

B.R.Ambedkar Philosophy on Indian Democracy A Study

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Abstract

The main goal of the study is to analyze and evaluate critically the idea of B.R.Ambedkar, the great Indian constitution maker, regarding Indian democracy and to capture the position of B.R.Ambedkar on issues whose relevance is even felt at present. Analyzing the idea of democracy of B.R.Ambedkar in details, it can be found out that B.R.Ambedkar had unshakeable faith in democracy. In his conception of exploitation less society, democracy has an extra-ordinary role which he defined as 'one person, one vote' and 'one vote, one value'. Democracy means empowerment of any person for participating in the process of decision-making relating to him him democracy means liberty; equality and fraternity B.R.Ambedkar definition of democracy had such a tone. This research gives closer and analytical insight into the thoughts of B.R.Ambedkar and provides an answer to the question of whether we, the Indian, achieve religious tolerance, human equality and freedom, true democracy, gender respect in the society, justice and peace in the light of political philosophy of B.R.Ambedkar whose memory will ever guide the nation on the path of justice, liberty and equality.

Introduction

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), 'a symbol of revolt' as mentioned by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India was one of the front-ranking nation-builders of modern India. He is popularly known as the pioneer who initiated the liberation movement of roughly sixty-five million untouchables of India. Yet, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, the chief architect of Indian Constitution, notwithstanding all handicaps of birth, has made, by pursuit of knowledge in the humanities, social sciences,politics and law, an indelible imprint on the body politic of the country.¹ A glance of his copious writing would evidently show that despite his preoccupations with the problems of the dalits (Untouchables),B.R.Ambedkar has in his own way, made significant contributions to the contemporary political ideas. B.R.Ambedkar stood apart from his well-known famous contemporaries of India in three respects. First, being a great scholar, social revolutionary and statesman, he had in himself a combination of these attributes that one rarely possesses which made him distinguished from other intellectual personalities of that time. As an intellectual, gigantic personality and creative writer, he had imbibed knowledge that was truly encyclopedic.² The range of topics, width of vision, depth and sophistication of analysis, rationality of outlook and essential humanity of the arguments that he came-up with made him different from his illustrious contemporaries. Secondly, B.R.Ambedkar never wrote merely for literary purpose. In his scholarly pursuit as in his political activities, he was driven by a desire to comprehend the vital issues of his time and to find solutions to the problems of Indian society. With this motivation, he intervened, at times decisively in shaping the social, economic and political development of the nation during its formative stage. There was hardly any issue that arose between the early 1920s and the mid-1950s in India to which B.R.Ambedkar did not apply his razor-sharp analysis, whether it was the question of minorities, reorganization of states, partition, constitution or the political and economic framework for an independent India.³

The third unique aspect of B.R.Ambedkar lies with the nature and kind of questions he delved into. What is probably most important in a thinker and intellectual is not so much the answer they provide but the question they raised. B.R. Ambedkar raised the questions that were simultaneously relevant and uncomfortable. Relevant as they were critical for the nation-in the making and uncomfortable as very few were willing to acknowledge the existence of those issues.⁴ B.R.Ambedkar raised certain pressing issues in his characteristic style that no one was willing to take up or deal with. In course of his public life over three decades, B.R.Ambedkar was fully convinced that politics should be the instrument to fight for justice in adorning all sections of the Indian people with freedom. As such, he tirelessly worked towards the goal of justice for the untouchables in an unjust society, mainly through political means. In the course of these activities, B.R.Ambedkar developed his own ideas about society and politics of the contemporary India.⁵

Viewed from the subject of political science, those ideas obviously merit Attention. But, scholars who have worked on B.R.Ambedkar's different ideas fail to bestow due importance on these aspects of his thinking. As a background to this article, it has been considered appropriate to present the position of B.R.Ambedkar on the central issues with which B.R.Ambedkar was preoccupied and the issues, which continue to confront the Indian society and its polity and economy. The present study is a humble attempt to make a comprehensive and objective analysis of philosophy.⁶

B.R.Ambedkar regarding Indian

Democracy keeping in minds the gaps and lapses in the existing literature on B.R.Ambedkar. In this article, an attempt has been made to provide an insight into B.R.Ambedkar's idea on democracy. He was a true democrat and advocated a democratic society based on the principles of natural justice, equity and classification according to aptitude, ability and profession.⁷ The roots of democracy lie not in the form of Government but in the social relationships. He considered caste system in India as a serious obstacle in the path of democracy. He said "The first condition precedent for the successful working of democracy is that there must be no glaring inequalities in the society. Secondly, there must be statutory provisions to mitigate the sufferings and to safeguard the interest of the suppressed and oppressed people."⁸

The society must be based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity in order to ensure social endosmosis". According to him, economic inequalities are inherent in the capitalist economy which makes political equality assured by democracy worthless. Thus, according to B.R.Ambedkar, the failure to recognize that political democracy cannot succeed where there is no social and economic democracy has vitiated parliamentary democracy.⁹ B.R.Ambedkar maintained therefore that though "parliament democracy developed a passion for liberty, it never made a nodding acquaintance with equality. It failed to realize the significance of equality and did not even endeavor to strike a balance between liberty and equality, with the result that liberty swallowed equality and left a progeny of inequalities".¹⁰

General connotation of Democracy

Democracy is the most valued and also the indistinct political terms in the modern world. The ancient Greek word 'democracy' means rule by the demos, which can be translated as either 'the people; or 'the mole' depending on one's ideological preference. By itself, democracy means little more than that, in some undefined sense, political power is ultimately in the hands of the whole adult population and that no smaller group has the right to rule. Democracy can only take on a more useful meaning when qualified by one of the other word with which it is associated, for example, liberal democracy, representative democracy, participatory democracy or direct democracy.¹¹

Although all free societies are democratic, democracies can fail to protect individual freedom.¹² Countries are generally considered democratic to the extent that they have fair and frequent elections in which nearly all adults have the right to vote, citizens have the right to form and join organizations and to express themselves in alternative sources of information existed. Architects of democracy must determine the constitutional structure that best suits the needs of a particular country, alternative forms of constitutional democracy include parliamentary versus presidential forms of government, plurality versus proportional representation system and federal versus unitary systems.¹³ In a Parliamentary system, the Prime Minister is elected by the parliamentary process and can be removed from office by a vote of no confidence from the Parliament. Executive and legislative powers are fused in a Parliamentary System. In a Presidential system, the President is elected directly by the people and there is a formal separation of powers. Plurality voting tends to produce a two-party system and greater governmental stability, but it offers voters fewer choices.¹⁴ Proportional representation, on the other hand, encourages the formation of small or splinter parties, which can make governments unstable. A third constitutional choice is whether to set up a federal or unitary form of government. In a federal system, authority is divided between central and state governments. In a federal system, each state has its own legislative and executive and state exercise broad powers. In the late 20th Century, a democratic revolution spread around the world as more countries sought to establish democratic governments.¹⁵

There democratic transitions raised hopes for better and more peaceful world. Francis Fukuyama asserted that democracy had triumphed over communism and other competing ideologies.¹⁶ He suggested that democracy would in time become universal. Samuel Huntington examines the history of democracy since its emergence in America.¹⁷ He concluded that there have been three waves of democratization and two reverse waves since democracy first washed up on America's shore. During the first democratic wave (1828 – 1926), more than thirty countries became democratic. A reverse wave began when Benito Mussolini came to power in Italy in 1922. Between 1922 – 1942 reversals occurred in many new democratic countries succumbed to communist, fascist and militaristic ideologies.¹⁸

Reversal occurred in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Greece, Turkey, India, Pakistan, South Korea, the Philippines and elsewhere. Virtually all newly independent African countries were authoritarian. Many social scientists began to think that democracy was not applicable to developing countries. In the mid 1970's the third wave of democratization began in southern Europe – Portugal, Greece and Spain. It spread throughout Latin America, as the military returned to the barracks.¹⁹

It moved into Asia, with India, Pakistan, Turkey, the Philippines and South Korea restoring democracy. Finally, the spread to the communist countries of Eastern Europe. Between 1974 and 1990, some thirty countries made transitions from authorization to democracy, approximately doubling the world's number of democracies.²⁰ The third wave of democratization occurred, in most cases, through negotiations, elections and

nonviolence. A important factor that influences the consolidation of democracy is the country's level of economic development.²¹ It produces a more highly educated society and attitudes, such as trust and tolerance that are conducive to a democratic political culture. Greater economic wealth facilitates compromise and accommodation among different groups Democracy follows, to use Samuel Huntington's phrase, "a two step-forward, one-step-backward pattern." The consolidation of democracy is influenced by prior experience with democracy, the political institutions that are established and the level of economic development among other factor. In a democracy, the government and opposition leaders must work together, which often requires basing from the previous experience of others.²²

B.R. Ambedkar's idea of Democracy in Indian context

According to B.R. Ambedkar, democracy means fundamental changes in the social and economic life of the people and the acceptance of those changes by the people without resorting to disputes and bloodshed.²³ He wanted to establish the principle of one man, one vote and one value not only in the political life of India but also in social and economic life. He wanted political democracy to be accompanied by social democracy. He gave central importance to social aspects of democracy over political aspects, unlike many others whose discourse on democracy is confined to the political and institutional aspects. B.R.Ambedkar paid greater attention to social linkage among people than separation of powers and constitutional safeguards for democracy. and political power. He was conscious of the social and economic inequalities which corrode the national consciousness of the Indian people.²⁴ B.R.Ambedkar said, "We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the lease of it social democracy". B.R.Ambedkar paid .serious attention to religious notions that promote democracy.²⁵ B.R.Ambedkar viewed the religious foundation of caste as the fundamental obstacle to democracy in India on the one hand and the Buddhist doctrine of liberally, equality and fraternity as the foundations for democracy on the other hand. He writes, "It is common experience that certain names become associated with certain notions and sentiments, which determine a person's attitude toward men and things."²⁶

B.R.Ambedkar think Democracy View

Vaisha and Shudra are hierarchical divisions of high and low caste, based on birth and act accordingly". B.R. Ambedkar thinks of democracy from the view point of practical life. He belongs to the realistic school of political scientists. He is not bothered about the principles and theories of political science. During the national improvement, his aim has to have justice and freedom for the people in the real sense. He aspired for having a government of the people, for the people and by the people.²⁷ According to B.R.Ambedkar, democracy means no slavery, no caste, and no coercion. He wants free thoughts that choice and capacity to live and let live, which his conscience, would be the right path to democracy. B.R.Ambedkar says "Democracy is a mode of associated living. The roots of democracy are to be searched in social relationship, in terms of the associated life between the people who form the society". B.R.Ambedkar is the greatest political thinker. Outwardly this may see strange that in India, life was the monopoly of the Brahmin caste and was completely denied to other castes for thousands of years.²⁸ However, here no contradiction is involved. It was the very privileged position assigned to the Brahmin that became the cause of the retardation. In Indian society, property, illiteracy, caste distinctions as the positive dangers to democracy. In these situations, educational facilities and economic help should be provided for those who are illiterate and backward on one hand and on the other, who want to wipe on the roots of caste system in order to safeguard the interest of democracy. B.R.Ambedkar says, "If you give education to the lower strata of the Indian society which is interested in blowing up the caste systems, the caste system will be blown up". At the moment, the indiscriminate help given to education by the Indian. Caste system will improve prospect of democracy in India and put democracy in safer hands. In Indian society, class structure is a positive danger to democracy. This class structure made a distinction of rich and poor, high and low, owners and workers, and permanent and sacrosanct parts of social organization. "Practically speaking in a class structure there is, on the other hand, tyranny, vanity pride, arrogance, greed, selfishness and on the other, insecurity, poverty, and degradation, loss of liberty, self reliance, independence, dignity and self respect.

B.R.Ambedkar, the Aim of Democracy

The interest of society as a whole, and not for any class, group or community. Therefore, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, while speaking on "conditions precedent for the successful working of Democracy", in Poona, emphasized that, The first condition which I think is a condition precedent for the successful working of democracy is that there must be no glaring inequities in the society. There must not be an oppressed class. There must not be a suppressed class. There must not be a class which has got the entire privileges ad a class which has got all the burdens to carry. Such a thing, such a division, such an organization of society has within itself the germs of a bloody revolution and perhaps it would be impossible for democracy to cure them." To him, real democracy is opposed to the suppression of minorities. The suppression and exploitation of minorities in any form is the

negation of democracy and humanism. If suppression is not stopped, then democracy degenerates into tyranny.²⁹

CONCLUSION

The consequences of the caste system on politics and election are quite obvious. Caste are so distributed that in any area there are major castes carrying the seats of Assemblies and Parliament by sheer communal majority voting is always communal, because the minority communities are coerced and tyrannized for casting their vote in former of a particular candidate. The democratic principles of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness are considered to be the essentials of human life in B.R.Ambedkar's concept of democracy. He attaches importance to human well being and

Thus, Ambedkarism is of great relevance to Indian society even today in achieving social justice, removal of untouchability, in establishing equality and freedom and true democracy. Democratic socialism is the key note of his political thought and constitutionalism is the only way to achieve it. In conclusion, it can be said that this research gives closer and analytical insight into the thoughts of B.R.Ambedkar and provides an answer to the question of whether we, the Indians, achieve religious tolerance, human equality and freedom, true democracy, gender respect in the society, justice and peace in the light of political philosophy of B.R.Ambedkar whose memory will ever guide the nation on the path of justice, liberty and equality.

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