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DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR ON DEMOCRACY

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Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), 'a symbol of revolt', was one of the front-ranking nation-builders of modern India. He was the emancipator of the dalits, a champion of the Depressed and weaker sections including women, a great scholar with highest intellectual integrity, a far sighted statesman a legal luminary with extraordinary expertise, a Constitutional expert, a true nationalist with great ability and determination and above all, a staunch character of Democracy in true spirit.

Many thinkers have given many interpretations for the term democracy. Dr. Ambedkar's vision of democracy was closely related to his ideal of a "Ideal society" constructed on the basis of "liberty, equality and fraternity". Democracy, as he saw it, was both the end and the means of this ideal. It was the end because he ultimately considered democracy as coterminous with the realization of liberty, equality and fraternity. At the same time, democracy was also the means through which this ideal was to be attained. Hence, Dr Ambedkar says: "Democracy is not a form of government, but a form of social organization." This is based on radical humanism, whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed".

Dr. Ambedkar was a firm believer of Buddhist doctrine of nonviolence he asked his followers to 'agitate' for their rights in a peaceful manner. According to him, Violence undermines the spirit of democracy. He believes in constitutional way of life. In his concept of Democracy he wants the Government to be responsible for bringing revolutionary changes in economic and social life of the people without bloodshed whereas Marxism believed in bloodshed against State. Hence, Dr. Ambedkar revolted against Chaturvarnya, system of untouchability, caste inequality to establish democracy in India.

Factors Necessary for the successful Operation of Democracy

For the successful functioning of democracy Dr Ambedkar also suggested some necessary conditions which are as follows: "(1) there should not be glaring inequalities in society, that is, privilege for one class; (2) the existence of an strong opposition; (3) equality in law and administration; (4) observance of constitutional morality; (5) no tyranny of the majority; (6) moral order of society; and (7) public conscience." To make democracy successful in India, he suggested few other precautions also. Democracy means rule of the majority. But this should not result into despotism of the majority. Majority must always respect the views of the minority. In India there is a possibility that the minority community will always be a political minority also. Therefore, it is very essential that the minority must feel free, safe and secure. Otherwise, it will be very easy to convert democracy into a permanent rule against the minority. Caste system could thus become the most difficult obstacle in the successful functioning of democracy. The castes which are supposed to be of low status will never get their proper share in power. Caste will create barriers in the development of healthy democratic traditions i.e., inclusive democracy (Participatory democracy). This means that unless we achieve the task of establishing democracy in the social field, mere political democracy cannot survive.

Addressing the Constituent Assembly, he suggested certain devices essential to maintain democracy: "(a) constitutional methods: (b) not to lay liberties at the feet of a great man: (c) make a political democracy a social democracy."

Dr. Ambedkar wanted Social democracy to cherish in India. He said very categorically political Democracy cannot be successful unless there lies at the base of it of social and economic democracy. He warned the nation in this direction that, "on the 26th 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 inequalities. In politics we will be recognising the principles 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 vote. 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 our political democracy." Dr Ambedkar firmly believed that political democracy cannot succeed without social and economic democracy.

Hence it is the duty of the state and civil society to establish social and economic equity, which are considered as instrumental factors necessary for the successful functioning of democracy through which people who suffer from inequality will feel free, safe and secure.

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