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AMBEDKAR'S PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL CHANGE

Abhilash¹

¹Research Scholar,
Department of Studies in History,
University of Mysore,
Manasagangotri, Mysore,
Karnataka, India

Dr. Rachaiah²

²Assistant Professor,
Department of History, Maharaja's
College,
University of Mysore, Manasagangotri,
Mysore, Karnataka, India

ABSTRACT

Ambedkar had stricken a balance between gently suggesting pragmatic action and providing critical analysis of the ongoing anti-caste movement in India. Ambedkar wanted to establish an egalitarian society in India through meaningful constitutional protective measures. Ambedkar's great contributions for social change have shaped the character of the nation, India and of democracy. Ambedkar argued that the concept of human capital in India is useless if the poor and down trodden dalits other classes do not recognize untouchables as human beings with equal social status and religious basis. The issues of social change and economic equity are central to national development in India. State has a fundamental role to play to construct a just society. India cannot march towards progress without achieving the goal of social change. The progress of the country is primarily dependent on the eradication of social evils and constraints. Subalternity and exclusion deal with the problem of marginality and emphasizes to treat them as integrated one. The policy makers and corporate leaders should also implement the policy of reservation in the private sector as a matter of corporate social responsibility. The empowerment of Dalits is thus a part of a continued quest for the establishment of an egalitarian society. There is a need for a paradigm shift from post-facto to pro-active planning for the empowerment of Dalits in India.

KEYWORDS: Ambedkar, social change, economic equity, economic development

PREAMBLE

The caste system in India was institutionalized by the priestly class to remain on top of the social, educational, economic and political orders without any achievement and contribution. This system is against the law of natural justice and constitutional justice. It needs to be abolished in Indian society since India needs a reorganization of its antiquated social system in order to fit properly into the modern world. Many social reformers have strongly advocated the need for annihilation of caste in India to establish an egalitarian society. Among all political forces, Ambedkarites, communists and other secular forces have played a prominent role in the creation of a casteless society and put an end to caste-based oppression in the country. Ambedkar's perspective on social change with special reference to India is examined in this article on the basis of secondary data analysis.

AMBEDKAR AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Ambedkar supported the inter-dining and intermarriage practices. He observed that intermarriage was the only solution to the problem of caste system which impeded social change in India. The destruction of caste does not mean the destruction of a physical barrier. It means a notional change for better social and economic orders. He burnt Manusmriti in 1927 to create a casteless society and achieve the goal of social change which is a prerequisite to inclusive social and economic development in India. Ambedkar was a great revolutionary-change-agent and facilitator of inclusive economic development. He had led a non-violent and democratic movement for social transformation in India.

Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy, which means, a way of life which recognize liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life (Ambedkar, 1949:02). Ambedkar struggled for the promotion of social change in India as a prominent social reformer. Ambedkar's critique of an Indian nation was conditioned by his personal experience of caste and empowered by an anti-caste reading of pre-modern Indian history.

Hinduism is not interested in the common man. Hinduism is not interested in society as a whole. The centre of interest lies in a class and its philosophy is concerned in sustaining and supporting the rights of that class. That is why in the philosophy of Hinduism, the interests of the common man as well as of society are denied, suppressed and sacrificed to the interest of dominant class (Ambedkar, 1946:01). Ambedkar wanted to cleanse Hinduism and remain as a Hindu. He realized that his ideal could not be realized because of the strong resistance by the caste enemies in India. Ultimately, he declared that he would never die as a Hindu and

embraced Buddhism in 1956 along with lakhs of followers at Nagpur.

Ambedkar's association with the grand political streams such as liberal, radical or conservative enabled him to develop the core of political thinking for the creation of democratic form of society. He argued that political equality cannot be achieved unless socially backward groups or the depressed classes are not given an equal footing in the political arena. He also strongly pleaded for adequate political representation to the Dalits and Adivasis in Indian legislative bodies to bring about social change and development.

Ambedkar had stricken a balance between gently suggesting pragmatic action and providing critical analysis of the ongoing anti-caste movement in India. Ambedkar's life story and experience can be excavated, built upon, and reflexively mined for their inherent and complex opportunities to create lasting change in Indian society. He illustrated the dehumanizing demerits of the caste system in India and worked for the transformation of Indian society on missionary zeal. Ambedkar is a symbol of freedom and independence, but this freedom is nationalistic and amorphous. The Constitution of India contains several radical and progressive measures for the eradication of social evils and economic obstacles to economic democracy which are the foundations of social change in India.

Ambedkar followed the Buddhist principle for making the Constitution of India and modernizing India in the post – independence era (McMillin, 2010:21). Scholars have explored the religious significance of this movement within a larger context of social change in a much needed corrective to that perspective.

The citizens of the republic are constitutionally committed to democracy, social justice, equality of opportunity, secularism and above all to a welfare state (Sirswal, 2011:37). Ambedkar had called upon the educational institutions to become meaningful social laboratories and produce new generation of change agents.

Ambedkar had vehemently opposed the Gandhian school of thought based on Manusmriti and Varna system (Krishnan, 2011:17). Ambedkar had studied both eastern and western philosophies thoroughly and worked for the eradication of the complexities of social change and economic development in India. He effectively sensitized and mobilized the weaker sections of India for democratic struggle against the caste system and caste based economic exploitation.

Ambedkar wanted to establish an egalitarian society in India through meaningful constitutional protective measures (Ray and Ray, 2012:32). Ambedkar had accepted the concept of democratic struggle for social change and collective

welfare in India. He was a true socialist, emancipator and developmentalist in modern India. He followed Buddhism to ensure a non-violent revolution for social change and economic development in India.

Ambedkar rose to eminence as a social reformer and a leader of the Depressed Classes of India. He worked hard for their upliftment from the downtrodden position they were living in, as a result of social, economic, religious and political disabilities, sanctioned by religion and imposed by custom. The main aim and mission of Ambedkar's life was to try to lead the Depressed Classes towards a higher social, political and economic status and to free them from the stigma of Untouchability that lay upon their foreheads (Kaith, 2014:13). Ambedkar waged a democratic war against social injustice, inequality, oppressive features and vested interests for the creation of a progressive society.

Ambedkar created series of constitutional provisions for the social change and economic development of women and weaker sections of Indian society (Singh, 2015:35). Ambedkar believed much in the abolition of customs for the development and improvement of Indian society. If we evaluate the Indian caste system and philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar, it becomes clear that Dr. Ambedkar was certainly a leader and reformer of caste system. The writings, speeches and struggles of Ambedkar have left an everlasting effect on the depressed classes and they got ready to rise against their slavery (Nath, 2015:24). Ambedkar laid a strong foundation for Dalit movement in India and paved the way for the social change, modernization and development among Dalits, Adivasis and other vulnerable communities in India.

The Buddhist revival in India ignited by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar more than fifty years ago has brought millions of the country's most impoverished and marginalized people to the Buddhist path (Enauke, 2015:07). He argued: 'If you want to save Hindu religion, the Brahmanism will have to be abolished'. Ambedkar heralded a new age of social change and revolution by following Buddhism. He was deeply committed to achieving the goal of social freedom, equality, justice and development in India.

Ambedkar rightly understood that the transformation of social system according to the need of the times and in accordance with the modes and mores of the people is a matter of necessity. He had struck a balance between instrumentality of law and folkways and mores of the people for achieving the goal of social justice in India (Durgalakshmi and Ammu, 2015:06).

Ambedkar considered social and economic democracy as the backbone of political democracy. He pleaded for the establishment of social democracy as a means of social change, transformation, modernization and development in

India (Sukumar, 2015:38). Ambedkar argued that the life and property of the minority groups should be safeguarded by the state institutions. He supported an independent and effective judiciary and legislature for the equitable distribution of income and wealth to establish a welfare society in India. He suggested series of socio-economic schemes for attaining the goal of inclusive growth with social justice.

Ambedkar's great contributions for social change have shaped the character of the nation, India and of democracy. He was a rare combination of immense knowledge, exceptional political prowess and an unwavering commitment to social change. Ambedkar was fully aware of the need for social change to facilitate the integrated development of India on the basis of socialistic path laid out by the Buddha (Kavitha, 2016:15).

Ambedkar was a great nationalist, the greater for his dedication to ensuring protections and equality for the most vulnerable. He showed that democracy requires that oppressed groups such as Dalits are authors of their own destiny, not reliant on philanthropy or the generosity of the wealthy or the benevolence of the pious (Sinha, 2016:36). Ambedkar had adopted the rights based approach to social change and economic development. He embarked upon by all democratic means and methodologies to bring about social change in India.

Ambedkar had made attempts to erase the stratification among the castes and also supported the gender bias in the caste (Yerriswamy, 2016:39). Ambedkar fought for social justice and gender justice to solve the problems of women and weaker sections in the country. He had dreamt of eradicating the caste system through inter caste marriages and unification of weaker sections for the creation of welfare state.

Ambedkar argued that the concept of human capital in India is useless if the poor and down trodden dalits other classes do not recognize untouchables as human beings with equal social status and religious basis. He advocated that social engineering, social networking, human capital development and economic democracy would make India a super power (Mahato and Saha, 2016:20). Ambedkar was a great social visionary and fighter for social change and justice in India. He is a great symbol of revolt against fundamentalism which is the biggest impediment to social change in India.

Ambedkar is the prominent messiah of social justice and humanity in India. He considered the caste system as the greatest evil in Hindu religion. He wanted to reform restrictive Hindu social system, which ascribes status to a man on basis of his birth in a particular low or high caste. He was of the opinion that caste inhibits the social and economic organization of the society (Khanna, 2016:16). Ambedkar's social philosophy revolves

around liberty, equality and fraternity of all human beings in India. He incorporated many progressive safeguards and provisions for the protection and progress of women and weaker sections of India. He was a great social reformer, change agent, guardian of democracy and catalyst of development in India.

Ambedkar vehemently opposed idol worship and the memorialization of individuals through erection of thousands of statues across the country. He had called for structural changes in the social system, political system and economic system in order to create a just society (Rinker, 2017:33). He played a crucial role in the eradication of caste system in India. He encouraged the strategic opportunities for social and structural change of systems in various spheres of human life.

Ambedkarites have noted that the nationalist story of Dr Ambedkar must not be retold without reference to his revolutionary critiques of caste oppression. Ambedkar's nationalism was based on absolute social commitment and quest for economic democracy (Devanoor et. al, 2017:05). There is a strong need for re-appraising and re-appropriating Ambedkar as a champion of social change, equity, justice and development. He was revolutionary in the sense that he was radically new and innovative for his time since he was inspired by the western liberal, social and democratic values and traditions.

The issues of social change and economic equity are central to national development in India. Ambedkar had contributed his best for achieving the goal of social change and establishment of egalitarian social, economic, political and cultural orders. There is a need for integrating the social philosophy of Ambedkar in global perspectives and constructive approaches in achieving the goal of inclusive development.

Ambedkar had managed to bring revolutions by making radical changes in the education, society, economy, polity and other spheres of national life. He embraced Buddhism to liberate India from social, economic, political and cultural diseases and disorders and make the country rich in every aspect of human life. He established a legacy of forward-thinking social reform and economic transformation in India. He had called upon the people of India to give up bullet power and make use of ballot power to transform India as a superpower. He forcefully advocated for the rights of women and weaker sections of India on the principle of natural justice.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Affirmative action, commonly alluded to as reservation, is one of the few policy instrumentalities provided in the Indian Constitution to peck a new socio-political order based on equality and justice (Prabhash, 2001:26). There is a need to assess the impact and consequences of reservation on Dalits in

India to ensure early corrective measures and successful implementation of reservation policy to lead them on the track of social transformation.

The sociological jurisprudence has come a long way from being a theoretical stream towards being consulted for mass reforms. The Supreme Court of India has played a significant role in bringing about equality and social change, building way for an advanced and modern outlook. It certainly has acted as a catalyst in the process of social transformation of people wherein the dilution of caste inequalities, protective measures for the weak and vulnerable sections, providing for the dignified existence of those living under unwholesome conditions, etc. are the illustrious examples in this regard (Jain, 2005:10). The judicial activism has resulted in the protection and transformation of the lives of the disadvantaged sections of society including Dalits in India.

The Indian constitution has brought huge social successes – but rubbing out entrenched inequality is yet to be accomplished in India even after 70 years of independence (Jeffrey, 2010:11). The Government of India has not achieved success in heralding a new era of social change and development of Dalits and Adivasis in India. The media and civil society are required to play a responsible role as instruments of social change and progress of Dalits and other disadvantaged sections of Indian society.

State has a fundamental role to play to construct a just society. India has been implementing social justice programmes through its reservation policy which is in reality a problematic one from its very inception. Certain sections of society whom we call dalits were denied access to the natural resources and denied right to livelihood in India. Ambedkar's leadership provided a fresh path for over all development of Dalits and Adivasis in the country. He believed that the root of untouchability lies in the caste system and caste in the hands of the orthodox has been a powerful weapon for persecuting the reformers and for impeding all reforms (Kumar, 2011:19). Ambedkar had fought for the empowerment of Dalits based on equal rights and human dignity through constitutional provisions and developmental measures. Ambedkar's notion of social justice centered development of Indian economy is relevant in contemporary India.

The caste system in India has created developmental gaps and hindered social change among the marginalized sections of society. The caste solidarity has not been incompatible with the fusion of social and economic elements. The social guild has developed as a conglomerate structure in obedience to larger economic needs than what caste satisfies (Mukerjee, 2011:23). The caste system has resulted in division of labor, disintegration of laborers and marginalization of laborers in India.

Most of the Dalits, backwards and minorities have suffered heavily because of caste based prejudices and deprivations in India.

SOCIAL CHANGE OF DALITS IN INDIA

The Dalits have historically been poor, deprived of basic human rights, and treated as social inferiors in India. They still face economic, social, cultural, and political discrimination in the name of caste. The social and political domination of upper castes has continued in India in the name of caste system which is the biggest hurdle in the way of social transformation of Dalits (Sardar, 2012:34). The social and political mobilization on caste lines has resulted in the continued caste based economic and political monopoly in India. The state has to play a pro-active role in the empowerment of Dalits in the new millennium.

The mass media have not achieved notable success in facilitating social change and economic development of farmers, workers, women and weaker sections of India. The Indian theatre and traditional media have filled the vacuum created by the mainstream media in addressing the social problems in contemporary India. The potentiality of theatre as a medium to diffuse information on addressing social evils has not been utilized effectively. The theatre personalities have brought about commendable awakening among the masses at the grassroots level about social change and inclusive development (Kasturi and Vardhan, 2013:14). The stakeholders of social change and development should utilize the theatre and other traditional media to bring about social change and development among the weaker sections in India.

India cannot march towards progress without achieving the goal of social change. The progress of the country is primarily dependent on the eradication of social evils and constraints (Fraser, 2013:08). Gender inequality persistence in India proves that new values and structures do not necessarily lead to the disappearance of older forms, but they can co-exist with mutual adaptations and reinforcements (Condorelli, 2015:04). Gender inequity and social injustice should be wiped out to create a just society and facilitate social modernization among women and backward sections of society in India.

The elected representatives have the capacity and opportunity to bring changes in the lives of the people represented by them. The economic story cannot be separated from the social story. Dalits have not gained adequate educational and developmental opportunities for their social change and progress in India (Gorringe, 2015:09). Dalits have not achieved better social mobility in the absence of educational and economic resources. Dalits still occupy the lowest rungs of Indian society due to persistent exclusion and impoverishment.

Dalits need committed, responsible and pro-social actions to enjoy the benefits of inclusive education, social capital development, economic resources and political opportunities in India.

There are several issues rooted in the caste system such as exist restrictions for the women and weaker sections in India. The caste system in India has affected the economic status of people by denying them opportunities for social equality and economic justice (Bhalerao, 2016:03). There are several stakeholders of social change and economic development in India. The social work educators and practitioners have a great social responsibility in facilitating social change for creating new developmental opportunities to the socially disadvantaged and economically backward sections of society at the grassroots level.

The mental health problems should be examined comprehensively to undertake social change and economic development oriented programmes concerning Dalits in India. The rights based and recovery oriented approaches will change the way psychiatry is practiced. There is a greater need to evolve services and treatment strategies that take into account sex issues and rights of the underprivileged. The adoption of new technologies and innovative practices will change the lifestyles and improve the health of women and weaker sections (Prasad et. al, 2016:29). Adoption of progressive measures along with an increasing focus on a rights based approach would bring about social change and economic development of Dalits in India.

The government has introduced several schemes for helping the indigent Scheduled Caste people but the importance of whatever the government is doing for them increases hundred-fold because other sources of their upliftment are either closed or proved ineffective (Ram, 2016:31). Dalits and Adivasis have poor traditional educational and economic base which has hindered their social change and progress. The international agencies and institutions have extended financial assistance to the Government of India and regional governments to implement various programmes for the social change and economic development of Dalits. Series of welfare measures which fit into the actual requirements of Dalits and Adivasis should be implemented in India to bring about absolute social and economic transformation.

The goal of social change can be achieved on the basis of integrated efforts and multi-faceted actions in the world. The state has miserably failed in the re-distribution of land to landless Dalits and other peasants to eradicate poverty, unemployment and other constraints to development (Prasad, 2016:27). Land distribution, extension of irrigation, power generation, cooperative farming, adoption of agricultural technologies and entrepreneurship

development are the crucial factors responsible for achieving the goal of peasants and Dalits in India.

The demonetization has certain strengths such as high rates of savings and investment. It is an opportunity to ensure long-run changes in both the economy and the society. Indian polity will be more strengthened, economy will be in upward direction and society will be more cohesive. The social enterprise, which promises both economic empowerment and social transformation, is driving tremendous positive change in the lives of women, weaker sections and indigenous people of India (Prasad, 2017:28). The new economic policy has weakened the foundations of caste system in India and paved the way for social and economic transformation of Dalits and other vulnerable sections of society.

The main goal of social entrepreneurship is not money or wealth; rather they prioritize more on serving the needs and wants of the community in a more resourceful way. The mission behind origin of social enterprises is to bring social change among Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalized sections of society in India. Social entrepreneurship is the best method, which protects the ethnicity, culture of the groups and promotes sustainable development (Kumar, 2017:18). Dalit and Tribe entrepreneurs are experiencing social, financial and technical constraints and limitations. The stakeholders of Dalit empowerment should adopt pro-social measures for the development of social entrepreneurship and achievement of social change with reference to Dalits and other vulnerable sections of society.

Caste, Hindutva and Dalits are the major defining characteristic of Indian society. Gautam Buddha, Kabir, Ambedkar and other social reformers have challenged and opposed this social system which denies fundamental rights and opportunities for social transformation of Dalits. This is a system of structural hierarchy which needs to be annihilated (Puniyani, 2017:30). The mission of Baba Saheb Ambedkar for annihilation of caste should be carried forward to ensure equality of opportunities to all sections of society including Dalits in various fields. Dalits cannot march towards absolute progress without social change in India.

Globalization has created more dangers and opportunities of an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. The social structure has become weak due to migration, modernization, improved social status and economic upliftment of the people in India (Jethwani, 2018:12). The caste system has not gained an upper hand over the new economic environment which has offered better opportunities for social change and economic development of various sections of society including Dalits. India is emerging nation which is trying to reclaim its position in the global economy under the changed circumstances.

Subalternity and exclusion deal with the problem of marginality and emphasizes to treat them as integrated one. The problem of subalternity in the Indian context is more of marginality, subordination, and exploitation, to which a vast section of Indian society has been subjected through socio-economic and political processes. Exploration of dynamic relations between subalternity, exclusion and social change needs to be undertaken to implement suitable measures for social change and development of Dalits and other backward sections of Indian society (Pankaj and Pandey, 2018:25).

Globalization has changed the mindset of people in India and other developing nations. The technological advancement and the mastery of the human mind makes people feel empowered and in control. The Indian demonetization was intended to eradicate corruption which has blocked social change and economic transformation of people (Jethwani, 2018:12). Globalization has weakened the caste system and facilitated a social paradigm shift from caste oriented economy to class oriented economy in India. The demonetization move has failed to usher in a new era of social justice and economic transformation with special reference to Dalits and other indigenous people of India.

There were movements to create a Dalit consciousness and win constitutional recognition. The Hindutva forces have created several obstacles to social change, economic development and political modernization of Dalits in India. Dalits still remain supremely vulnerable to violence, oppression and deprivation in all walks of life. The devastation of Dalit lives continues in the most sickening way (Mehta, 2018:22). Dalit political leaders in major political parties have not worked sincerely for the social change and development of Dalits in India. They have lost the benefit of reservation in employment sector due to liberalization of economy in the country. True Dalit representatives should be enabled to gain entry into legislative bodies to fight for social justice. The policy makers and corporate leaders should also implement the policy of reservation in the private sector as a matter of corporate social responsibility.

The goals of social change and economic development of Dalits can be achieved on the basis of certain pro-social measures in India. They include – change of mindset of the rulers, prevention of atrocities, implementation of poverty alleviation programmes, separate electorate for Dalits, conversion to Buddhism, adoption of progressive measures, allocation of adequate resources, implementation of reservation policy in the private sector, enhancement of reservation benefit according to the increasing population, social capital development, human resources development, skill development, proficiency development,

entrepreneurship development and leadership development of Dalits.

SUMMARY

Dalits constitute approximately 25% of the total population of India in the present times. They suffer from multi-faceted injuries and deprivations due to Hindu social order, caste system and power structure created by the castiest and market forces. Ambedkar had led a historical movement for social justice and economic equity for Dalits, Adivasis and other vulnerable sections of society in India. The country has witnessed strong mass movement against oppressive features and forces. The empowerment of Dalits is thus a part of a continued quest for the establishment of an egalitarian society. There is a need for a paradigm shift from post-facto to proactive planning for the empowerment of Dalits in India. The educational progress of Dalits matters most from the point of view of empowerment of Dalits. In the present age of privatization of higher education, the mainstream higher educational institution have failed to fulfill their social obligations since they are controlled by the market forces which practically constitute 'class enemy' and 'caste enemy' of Dalits and other oppressed sections of Indian society. The future agenda for the stakeholders of educational justice, social change and economic development in the country with reference to Dalits must deal with the process of inclusive educational development and equality centered economic development in India.

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