

DR. BHIM RAO AMBEDKAR'S VIEWS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ITS CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

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ABSTRACT

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar 's name is written in golden letters in the history of India as a creator of social justice. Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar popularly known as Dr. Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar, was a Messiha of Dalit, an intellectual, a revolutionary, a philosopher, a patriot, a scholar, a writer and the architect of the constitution of India. Dr. Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar views on social justice are the spirit of basis of the Indian Constitution. He shaped a refined casteless society on the principle of democracy. He spent his whole life to uplift the poor, exploited untouchables and troubled classes. The social justice means providing equal social opportunities to everyone to develop their personalities, associated with equality and social rights. In every state it becomes more important to secure a social order in which the legal system of the nation promotes justice on the basis of equal opportunity and, in particular, ensures that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities. Largely, the people are being treated with discrimination in caste, race, color, size, religion in the society because of they are generally uneducated and from marginalized sections of the society that creates a social disorder and inequality among them. This paper makes an attempt to examine the concept of social justice visualized by B. R. Ambedkar. Thereafter, it focuses on Ambedkar's ideas on social justice in the Indian context and it finally explores the relevance of his mission for social justice in the present times.

Keywords

social justice, equality, liberty, constitution, socialism, caste system, social order, caste structure, struggle, rights, democracy

Objective of the Paper

To understand the concept of social justice through the lenes of dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar
To understand in brief the Ambedkar's notion of social justice and its contemporary relevance.

Review of Literature

There is variety of literature available on Dr. Ambedkar's ideas of social justice and its relevance in contemporary times. However, the aim of the present paper is to review a few important literatures apposite to the study.

Professor R.M.W. Dias (1985) states that 'Justice cannot be defined in one standard formula which can be applicable for all in the same manner. The concept of justice is complex and shifts the balance between many factors. Justice means 'the just allocation of advantages and disadvantages so it will prevent the abuse of power, preventing the abuse of liberty, is the just decision in the situation of disputes and thereby adopt the changes.

Rodrigues (2011) The article tries out to define the key concern of justice in contemporary political philosophy through the contribution of Rawls and Ambedkar's preoccupation of writings with the political practices revolving around justice and Sens's contributions in relations to justice. The article states that though there is a shared ground across among them, concerns on the issue of justice and also different stances in their own respective and to which extent they can be justified. Therefore, justice is a human endeavors and concern based on reason and deliberations.

Kumar (2013) The article examines the issue of social justice through a common parlance as in terms of encirclement of political and economic policy. It's a contested and debatable term but as a statement of fundamental axiom of value in political and economic life. However, state has to play an important role to have just and egalitarian society. His just society was based on equality, liberty and fraternity. It is in this very context the present article explores the concept of social justice and understands the Ambedkar's notion of social justice. However, there is no dearth of literature on this very Ambedkar's views on social justice in the Indian context. Whereas, it's a humble attempt to review a few literatures related to the relevance of the present study.

Ambedkar's (2014). 'Annihilation of Caste', is an important document of Indian socio-cultural history. The study places the caste in a wider global context and raise the issue of discriminatory practices related to caste. All the important points raised by Ambedkar on democracy, citizenship and social discrimination has a huge contemporary bearing. In many ways the books serve the contested issue, concerning Gandhi, Indian politicians and elites, contemporary trends in Indian politics and marginalization of Ambedkar. In all these Ambedkar emerges out a provocative and

modern thinker. The Roy has done a great thing by keeping alive the debate about case and relocating Ambedkar thoughts in contemporary scenario.

Raghavendra (2016) the present article tries to conceptualize the concept of social justice through Indian historical times that is through ancient approach to modern approaches to justice. The author focuses on the spirit of the constitution of India by locating the social justice embedded in it. In which he tries to argue that it's the duty of the state to secure the social order in which legal system of a state promotes justice and equal opportunity to all irrespective of his or her caste and status. Further, the article explores the study on social justice and Ambedkar's ideas on social justice in the Indian context by exploring its contemporary relevance.

Anand (2017) Justice is considered one of the most important values in political philosophy. The ancient Greek political thought identified justice as a virtue, which was incorporated into moral philosophy".

Mungerkar (2017). 'The Essential: Ambedkar', The study of edited volume shows one how steep the decline has been. The clarity and thoroughness with which Ambedkar tackles the issues of the day are matched only by the clarity he brings to them. In this book the finest extract of Ambedkar body of work has been extracted finely by arranging the issues such as caste and untouchability, the philosophy of Hindu religion, the making of Indian constitution and emancipation of women. The Ambedkar known for his view on the discrimination of backward classes, particularly the untouchables and caste politics practices as such are the pathbreaking ideas, most of which are prevalent today.

Methodology

The present study will be based on the data and sources collected from the secondary sources pertaining to relevant policy documents and policy reports, debates and speeches, books, articles and journals. Further, to analyze the ideas of Ambedkar's reflection in Indian constitution and notion of social justice with its contemporary relevance.

Introduction

Since dawn of civilization every social order is striving hard to attain the status of a welfare state and trying to ensure happiness to each of its member. The ultimate goal of every welfare state is to establish and maintain justice within its boundaries. Justice is a very comprehensive and dynamic concept having a vast canvass which cannot be confined within specific limitations.

There are multifarious and diverse facets of the term “justice”. As per the form a unique name has been given to each facet of justice. Peace cannot be imagined in absence of justice and further without justice there cannot be law and stability in the society. Social Justice covers different significant components of justice in it. Social justice is the edifice for welfare state.

Social Justice with special reference to Dr. BR Ambedkar

Dr. Ambedkar was a critique of Brahminic Social Order. The Hindu Social Order recognized only four Classes i.e. Brahman, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. According to the *Manu Smriti* the position of Brahmins is supreme among all in the Hindu Social Order. In his essay ‘the Hindu Social Order: Its Essential Principles’, Dr. Ambedkar claimed that in the Hindu social Order, there is no room for individual merit and no consideration of individual justice. Manu, the Hindu law creator has deprived the common men (Shudras). He pointed out that, the *Manu Smriti* supports slavery in the form of social inequality. Here cast is endogamous. Once born in one caste will die in that particular caste. Throughout the ages, the helpless Dalits (touchable and Untouchable Shudras) have been praying of the tyrant upper caste. Ambedkar himself was one of the victims of social exploitation and injustice of Hindu society. He himself had suffered humiliation and had felt the pain of exploitation at the hands of upper caste. He, therefore, organized Social Revolution

Throughout the Nation for the establishment of justice, liberty, equality, fraternity and human dignity on the basis of the thoughts and works of Gautam Buddha, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Mahatma Joytibar Phule, Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Tukaram, Rabi Das and Chokhamela, who devoted their entire their life for Social Equality. Ambedkar’s Criticism of Manu Smriti: The root cause for the pathetic status of the marginalised class Hindu social order is a setup which perpetuates inequality, injustice and hatred. According to Dr. Ambedkar the root cause of social injustice to the Schedules Castes and Schedules Tribes is the Caste system in Hindu Society. The root of the Caste system is religion, the root of the religion attached to varnashram and the root of the varnashram is the Brahminism, the roof of Brahminism lies with the political power. Casteism is rampant because there is no independent public opinion to condemn and to address it and there is no impartial machinery of administration to curb it, there is no check from the police or the judiciary for the simple reasons that they are all are subordinate to the Hindus, and the exploiters

are supported by them. At the economic front, we have a society in which there are few having immense wealth as compared to those are leading a miserable life. He was against Manusmirthi as it gives a warrant to the Brahmins to commit all types of violence on Schedules Castes and Scheduled Tribes and justify their evil designs.

B R Ambedkar was the supporter of Buddhism. Dr. Ambedkar was convinced that there is no salvation within Hinduism for untouchables. He rightly attributed to a social system backed by Hinduism was responsible for the low-status, degradation and low-esteem of untouchables. Of all religions in the world, it was Hinduism that recognizes caste distinctions and untouchability. He came up with a solution that conversion to Buddhism as a last resort to emancipate Untouchables.

from the clutches of casteism prevailing in Hindu Social Order. Dr. Ambedkar argued that Buddha was first Social Reformer who had denied the sacredness and purity of the Vedas.

Therefore, Babasaheb Ambedkar urged to the oppressed as well as to all the Indians to jump the barricade of biasness created by Hindu social Order by seeing the truth in the Buddhist way of life and ensuring a new society based on harmony and happiness. In his book *The Buddha and his Dhamma*, Ambedkar very authoritatively claimed that Buddhism can be the panacea for the problem of social and natural suffering of the oppressed class. Dr. Ambedkar has pointed out that Buddha's Dhamma was fundamentally different from that of Religion. Dhamma is righteousness, which means right relation between man and man in all spheres of life. In his work "Buddha or Karl Marx", he regarded the Marxian Philosophy as far behind Buddha. It can say that the atrocities and exploitation of the upper-castes on the Shudras, Ati-Shudras and Adivasis (Dalitbahujans) compelled them to choose the path of conversion. Further according to Ambedkar, man could not live by bread alone; he had mind which needed food for thought; and religion instilled hope in man and always drove him to activity. He emphasized that mankind needed a religion of humanity, and that he discovered these principles in Buddha's Dhamma. He, therefore, preferred the path of conversion to Buddhism because of its egalitarian philosophy.

Perception of Social Justice by Dr B R Ambedkar

Ambedkar agreed with Bergson's idea of justice which states, "Justice has always evoked ideas of equality, of proportion of 'compensation'. Equity signifies equality rules and regulations, right and righteousness are concerned with equality in value. If all men are equal, all men are of the same essence and the common essence entitles them to the same fundamental rights and to equal liberty" (quoted in Ambedkar, 1987). Ambedkar had also a very liberal concept of justice in the sense of its being grounded in human values. Ambedkarite social justice stands for the liberty, equality and fraternity of all human beings. It is a fact that Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar did not propound any specific definition or theory of "Social Justice" per se. His thoughts are eloquently portrayed in his writings and speeches published posthumously. On the basis of these we can easily argue that Ambedkar has mentioned multiple principles for the establishment of an open and just social order in general and Indian society in particular. Therefore, with the help of these elements we can carve out a theory of social justice, what can then be then referred as Ambedkar's theory of Social Justice.

He stood for a social system which is based on right relations between man and man in all spheres of life. The unity and equality of all human beings, the equal worth of men and women, the respect for the weak and the lowly, the regard for human rights, benevolence, mutual love, sympathy, tolerance, and charity towards fellow being, human treatment in all cases, the dignity of all citizens, the abolition of caste-distinctions, education and property for all, goodwill and gentleness (Jatava, 1998).

Ambedkar's concept of justice seeks to remove glaring inequalities in society based in a hierarchical Caste system with its graded disabilities from birth on a large section of Hindu society and the conferment of privileges and position of dominance of Brahmins, a small section of the society. We can extract Five Basic Principles, from writings and speeches of Ambedkar, through which justice can be dispensed in the society.

- Establishment of society based on equality, liberty and fraternity
- Establishing a society where individual becomes the means of all social purposes

- Establishing democracy- political, economic and social.
- Establishing democracy through constitutional measures and
- Establishing democracy by breaking monopoly of upper strata on political power

Dean, School of Ambedkar Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Prof. Kameshwar Choudhary said that Ambedkar favoured neither liberal nor Marxist perspectives on social justice. Instead, he favoured radical-liberal perspective based on useful means for social transformation. “Ambedkar’s idea of social justice was based on our indigenous historical, social and cultural roots,”

Equality, Liberty and Fraternity

Principles of equality, liberty, and fraternity have been acknowledged to be the basic fundamentals of Social Justice and can not to be treated as separate items in a trinity Liberty cannot be divorced from equality, equality cannot be divorced liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity, form a unity of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Few objects to liberty in the sense of a right to free movement, in the and a right to property, tools and materials as being necessary for earning a living to keep the body in due state of health. However, the problem is that people who support liberty in the sense of right to life, limb and property would not readily consent to liberty if it involves the liberty to choose one’s profession. Ambedkar argues that to object to the liberty to choose a profession is to perpetuate slavery. For slavery does not only merely mean a legalized form of subjection. It means a state of society in which some men are forced to accept other occupations which control their conduct. This condition is found even where there is no slavery in the legal sense. For instance, it is found in the society where caste system is prevalent because some persons are compelled to carry on certain prescribed calling which are not of their choice. So far as equality is concerned one has to admit that all men are equal. Equality may be a fiction but nonetheless has been accepted as the governing principle.

Individual as a unit in Ambedkarite concept of Social Justice

Ambedkar emphasized that generally there are two fundamental and essentials of a free social order. According to him, “The first is that the individual is an end himself and that the aim and object of society is the growth of the individual and the development of his personality. Society

is not above the individual and if the individual has to subordinate himself to society, it is because such subordination is for his betterment and only to the extent necessary". It is with this aim he had rejected village as a unit of governance and adopted the individual as its unit. He vehemently criticized the part played by village communities in the history and congratulated the Drafting committee for accepting individual as the unit of governance (Ambedkar 1994:61-62). Ambedkar had argued for individual as end itself as he was fully aware of the fact that, "The Hindu social order does not recognize the individual as a center of social purpose... For the Hindu social order is based principally on class or Varna and not on individuals... (Ambedkar 1987:99). The followers of social justice laid main emphasis on "Individual"

Ambedkar's notion of Social Justice and Democracy

Social Justice can survive into a form of government having a Democratic fabric. Democracy is more than a form of government for Dr Ambedkar. Democratic society is characterized by absence of stratification of society into classes and the social habit on the part of individuals and the groups which ready for the continuous readjustment of recognition of reciprocity of interest.

Political Equality

He argued, "We must... not...be content with mere political democracy. We must make sure our political democracy a social democracy as well" (Ambedkar 1994: 1216). Ambedkar further defined social democracy as a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. (Ambedkar 1994: 1216). In his own words, "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 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 live this life of contradiction? How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? 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..."

Fraternity

The second thing we are wanting in is recognition of the principle of fraternity. What does fraternity mean? Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of Indians-If Indians being one people. It is the principle, which gives unity and solidarity to social life. It is difficult thing to achieve” (Ambedkar 1994: 1216-17) Dr. Ambedkar was of the view that only social justice could lead to social harmony, social stability and patriotic feelings. He believed that a democracy, which enslaves the working class, a class that is devoid of education which is devoid of means of life, which is devoid of any power of organization, which is devoid of intelligence, is no democracy but a mockery of democracy.

For the survival of Political Democracy i.e. Political Equality the instinct of social Justice should be mingled in it. There should not be only Political Democracy but Social Democracy and Economic Democracy should also be there otherwise there would coup of Political Democracy. According to Ambedkar one of the ways to deliver social justice to the individual was breaking the monopoly of the upper strata. Ambedkar in this regard opined, “...there can be no gainsaying that political power in this country has too long been the monopoly of a few. This monopoly has not merely deprived them of their chance of betterment; it has sapped them of what may be called the significance of life. These down-trodden classes are tired of being governed. They are impatient to govern themselves. This urge of self-realization in the down-trodden classes must not be allowed into a class struggle or class war. It would lead to a division of the House. That would a day of disaster.

This can only be done by the establishment of equality and fraternity in all sphere of life. People are fast changing...They are getting tired of government by the people. They are prepared to have Government for the people...If (Ambedkar 1994: 1218).

Significance of Ambedkarite Social Justice in present scenario

In the saga of Globalization, liberalization and privatization, the concept of Social Justice has assumed a greater significance. The meaning of Globalization in India is opening doors of our economy to the multinationals in the field of agriculture, industries, communication, transportation, electricity generation and distribution and also education etc. They are hardly concerned with environment, infrastructure development or with social justice. Many Multi-

National Companies (MNC) by emphasizing, on merit, have ignored the concept of social justice. Here man is considered merely a commodity and a person has to compete for the bread and business equally on the "Darwinian socio-economic order" i.e. struggle for existence and survival of fittest. Whereas democracy thrives on the co-operative spirit so that strong and weak could survive and co-exist together like tall trees small bushes and grasses growing in the same socio-ecological plain.

All MNC's should be made to work within the Constitutional frame work so as to ensure social justice to Scheduled Castes and Schedules Tribes and women in India. For this the state should make various rules, regulations and procedures. Otherwise, the concept of social justice will confine to black and white only and cannot be realized in practicality.

At last but not least Ambedkar's ideas on social justice remain relevant in contemporary Indian society in promoting constitutional and legal methods for upholding the rights and dignity of the vulnerable sections.

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