

The Social Philosophy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar - A Study

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Abstract

This research paper critically evaluates the philosophy of Dr BR Ambedkar. Further, it focuses on the idea of social justice, caste abolition, democracy, and even gender equality. Dr B. R. Ambedkar is one of the most eminent intellectual figures of the modern world and one of the greatest personalities of our independence struggle. He was a great Economist, Philosopher, Historian, Lawyer, Politician and Scholar per excellence and a very good Professor. He played a key role in viewing the structure of the government and the form of the Constitution. He is one of the very few Indian Statesmen and was the first and foremost leader of the depressed classes. The struggle of the depressed classes for Human Rights and Socio-Political equality from the twenties of the 20th Century is woven around his name being elected as Chairman of the Drafting Committee. The paper enforces that his philosophy is not just historical but offers a transformative framework which addresses the present-day social inequalities in our societies.

Keywords: Social justice, caste, democracy, gender equality, Ambedkar, social transformation.

1. Introduction

Dr Baba Saheb Bhimrao was born in a poor family belonging to the Mahar Community, considered an untouchable caste. In fact, the Mahars are a martial community and therefore a separate Regiment was established in the country after the Mahars, in view of their valour and courage, inhabited the Western parts of India. He proved to the World that poverty, discrimination, intimidation, and humiliation in society would not deter a person endowed with indomitable courage. Strong will, determination and hard work. With all the social, financial, and psychological handicaps, he emerged as a great champion of traditionally marginalised sections and as Chief Architect of the Supreme Law of the Land with his total dedication and Commitment.

Existing scholarship on Ambedkar has largely focused on his role as the architect of the Indian Constitution and as a leader of the Dalit movement. Works by Keer (1962) and Das (1979) provide valuable insights into his life and contributions, but remain largely descriptive.

More recent studies have attempted to reinterpret his ideas in relation to modern concerns such as globalisation, identity politics, and social justice. However, there is still a tendency to treat his philosophy as historical rather than contemporary.

Furthermore, limited attention has been given to regional contexts. In states like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, caste continues to shape everyday life interactions, yet these realities are often absent in academic discussions.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are as follows. They are

- To study the social thought and life of Dr B.R. Ambedkar as a common man and to know the social status of the society
- To understand the economic and political structure of the society from the Ambedkar point of view, and further to analyse the women's status in the society

Research Questions

In penning the research paper, the research questions are: *How did Dr B.R. Ambedkar educate the people through his writings and speeches? And how does Dr B.R. Ambedkar inspire society through his knowledge?*

Research Methodology

Most of the data for this study has been collected from the secondary sources, which in turn are the books written by Ambedkar and others who wrote on him. The data is purely dependent upon the secondary sources and various writings and speeches given by Dr B.R. Ambedkar.

Analysis

Society Structure

The Society is classified into 4 Varnas. Those are (1) Brahmins, (2) Kshatriyas (3) Vyshya (4) Sudras. The Varna system is divided into 4 groups, i.e., we all know that whereas the Varna system is classified into many castes, it is called the Caste System. Another group name, called “Punchamas”, they are called “Athi Sudras”.

The teachings and writings of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar have assumed even greater relevance in the present environment for the emancipation of our society. Let us ‘Educate’, ‘Organise’ and ‘Agitate’ and venture to create an ideal society, in the words of Babasaheb.

An ideal society should be mobile, and should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society, there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association. In other words, there should be social osmosis. This is a certainty, which is only another name for democracy. Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living of conjoint communicated

experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen. Let us go all out to achieve it.

The foregoing facts are just the tip of an iceberg. There is no dearth of such shocking examples in our society. However, the worst thing is that, still in our society, there are defenders of the caste system, the root cause of social inequality and injustice. Constitutionally, the state is wedded to the concept of social justice, and attempts are made to achieve the goal, but in reality, since the social-cultural background remains the same, that of anti-social justice, the growth of social justice is very slow.

Dr Ambedkar was aware of this fact. Therefore, he was not very happy with merely social justice, but he desired the social transformation of Indian society, a Casteless Society, where the worthiness of man will be determined by his worth and not by birth. According to him, “two agencies are generally relied upon by the social idealists for producing social justice. Reason One is Caste, the other one is religion. Today it has become the creed of the educationalists, philosophists and social scientists who believe that universal education and the development of printing and press would result in an ideal society, in which every individual would be so enlightened that there would be no place for social injustice”.

He further says that: While answering why reason fails to bring about social justice, he said that where reason comes into conflict with vested interests, it fails. Many Hindus have a vested interest in untouchability. That vested interest may take the shape of a feeling of social superiority, or it may take the shape of economic exploitation, such as forced labour or cheap labour/”

It is because of this that Dr Ambedkar, in his warning to the untouchable, stated. “The untouchable should bear in mind two things: firstly, that it is futile to expect the Hindu religion to perform the mission of bringing about social justice. Such a task may be performed by Islam, Christianity or Buddhism. The Hindu religion is itself the embodiment of inequality and injustice to the untouchables. For it to preach the gospel of justice is to go against its own being. To hope for this is to hope for a miracle. This reasoning of Dr Babasaheb also explains why he left Hinduism and embraced Buddhism.

Dr Ambedkar has also offered a solution to end this complex problem by advising that untouchables must strive, on the one hand, for education and the spread of knowledge, because the power of the privileged class rests upon lies which are sedulously propagated among the masses, and on the other hand, they must strive for power. While emphasising the importance of power, he said. “What makes one interest dominant over another is power. That being so, power is needed to destroy power. There may be the problem of how to make the use of power ethically, but there can be no question that without power on one side, it is not possible to destroy power on the other side.”

This solution of Dr Ambedkar applies to all those who are victims of social injustice, oppression, and persecution. He was absolutely right in judging that the destiny of the poor will not change unless they are made equal partners in power. Only by marching on this road of salvation can the Dalits, adivasis, other backward classes, religious minorities, the labouring class and all women in the country, they can really liberate themselves socially, economically and politically.

This attempt to radicalise the ideology of the power/middle caste parties and Indianise the Marxism of the left would have all the required ideological vitality and social base to achieve the goals of both Ambedkarism and Marxism in India. Neither the left parties nor the lower / middle caste parties alone have the strength for reconstructing the Indian society on the lines of equality, liberty or fraternity in real life. United together, they would win; divided, they would contribute to perpetuating the hegemony and domination of the dominant castes and classes as they have largely done so far in the country.

So, the need of the hour is to bring together the disparate and fragmented progressive forces of the Ambedkarite and Marxist type for social transformation and also incorporate into it the concerns of the new social movement. This would imply adoption of a transformative collaborationist approach rather. This would be entirely different from the co-optionist collaborationist approach, which has been followed by the Indian state and the major political parties for the perpetuation of the hegemony and dominance of the upper castes. The transformative approach would facilitate establishing the hegemony and domination of the weaker section and concretise the ideal vision of society based on the principle of equality, liberty and justice, not only in a formal legal sense, as is the case today, but also in an existential sense in the actual life of the people.

It can be seen from the above discussion that Ambedkar was deeply exercised by the subordination of women. He wanted to change the old Indian social order, which was based on discrimination and inequality. His main project was to create a just society, and this question of social justice continued till the end of his life. He vehemently criticised the idea of upholding the purity of caste at the cost of women. He was against the inhuman practices imposed on women in the name of religion. He draws linkages between women's subordination and caste exploitation, and therefore, he proposed to annihilate the caste. He further says it is the caste panchayat and family laws based on castes which forced women to be dependent on men. Ambedkar's analysis of caste itself. Thus, he identified the caste system as the only source of women's exploitation. Moreover, the Bills he introduced from time to time reveal that he wanted to resolve issues that could not be reformed, and hence the law must come to their rescue, as stated earlier.

“An Ideal Society would be a Society based on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.” – Dr B.R. Ambedkar.

Dhananjay Keer, a great biographer, said that, “Dr B.R. Ambedkar stands out in the history of this Ancient land as an Educationalist, Economist, Author, Professor, Lawyer, A great leader, Fighter, Law-giver, humanist, leveller, and Liberator.” These remarks are totally true of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar.

Conclusion

Ambedkar's social philosophy represents a comprehensive framework for achieving justice and equality. While significant progress has been made, his vision of a truly egalitarian society remains incomplete. It highlighted the need to revisit and reinterpret his ideas in light of contemporary challenges. By integrating his principles into social, educational, and political practices, it is possible to move closer to the ideal society he envisioned.

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