



Dr. Ambedkar's Empowerment on Educational Thoughts: Some Review

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *In this paper, I concentrate on two issues like education and empowerment. The word empowerment is borrowed from feminists and it defined as the "ability to do or affect something or anything to act upon a person or thing". It is the simple process of increasing personal or political power so that individuals, families and communities can take action to improve their situations. Education is the important bases of power in the modern society. Therefore, my understanding education is: a source of power and also as an agency that empowers people. From the individual point of view, the empowerment is defined as building confidence, insight and understanding, and developing personal skills. For example, being able to analyze situations and communicate more effectively to others.*

Introduction:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a great scholar and an eminent educationist. He carried out his studies in India and abroad. In the early twentieth century, when most of the Scheduled Castes people received hardly any education, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar received the best possible education and obtained an array of degrees from reputed universities abroad. As a scholar, he participated in seminars and presented papers, wrote articles for journals and authored several books. He started his career as a teacher and was also Principal in the Government Law College, Bombay for some time. But he left the job in order to devote himself fully to the service of the nation and the welfare of the downtrodden sections. His contribution to the advancement of education in the country is multifarious. Besides being a teacher and Principal, he was a great spokesman of education and founder and builder of educational institutions of national repute. Above all, like the Buddha, he was a great teacher and educator of the masses.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the frontier of Dalits emphasizes on the need of education. He compares education with the milk of tigress and adds that one who will drink it; won't seat calm. Ambedkar in one of his thoughts says, "If you want to develop the society then you need to spread up the education. Education eradicates the bias of people which results on to minimize the exploitation, domination, of those people who try to take the benefit of the so called illiterate people. If the people get knowledge through education then they can face the problems created by the dominators. Education reforms opinions, it tries to remove the walls built among the people. The biggest gift that is given by the education is that it creates self confidence among us which is considered as the first stage of our development." [1]. Ambedkar in one of his speeches addresses that, "The people don't sustain in the struggle of life until they get educated. Since that they get caught in the clutches of social problems such as insult, suppression and desecration. So it is the duty of the existing government to accelerate by providing education." [2]. In the days of Ambedkar the educational condition of untouchables was very critical. He was of the opinion that, "The untouchables were deliberately being kept away by Brahmans and other castes. It was just because they drive the education system. They just tried to behave with untouchables as inferior." [3]. It resulted to take an ef-

fective action against government. Further he tries to make changes in education system after the worse experience with untouchables.

According to Ambedkar, "Education is a weapon of creation of mental and educational development, weapon of eradication of social slavery of economic development of political freedom." [4]. While emphasizing on the need of education he puts forth the demand of law of compulsory education. He knew that the problem of primary education is the problem of nation. He in the conference of Mahabaleshwar held on May 31, 1929 addressed that 'The problem of the spread of primary education is the most dominating one. In the present days these countries who bear the maximum Dalit illiterates don't sustain in the competition of life. The spread of primary education is the base of national development. It will take more time if the spread of primary education is dependent on the interest of common people. So it needs to implement a compulsory Act of primary education." [5].

Empowerment:

Empowerment refers to increase in the spiritual, political, social, racial, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities. The term empowerment covers a vast landscape of meanings, interpretations, definitions and disciplines ranging from psychology and philosophy to the highly commercialized self-help industry and motivational sciences. Sociological empowerment addresses that the members of groups that social discrimination processes have excluded from decision-making processes through, for example - discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion or gender. Empowerment as a methodology is often associated with feminism. Empowerment is the process of obtaining the basic opportunities for marginalized people, either directly by the people or through the help of non-marginalized others who share their own access to these opportunities. Empowerment also includes encouraging and developing the skills for self-sufficiency with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare in the individuals of the group. It is a process which enables the individuals/ groups to the full access of personal/collective power, authority and influence and also to employ that strength when engaging with other people, institutions or society. In other words, "Empowerment is not giving people power; people already have plenty of power, in the wealth of their knowl-

edge and motivation, to do their jobs magnificent. It encourages people to gain the skills and knowledge that will allow them to overcome obstacles in life or work environment and ultimately help them to develop themselves or the society. Empowerment is the enhancement of the political, social, economic or spiritual strength of individuals and communities. Empowerment envelops developing and building capacities of individuals, communities to make them part of the main stream society. Empowerment may also have a negative impact on individuals, corporations and productivity depending upon the individual's views and goals. It divides the genders or the races. Strong skills and critical capabilities are often held back to open doors for those who meet the empowerment criteria. Those who use empowerment as a selfish advantage tend to become difficult, demeaning and even hostile colleagues. There are two approaches in understanding the role of education in empowering people. One: the radical approach of using pedagogy as a conscientization process of the oppressed. The second approach: a transformative project of creating opportunities in the mainstream education to those who are previously denied access to education.

Ambedkar's thoughts on education:

Dr. Ambedkar did not visualize education simply as a means for the development of a child's personality or as a source of earning livelihood. Rather, he considered education as the most powerful agent for bringing about desired changes in society and a prerequisite for organized effort for launching any social movement in the modern times. For him, education was an instrument to liberate the dalits from illiteracy, ignorance and superstitions and thus enable them to fight against all forms of injustice, exploitation and oppression.

Dr. Ambedkar gave the highest priority to education in his struggle for the liberation of the dalits from the age-old oppressive character of the caste-ridden Indian Society. For he believed that it is only education through which various kinds of disabilities of the dalits could be overcome and their shackles of social slavery thrown away. Education provides strength and opportunity to them to fight against poverty, disease, and backwardness. Keeping in view the crucial role of education in social emancipation of the dalits, Dr. Ambedkar gave the following message to his brethren: "Educate, Organize and Agitate". This is evident from his speech on the Bombay University Act Amendment Bill in the Bombay Legislative Council on 5 October 1927:

"We may forgo material benefits of civilization, but we cannot forgo our right and opportunity to reap the benefits of the highest education to the fullest extent ... Backward Classes ... have just realized that without education their existence is not safe".

Educate:

Education has an immense impact on the human society. One can safely assume that a person is not in the proper sense until he is educated. It trains the human mind to think and take the right decision. In other words, man becomes a rational animal when he is educated. By the way of education only the knowledge and information received and spread throughout the world. An uneducated person cannot read, write and he is very close to all knowledge and wisdom like a window. In contrast, an educated man lives in a room with all its windows open towards outside world. Simply getting education does not mean to acquire the knowledge and getting academic designation. Education must get through by the way of free mind and free

thinking.

Agitate:

The word 'agitate' does not mean that, to agitate physically; it is a mental revolution in its place. It does not mean to go out and start protesting violently on the streets, without getting educated. After getting educated, by understanding Babasaheb's thoughts and strategy the individual can start agitating mentally. Agitated mind, as Dr. Ambedkar presumed, would force educated people to form organizations and they would act to fix the problems. Many people, quite often, who profess Dr. Ambedkar, limit his slogan to these three points. But to this author, the actual message of Dr. Ambedkar lies in "have faith in your strength."

Organize:

Educated and agitated minds will easily organize for a common mission. We must get ourselves educated and our thoughts agitate so that we can collectively organize. Agitated minds for a common mission will help them to unite and struggle for their common goal as one force. Only education can bring this change. Ambedkar had also given lot of emphasis on getting education. He had given prime importance to education. He further added that, "The backward classes have come to realize that after all education is the greatest material benefit for which they can fight. We may forego material benefits of civilization but we cannot forego our rights and opportunities to reap the benefits of the highest education fully. That is the importance of education. From this point of view he advised the backward classes to realize that without education their existence is not safe."

In Ambedkar's idea on educate, agitate and organize Ambedkar's idea of giving education and equal opportunity to the people aims at removing the barriers in Indian Hindu religious caste system and development of backward caste as well as all marginalized communities. According to the social work students, educate agitate and organize means create power in people to experience basic rights in the society, to achieve success in the life and also struggle for social justice. In the social work field Ambedkar's idea about educate agitate and organize is very much relevant in the current context because in the Indian society, people are illiterate and they are not aware about education as well as their basic rights of the life, still people are facing caste discrimination in society and lack of support and motivation. Educate, Agitate and organize must be maintained to see the effective results of the movement for the upliftment of our people. For the upliftment of the depressed classes he developed a programme of education as a part of the general manifesto of Indian Labor Party before the general elections of 1937. To stamp out the illiteracy, he emphasized the necessity of full and compulsory and liberal education. He emphasized that many pupils from depressed classes did not have money. To overcome the financial problem which is acting against their studies, he stressed the necessity of scholarships in educational institutions.

Dr. Ambedkar considered education to be essential for all men and women irrespective of their social and economic status. All men and women must get at least the minimum education so that they may know how to read and write. The primary education caters to the minimum essential need of educating the masses. According to Dr. Ambedkar:

"The object of primary education is to see that every child that enters the portals of a primary school does leave it only at a stage when it becomes literate throughout the rest of his life. But if we take the statistics, we find that out of every hundred children that enter a primary school only eighteen reach the fourth standard, the rest of them, that is to say, eighty-two out of every one hundred replace into the state of illiteracy. He said that the Government should spend sufficient amount of money so that "every child who enters a primary school reaches the fourth standard."

Conclusion:

Ambedkar wanted the people to cultivate the values of freedom and equality among themselves; it is possible only through education. He regarded education as a means to reach the doors of light and perception to remove the regions of darkness and ignorance. Ambedkar emphasized on secular education for social emancipation. The basic theme of his philosophy of education is: inculcating the values of liberty, equality, fraternity, justice and moral character among the boys and girls of all shades. By the way of his educational philosophy, I shall view that by experiencing full freedom of education without the barriers of any caste, creed and race; it is the best way for the enlightenment of human beings from ignorance.

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