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DR. AMBEDKAR'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION: RELEVANCE IN EDUCATION FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Jintu Thakuria, Dr. Phunu Das Sarma

Abstract:
Dr. BabaSaheb Ambedkar is one of those prominent personalities who had immensely contributed in the shaping of independent India's educational as well as social development. Though he has been attributed and honored as the beckoning leader of the backward caste peoples, but at the same time he has also opened a new path of education system which was conceived as liberal in its approach. It is to be noted that Dr. Ambedkar was much more influenced by the Buddhist Philosophical doctrines. At the initial period, Buddha had not allowed women for entering into the Sanghas which were considered as the education center. During the mid-twentieth Century, status of women in India was very low. Though it has changed in due course of time, but the patriarchal pattern of thoughts and perceptions in Indian society has been on continuum leading to women harassment and abuse. In this present study it is intended to look upon the less talked aspects of the educational thoughts propagated by Dr. Ambedkar which are relevant for the education for women empowerment. Dr. Ambedkar had emphasized on secular as well as universal education. The basic concern in his philosophy of education was to inculcate the values of liberty, equality, fraternity, justice and moral character in the boys and girls of all shades. Hence, his philosophy of education can provide plethora in planning the education for women empowerment in the 21st C.
Key Words: Education, Empowerment, Philosophy of Education, Women

Introduction:

Indian society has been pre-dominantly caste divisions based. Though the caste system at the initial periods of Indian civilization i.e. in the Pre-Vedic and Vedic era was based upon divisions of activities and profession, but with due time, the societal structure got changed. Different factors and elements rose in the different periods and phases had ultimately led to strict division of castes on birth basis as well as supremacy and oppression of particular groups in the society. During the Independence period, though Indian society was inclining towards westernization under the influence of Colonialism, but it was still drowning in the black-holes of age-old prejudices. From times immemorial, particular sections of the society were oppressed, discriminated, abandoned and deprived. These include people from lower castes, tribes, communities and specifically, the women. Women were deprived of even their basic rights. Though, in the Vedic period, few women like Gargee, Miatrayee had the privilege of receiving education, but from the medieval period, women were started to be considered limited to the four walls of home. Evidently, scripts such as Manusmriti, Lakshmi-Charita, though they have significance in the formation of Indian society, but they provided limitations to women's development and progress. Even in the Post-independence India, there are reported thousands of cases every day of women's suppression and harassment. Though with modernization in thoughts, ideas and ideals; India is progressing to eliminate all kinds of discriminations at all levels including racial and gender discrimination; still, those are going on in the society.

To make the modern India free from all kinds of discrimination, it was Baba Saheb Ambedkar who had taken a great step in framing the constitution. B. B. Ambedkar had included drastic-change driving articles in the Indian Constitution keeping the oppressed and deprived section of the society in his mind. He waged a relentless war against the narrow social order prevailing in the Indian society within all its sects for social equality, human dignity and political-economic empowerment. He was, undoubtedly a beckoning leader of the untouchables, but he was also much more patriot,

scholar, thinker and the Founding Father of Indian Constitution. It is fact that he had strived for the development, empowerment and progress of the 'untouchables'. At the same time, his vision was broader. He had also strived for the empowerment of all the deprived sections of the society including the women.

Till, independence, women in India was thought as material meant for household activities and child rearing only. Education was a privilege for few who belong to the higher status holder families. Mass education for women was out of imagination. Baba Saheb Ambedkar had stressed on Education for the empowerment and upliftment of all the weaker sections. It has been more 70 years of the commencement of the Indian Constitution. Though, girls education has been stressed in various post-independence committee's reports and recommendations and various strategies have been adopted from time to time, but still patriarchal pattern of thought process are tend to be dominating force in case of women empowerment. Therefore, women empowerment in the digitalized India can't be limited to girl's education only; but also it should encompass gender education. Dr. Ambedkar had stated that –'Education is not only birthright of every human being but also a weapon of social change'. He had considered education as a key to social progress. He had strongly opposed the traditional education system which was based on caste system and gender biased. It is already mentioned that education was available prominently for the upper caste people. The lack of education had led the deprived sections (lower castes, untouchables, women) to be mentally slave, culturally handicapped, economically weaken, socially backward and politically usable. Therefore, Ambedkar had stressed the need of educating the drown trodden for the equal progress of the society. Even in this 21st C , though material scenario of Indian society has been changed drastically, but patriarchal patterns of thoughts and attitudes have remained same which is evident from various memes, viral posts and reported virtual abuse incidents on the platform of social media. Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy of Education can be leading light in propagating women empowerment through education.

Objectives:

1. To highlight the contributions of Ambedkar to the Indian Education system.
2. To analysis the relevance of Ambedkar's Educational thoughts in promoting women empowerment.

Key Words:

Education: It is the formal system of providing knowledge, experience and certified degree based upon performance along with shaping attitude, perspective and personality of Individuals.

Empowerment: To make individual self-sufficient, capable of taking own decision and holding own rights

Philosophy of Education: Thoughts, ideas and schemes regarding the different aspects of Education including school system, curriculum and methods

Women: The deprived section of the Indian society from time immemorial because of gender discriminations.

Methodology:

This paper is based on documentary study. It is a descriptive and analytical paper. Hence, analytical method is applied in the present study. A few selected books, documents and scripts have been taken as secondary source of data. The analysis is based on description and extracts from the relevant scripts, books and documents.

Review of the Related Literature:

Dhal K Pravat (20170, in his study 'Contribution of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to Indian Education and Society' has highlighted Ambedkar's contributions to the advancement of education. The study has described Ambedkar as undoubtedly a unique personality who regarded education as a means to reach the doors of light and perception to remove the regions of darkness and ignorance. It is maintained that Ambedkar emphasized on secular education for social emancipation.

Waghmare D. Pradeep (2016), in his study 'Relevance of Educational Philosophy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in 21st Century' strived to highlight the different aspects of Ambedkar's Philosophy with an introduction on Influences on DR. B.R. Ambedkar. It is asserted that Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy of Education was the blend of rational and secular philosophy of Gautama Buddha and the Pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey. The study has considered that Dr. Ambedkar's contribution towards education and his independent thinking made him an independent intellectual of the world. He propounded his own philosophy of education and had largely influenced the outlook of downtrodden. The study has regarded that Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts on education and his educational philosophy are relevant today in the 21st Century for the socio-economic and political development of our country.

Solkhe Manika(2018), in her study 'Role of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar towards Women Empowerment in India: An Assessment' has asserted that Ambedkar's thoughts are important for the social reconstruction that favors women empowerment. It is concluded in the study that Ambedkar expressed his views on the state of life of all women. He stated that women must be treated equally and given equal prestige. The teachings and thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar are useful not only women but also all the Indian even today. His deep concern and feelings for all round development of women is expressed in maximum of his speeches

Barnwal (2014) concluded that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar can be regarded as one of the greatest intellectual and social reformer of modern India who struggled throughout his life for the liberation of Indian women (particularly from depressed classes) from the lifelong bondage and slavery under the weight of Hindu social institutions. By conceptualizing caste and gender inequality as inseparable constituents of Hindu social order, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar laid the foundations for gradual transformation of Indian social consciousness and gender justice in India.

Singariya (2014) stated that Dr. Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of Hindu society. His dream of society, based on gender equality is yet to be realized and therefore his thoughts are important for the social reconstruction that favors women empowerment..

Ubale (2016) concluded that Dr. Ambedkar was a path-maker of all the women irrespective of religion, caste, creed, gender and brought a new trend for uprising the women through his thoughts and beliefs. Along with women all the people of India should be proud for the tremendous and everlasting steps for the empowerment of women in Indian society carried by Dr. Ambedkar. He also talked about the Muslim women about wearing veil, their religious traditions and marriages and fought against all kinds of discrimination against women throughout his whole life. But still discrimination against women in Indian society is overlooked. So, it is a duty of every Indian to fulfill the dreams of Ambedkar for a better life world of women. It may also be mentioned here that the term, "Social Justice" will not be exercised properly if the people of India should not be able to change their attitudes specially towards women, SCs, STs and other weaker section of the society.

Analysis:

1. **Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy of Education**:
   Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy was problem-oriented and solution driven. In other words, Ambedkar was a social philosopher. For him, philosophy must guide the society for progressive change on the line of individual dignity and freedom. He stated –'Philosophy has its root in the problems of life and whatever theories philosophy propounds must return to

society as instruments of reconstructing society'. Ambedkar was strictly against the prevailing traditional orthodox idealistic philosophical notions. He was more inclined towards the Buddhist Philosophical doctrine. He was in favor of the three principles inherited from Buddha's philosophy- Prajnya (Knowledge or wisdom), Sheel (Character), Karuna (Compassion). He had also advocated that education should function as means of attaining Samyak Gyana i.e. Right Knowledge- one of the path of the eightfold paths propagated by Buddhism.

Dr. Ambedkar was also greatly influenced by the ideas and ideals of John Dewey. He had fully subscribed John Dewey's view emphasizing on education as means to change the world and not merely to understand it. In a sense, he was influenced by the pragmatic ideas of education. He considered education as a means for self-expression, for building self-esteem and character, for determining proper conduct and for learning through experience. He believed that the students should try to understand and unravel earthly and transcendental mysteries. He asserted in tune of Dewey that education should create human values which have universal applicability. In this sense, he may also be regarded as a humanist. He had stressed on imparting education for the development of human personality. He regarded that education must focus on serving human interests and achieving social progress. He considered education not only as the basis of social, economic and political revolution but also a vital force for individual development and social change. In his words-'Education is a weapon of reaction of mental and educational development, weapon of eradication of social slavery of economic development of political freedom'. For him, education is the most powerful agent that can liberate the oppressed section of the society from illiteracy, ignorance, superstitions enabling to fight against all kinds of prejudices and, a prerequisite for organized effort for launching any social movement in the modern times. Therefore, he advocated –'Educate, organize and Agitate', which means to create power among people through education so that they may make themselves able of experiencing their basic rights in the society, achieve success in life and struggle for social justice. He considered education as essential for all men and women irrespective of their social and economic status. He observed- ; Education is necessary for females as it is for males. If you know how to read and write, there would be much progress….'.

2. Scheme of Education:

a) Universal Education: Dr. Ambedkar had considered education as instrument for individual development and social change. In his view, education is not only the birthright of every human being but also a weapon of social change. In his scheme of education he had emphasized upon the Universal Education system stressing that education is the important mean to develop individual's rationality, conscience, scientific temper and consciousness leading to development of personality of the individual. He had not only favored the secular pattern of education but also the availability of education for all irrespective caste, creed and gender. He argued that education is such an indispensible thing that it should necessarily be within easy reach of all. He urged for making education cheap so that the poorest of the poor may acquire it. He had emphasized the necessity of free and compulsory education. At the same time, he had advocated scholarships in educational institutions along with diversification between teaching universities and non-teaching universities (technical education based institutions).

His scheme of universal education not only was an attempt to eradicate the caste discriminations of Indian society, but also literate and liberate all the citizens of India irrespective of gender.

b) Functional Education: Dr. Ambedkar had emphasized on education to function as the instrument of social reform. Addressing a meeting at Calcutta on 2nd January 1945, he advised the students to concentrate only on education and not to involve in politics. He had urged the students not only to get a degree but to see that the degree carry with it some positive knowledge or attainment. Further, in his scheme of Education, he had emancipated the need of the cultivation of the mind and the spirit of self-help among men and women. He perceived education as the most important factor for molding the life of all men, women and children.

c) Co-education: Visioning a society ensured of justice and equality, Dr. Ambedkar had advocated the scheme of Education for all. Therefore, he had favored the co-education system. He had a strong desire to liberate women from their suffering and economic dependency. He urged that it is co-education which can play a vital role in reducing and removing the gender biasness, discrimination and prejudices of society. He stressed co-education provides women to sit and receive education together with men. It may act as a strong influential strategy in changing the male-ego dominated attitude of the growing children.

d)

3. **Empowerment and Women in Ambedkar's eyes**:

Ambedkar's dreamt society was based on gender equality which is yet to be realized and therefore his thoughts are important for the social reconstruction that favors women empowerment. Dr. Ambedkar expressed his views on the state of life of all women. He bitterly criticized all such traditions and norms which militated against equality of women. He had favored economic independence of women. He stated that women must be treated equally and given equal prestige. He viewed that- "We shall see better days soon and our progress will be greatly accelerated if male education is persuaded side by side with female education".

He had adopted different initiatives to make the women educated and liberated. He started a strong movement against the Hindu social order and launched a journal 'Mook Nayak' in 1920 and 'Bahiskrit Bharat' in 1927 for this purpose. Through its issues he had stressed on the gender equality and the need for education and exposed the problems of the depressed as well as women. He had advocated development of morality in all people through education. He asserted that only those objectives of education are meaningful that aid in making humans happy and prosperous and helping society progress. He was also in favor of making education relevant to employment. Stressing on women education, he stated-'Unity is meaningless without the accompaniment of women'. He had taken steps to launch women's' associations for the untouchable women with the objective of spreading education and mass-awareness. On 19th and 20th March, 1927, he had addressed a huge assembly of depressed classes including women where he appealed for liberation of women with recommendation of education as mandatory for development of mind and essence of self-help. He believed-'a family is educated only when the man along with the women in the family are educated'. He had firmly advocated for 'dignity and resilient determination for women'. On 20th July, 1942 at Nagpur, addressing the Second All India Depressed Classes Women's Conference, he said- 'I measure the progress of community by the degree of progress which women have achieved….'

Constitutional Provisions Framed By Ambedkar for Women Empowerment and Education:

Dr. Ambedkar was a personality of great vision. In framing the constitution of independent India, he made tremendous efforts to ensure social justice and equality to all man and women. He had instituted many such provisions to the Constitutions which have been effective till date ensuring equal rights to all. Some of such prominent provisions are:

a) Article 14: It guarantees that the State shall not deny equality before the law and equal protection of the laws;
b) Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination against any citizen on the ground of sex;
c) Article 15 (3): It empowers the State to make positive discrimination in favor of women and children;
d) Article 16: Provision for Equality of Opportunity in matters of public employment;
e) Article 23: prohibition of trafficking in human beings and forced labor;
f) Article 39 (a) and (d): These two provisions enjoin the State to provide equal means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work;
g) Article 42: It enjoins upon the State to make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work, and for maternity relief;
h) Article 51A (e): It imposes a Fundamental Duty on every citizen to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
i) Article 243D (3): It provides that not less than 1/3rd of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayats to be reserved for women, and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayats;
j) Article 243T(3): It provides that not less than 1/3rd of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality;
k) Article 243T(4): It provides reservation of offices of Chairperson in Municipalities for SCs, STs, Women in such manner as the legislature of a State, may by law provide;

Dr. Ambedkar had firmly held the position favoring equal educational opportunities for all irrespective of caste and gender. For him, empowerment of women raising them from all the orthodox patriarchal obstacles is necessary for the progress of the society as a whole. Therefore, he had advocated universal, co-education system which is functional in nature. Here, by 'functional' more emphasize was given upon making education effective to the extent which enables all men and women to come over all the oppressions of social stigmas and discriminations upholding own social, economic and political rights and self-sufficiency. That's for why he propagated that the Principle of Utility should be the basis of curriculum construction at all levels. He viewed that curriculum should be democratic, which should be put together by teachers concerned, in keeping with the demands of the subject and the students. He was in favor of curriculum that would help students get employment and would make them capable. He had urged for complete and compulsory education. He had prioritized technical education as well as scholarships for the weaker sections and higher education in general. He was in favor of compulsory education for women, but only up to the matriculation level, after which, he suggested that they acquire home-management skills. He was not in favor of uniform education for men and women. He felt that both have different roles in society, hence their education should also be different.

4. **Relevance in the Present Context**:

India is at the third decade of the 21st C. where it is becoming digitalized in almost all spheres. Though, it is upgrading day by day rising above the age old social evils counting from racial discrimination to gender biasness as well as in the matter of women empowerment, but still, numbers of cases of women's harassment and abuse in different

ways are going on. Ambedkar's scheme of education is found to be very relevant in the present context also. Because, he propagated that education should aim at the goal of moralization and socialization of people. He had held that- Education is the foundation of civilization and Culture. His scheme of Education not only ensures equalization of the availability and accessibility of quality education to all but also guarantee political and economic power. In the present context of rapidly increasing population and alarming unemployment situation, his ideas of providing technical education is found to be more relevant. Most importantly, his philosophy of education strives to make individual morally and ethically sound. Moral and Character development can reduce gender discrimination in true sense. Inculcation of human values through education develops unbiased gender attitude among the students. Ambedkar considered learning as essential for every individual from progress in life. He had urged for the economic independence of the women through education which is of utmost relevance in present day also. Moreover, proper implementation of his scheme of Co-education can be helpful in creating gender-sensitive atmosphere in the school and university campuses. Gender-sensitized institutional campus has been one of the major discussed issues of the present educational and social researches. Reports of different kinds of abuse come up from different institutions frequently. Implementation of Ambedkar's educational philosophy stressing on the humanistic approach and the co-education approach can be a solution to such issues. Ambedkar visions of education was not limited to only as a means of personality development or source of earning livelihood; rather, he had regarded education as powerful instrument for bringing about desired changes in the society. Ambedkar had stressed on both equality and equity. His scheme of education basically emphasized upon the cultivation of the values of liberty, equality, fraternity, justice and moral character among the boys and girls of all sections of the society. Therefore, in the complex days of 21st C where value-loss and moral degradation has been a prime concern, Ambedkar's philosophy of Education finds utmost significance.

Conclusion:

Dr. Ambedkar was undoubtedly a liberator of the millions of downtrodden in India. His educational ideas and propagandas can be applied with necessary modifications according to the demand of the 21st C. His scheme of Co-education should have to be properly implemented in all the schools. It will help in reducing the gender barriers and male-ego dominant prejudices. Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts are not only relevant for the Dalit community but for the entire Indian society. Today, enhancement of the budgetary allocation and expenditure on education is widely talked of. Ambedkar had raised this demand long ago. The provisions initiated by him in framing of the Indian Constitutions have been on function till today providing greater opportunity to the weaker section of the society including the women. His urge for technical education for the weaker section has been proved drastic-change driven in his future India. It is still on relevance as it is the means of assuring employability to all the individuals including women. His scheme of education thus can be applied to the present education system to ensure greater empowerment to all the women.

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