
DR. AMBEDKAR'S VISION OF EDUCATION: INSIGHTS AND TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL IN INDIA'S CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT

Dr. Ambedkar, an architect of Indian Constitution was an eminent jurist, scholar, economist, leader, prolific thinker and a well-renowned educationist. He had made multifarious contribution towards the development of education. He considered education as best tool for social reforms as well as individual and overall development of society. Dr. Ambedkar is of the view that education made people aware about their rights, justice and human dignity. It is as important as food, clothing and shelter for the human beings. He was very much influenced from Dewey's view and held that only educated masses can make Democracy successful as they can only understand the social realities. Dr. Ambedkar put all his effort to brought education within the reach of everyone so that it can help in upliftment of the downtrodden classes including women section of the society. He emphasized more on the attainment of higher education by Dalits to empower them and to make them more intellectual. He recognized the importance of role of teachers in the process of learning and providing guidance to the students. The researcher in this paper has made an attempt to study the contribution of Dr. B.R Ambedkar in Education and its relevance in present context of Indian society.

Keywords: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Constitution, Education, Democracy, Dalits, Women.

Introduction

Education is very important for the human beings to live a better life. It helps us to understand the problems and find out the solutions for them. It helps in overall growth of the people and the society at large. It also enlightens the peoples about their rights and liberties. Education is very important for the social development of the individuals in the society. But in India there are many social taboos like casteism, untouchability, social oppression and gender discrimination which cause lots of hindrances in the progress of the society. (Sharma 61) Dr. B.R. Ambedkar also known as Babasaheb Ambedkar was a great jurist, economist, political leader and scholar. Born to Mahar parents, he is the one among the Schedule Caste who in early twentieth century went for his higher studies from various reputed universities in abroad. He was a progressive thinker who always raised his voice against social injustice suffered by marginalised groups of the society. He was a staunch supporter of the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity which he found in the philosophy of Buddha in the form of Prajna (wisdom to understand superstition), Karuna (compassion) and Samata (equality) which appealed him a lot. Dr. Ambedkar throughout his life fought for the establishment of an egalitarian society. He asked for the development of masses and social justice through his lectures, speeches and writings articles for various journals. Dr. Ambedkar had himself experienced in his life that how education can change and shape the destiny of depressed class, whom he represented. (C.) It is important here to mention the contribution of Dr. Ambedkar in education, his vision and its relevance in the present context.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his views on Education

Dr. Ambedkar was very much influenced by the pragmatic education philosophy of his teacher John Dewey who visited various universities, institutions and most developed nations to get knowledge for the upliftment of the masses. The education philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar was blend of John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy and 'dhamma' of Buddha. Dewey was of the view that Education is the most important key to make democracy successful venture as only the educated people can understand the problems. He said that in democracy, the government rests upon the adult suffrage which cannot be successful if the electors and who obey their governors are not educated. That's why Dr. Ambedkar considered education important like food, clothing and shelter for a man. (Dewey 87)

He said that man acquires knowledge not only for his own's benefit but also for the benefits of others. It helps a man to get liberation from the oppressive structure of caste discrimination and transformation of social order which leads to the establishment of an egalitarian society. It can also be used as a means to build the moral character of the students irrespective of their caste, colour, religion and sex. It helps the individual not only in their social mobility but also opens the door for their modernization. It also helps in formation of the character of the individuals. (Balu)

According to Dr. Ambedkar, the curriculum is a mean through which the goals fixed by the education can be achieved. It helps to bring rationality among the learners which help them to distinguish between truth and untruth. He gave importance to science and technical education as it opens more venues for the individuals and ultimately helps in the progress of the nation. He had established the 'Bharatiya Samaj Seva Sangh' whose motto was to read, read out and hear, understand, realise and give realisation. He was also not in the favour of severe education system as he believed that if University will make conducting examination as its overall goal, it will not be able to promote research and higher education. (Balu)

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his views on Primary Education

Dr. Ambedkar said that Primary education is very important for underprivileged section of the society. It is more than like a movement having an objective to provide a platform to the vulnerable section to enter into public life. Primary education refers to "free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years". Ambedkar pointed out that, "The object of primary education is to see that every child that enters the portals of a primary school does leave it only at a stage when it becomes literate and continues to be literate throughout the rest of his life." (Jogan 206) He believed every person must get at least Primary education so that he can learn how to read and write. He also cautioned regarding the trend of dropout rate at the initial stage, "...if we take the statistics, we find that out of every 100 children that enter a primary school only 18 reach the fourth standard; the rest of them, that is to say, 82 out of every 100, relapse into the state of illiteracy." (Jogan 206) Primary education must reach to every child for development of the nation. So the government must made necessary expenditure for the development of the primary education.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his views on Higher Education

Dr. Ambedkar's approach was very pragmatic especially for the minority class. His main aim was to promote higher education among the depressed class as he himself understands the importance of self respect and self elevation. He was of the view that the progress of the community depends on the advancement of the education in its members. While giving his view on University education in 2016, he made very important interventions in the Bombay University Amendment Act to promote Higher education in universities in India. He also opposed the distinction between undergraduate teaching and postgraduate teaching. He said that the best method to promote higher education and research is not to separate the colleges from the University rather to make a synthesis in which there would be partnership among the University and the colleges in promoting together, both the undergraduate and the post-graduate studies. This will help the students at the under-graduate level to attend the lectures of senior and distinguished professors. Moreover, the separation of postgraduate from under graduate means the separation of research from teaching due to which research suffered harm. Dr. Ambedkar was in favour of giving all academic and administrative posts to all the teachers in the Universities. He had taken a very important step on June 20, 1926 for propagating higher education especially to promote intellectual, moral and social democracy among the depressed classes by establishing People's Education Society in Bombay. (Jogan 207)

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his views on Education for Women

Babasaheb's approach towards education of women was totally different from the approach of other thinkers. He believed that the progress of a nation is based on the progress of women. He considered Women's education as one of the components of the objective of policymakers. He stressed on the need of education of the women for their emancipation. He was in the favour of giving equal rights for men and women to liberate them from economic dependency and sufferings. He wanted to give co-education to women with men. He was of the view that education will make women to think independently which will lead to their overall mental and intellectual development. (Minara) He proposed Hindu Code Bill to empower women by giving them various rights like Right to Divorce, Equal Rights for Women to Inherit Property and the Abolition of Polygamy. It was opposed by upper caste people because it was a direct attack on the Hindu caste system and patriarchy system of our society. He was not only concerned about Hindu woman rather he raised his voice for the protection

of the rights of the Muslim women also. He opposed the Indian Muslim Purdah system which according to him is contrary to real purdah system prevalent in Islamic religion. He also criticized the denial of Right to divorce to Muslim women. He believed that a true religion cannot deny right to education and religious rights to women. In his last speech in Parliament, he quoted the famous thought of Irish patriot Daniel O Connals, “No man can be grateful at the cost of his honor, no women can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of his liberty.” (Kumar) Dr. Ambedkar’s views on Women has reflected in Indian Constitution where through certain provisions equal rights are given to women at par with men.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his views on Education for Depressed Class

Babasaheb Ambedkar stressed on the secular education as he never recognized Hindu knowledge system as secular. In his words, “There are countries where education did not spread beyond a few. But India is the only country where the intellectual class, namely, the Brahmins not only made education their monopoly but declared the acquisition of education by the lower classes, a crime punishable by cutting off of the tongue or by the pouring of molten led in the ear of the offender. The result is that for centuries the Brahmins have denied the servile classes the right to education.” (Moon 215) He was against the view of Dr. Radhakrishnan as he supported the traditional education system whereas Dr. Ambedkar while opposing traditional education system considered upper caste responsible for the degradation of lower caste people by denying them right to education. He considered education not only as a means of adequate livelihood but a sharp weapon to fight against injustice, discrimination and exploitation. (Mandal) Ambedkar also observed, “The backward classes have come to realize that after all education is the greatest material benefit for which they can fight. We may forego material benefits, we may forego material benefits of civilization, but we cannot forego our rights and opportunity to reap the benefits of the highest education to the fullest extent. (Narake 62) Thus, Dr. Ambedkar emerged as a staunch supporter of the education movement for the liberation of underprivileged classes.

Babasaheb Ambedkar wanted to establish just social order in the society. He considered education as birth right of all the persons including marginalized section of the society. He believed that it is the only education through which downtrodden persons can train their mind to get social status, economic betterment and political freedom by liberating

themselves from the social slavery. He made an effort to bring awareness among the masses of downtrodden class to create a just society for them. He developed a program of education as a part of the general manifesto of the Indian Labor Party before the General Election of 1937 for the upliftment of depressed classes. He realized the financial problems of the Dalit students and to provide them free and compulsory education, he gave proposal of providing scholarship to them. As a member of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, he made his best effort to raise voice for the rights of the depressed class by inclusion of certain provisions in the Constitution of India. Like Article 30(1) & (2) provides that State while providing the rights to the linguistic or religious minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their own choice will also not make any discrimination while granting aid on the ground that it is under the management of a linguistic or a religious minority. Article 29 (2) of the Constitution of India provide protection to the interest of minorities by providing them admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds without any discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste or language. Article 46 directs the State to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker section of the people especially of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with special care and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. (Suman 486)

According to Dr. Ambedkar, Education provides strength to the people to fight against diseases, poverty, backwardness and injustice. He realized the crucial role played by the education in the social emancipation of the Dalits, he gave message of “Educate, Organize and Agitate” to his followers to guide them towards emancipation, freedom, justice, equality, fraternity, and liberty as guaranteed by the Indian constitution. He made his words clear by his speech in the Bombay Legislative Council on 5 October 1927 by stressing on the importance of the benefit of the higher education over the material benefits for the backward class. He said that education makes man a rational thinker and help him to spread his knowledge throughout the world. He called upon the backward classes to educate their next generation to liberate themselves from the domination of the upper caste. By agitate, he means, a man must know about his strength and go for peaceful mobilization for their rights. After getting education and by understanding Br. Ambedkar’s approach, he must do mental agitation. Finally, by giving call to organize, he wanted the depressed class to come forward together for the realization of their rights. (Dhal 8581)

Dr. Ambedkar and his views on Role of Teachers and Students

Dr. Ambedkar was of the view that teachers are the creators of the nation so a proper person should be selected for this profession from a point of view of social reforms. He opined that teaching and research must be the work done by the professors for which they must get equal pay. He wanted to give teachers freedom in their sphere to frame their own syllabi and curriculum. He opined that teachers must always seek for knowledge and not only try to find out truth but also practice it. Dr. Ambedkar gave more importance to learning. He wanted the youth to develop a spirit of service towards the community. He emphasized that students must expand their vision, enhance their knowledge and develop their critical thinking. They should be more dedicated towards the attainment of their goals to make their life more meaningful. (Bawa)

Relevance of Dr. Ambedkar's views in present context

Babasaheb Ambedkar's views on education are having its application even at present time. It plays a very crucial role at this time when we are facing various global challenges. Education provides a critical approach to the individuals in this era of technological advancements. The relevance of Dr. Ambedkar's vision on education in present context is as follows:

1. Dr. Ambedkar advocated inclusive education which means that the access to education must be given to all irrespective of any caste, gender, socio-economic status, or abilities. These ideas of Dr. Ambedkar are considered as an ideal form of education system in the present society. The Constitution 86th Amendment Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Indian Constitution to provide free and compulsory elementary Education to all the children from six to fourteen years as a fundamental right as per the law determined by the State. Thus, through Article 21-A, India moves forward towards a right-based framework by giving obligation on the part of the government to implement this fundamental right of the children.
2. Dr. Ambedkar was very well aware about the financial difficulties faced by the backward classes. He was of the opinion that the education must not be beyond the reach of the common man. It is the government aid only which can help the SCs students to take technical education for employment purposes. He proposed that rather than providing loans, scholarships should be given in the form of loans. To make this dream of Babasaheb

Ambedkar a reality, no. of scholarship schemes are initiated to provide free and compulsory education for SCs and STs like Dr. Ambedkar Pre and Post Matric Scholarship Scheme.

3. Dr. Ambedkar himself has experienced the sufferings faced by the marginalized section of our society. He believed that education can only inculcate a sense of equality, liberty, fraternity and can make them feel free to fly like a bird. Moreover, the policies should be framed in such manner that the higher education must be in the reach of the lower class people also. Furthermore, he was of the view that the University should impart impartial and scientific nature education to the adults. It should also implant in their mind the critical approach of thinking as well as the value of reaching the truth. New Education Policy-2020 is a great initiative of the Indian education system for the establishing an inclusive society on the basis of democratic principles. Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy is reflected in New Education Policy-2020. It has been framed to meet the challenges faced by the present educational system. This document can be considered as a Vision document on Education system as envisaged by Dr. Ambedkar. His contribution to the development of primary education, universalization and inclusiveness of education, free and compulsory elementary education, teacher's role in framing curriculum, scientific and secular nature of education etc. and New Education Policy-2020 are interfaced with each other for establishment of an inclusive and egalitarian society. An effort has been made to provide equal rights and opportunities of education for all without any discrimination. Policies for Higher education are framed to cater the diverse needs of the learners. Best efforts have been made to implement the policies through additional concerted efforts. (Dange)

Conclusion and Suggestions

Dr. Ambedkar's life and work has a very intense impact on the generation of Indians. He has envisioned a modern democratic India free from all the shackles of discrimination and oppressions. His approach was very realistic and pragmatic. He is the one person in our history who showed the path of education and employment to the Dalit community and made them to realize their existence by giving them awareness about their rights, making them free from the social stigmas and exploitation by upper classes. His thoughts are not only relevant for the Dalit community but for our entire society. As a nation builder, he wanted to construct through education an empowered India and to realize his this dream, he provide free and compulsory education to all by incorporating Article 45 in the Constitution of India and by safeguarding

the educational interest of minorities through Article 46. He asked the Dalits to merge with upper caste in social, economic and political aspects by his slogan of 'Educate, Organize and Agitate'. Thus, now it is the need of the hour that we should highlight and maintain those aspects of Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts in the field of education which help us to bring social change and make the progress and development of the nation possible. New Education Policy-2020 should try to develop and interpret the vision of Dr. Ambedkar' education philosophy according to the needs of 21st century.

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