



DR.AMBEDKAR'S THOUGHTS ON POLITICS

Dr. A. Jyothi

Faculty, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, S.V.University, Tirupati – 517 502, AP, India

ABSTRACT Ambedkar's political thought is still very relevant to not only to the politics of India but also to politics in South Asia in general. B.R.Ambedkar was a representative figure of Indian Politics in the Gandhian era. Ambedkar pointed out that though the Caste Hindu Congressmen adopted a radical stand in politics, in social matters they were traditionalists and upheld social inequality. 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. Ambedkar's thought, as reproduced in his writings and speeches, has great prominence in drawing the history and growth of social thought in India. It is essential to understand the philosophy of Ambedkar which is the theoretical foundation for the Dalit movement. The central of political thinking of Ambedkar is enclosed in two of his statements, the rights are protected not by law but by social and moral conscience of society, and a democratic form of government presumes a democratic form of society.

KEYWORDS :**INTRODUCTION**

“My definition of democracy is – A form and a method of Government whereby revolutionary changes in the social life are brought about without bloodshed. That is the real test. It is perhaps the severest test. But when you are judging the quality of the material you must put it to the severest test.”- Dr.Ambedkar

Ambedkar's political thought is still very relevant to not only to the politics of India but also to politics in South Asia in general. South Asian countries are today facing deep crises, unable to develop political and social institutions to guarantee stability to their societies primarily because of centuries of oppressive and social political systems 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. The damage that was done in the process of repression that accompanied the creation and the maintenance of the caste system have become the obstacles to the development of the intelligence the creativity and the capacity of all the people to deal with contemporary problems. Their past holds them in their bondage. The bonds are so deeply engrained into the very nervous systems that generation after generation people are reproduced with mentalities that prevent them from realizing the capacity for freedom and capacity for deeper social communion in each other in their social context. Deep divisiveness inbuilt into the South Asian culture was created by these centuries of subtle of social control. Methods of control were formulated as rules of religion and rituals to which the individual life was so deeply tied up. The idea of the individual freedom is so alien to this cultural heritage. The intricate mechanism that entraps people emotionally and psychologically by various kinds of mythical beliefs got so engrained in the minds of all due to this past.

It was B.R. Ambedkar that identified the cause of the retardation of the Indian creativity, which is also the source of the retardation of the mindsets of people of other South Asian countries. He saw that purely by way of mental exercises this bondage cannot be broken. What needed to be broken were the social the social linkages which had tied up the minds of the people over centuries. To this he gave and for the understanding of this processes he devoted his time. And his way of understanding was not by reading into the text of the past but into the lives of the ordinary folk of India spread in that vast country. In the poverty of India was the evidence that was necessary to look into in order to discover the methods by which people lives are destroyed by this terrible heritage. Without doubt, Baba Saheb Ambedkar is the greatest political leader in modern South Asian history, with regard to his understanding of the linkage between social controls exercised by religion and its influence in the contemporary history. While Mahatma Gandhi saw the meaning of freedom in terms of getting rid of the colonial power and passing the power to local elites, Ambedkar saw freedom of Indians from the point of view of getting rid of cultural inhabited bondage of created by the caste system. He saw centuries old

practices in which social control of the masses has been done mainly by the use of language, rituals and 'ethical codes' reinforcing the caste domination over the masses. Ambedkar also saw moments of liberation in Indian history. That was the way he saw Buddhism. He called Buddha his guru. He said that he didn't learn principles of democracy from Western philosophers but from his guru, Gautama Buddha.

B.R.AMBEDKAR'S ROLE IN INDIAN POLITICS

B.R. Ambedkar was a representative figure of Indian Politics in the Gandhian era. Gandhi was the unchallenged leader of Indian National Congress; Jinnah represented the separatist Muslim forces and Ambedkar was the main spokesman of Depressed Classes in India. Both Gandhi and Ambedkar were the champions of the Depressed Classes. Ambedkar had been born in an untouchable family and had suffered from humiliation on that account. By his exertions and perseverance he proved himself the unchallenged leader of the Depressed Classes in India as well as a statesman of national stature. Decades have passed since independence and Ambedkar's death. At the distance of time it is perhaps worthwhile to evaluate his role and personality in proper historical perspective. For most of his 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 era. He sincerely felt 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. Mahatma Gandhi realized Ambedkar's mental state and said: “He is pronounced as belonging to the Depressed Classes and as being untouchable. Intellectually he is superior to thousands of intelligent and educated caste Hindus. His personal cleanliness was as high as that of any of us. Today he is an eminent lecturer in law. Tomorrow you may find him a Judge of the High Court. In other words there is no position in the Government of this country to which he may not aspire or rise and to which an orthodox Brahmin can raise”.

Ambedkar pointed out that though the Caste Hindu Congressmen adopted a radical stand in politics, in social matters they were traditionalists and upheld social inequality. Gandhi also felt that many Congressmen supported his anti-untouchability programme only out of political consideration and that they had no hearty support for this programme. Even though Ambedkar kept aloof from the political programme and activities of the National Congress, yet he cannot be branded as protégé of the British imperialism. He fearlessly criticized the failings of the British Government. He pointed out that the British Government supported the cause of Depressed Classes only out of ulterior political motives and gave undue weightage to the Hindu conservatives. Ambedkar professed and proclaimed that the uplift of the Depressed Classes was the goal of his life. He did not show any eagerness to earn the reputation of a nationalist leader. This is why he fearlessly and frankly expressed his views for the cause of Depressed Classes and quarrelled with Congress and even Mahatma Gandhi. In September 1932, when Mahatma Gandhi announced his decision to fast unto death, protesting against the provision of separate electorates

for the Depressed Classes in the British Prime Minister's Communal Award, and when practically the whole nation backed Gandhi's stand, Ambedkar criticized Gandhi and called his fast "a political stunt".

INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT: B.R. AMBEDKAR

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. The political philosophy of Ambedkar assists 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 arena 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 organised, united and encouraged the untouchables in India to effectively use political means towards their goal of social fairness. Dr. Ambedkar wrote three scholarly books on economics:

1. Administration and Finance of the East India Company
2. The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India
3. The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution

Administration and Finance of the East India Company

The first two signify his contribution to the field of public finance: The first work evaluating finances of the East India Company during the period, 1792 through 1858 and the second one book analysing the evolution of the Centre State financial relations in British India during the period, 1833 through 1921. The third book, his magnum opus in economics, denotes a seminal contribution to the field of monetary economics. 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 emphasised 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 internalises 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 Social Precedes Political Conception

Ambedkar's thought, as reproduced in his writings and speeches, has great prominence in drawing the history and growth of social thought in India. It is essential to understand the philosophy of Ambedkar which is the theoretical foundation for the Dalit movement. The central of political thinking of Ambedkar is enclosed in two of his statements, the rights are protected not by law but by social and moral conscience of society, and a democratic form of government presumes a democratic form of society. He deliberates democracy as a form of society, or a mode of associated living, and a social conscience is the only protection of all rights. The origins of democracy are to be examined in social relationships, in terms of associated life among the people who form a society. According to him, social relationships are

main factors to democracy. Ambedkar is a social democrat in spirit and practice. His special contribution to political thought lies in his connecting liberty, equality and fraternity to the concept of social democracy, which in line, he relates to democracy as a form of government. He further explained the limitations of social democracy in everyday functioning. He categorically stated while addressing the constituent assembly (November 25, 1949), "Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy' which means, a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life." This statement indicates that he defined democracy as a form and method of government whereby radical changes in the economic and social life of people are brought about without killing."

Ambedkar's main focus was on the notion of community. According to him, society is always composed of classes. It may be an overstatement to proclaim the theory of class conflict, but the existence of definite classes in society is a fact. An individual in a society is always a member of a class. A caste is an enclosed class. Brahmins created caste and it is extended to other servile classes. Caste is an endogamous unit and also a communal unit. His political theory was based on a moral community. It was as a model to be realised. He was highly critical about the Hindu social order. He debates that Hinduism is not capable to be a community. Buddhism was projected as the ideal having the value of community grounding on morality. He considers that Buddhism tried to found society on the basis of 'reason' and goodness. His idea of community is very original. He does not approve to either Hindu ideal community or Marxist conception of community based on participation in production process. His notion of community is moral and ethical. It is not automatically available for participation in common affairs. His idea of community has to be created through hard and torturous process of moral revolution.

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. The nations 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.

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. 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 democracies 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. The damage that was done in the process of repression that accompanied the creation and the maintenance of the caste system have become the difficulties to the development of the intelligence, the creativity and the capacity of all the people to deal with contemporary problems. Their past holds them in their slavery. The bonds are so deep-seated into the nervous systems that generation after generation people are reproduced with attitudes that prevent them from realizing the capacity for freedom and capacity for deeper social communion in each other in their social situation. Deep divisiveness inbuilt into the South Asian culture was created by these centuries of understated of social control. Methods of control were formulated as rules of religion and rituals to which the individual life was so deeply tied up. The idea of the individual freedom is so unknown to this cultural heritage. The intricate mechanism that catches people emotionally and psychologically by various kinds of mythical beliefs got so entrenched in the minds of all due to this past.

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 ongoing thorough social reform movements along radical lines, of which, and 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 he gave and for the understanding of this processes he devoted his time. And his way of understanding was not by reading into the text of the past but into the lives of the ordinary people of India. In India, people are living under poverty line. That was the evidence to discover the methods by which people lives are destroyed by this terrible heritage.

Even though Ambedkar had wrangled with Congress and Gandhi on some basic issues, on the evening before of independence, he accepted the invitation of the Congress to join the Union Government and extended his role in the building of the nation. As the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, he played the vital role in developing a new constitution. He took all care to preserve the liberal ideas and ideals of the National Congress in the Constitution. Usually Ambedkar is popular as the father of Indian Constitution. Dr.K.V.Rao has labelled him as the mother of the Constitution as he gave constitutional shape to the ideas of Congress rather than his own. He held the portfolio of Law in Jawaharlal Nehru's first Cabinet. Because of his differences with the Congress and Prime Minister Nehru, he resigned from the Union Government.

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 was knowledgeable in history and the political theories which have been produced in the process of scuffles for democracy. He was also intensely aware of the history of minority problems in the world. He assumed that if a minority problem is not properly resolved,

global populace can be destroyed in conflicts which not only extinguish the minorities but entirety of society. Ambedkar indicated that though the Caste Hindu Congressmen accepted a radical stand in politics, in social matters, they were traditionalists and supported social dissimilarity.

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.

REFERENCES

1. Tejani, Shabnum (2008). "From Untouchable to Hindu Gandhi, Ambedkar and Depressed class question 1932", Indian secularism : a social and intellectual history, 1890-1950. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press. pp. 205-210. ISBN 0253220440. Retrieved 17 July 2013.
2. Jaffrelot, Christophe (2005). *Dr Ambedkar and Untouchability: Analysing and Fighting Caste*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers. p. 4.
3. Keer, Dhananjay (1990) [1954]. "Man of The Hour". *Dr. Ambedkar: life and mission* (Third Edition ed.). Mumbai: Popular Prakashan Private Limited. pp. 63-64.
4. "Dr. Ambedkar". National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights. Retrieved 12 January 2012.
5. Benjamin, Joseph (June 2009). "B. R. Ambedkar: An Indefatigable Defender of Human Rights". *FOCUS* (Japan: Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center (HURIGHTS OSAKA)) 56.
6. "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar". Maharashtra Navanirman Sena, Retrieved on 26th December, 2010.
7. Joshi, Barbara R. *Untouchable: voices of the Dalit liberation movement*, Minority Rights Group. p.81.
8. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Biography—Life and Profile, <http://www.culturalindia.net>, accessed on February 5, 2011.
9. Dalmia, Vasudha; Sadana, Rashmi, eds. (2012). "The Politics of Caste Identity". *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Indian Culture*. Cambridge Companions to Culture (illustrated Ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 93. ISBN 0521516250.