



Indian Political Thoughts and Concept of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on democracy : A Review

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Introduction : B. R. Ambedkar was great intellectual and social reformer. In his early stage of career, he realized the plight of untouchables. He dedicated his whole life for socio economic upliftment



(Bakshi, 2009). The political philosophy of Ambedkar assist in renegotiating the crisis of western political theory in particular and leading the fights of the people in general. Ambedkar has arisen as a major political philosopher with the rise of dalit movement in contemporary times (Bakshi, 2009).

He emerged on the Indian socio-political area in early 1920s and remained in the head of all social, economic, political and religious efforts for upliftment of the lowest layer of the Indian society called untouchables. Babasaheb was a great researcher who made exceptional contributions as an economist, sociologist, legal luminary, educationalist, journalist, Parliamentarian and as a social reformer and supporter of human rights. Babasaheb organized, united and enthused the untouchables in India to effectively use political means towards their goal of social fairness.

As a member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly (since 1926), Ambedkar gave real expression to the protests of the rural poor through his mass movements. His positive struggle against the prevailing land tenure system called Khoti liberated a vast majority of the rural poor from an extreme form of economic exploitation. His successful agitation against Mahar Vatan liberated a large section of the rural poor from virtual serfdom. He presented a bill in the State Assembly aimed at preventing the malpractices of money-lenders hurting the poor (Bakshi, 2009). In industrial field,

Dr. Ambedkar founded in 1936, the Independent Labour Party. While the prevailing trade unions fought for the rights of workers, they were indifferent to the rights of untouchable workers as human beings. The new political party took up their cause. Consequently, as the Labour Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council from 1942 to 1946, Dr. Ambedkar was instrumental in bringing about several labour reforms including establishment of employment exchanges, generally laying the foundations of industrial relations in Independent India. His



ministry also included irrigation, power and other public works. He had immense contribution in shaping the irrigation policy, especially the Damodar Valley Project. Dr. Ambedkar's attack on the caste system was not just aimed at challenging the hegemony of the upper castes but had broader connotation of economic growth and development. He contended that the caste system had reduced the mobility of labour and capital which in turn, obstructed economic growth and development in India. In his memorandum submitted to the British Government titled "States and Minorities" in 1947, Dr. Ambedkar laid down a strategy for India's economic development. The strategy placed "an obligation on the State to plan the economic life of the people on lines which would lead to highest point of productivity without closing every avenue to private enterprise and also provide for the equitable distribution of wealth".

When India got Independence, Dr. Ambedkar became the first Law Minister of India. Even while drafting the Indian Constitution (as the Chairman, Drafting Committee) in 1948-49, the economist in Dr. Ambedkar was very much alive. He strongly suggested democracy as the 'governing principle of human relationship' but stressed that principles of equality, liberty and fraternity which are the foundations of democracy should not be interpreted narrowly in terms of the political rights alone. He emphasized the social and economic dimensions of democracy and warned that political democracy cannot thrive when there is no social and economic democracy. He gave an expression to the objective of economic democracy by incorporating the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution. Being the Law Minister, Dr. Ambedkar fought vigorously for the passage of the Hindu Code Bill, most significant reform for women's rights in respect of marriage and inheritance. He resigned in September 1951 when the Bill did not pass in the Parliament.

The political philosophy of Ambedkar may aid in renegotiating the predicament of western political theory in particular and leading the fights of the masses in general. People can observe Ambedkar's association with the grand political streams such as liberal, radical or conservative through his writings. At the same time, he distinguishes himself with these three dominant political traditions. Ambedkar's philosophy is fundamentally ethical and religious. According to him, the social precedes the political. Social morality is main focus to his political philosophy. He is neither a violent individualist nor a traditional communitarian. His ideas of democracy internalizes the principles of equality, liberty, and fraternity in their true



spirit. Though there are many attempts but one may find difficulty in locating him in dominant political traditions. Often this may lead to misinterpretation of the essence of Ambedkar. Ambedkar's political thought stresses a new language to understand the intricacy of his opinions.

Ambedkar's Concept on democracy:

Ambedkar had a long conversation on democratic form of government in his literatures. His conception of democracy is different from the parliamentary democracy of Western Europe. Democracy came with the principles of liberalism. Parliamentary democracy has all the marks of a popular government, a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Ambedkar considered the problems and articulated displeasure against the parliamentary democracy in nations like Italy, Germany, Russia, Spain and some other European nations in proposing the parliamentary democracy in India. Ambedkar explored grounds for the let-down of parliamentary democracy that parliamentary democracy gives no free hand to repression and that is why it became a disgraced institution in the countries such as Italy, Spain and Germany which readily welcomed dictatorships (Roudrigues, Valerian, 2002). The nations that were opposing dictatorship and vowed to democracy to find their discontent with democracy. First, parliamentary democracy began with equality of political rights in the form of equal suffrage.

Some countries have parliamentary democracy that have not accepted adult suffrage. It has progressed by growing the notion of equality of political rights to equality of social and economic opportunity. It has documented that companies, which are anti-social in purpose, cannot hold the state at bay. With all this, 'the reason for dissatisfaction is due to the understanding that it has unsuccessful to assure to the people for the right to liberty, property or the chase of pleasure. The causes for this failure may be found either in incorrect system or wrong organization or in both (Roudrigues, Valerian, 2002). He expounded this point by indicating the fault with both wrong ideologies and bad organization in following the ideals of democracy.

The idea of freedom of contract is one of the liable factors for parliamentary democracy in terms of ideology. Parliamentary democracy took no notice of economic inequalities and did not care to scrutinise the result of freedom of contract on the parties to the contract, in spite of the fact that they were unequal in negotiating power. It did not mind if the freedom of contract gave the strong opportunity to deceive the weak. The result is that parliamentary



democracy in standing out as a protagonist of liberty has continuously added to economic crimes towards the poor, subjugated and dispossessed class (Roudrigues, Valerian, 2002). The second mistaken philosophy which has vitiated parliamentary democracy is the failure to realize that political democracy cannot thrive where there is no social and economic democracy (Roudrigues, Valerian, 2002). He exemplified this point by comparing the failure of parliamentary democracy in the countries of Italy, Germany and Russia with England and USA. He sensed that there was a greater degree of economic and social democracy in the latter countries than existed in the former. Social and economic democracy are major factors of a political democracy (Roudrigues, Valerian, 2002). Parliamentary democracy developed a desire for liberty. It never made even sleepy acquaintance with equality. It failed to realize the significance of equality and did not even strike a balance between liberty and equality.

Ambedkar's political dogmas are still relevant to not only to the politics of India but also to politics in South Asia in general. Presently, South Asian countries are facing deep crises, unable to develop political and social institutions to guarantee stability to their societies primarily because of oppressive and social political systems from centuries that were their heritage due to the caste system. The caste system essentially was a system of domination by a small group, called Brahmins, who developed most sophisticated forms of cunning into the social control systems of their time in a way that even for centuries they could maintain their dominance.

In 1943, Dr. Ambedkar argued that, "A democratic form of Government presupposes a democratic form of society. The formal framework of democracy is of no value and would indeed be a misfit if there was no social democracy". He further highlighted, "The political never realized that democracy was not a form of Government: it was essentially a form of society". He was highly anxious of the Dalits` fortune in the independent India. For, he could evidently see that most political structure of his time were preparing for a democratic form of government, without considering the varna/caste organisation of the Indian society. That is why, he was adamant on going thorough social reform movements along radical lines, of which, most political conflicts were averse to. He also observed that none of the political organisation was prepared to interfere in the internal affairs of the society. While referring to the experiences of other societies, he had warned, "As experience proves, rights are protected not by law but by the social and moral conscience of society. If social conscience is such that it is prepared to recognise the rights which law chooses to enact, rights will be safe and



secure. But if the fundamental rights are opposed by the community, no law, no Parliament, no Judiciary can guarantee them in the real sense of the word".

B.R. Ambedkar also identified the cause of the retardation of the Indian creativeness, which is also the source of the obstruction of the attitudes of people of other South Asian countries. He saw that by way of mental exercises this bondage cannot be broken. Efforts must be done to break the social linkages which had tied up the minds of the people over centuries. To this In September 1932, when Mahatma Gandhi announced his decision to fast unto death, remonstrating against the provision of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes in the British Prime Minister's Communal Award, and when practically the whole nation supported Gandhi's attitude, Ambedkar disparaged Gandhi and entitled his fast "a political stunt". Gandhi took Ambedkar's views seriously and finally agreed to reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes in joint electorates, which was embodied in the Poona Pact.

Ambedkar was a social innovatory. He attempted to generate self-consciousness and self-respect among the Depressed Classes. He recommended them to be impressive personality instead of remaining as innocent person. His aim was to eradicate social differences, based on caste and Varna, and establishing a social order, based on liberty, equality and fraternity. At the fag-end of his life, he with his followers encompassed Buddhism, as he considered Buddhism, to be a humanitarian religion, based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

Ambedkar operated outside the conventional of Congress politics and also disapproved the Congress activities. He was supposed by many to be a separatist and pro-British. But all along the remained a patriot. He stated that patriotism was not the domination of Congress and that one could be patriotic without becoming a Congressman

Ambedkar is considered as the great protagonist of reservation of seats in legislature and posts in Government. But in his final stage of life, when he accepted the principles of Buddhism with his followers, he counselled the Scheduled Castes to stand alone instead of depending on supports. Ambedkar is an unusual personality in the national life of India. He was an economist, a jurist, a social revolutionary, a constitution-maker, an able parliamentarian, an administrator, and above all a constructive statesman of extraordinary competence.

Ambedkar philosophies must be studied by the younger generations who are finding solutions to the kinds of problems that they have no solution. The easy solutions many have sought but have not worked. There is a complexity that needs to be explored in order to be able to explore all the possibilities of getting over these severe problems. In the writings of



Ambedkar, there are great understandings that are yet to be explored and in that investigation, the real brilliances of the past of the sub-continent could remerge. Pseudo respect for Buddhism today was challenged by Ambedkar who himself became a Buddhist by trying to revive the actual history of Buddhism in India. The annihilation of Buddhism in India was a result of the caste struggles in India and in that fight the certainties that the Brahmins had developed to get triumph and to win back their supremacy. These issues were also constantly exposed by Ambedkar.

Conclusion : B.R. Ambedkar was a demonstrative figure of Indian Politics in the Gandhian period. Ambedkar has emerged as a chief political philosopher with the rise of the dalit movement in modern times. There are several attempts to understand Ambedkar and his philosophy. B.R. Ambedkar, the chief draftsman of Indian Constitution, emerged at the moment in British rule. In whole life Ambedkar worked outside the mainstream of national politics. He worked for the Depressed Classes' uplift within the political and constitutional framework of the imperialist period. He realized that being socially treated as an untouchable, he could not get a status of equality and dignity within the Congress politics which was dominated by Caste Hindu politicians.

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