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The works and views of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

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Abstract: *The name of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar brings to our mind a social reformer, Principal architect of Indian Constitution and messiah of backward classes and women's rights. In spite of development in social-economic and political sectors in our country, still there are caste violence and discrimination exist among the Dalits and women, which challenges the human dignity of those weaker section. Ambedkar being a rationalist thinker critically see the Hindus traditional social system so as to create a simply and egalitarian society. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, widely acknowledged as Babasaheb, was an Indian economist, historian, jurist, philosopher and politician. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was the principle architect of the Constitution of India. Ambedkar's labors to eliminate the social evils like untouchability, caste boundaries and work for women upliftment were significant. The leader, right through his living, fought for the civil rights & privileges of the 'dalits' and other socially backward classes.At present the Nation paid rich tributes to Babasaheb Ambedkar, principal architect of Indian Constitution, on his 125th birth anniversary. To eradicate of these social evils, Ambedkar's work on build a simply and egalitarian society is more necessary for not only to grasp the social orders but also for take away the current day's social evils of the Indian society.*

Key Words: ***Caste discrimination, society, acts, inequality, democracy***

Dr Ambedkar laid down strong foundations for economic progress of crores of his followers who were driven to wretchedness by barbarous social customs of the Hindu religion. He put forth the issue of economic progress of the untouchables during the Mahad Satyagraha. As part of social awakening for Satyagraha he held public meeting at various places. In one of such meetings of the Solapur District Watandar Mahar Conference, he says 'the livelihood of Untouchables is now

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entirely in the hands of touchables. When the Untouchables will have their own independent arrangement for their livelihood then they may like to sacrifice their lives for their human rights. That will be a historical day, not only for the Hindus, but for the whole of Hindustan.' (Solapur, 27 November 1927).

He suggests several measures and some alternate vocations for economic progress of the untouchables. His speeches indicate his serious concern about economic upliftment of his people. In his indomitable style he narrates the theory of mutual dependence in socio-economic relationship between the touchables and the untouchables. He says 'The relationship is purely mutual. However, it is also true that this mutual relationship is not of equal strength because one party is having stronger leverage against the other. The weaker party is always under a dilemma that if it has to struggle, how long it would be able to sustain. As a result, sometimes it has to abandon even the most important cause for creating some permanent system for protecting its dignity.'

He recognizes that the bearing capacity of the untouchables cannot be as strong as the touchables. He believes that the wealth shall be used for progress of the nation, not to enslave the poor. 'Wealth is an effective tool for the progress of any nation. For this, it is essential that it should be accumulated. But if the same wealth is used to enslave the poor population or to dwarf their growth and when the wealthy people use their wealth to show off their status and superiority then such wealth becomes devil's wealth.' (Solapur, 27 November 1927)

When Dr Ambedkar spoke on whatever subject, he always quoted, in exact context, facts and figures from various source the world over to draw his point home. It is astonishing in the era half a century before the internet or Google. He used all his faculties to vouch for better government reforms for the progress of the poor with data from various progressive countries. His speech 'On Bombay Province Budget: 1938-39' made in Bombay Legislative Assembly (5 March 1938) is one such classic example. He compares per capita revenue in various countries with that of Bombay and observes 'It is picture; it is a contrast, which is bound to make any Finance Minister who wants to take the responsibility of bringing welfare to the mass of the people of this Province, shake in his shoes'; and questions 'what are the ways of improving the financial resources of this Province?' He blames the government for not having courage to tax the rich saying 'I for myself have the greatest condemnation for the Government for not coming forward with taxation. This Budget, therefore, I say, is a rich man's budget. It is not a poor man's budget. No Government

worthy of its name, no Government with any sincerity, can tell the poor classes that it cannot provide these amenities because it has not the courage to levy taxes. The sooner such a Government abdicates the better for all.'

He suggests that government revenue should be used for welfare of the poor and farmers. 'The money the Government was raising in the form of taxes must be utilised to relieve the farmers of their debts, to fight poverty and to impart education; but he said that it could not be done if Prohibition was given a priority or a preference over these urgent problems.' (Nashik, July 1939)

He severely criticized government's misplaced priority of spending lakhs of rupees on Prohibition (just to please Mahatma Gandhi) ignoring more urgent public welfare. He says 'Apart from the question whether the taxation proposals are good or not, you are raising practically 1.30 lakhs of rupees; is it necessary that you should spend this money on improving the lots of a drunkard or should you spend this money on educating children who do not get education? What is the choice that you make? That is really the whole question. Is the education of children more important? Is the education practically of 17 to 18 lakhs of children less important than the lot of 10 lakhs of city people who choose to drink? Sir, I do not believe in it. I am a tee-totaller and I wish everybody was. But the problem is really this. If you give me an educated man who is also a sober man. I welcome him. But, if you tell me to take sober man who is a fool, who is a dud, who does not understand anything, I for myself would prefer a man who drinks but who knows something. That is my position; I think that is the position which ought to be considered by the Honourable Finance Minister when distributing this colossal taxation which he is levying on the Province. The village water supply is a crying need; there are hundreds of villages which have no water supply at all. The improvement of the insanitary condition and the abomination that exist in villages is certainly the crying need of our Province. Hundreds of people are dying by reason of the fact that there is no medical aid, no clear water to drink.' (On the Bombay Province Budget: 1939-40, Bombay Legislative Assembly, 25 February, 1939).

Dr Ambedkar always took up the issues of all weaker sections, farmers, labour, workmen, women and all. He proposed several reforms, suo-moto, for labour welfare when he was Labour Minister in the Viceroy's Council. In one of his speeches he says 'Under the stress of the War, the Government of India was called upon in increasing degree to deal with industrial problems of Labour Welfare and I am glad to be able to say that it did not hesitate to take a very bold line of action. Government undertook the task of converting unskilled men by giving them technical

training and establishing numerous training schools. It introduced two new principles in the prevailing Labour Code which are of far –reaching importance and which mark a significant departure from tradition. It took upon itself as its duty and responsibility the right to prescribe fair wages and fair condition of service. It also took upon itself as its duty responsibility to compel employers and employees to submit their disputes to arbitration. This is not all. The Government of India undertook the responsibility for ensuring the Welfare of Labour, not merely by directing what should be done for the well–being of the workers but also by appointing an agency of its own to see if the direction issued by it are carried out or not.' (New Delhi, 6 September 1943)

Dr Ambedkar was deeply concerned that condition of labour is directly linked to industrial development of the country. As a Labour Minister in Viceroy's Council since 1942 he initiated several measures on various fronts for welfare of the labour class and also for development of Trade Unionism in the country. Various steps taken by him as a Labour Minister are unique and unparalleled in the history. Still he was not happy about the overall approach of the government policies towards labour. He even expressed his anguish in his speech on 'Govt.'s policy towards labour' in Central Legislative Assembly (CLA), (16 March 1944). In fact, he sounds more like a Union leader of the Un-organised Labour than the Labour Minister when he speaks on 'welfare and social security of workers' in CLA, (11 March, 1946).

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Dr Ambedkar took suo-moto steps to implement the conventions of International Labour Organisation and initiated several amendments in the Factories Act and other welfare measures which are evident from his speeches like, 'Health Insurance for Industrial Workers' (New Delhi, 17 March, 1945); 'Grant of adequate Dearness allowance to Workers' (New Delhi, 12 February 1943) and 'Payment of wages (Amendment) Bill' (New Delhi, 16 November 1944).

His speech in Rajyasabha on 'Government Order on Bank Disputes' (2 September 1954) can be said to be a harbinger of birth of State Bank of India. In fact, it will not be an exaggeration to say that it had paved way for higher differential wages for the employees of the State Bank of India which they continue to get till date.

Dr Ambedkar believed in the principle of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity which he extended to all sections of the society including labour. His speeches like, 'why Indian Labour is determined to win the war' (AIR Broadcast, 1 January 1943); 'Labour and the Constitution' (New Delhi, 6 September 1943) and 'On Social Security' (New Delhi, 6 September 1943) are noteworthy.

Dr Ambedkar was keen to develop water sources for faster economic growth of the country even before Independence. He emphasized that water management shall be an integral part of management of economy of the country. He presents the blueprint for 'Damodar Valley Scheme' (Kolkata, 3 January 1945) visualized on the lines of Tennessee Valley Authority in America. He says 'The Damodar river project is the first project along this line. It will be a multi-purpose project. It will have the object of not only preventing floods in the Damodar river but also have the object of irrigation, navigation and the production of electricity and lay the foundation for a regime of prosperity for the poverty stricken millions of this country.' In the same speech he points out that the water navigation, like railways, should be made a Central subject instead of State subject in the Constitution.

While he advocates for large irrigation projects, at the same time he emphasizes that rehabilitation of displaced people shall be a top priority of the authorities in his speech 'Rehabilitation Plans' (New Delhi, 5 March 1946).

Dr Ambedkar was well aware of the limitations arising out of federal structure of governance in implementation of schemes howsoever these might be good and well intended. He therefore makes an ardent appeal to the State Governments as a representative of Central Government. He says 'There is only one thing which the Government of India expects the Provinces to do. It expects the Provinces to bear in mind the absolute necessity of ensuring that the benefits of the project get ultimately right down to the grass roots, i.e. everyone living in the Valley and some of those in the vicinity, all have their share in the prosperity which the project should bring. This, in my view, is essential.' (Kolkata, 23 August 1945)

Dr Ambedkar firmly believed in the philosophy of *'Bahujan Hitaya, Bahujan Sukhaya'* in all his endeavours and expected the provincial/ State governments also to follow the same keeping aside all the differences. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Dr Ambedkar was pioneer in propagating planned process for integrated inclusive economic growth. He stated the difference in economic model of our parliamentary democracy with that of other forms of government. He says 'The point I am anxious to emphasize is that the need for an accord between the Plan and public opinion can hardly be exaggerated in a country like India which has as its ideal a Parliamentary system of Government. People talk about the success of planning in Russia. But they forget that the success is due largely to the fact that Russia has no Parliamentary Government. Planning in a Parliamentary Government where those who plan live under the constant threat of no confidence

motions and cannot be sure whether they can remain long enough to put their plans through is a very doubtful proposition. Whether planned Economy is inconsistent with Parliamentary democracy and, if it is so, how the two can be reconciled is a very large theme and this is not the place to deal with it. All, therefore, I wish to do is to caution you that if our plans are not to be scrapped by our successors, we must take care that they are in accord with what the large majority of people believe to be for the greatest good of the greatest number.' (New Delhi, 2 February 1945)

Dr Ambedkar vociferously pressed the importance of development of basic infrastructure like irrigation, power, roads, railways and waterways, etc. in the legislatures and also in the public meetings, conferences, etc. He urged governments to keep lower duties on power consumption to encourage more and more people to use it. His speeches on budgets in Bombay Legislature way back in 1938 are evidence of it. Some of his speeches on this theme are: ' Government Policy regarding Mineral Resources of India' (Central Legislative Assembly, 12 March 1945); 'Multi-purpose Plan for development of Orissa's rivers' (Cuttak, 8 November 1945); and 'Proposed Evacuation of Villages in the prosecution of the Damodar Scheme' (Central Legislative Assembly, 7 February 1946).

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Equal opportunity is the most essential factor for inclusive economic growth. Dr Ambedkar always underlined this aspect leaving a ray of hope in all his speeches, whether on making a law or implementing a law. His views on economic development for bringing all sections of the society at par are highly motivating and encouraging. He cautioned the people and government alike about the possible problems arising out of schemes for economic development. His views on economic development are still relevant as a strong guiding force.

After long years of neglect, the ideas of B.R. Ambedkar seem to be gaining currency. While his thoughts on Indian society and politics have garnered more attention, some of his economic ideas too deserve greater attention.

Known largely as the father of the Indian Constitution and a leader of Dalits, Ambedkar began his career as an economist, making important contributions to the major economic debates of the day. He was, in fact, among the best educated economists of his generation in India, having earned a doctorate in economics from Columbia University in the US and another from the London School of Economics.

Ambedkar's London doctoral thesis, later published as a book, was on the management of the rupee. At that time, there was a big debate on the relative merits of the gold standard vis-à-vis the gold exchange standard.

The gold standard refers to a convertible currency in which gold coins are issued, and may be complemented with paper money, which is pledged to be fully redeemable in gold. In contrast, under the gold exchange standard, only paper money is issued, which is kept exchangeable at fixed rates with gold and authorities back it up with foreign currency reserves of such countries as are on the gold standard.

Ambedkar argued in favour of a gold standard as opposed to the suggestion by John Maynard Keynes that India should embrace a gold exchange standard. He argued that a gold exchange standard allowed the issuer greater freedom to manipulate the supply of money, jeopardizing the stability of the monetary unit.

Ambedkar's Columbia dissertation was on the state-centre financial relations under the guidance of Edwin Seligman, one of the foremost authorities on public finance in the world. Ambedkar argued that under a sound administrative system, each political unit should be able to finance its expenditure by raising its own resources, without having to depend too heavily on another.

Ambedkar's views on the rupee and on public finance were responses to the raging economic problems of the day and not all of his analysis may be relevant today. But some of the principles he enunciated such as that of price stability and of fiscal responsibility remain relevant even today.

Of all his academic publications, the one that has aged best and has great relevance for contemporary economic debates is a 1918 essay on farming and farm holdings published in the journal of the Indian Economic Society.

In that essay, Ambedkar considered the problem of small landholdings in India and their fragmentation. After examining various proposals to consolidate and enlarge such landholdings that were being debated in those days, Ambedkar came to the conclusion that such proposals were fundamentally flawed.

Ambedkar argued that land was only one of the factors of production required to produce crops, and unless it was used in an optimal proportion with other factors of production, it would be inefficient. Landholdings should, therefore, not be fixed but should ideally vary with the availability of other factors of production: increasing with the availability of farm equipment and shrinking if the latter shrank.

Any proposal to enlarge holdings can be entertained only if it can be shown that the availability of farm implements has grown considerably in the country, argued Ambedkar. And he then marshalled data to demolish that argument by showing that capital stock had, in fact, declined.

Ambedkar argued that the real challenge lay in raising the stock of capital and that will be possible only if there is greater savings in the economy. This was not possible as long as a great mass of people depended on land for their livelihoods, he reasoned. Therefore, he posited industrialization as the answer to India's agricultural problem.

"In short, strange though it may seem, industrialization of India is the soundest remedy for the agricultural problems of India," Ambedkar concluded. "The cumulative effects of industrialization, namely a lessening pressure (on land) and an increasing amount of capital and capital goods will forcibly create the economic necessity of enlarging the holding. Not only this, industrialization by destroying the premium on land will give rise to few occasions for its sub-division and fragmentation."

What is most remarkable about Ambedkar's analysis is that he was able to conceive of the notion of "disguised unemployment" much before it came into vogue in development economics, and that he was able to anticipate one of the key insights of Nobel Prize-winning economist Arthur Lewis three decades before Lewis formulated his famous two-sector model of the economy.

Lewis presumed that developing economies had surplus and idle labour in the farm sector, and showed how transferring labour from farms to factories would raise savings and productivity levels in both sectors, leading to overall growth. The model Lewis formulated in 1954 was far more elaborate than what Ambedkar outlined in his essay, but there are striking similarities in the way both framed the issue.

Ambedkar returned to this theme in a 1927 speech made on the floor of the Bombay legislative assembly (as it was then called), which was debating a proposal for regulating landholdings.

Ambedkar warned of the folly of such regulation, reiterating his arguments made in the 1918 essay. He argued that the enlargement of landholdings by controlling the partition of immovable property and sale of consolidated holdings would create a small crust of wealthy landowners and a large mass of landless "paupers".

Despite his objections to many social customs sanctioned by Hindu scriptures, Ambedkar voiced his approval of the Hindu law of inheritance, which, according to him, prevented the creation of plutocracy, which primogeniture (the right of succession belonging to the firstborn child) would surely have created. A better way of addressing the problem of fragmentation was to introduce

cooperative farming, and "to compel owners of small strips included therein to join in cultivation without destroying private ownership".

In later years, Ambedkar's energies were devoted more to politics and social change rather than economic analysis, but even his writings and speeches on politics reflected a deep engagement with economic issues and questions of political economy.

Just as his politics are today being appropriated by politicians of all hues, his economics today has become a battleground between the left and the right, with both sides claiming that he was actually on their side. But a careful reading of Ambedkar's writings dispels the view that he was either a champion of a laissez-faire economy or a revolutionary socialist.

Ambedkar's views on economics were as complex as his views on politics and it is likely that one shaped the other. As his views on India's agrarian problems indicate, he saw no contradiction between advocating for industrialization on the one hand and cooperative farming on the other. And in both cases, he supported his arguments with examples of countries in other parts of the world which had adopted the solutions he was advocating. More than doctrine, empirical evidence seems to have guided many of his policy positions.

Although Ambedkar spoke out in favour of industrialization and urbanization, he also warned of the ills of capitalism, arguing that unfettered capitalism could turn into a force of oppression and exploitation.

It was Ambedkar who proposed to the Constituent Assembly that the chapter on fundamental rights in the Constitution should include both negative rights (relating to civil liberties) as well as positive rights (relating to social and economic justice). In a memorandum on this subject, Ambedkar outlined his vision of the rights of citizenship in a free India, and explained why it would entail extensive state control over the economy.

Ambedkar included a section on remedies against "economic exploitation", which proposed, among other things, that key industries should be owned and run by the state and that agriculture should be a state industry. Ambedkar argued that a modified form of state socialism in industry was necessary for rapid industrialization, and that collective farming was the only salvation for landless labourers belonging to the "untouchable" castes.

Anticipating the objections of "constitutional lawyers" who may think that Ambedkar's formulation went beyond the scope of the usual kind of fundamental rights, Ambedkar argued that such a view would be based on a very narrow understanding of fundamental rights. If the objective of such rights was to protect individual liberty, his proposals did the same, Ambekar argued.

Ambedkar argued that an economy based purely on the profit motive violated two tenets of political democracy: one, it allowed private employers, rather than the state, to govern the lives of individuals, and two, it may force an individual to give up his constitutional rights to gain a living.

"If a person who is unemployed is offered a choice between a job of some sort, with some sort of wages, with no fixed hours of labour and with an interdict on joining a union and the exercise of his right to freedom of speech, association, religion, etc., can there be any doubt as to what his choice will be?" Ambedkar wrote. "The fear of starvation, the fear of losing a house, the fear of losing savings if any... are factors too strong to permit a man to stand out for his Fundamental Rights."

Responding to libertarian lawyers who argued for minimum state intervention to protect liberty, Ambedkar argued that withdrawal of the state may lead to liberty but that liberty is "liberty to the landlords to increase rents, for capitalists to increase hours of work and reduce rate of wages".

"In an economic system employing armies of workers, producing goods en masse at regular intervals, someone must make rules so that workers will work and the wheels of industry run on," he wrote. "If the state does not do it, the private employer will. Life otherwise will become impossible. In other words, what is called liberty from the control of the state is another name for the dictatorship of the private employer."

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Both the political and economic structure should be defined by law to translate the rule of one man, one vote to the doctrine of one man, one value, Ambedkar argued. Countries such as India should profit from the experiences of other countries and define the shape and structure of the economy in the Constitution itself, he felt.

Yet, Ambedkar's radical proposals did not win the support of the Constituent Assembly. Instead, many of the provisions outlined in his memorandum found place in the Directive Principles of State Policy, which, though important, are not justiciable in a court of law.

Ambedkar seemed to have accepted that compromise with equanimity when the chapter on directive principles was finalized in late 1948, even though just a year earlier (in 1947), he had made an impassioned plea for making socioeconomic rights justiciable. "How and why Ambedkar's position on social and economic rights changed remains a puzzle," writes political scientist Niraja Gopal Jayal in her 2013 book, *Citizenship and Its Discontents*.

Although Ambedkar resented Jawaharlal Nehru for, among other things, not including him in the cabinet committee on economic affairs (and cited that as one of the reasons for his resignation from the cabinet), his views on the economy and the role of the state mirrored those of Nehru.

Both Nehru and Ambedkar advocated state ownership of key industries to drive rapid industrial growth without closing avenues for private enterprise in the country. Like Nehru, Ambedkar was influenced by the dominant intellectual paradigm of the day, which emphasized a large role of the state in economic affairs.

Both men were also likely influenced by the ideas of Fabian socialists, and their social democrat counterparts in the US. One of the biggest influences on Ambedkar was American educationist and philosopher John Dewey, who became the president of the League of Industrial Democracy in 1939, and who subscribed to a broad conception of social democracy.

Despite accepting certain insights from Marxism, particularly the concept of exploitation in society by one group against another, Ambedkar differed with Marxists in many respects. In an essay titled*Buddha or Karl Marx*, written a few weeks before his death, he analysed the similarities and differences between the ideas of Buddha and those of Marx, and argued that the ideas of the former were more appealing.

Ambedkar pointed out that even Buddha had spoken about the evils of exploitation in society, even if he did not use the Marxist parlance of class conflict, and had warned that private property brought sorrow and suffering to the world. According to him, both Buddhism and Marxism aimed to root out exploitation and suffering, but the means were different.

While one appealed to the conscience of man to change himself, the other relied on violence and the dictatorship of the proletariat to achieve it. The latter was unacceptable to him because it did not recognize the value of human life. To him, the three ideals of liberty, fraternity and equality were compatible only with Buddhism.

Ambedkar was also critical of Indian socialists who failed to take into account caste while planning for class struggle. In that brilliant but undelivered speech written in 1935, *The Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar argued that it was impossible for the poor to form a common front against the rich as long as they maintained caste distinctions.

Ambedkar argued that it was not enough for the socialist to say that he himself did not believe in caste; if he wanted to be taken seriously, he would have to undertake a vigorous programme of social reform to remove caste distinctions in society.

Conclusion:

The main goal of the study is to analyze and evaluate critically the idea of Dr.B.R Ambedkar regarding great Indian democracy and to capture the position of Ambedkar on issues whose relevance is felt even today's time. A detailed analysis of Dr. Ambedkar's life and mission reveals

that Dr. Ambedkar held the basic and fundamental norm, to be equality- social, economic and political, from which he proceeded to lay down a collection of 'ought' propositions; in this hierarchy of 'ought', the initial fundamental 'ought' on which the validity of all the other ultimately rests, the fundamental norm seems to be the social equality, the justification for the rest of the legal reforms and changes he persistently fought for. It was a society full of social inequalities in which Dr. Ambedkar was born. The humiliation he himself experienced in such an impartial society bore on effect in all thought his life. As discussed earlier, Dr. Ambedkar had a visionary cognition of democracy, which needs to be "retrieved" today. But going beyond that, we must also augment this vision in the light of recent developments. While Dr.B.R Ambedkar was far ahead of his time in stressing the link between political and economic democracy, perhaps he failed to visualize the full possibilities of political democracy itself. He thought that in the absence of economic democracy, common people would be powerless. Also, he thought of political democracy mainly in terms of parliamentary and electoral processes. In both respects, his valuation was highly significant at that time. Today, however, we are constantly exploring new forms of democratic practice, in which people are often able to participate even if economic democracy is nowhere near being realised. This ability to participate arises from the fact that economic privilege is not the only basis of advantage in democratic politics. Money power certainly helps, but this advantage is not always decisive. Much depends also on organisational activism, the weight of numbers, the strength of arguments, the force of public opinion, the use of communication skills, and other sources of bargaining power. Aside from bargaining power, social ethics can also come into play in a democracy where there is room for what Dr. Ambedkar called "morality".

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