

B.R.Ambedkar's Ideology Exists in Socio-Cultural Context

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Introduction

Why B.R.Ambedkar is considered different from humanism? Is it that Ambedkarian ideology is associated with Dalit identity always? And Dalits and non Dalits who are scared of such an identity keep themselves away from B.R.Ambedkar ideology? Because they are afraid of the fact that they will be considered Dalits thereafter and there will be shrinkage in their social world or they will be vulnerable to discrimination's? Is it that Marxism and Weber an area safer shelter when people talks about ideologies? Do they have a clear reason why there is Marxist? Is it that they adopt a Marxist label because they feel it's something western and intellectual and so it is elitist?

I argue that many Dalits who claims themselves as B.R.Ambedkar do so because they are Dalits and they haven't understood B.R.Ambedkar ideology outside the castes framework from a humanist perspective, and the non Dalits rejects B.R.Ambedkar also for the same reason. What is happening to B.R.Ambedkar ideology in our country? Identity is becoming closer and this closeness is becoming constructed. I mean empowerment for some community means de-alienating from the Varna label.de-alienating from the so-called lower caste label. Thus they start practicing untouchability against castes down the caste so-called caste hierarchy. There effort is to shed the Dalit identity and hence forth they stops talking about B.R.Ambedkar and hide themselves from his thoughts. There are many misinterpretations that have been prevalent all these years. What does the word Dalit mean? Yes it meant broken. But it's not the case now, Dalit the term has a revolutionary assertion associated with it. It means disagreeing and delineating oneself from the elitism, from the dominant ideology, from the oppressors. In that sense the term Dalit is not only associated with the so-called lower castes, although the concept is a challenge to Brahmanism. Dalit is a word that reflects the multiple voices of the oppressed. It is a word that signifies the protesters, anyone who dares to challenge the hegemony.

The first problem is that the term Dalit is always associated with those castes which are at the bottom of the hierarchy, it has become a narrow term, Dalit identity the mental and physical state if being a Dalit thus naturally became the identity of the weak and broken in a society like India where the dominant reality is caste, wherever you go. Thus upgrading once social status became the process of delineating oneself from the dalit identity. B.R.Ambedkar is the greatest revolutionary that India has ever seen; when the whole India was fighting against the slavery from the external source he stood alone against internal slavery that a group of people was undergoing.

Political Freedom Dalit

To him India's political freedom is useless unless and until it attains social justice inside its boundaries. India's experience till now has proved it right. He proclaimed his aim is the recovery of human dignity of a group of people who were considered worse than animals by the brahminical society, he was the most learned person of the time and through his careful scrutiny of Vedic literature he arrived at the conclusion that India's history is written from the brahminical perspective and brought into light all the Brahmin conspiracy against Shudras women and nature. Through his through engagement with knowledge he arrived at a point where he defined what an ideal religion should be like, his idea of reforming Hindu religion was deconstruction and reconstruction. He questioned the base of Hindu religion by rejecting the authority of Vedas and shastras, when he felt this transformation can't be possible from within he went outside, through the mass conversion to Buddhism. He was the mass leader, the great human right activist, subaltern historian and enlightened man that India has ever seen. His ideology was based on equality, liberty and fraternity, his fight was for human dignity. Then how B.R.Ambedkar's ideology is always associated with the so called lower castes only?¹

The Brahminical society has a role in stigmatizing the term dalits and also the efforts and ideology of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar. As G. Aloysius says, 'within the mainstream social sciences the man is considered as the leader of the Mahar caste at worst and the drafter of constitution at best, keeping B.R.Ambedkar as far away as possible from the sacred/secretive subject of nation and nationalism ,(many among the intelligentsia would not hesitate considering him even as an anti national)is part and parcel of the overall élite strategy to maintain the dominance of its ideology over knowledge-production and knowledge- circulation in this country'.²

Marxism Ideology

Dominant voices made him the messiah of untouchables, and his ideology became their ideology, a great example is how B.R.Ambedkar ideology which is a universal ideology is prevented from being institutionalized

in Indian universities and schools. Can anyone explain me the relevance of Marxism in Indian context when the workers themselves are divided on the basis of caste? How can class be the dominant reality in India? But still, Marxism continues to give an intellectual face to many of the premier universities of India, and people considers themselves enlightened and intellectual after grabbing hold on Marxism. It has become an ideology of the socialists and people who don't have any particular ideology to say.

What is needed is an intellectual activism; it's an activism through pen, voice and your way of life and thinking. B.R.Ambedkarian ideology is an ideology misinterpreted; every dalit should be able to proclaim loudly that s/he is a dalit, understanding, what the meaning of dalit is your caste is not the only aspect that is making you a dalit. Your experiences, your attitude and your courage make you a dalit. B.R.Ambedkar ideology is your ideology not only because you belong to a particular caste, but also, you believe in Equality, Liberty and Fraternity. Because you are progressing spiritually, you want to be in an India the Babasaheb visualized you have the courage to stand against the dominant voice.³

The Concept of Social Justice

The like law, changes. It evolves itself into progressively new patterns and expands its frontiers and assumes new dimensions. Social justice has significance in the context of Indian society which is divided into Castes and Communities and they create walls and barriers of exclusiveness on the basis of superiority and inferiority such inequalities pose serious threat to Indian democracy. The concept of social justice takes within its sweep the objective of removing inequalities and affording equal opportunities to all citizens in social, economic and political affairs. India, while passing through the process of development is in the quest for finding our ways for a better and just socio-economic order. The search for a new model of socio-economic order is the need of the hour.⁴ Recent trends in Globalization, Urbanization, Mobilization of the poor in search of better life conditions and social justice movements compel us to think afresh. Social justice is an application of the concept of distributive justice to the wealth, assets, privileges and advantages that accumulate within a society or state because the essence of justice is the attainment of the common goods as distinguished from the goods of individuals even of the majority. There have been two major conceptions of social justice one embodying the nation of merit and desert, the other those of needs and equality. The first conception involves ending of hereditary privileges and an open society in which people have the chance to display their desert. It is expressed in equality of opportunity and careers open to talents. The second conception implies that goods should be allocated according in each person's varied needs.⁵

As it aims to make people materially equal, it entails Social justice involves the creation of just and fair social order just and fair to one and all. To make the social order just and fair for every member of the community, it may be necessary for the who are privileged to make some sacrifices. In this sense, Social justice is a revolutionary ideal. It includes both the economic justice and social justice. In India, justice is a generic term which includes both procedural and substantive justices the former providing rules of court procedures and mechanism what is generally known as natural justice and the latter making provision for social assistance. Benefits, facilities, concessions, privileges and special rights, to those who deserve and need such help describes by the omnibus term social justice. Social justice in India is the product of social injustice our Caste system and social structure is the fountain head for social injustice. It is unfortunate that even sixty years after independence social justice is still a distant dream not within the reach of the masses.⁶ The Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women under the traditional Hindu Caste hierarchy had suffered for centuries without education and opportunities for advancement in life. Social justice is compensatory justice to offset the accumulated disabilities suffered by these historically disadvantaged sections of society and absorb them educationally and occupationally in the mainstream of national life. If opportunities are not given to develop their neglected talents there will be social imbalance and tension resulting in anarchy and disobedience to the rule of law. 3.1 Meaning and Definition Social justice being a multi-dimensional concept has been viewed by scholars of law, philosophy and political science differently. The term social justice is quite comprehensive. Social justice is a bundle of rights, lancing wheel between haves and have notes. It is a great social value in providing a stable society and in securing the unity of the country. In general, Social justice may be defined as "the right of the weak, aged, destitute, poor, women, children and other under-privileged persons". According to DIAS, justice is not something which can be captured in a formula once or for all, it is a process, complex and shifting balance between many factors¹. The tasks of justice are "the just allocation of advantages and disadvantages, preventing the abuse of power, preventing the abuse of liberty the just decision of disputes and adapting to change" Justice may be natural justice or distributive justice. Social justice is basically a term which provides sustenance to the rule of law.⁷

Economic Equality

It has a wider connotation in the sense that it includes economic justice also. It aims in removing all kinds of inequalities and affording equal opportunities to all citizens in social as well as economic affairs. thus the aim of

social justice is to remove all kinds of inequalities based upon Caste, race, sex, power, position, wealth and brings about equal distribution of the social justice is a balance between social rights and social controls. According to Utilitarian, social justice is being one of the dimensions of justice which stands for fraternity; with a view to create such human social conditions which ensure free and fair development of all human beings. In fact the term may require a preferential treatment for certain sections of the population, who has been deprived of certain values for ages, with a view to bring them on equal footing other section of the population. According to John Rawls, the concept of social justice is "all social primary goods—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the basis of self Respect are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured"⁸.

The contents of the "social primary goods" specified by Rawls are of particular importance, for the fair distribution of them, namely, liberty and opportunity, income and wealth and basis of self respect in a society will undoubtedly help to achieve the much needed social justice. Another important aspect of his theory is that while laying emphasis on the equal distribution of the "social primary goods", he envisages "an unequal distribution" of the "social primary goods" if such unequal distribution is "to the advantage of the least favoured". In envisaging such "unequal distribution" of the social primary goods to benefit the "least favoured" in the society. John Rawls has displayed a great sense of pragmatism, he rightly felt that equal distribution of the 'social primary goods' in an unequal or hierarchical society would result in perpetuating the already existing inequality and the social justice would become cry in the wilderness. The 'least favoured' in every society must be given initial advantages to compete with the most favoured in the society by the unequal distribution of "social primary goods" to the advantage of the least favoured⁷. In enunciating this view, Rawls seems to have anticipated the doctrine of 'Protective Discrimination' embodied in the Constitution of India. Another important jurist, whose writings have great impact on the concept of social justice is Roscoe Pound. He classifies three legally protected interests, and they are public interests, social interests and private interests. In social interests he enumerates six important 'social interests' and his sixth principle of social interests is very relevant to the concept of social justice.⁹

Social Injustice

Social life in civilized society that each individual be able to live a human life there in according to the standards of the society. This principle is considered as by Roscoe Pound the most important of all. Justice Krishna Iyer a former judge of the supreme court of India says, "Social Justice is not cant but conscience, not verbal borrowing from like documents but the social force of the supreme law". Social justice is people oriented, legal justice is canalized, controlled and conferred by law. Social justice is the product of social injustice and seeks to remove social and economic inequalities and ensure equality of status, equality of opportunity. Social justice of today becomes the legal justice of tomorrow. The Supreme Court has explained the concept of social justice i.e. "the Constitution commands justice, liberty, equality and fraternity as supreme values to usher in the egalitarian social, economic and political democracy". Social justice, equality and dignity of persons are corner stone's of social democracy.

The concept of "social justice" which the Constitution of India engrafted consists of diverse principles essential for the orderly growth and development personality of every citizen. Social justice is thus an integral part of justice in the generic sense. Justice is a genus of which social justice is one of its species. Social justice is a dynamic device to mitigate the suffering of the poor, weak, dalits, Tribes and deprived sections of the society. B.R. Ambedkar is also one of the proponents of social justice in modern India. According to B.R. Ambedkar, the term "social justice" is based upon equality, liberty and fraternity of all human beings. The aim of social justice is to remove all kinds of inequalities based upon Caste, race, sex, power, Position,¹⁰

Caste Definitions

(1) Mr. Senart, a French authority, defines a caste as "a close corporation, in theory at any rate rigorously hereditary: equipped with a certain traditional and independent organisation, including a chief and a council, meeting on occasion in assemblies of more or less plenary authority and joining together at certain festivals: bound together by common occupations, which relate more particularly to marriage and to food and to questions of ceremonial pollution, and ruling its members by the exercise of jurisdiction, the extent of which varies, but which succeeds in making the authority of the community more felt by the sanction of certain penalties and, above all, by final irrevocable exclusion from the group."

(2) Mr. Nesfield defines a caste as "a class of the community which disowns any connection with any other class and can neither intermarry nor eat nor drink with any but persons of their own community."¹¹

(3) According to Sir H. Risley, "a caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name which usually denotes or is associated with specific occupation, claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same professional callings and are regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community."

(4) Dr. Ketkar defines caste as "a social group having two characteristics: (i) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born; (ii) the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group."¹²

B.R.Ambedkar's Concept of Social Justice

Dr.B.R. Ambedkar's Vision: Social Justice and wealth. The social justice brings equal distribution of the social, political and economical resources of the community B.R.Ambedkar was the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. He was fully aware of the pattern and problems of the Indian society. The aspirations of the different sections of the society and their conflicting interests. He tried to achieve social justice and social democracy in terms of one man-one value. He treated social justice as a true basis for patriotism and nationalism. B.R.Ambedkar did not accept the theories of social justice as propounded by the Varna system, the Aristotelian order, Plato's scheme, Gandhian sarvodaya order and not even the proletarian socialism of Marx. The contents of B.R.Ambedkar's concept of social justice included unity and equality of all human beings, equal worth of men and women, respect for the weak and the lowly, regard for human rights, benevolence, mutual love, sympathy, tolerance and charity towards fellow being.¹³

Humane treatment in all cases dignity of all citizens, abolition of Caste distinctions, education and property for all and good will and gentleness, He emphasized more on fraternity and emotional integration. His view on social justice was to remove man-made inequalities of all shades through law, morality and public conscience; he stood for justice for a sustainable society.¹⁴ According to Dr.B.R. Ambedkar the root cause of social injustice to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is the Caste system in Hindu society. He observed, Castes are enclosed units and it is their conspiracy with clear conscience that compels the ex-communicated to make them into a Caste. The logic of their obdurate circumstance in merciless and it is in obedience to its force that some unfortunate groups find themselves closed out with the result that now groups by a mechanical law are constantly being converted into Castes in a widening multiplicity. He further maintained that the root of untouchability is the Caste system and 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 root of Brahminism lies with the political power.¹⁵

B.R.Ambedkar's social vision is reflective in his own words. As an economic system permits exploitation without obligation untouchability is not only a system of unmitigated economic exploitation, but it is also a system of uncontrolled economic exploitation. That is because there is no independent public opinion to condemn it and there is no impartial machinery of administration to restrain it, there is no check from the police or the judiciary for the simple reasons that they are all down from the Hindus, and take side of exploiters.¹⁶ To the B.R.Ambedkar real democracy was a social democracy. According to him, it is essential to realize that political democracy cannot succeed where there is no social and economic democracy. He pleaded the realization of economic and social democracy in India, for political democracy was unreal preceded by economic and social democracy. B.R.Ambedkar said we must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is complete absence of two things in Indian society, One of these equality is on the social plane. We have in India a society based on the principle of graded inequality which means elevation for some and degradation for others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty-How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall 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 those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy.¹⁷

His philosophy was occupied with social amelioration, political enlightenment and spiritual awakening. For this it attached due importance to the economic well-being of the masses. To him, Political thought embodied a social dynamism because of man's attitude animal and social being. He had deep faith in fundamental human rights in the equal rights of men and women, in the dignity of the individual in social economic justice in the promotion of social progress and better standards of life with peace and security in all spheres of human life. His study of social facts enriched his political philosophy. B.R.Ambedkar was dead against the Hindu Caste structure as he was of the view that this structure has been primarily responsible for committing all sorts of atrocities on the various sections of the society particularly the weaker sections Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. He was against Manusmriti as it gives a blank Cheque to the Brahmins to commit all sorts of atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and justify their evil designs.¹⁸

Conclusion

Status and stamped the vast majority of the people as "sudras" and "untouchables" fit for only manual labour. They were deprived of educational opportunities and condemned to a low social status. In course of time the privileges for the privileged class increased and the other classes became more and more oppressed and depressed such a social structure breed inequality in status and denial of equal opportunities to all. It ushered an

unjust social order in this country. Social justice in India 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. The Caste system prevalent in India moulded every occupation into a Caste. Since each Caste has to follow its own traditional occupation it condemned the majority of the people to manual labour and forced them to remain under the domination of the upper Caste without any salvation. As the Caste-based social system assigned a hierarchical position to each Caste and pre-determined the social status and the favoured class and under-privileged depressed class resulting in gross unjust discrimination and inequality in society. It snapped all their energy and enthusiasm to make efforts for bettering their status in life and led to social and economic backwardness. It created social imbalance and hampered the even growth and progress of the society. To destabilize the traditional Caste hierarchy and transformation of the social structure of Indian society into a homogeneous unit and promote social integration and the welfare of the people by securing a just social order, the concept social justice was evolved in this country. The system that sought to preserve the social status cracked with advent of the introduction of the British legal system in India.

End Nodes

¹ Surendrasingh, *Dr. Ambedkar Contribution to Social Justice* (Ed) By Prof. M. Shabbir, Rawat Publication. New Delhi, 2005, P.78.

² *Ibid*, P.79

³ *Ibid*, P.80

⁴ *Ibid*, P.81

⁵ Nazeer.H.Khan, *B.R. Ambedkar on federalism, ethnicity and junder justice*, Deep&Deep Publication New Delhi, P.151.

⁶ *Ibid*,p152

⁷ John Rawl's, *Theory of Justice*, Universal Law Publication . New Delhi, 2002, P.44.

⁸ *Ibid*. P.336.

⁹ Friedman W,(ed), *Legal Theory*, Universal Law Publication, New Delhi, 2002, P.336.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, P.337

¹¹ Virendra Prakash Singh(ed.), *Caste System and Socoal Change*, Publishers, New Delhi, 1992,p,139.

¹² Ketkar, *History of Caste in India*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 1979,p,15.

¹³ Krishna Iyar ,*B.R. Ambedkar Centenary, Social Justice and the Undone vast Justice*, B.R Publication, New Delhi, 1991, P.141.

¹⁴ Purohit B.R, Sandeep Joshi, *Social justice in India*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2003, P.189

¹⁵ Mohamed Shabbir ,*Ambedkar on Law, Constitution and social Justice*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2005, P.309.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, P.310

¹⁷ *Ibid*, P.311

¹⁸ Venugopal, P, *Social Justice and Reservation*, Emerald Publication, Chennai, 1998, P.42.