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Sociology

EDUCATIONAL IDEAS OF Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR

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ABSTRACT

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar was a great intellectual of international repute, orator, erudite scholar and prolific writer. The range of his writings includes education, economics, sociology, law, constitution, anthropology, political science, religion and philosophy etc. Dr. Ambedkar brought a new awakening and a sense of social significance and confidence among the deprived section of the society. He waged a relentless war against the Hindu social order for social equality, human dignity and politico-economic empowerment. His primary aim was to make the Dalits of India socially and politically conscious of their human rights. He inspired them to prepare themselves for a revolution through education, organization and agitation. Education is a key of social progress. Education is not only the birthright of every human being but also a weapon of social change. It helps man to outgrow the crippling influences of ignorance and superstition and enables him to develop his potentialities to the maximum extent possible. It makes man conscious of his rights as well as obligations towards his fellow beings. Therefore, education is the best possible means to bring about an egalitarian society and very important instrument of social change.

Introduction

Indian education system was based on caste system. Education was allowed to only upper castes and it was not open for lower castes like Shudra and Atishudra and even it was not allowed for Women. Hindu Dharmashastras especially Manusmriti put various restrictions on lowers castes and women. There was no equality and freedom to have education which was mainly responsible to weaken the position of lower caste in Indian Society. Due to lack of education, Dalits' became mentally slave, morally degraded, culturally handicapped, economically weaken and socially backward and there was no social status and dignity. Denial of education made them socially weak. No efforts were taken to educate the lower castes in India and efforts were taken to maintain the caste-based hierarchy by upper castes upto the beginning of the 19th Century. The valiant efforts of Mahatma Jotirao Phule bore fruit and for the first time the schools for the education of women and the untouchables were established in India. Dr. Ambedkar considered him as one of his Guru along with Gautam Buddha and Saint Kabir. He continued the legacy of Mahatma Phule and Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur and spread the education amongst the disadvantaged section of society in India.

Dr. Ambedkar applied his social philosophy in the field of education and tried to use it as instrument to change the society. He said that learning was essential for every individual if he wished to make progress in the life. He stresses the need of educating the downtrodden for the real social and economic progress of the society. In this paper, an attempt is made to assess Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts on education and study his philosophy of education. Education should be capable of creating human values which have universal applicability. Ambedkar carried in him these ideas and spurned the idea of force as against education as an instrument of social change. He firmly believed that education could bring not only a new consciousness among the depressed classes but also impel them toward praxis of self liberation. He was aware about the present education system of India and its academic and administrative problems. He tried to solve those in proper academic manner. He used his newspapers to spread the idea of education amongst the depressed classes. He delivered number of speeches in order to awaken the youths, students, Dalits and Women which reflect his philosophy of education.

He gave prime importance to education in his life. He wanted to reconstruct the structure of Indian society. His approach therefore towards education was more constructive and

structural. He considered education as the basis of social, economic and political revolution. For Dr. Ambedkar, education alone creates a sense of new thinking and awakening among the hitherto oppressed people in India. He wanted it for all, and not restricted only to a few classes of society. As a humanist, Dr. Ambedkar was in favour of imparting education for the development of human personality. In the view of Dr. Ambedkar, education must focus on serving human interests and achieving social amelioration. It ought to aim at human development for which remolding the mind must be the major concern of education. It is only through education that one could enlighten oneself and organize social forces against tyrannical and oppressive elements of traditional societies in India.

He changed the entire mindset of the lower strata of the society towards the education. His philosophy of education was emancipatory in nature. In the name of caste system, lower castes people were systematically made slave of upper castes and established the religious hegemony on them. Ambedkar rejected the Hindu Social Philosophy propounded in Hindu religious scriptures which has made the caste system and the system of graded inequality the law of Hindu Social life. Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy of education aims at creation of a liberating consciousness, which is not just formal education, but the conscientisation process of education, agitation and organization put together. The basic thrust of Ambedkar, in brief, is to inculcate the values of justice, liberty, equality, fraternity and moral character among the boys and girls of all shades.

Dr Ambedkar recognized the education as a vital force for individual development and social change. To him, education could be an effective instrument of mass movement for the safeguard of life and liberty; it could liberate man from social evils; it could mitigate miseries of ignorance and poverty; and education could encourage the oppressed ones to fight and remove injustice and exploitation, to relieve them of their dogmatic beliefs. So Ambedkar was always conscious of the ignorance and backwardness of his poor people due to lack of education among them. In his struggle against caste based discrimination, Ambedkar held that emancipation of Dalits' in India was possible only through the three-pronged approach of "education, agitation and organization". According to Ambedkar, "Illiteracy and ignorance is the greatest hurdle in development of humanity". The root cause of all evils is ignorance, so he took the first step towards removing illiteracy and ignorance. Babasaheb firmly believed that education was the only effective means to uplift the

downtrodden. He also believed that it was only through education that the downtrodden could be awakened for their struggle to get their rights. To quote his own words, "My final word of advice to you is Educate, Agitate and Organize, have faith in yourselves." He was instilling the hope, confidence and moral character through his educational philosophy.

As an ardent educationist as he was, and a professor himself, Dr. Ambedkar strongly advocated the spread of universal education among depressed classes who were denied the same for centuries. Denial of education has thrown the Depressed Classes into the morass of ignorance, a slough of despond, perpetual bondage and eternal deprivation. Wherever Ambedkar had gone to speak to his people, he emphasized the need of education in order to bring among them awareness about their respect and rights, and thus, he motivated them for education. He used his own intellect and knowledge for the upliftment of society. In order to awaken Dalits and to make conscious of their rights, he gave great importance to education. He used education as a tool for their progress, advancement and social change. That is why, his slogan, "Educate, Unite, Agitate" assumed significance and popularity.

Ambedkar gave importance to character along with education. In order to do social changes, educated people should have character. Then he can utilize his knowledge for the development of human civilization and culture and develop his own personality. The view expressed by Dr. Ambedkar about education is worth quoting "the education that makes us neither competent nor teaches us lessons of equality and morality is no more education." He believed that education is good only if it promotes and preserves the interests of mankind as a whole. He argued that true education creates equality in society, provides food to the hungry people and satisfies for knowledge. He was convinced that it is only education that it is only education that breeds and nourishes the noble sentiments of unity, equality, fraternity and patriotism. Education alone humanizes man. According to him, 'Man, without education, is no better than beast'. He wanted to strengthen the national unity and integrity through education. He asked the educated persons to help their ignorant and illiterates to awaken from their ignorance. Through education, Ambedkar wanted the people to cultivate the values of freedom and equality among themselves.

Dr. Ambedkar demanded the secular pattern of education. He demanded education based on ancient traditions and customs should be given up and its place should be taken by job-oriented education. He said that no schooling should be conducted inside a temple. Separate buildings constructed for the purpose should be utilized. Private institutions running primary or secondary schools may be strictly prohibited to mention in the school register the caste and sub-caste of students.

Another feature of Ambedkar's educational policy was not to beg for donations from industrialists or businessmen; he asked the management to run educational institutions out of fees along with government grants. He was of the view that education is such an indispensable thing that it should necessarily be within easy reach of all. It should be cheap also so that the poorest of the poor may acquire it.

Ambedkar observes "Education is as necessary for females as it is for males. If you know how to read and write, there would be much progress. As you are, so your children will be mould their lives in virtuous way, for sons should be such as would make a mark in this world." He wanted to liberate women from their suffering and economic dependency. In order to give economic rights and freedom to women, Ambedkar demanded educational rights, equality and right to property for women. To educate women, he asked co-

education for women with men. Through education, he believed, that women would think independently which will lead to their intellectual and mental development.

Conclusion

Thus, Dr. Ambedkar's three word formula - 'educate, agitate and organize' is a powerful tool of social change even today. Dr. Ambedkar was a symbol of knowledge and character. He regarded education as a means to reach the doors of light and perception to remove the regions of darkness and ignorance. Ambedkar made the oppressed lot of the depressed classes conscious of their rights, which was denied to them for centuries. Educating the downtrodden people, he thought, was a sure way to instill in them a sense of consciousness, self-respect and dignity. He wanted the people to cultivate the values of freedom and equality among themselves; it was possible only through education. This in turn would provide the necessary cultural basis for their progressive assimilation into the mainstream of an enlightened national life. Dr. Ambedkar's contribution towards education and his independent thinking made him an independent intellectual of the world.

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