



Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy of Socio-Economic Justice and its Relevance in Present Indian Context

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Social, Economic, Justice, socialism, democracy.

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ABSTRACT *Dr. Ambedkar was a great champion of social and economic justice in India. He was the most learned and educated parliamentarian of his time. His social philosophy, as he said once, can be traced in three words- liberty, equality and fraternity. His economic philosophy is well documented in his views on state-socialism. The present paper discusses in detail about the social and economic philosophy of this great man. Further, an analysis is also made regarding the challenges before Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy. The paper also looks the relevance of his ideas in the present era of liberalization, privatization and globalization.*

Introduction

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a great champion of social justice in India. In his opinion the cause of injustice in Indian society is caste and caste is created/ followed by the support of Hindu religion. In India Scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward castes and religious minorities face denial of their basic human rights at the hand of so called upper castes Hindus. Dr. Ambedkar thought that all types of oppression, denial, exploitation and injustices can be removed by the state. In this regard he made many provisions in constitution of India for SC/ST/OBC/Religious minorities, women and children and State has been given duty and responsibility of protecting, promoting and safeguarding the interest of weaker sections of society. But, more than six decades experiences show that unfortunately state has been failed to protect and safeguard the interest of weaker sections of society. Impressed with Dr. Ambedkar's service to the downtrodden people, Mumford, President International Mathematical Union and a former Harvard University Professor says: "I take Dr. Ambedkar as one of my heroes" (TOI, June 4, 2015).

Dr. Ambedkar spoke on the eve of the signing into law of the Indian constitution, on 25 November 1949, that on the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this assembly has so laboriously build up.

Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy of social and economic justice:

Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy of social and economic justice is based on the principles of social democracy and state socialism which were meant to remove social and economic inequality in India respectively. Here both concepts are discussed in detail;

Social Democracy: Dr. Ambedkar's principle of social democracy consist three concepts of justice namely equality, liberty and fraternity. These principles of equality, liberty and fraternity should not be treated as separated items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy (Larbeer, 2003). He said that political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life, which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. Dr. Ambedkar believed that the root of untouchability is the caste system, the root of the caste system is religion and the root of Brahminical religion is authorization of power to Brahmins to exploit and discriminate weaker sections of society (Lal: 1998). In this type of system he says rights cannot be protected by law but the social and moral conscience of society. If social conscience is such that it is prepared to recognize 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' (Larbeer, 2003). Thus Ambedkar says that we can create social harmony through social democracy which has been destroyed by the caste system and created hatred and hostility among different communities.

State Socialism: Dr. Ambedkar advocated the concept of state socialism in states and minorities. His concept of state socialism is different from the concept of Marxist socialism. Marx says that all working class unite against capitalist and wage war against capitalist. As in one side capitalists are few in number and on the other side there is large army of working class, at the end capitalist will be eliminated in bloody revolution and new social order- socialism will be established under the leadership of working class, in which there will be no exploitation of working class.

Dr. Ambedkar's state socialism is not based on bloody revolution. He believed that bringing socialism is the duty and responsibility of state. State shall provide protection against economic exploitation and shall work towards making egalitarian society. He sees an extremely important role for the state in transformation of agriculture and advocates the nationalization of land and the leasing out of land to groups of cultivators, who are to be encouraged to form cooperatives in order to promote agriculture. Interven-

ing in a discussion in the Bombay Legislative Council on October 10, 1927, Dr. Ambedkar argued that the solution to the agrarian question "lies not in increasing the size of farms, but in having intensive cultivation that is employing more capital and more labour on the farms such as we have". The government and its economists, instead of recognizing that the crisis is the product in large part of the policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization, propose a set of so-called second-generation reforms. The war cry of the liberalizers is: "Away with all controls and the state, and let the market rule". In this context, one cannot but recall Dr. Ambedkar's words that liberty from state control is another name for the dictatorship of the private employer.

To solve the problem of economic exploitation, during the process of framing the Constitution of the Republic of India, Dr. Ambedkar proposed to include certain provisions on fundamental rights, specifically a clause to the effect that the state shall provide protection against economic exploitation. Among other things, this clause proposed that:

- 1 Key industries shall be owned and run by the state;
- 2 Basic but non-key industries shall be owned by the state and run by the state or by corporations established by it;
- 3 Agriculture shall be a state industry, and be organized by the state taking over all land and letting it out for cultivation in suitable standard sizes to residents of villages; these shall be cultivated as collective farms by groups of families (Athreya Venkatesh: 2002)

Dr. Ambedkar said "Caste is the monster that crosses your path, you cannot have political reform, and you cannot have economic reform, unless you kill this monster" (Kazeha: 1988) Thus, he wanted to include certain economic safeguards such as nationalization of agriculture and nationalization of some other core industries under fundamental rights for the welfare of weaker sections of society but, unfortunately he could not do so due to stiff opposition from other members of constituent assembly.

Challenges before Dr. Ambedkar's view on social justice:

Dr. Ambedkar shouldered the responsibility of making just society on state. He thought that state will protect all weaker sections, women and children from the exploitation of powerful. Further he thought that state shall make special provisions for the economic advancement of weaker sections of society.

Education, health and to some extent equal opportunity of jobs especially in public sector were under the control of state. It was thought that every citizen of the country irrespective of their class or caste must get excess to these basic facilities. Education and health make an individual capable to participate in all walks of life and through participation he/she can advance his personal life and also can contribute in nation building. Keeping this objective in mind in the beginning decade education and health was the matter of state.

New economic reforms and dilution of the role of state:

In present era of economic reform the role of government especially in social sector is continuously shrinking. Government is escaping from its responsibility of providing education and health to all. Public institutions in the field of education and health are shrinking and private institutions are emerging (there were only 11 private universities in 1950 and have increased to 94 in 2011) and now education and health have become commercial goods. It is very dangerous for poor, who do not have money to pay for it will be excluded from it which will lead further multiple exclusion and discrimination. Present policy of the government to leave education and health on market is big challenge before social justice. Now government is planning to dismantle PDS also, Delhi government has already started cash transfer scheme in place of PDS.

Dr. Ambedkar had given whole responsibility to state to do social justice with oppressed communities. But our experiences shows that state was failed to fulfill its responsibility. Consequently, India is facing many internal problems such as growing caste tensions, clashes and Naxalism in all the states. One reason of failure of government to perform its constitutional duty to provide social justice to oppressed communities may be the monopoly of upper castes in politics.

Failure of state and options to provide social justice to oppressed communities:

In India there is struggle between Upper and lower castes and this struggle have a long history. Whatever Dr. Ambedkar did for oppressed communities, for that he faced stiff opposition from caste Hindus in the parliament and outside the parliament too. When he shouldered whole responsibility of social justice on state he has no option left with him, as he was single well educated person in his community. At present because of Ambedkar's struggle SC/ST/OBC/Minorities who are most oppressed and exploited communities in India have more than 50 lakh students and about lakh of teachers in higher education across the country. Moreover they have constitutional rules in their favour against any type of injustice done against them. If teachers and students work towards educating the common masses of the country belonging to oppressed communities about their rights and constitutional rules then favourable environment can be created for the enforcement of constitutional rules including fundamental rights. Dr. Ambedkar has rightly said that rights cannot be protected by law but the social and moral conscience of society. 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 (Larbeer: 2003). Teaching community especially from oppressed and backward communities must fulfill their social responsibility of awakening the oppressed communities about their history of struggle and their history of backwardness in this country. If teaching community will not fulfill their responsibility given the condition that there is no hope from the government in present era of globalization then it will result in intense social/caste tensions and clashes as Dr. Ambedkar had warned.

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