



Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Thoughts on Ideal Democracy

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ABSTRACT:

This present research paper will bring into light Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's views on democracy in general and his contribution for the upliftment of the downtrodden masses of the society in particular.

Aristotle, a renowned Greek philosopher, criticized democracy as the most degenerated form of governance. On the contrary, Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as "Democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people". Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar also expressed that a democracy is a mode of administering a country. He walked away from the conventional concepts of democracy and viewed it as an instrument of bringing about change peacefully. What kind of a democracy do we wish for?

Following the footprints of these great philosophers, Dr. Ambedkar, the way he thought about and looked at all the problems and issues of a prosperous independent India with a different perspective, very few thinkers have reflected on the problems and issues of socio-political history of modern India. With the mission of complete eradication of casteism and untouchability from the society and to create a powerful and united modern India, he did not take part in the Indian freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, being a true patriot, supported India's struggle for independence. At the same time, he argued that unless we make socially, economically deprived classes liberate from the age old socio-economical inequalities, the Indian freedom struggle will remain just the pages of the book of history. His question, "What will be the position and place of the untouchables and the depressed classes in the post independent India?" posed, left the leading figures in the freedom movement unanswered. The changes, after 60-62 years of independence, in the lives of these classes, is the fruit Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's work did bear.

Key words: Democracy, Governance, Ethics

INTRODUCTION:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar remarked that though the democracy as a theory and a system of governance has evolved against the uncontrolled monarchy and dictatorship, even then, it is not a regressive and negative

form of governance. While explaining its conceptual characteristics, he maintained, "Democracy is a dynamic form of governance in a society. The objectives of democracy change with the change of time. Its aim in the modern democratic setup is not only to curb the unbridled rights of a



monarch but also to seek inclusive welfare of the people in a state.”

Earlier, it was believed that a king is an incarnation of the God and he should reign over his subject on the advice and the blessings of a Brahmin. This deep rooted belief in the Indian psyche was strongly condemned by the first social reformer in Maharashtra, Mahatma Jyotiba Fuley. He ostensibly asserted, “Crippled under the ill faith, the socially, economically and educationally underprivileged and downtrodden section of the society will not easily welcome this Western democratic philosophy of liberty, fraternity and equality.” He recounted and engraved the Indian history in their minds through the folk literature. Putting forward the principles of ideal democracy and the sovereignty of the people and condemning the way through which Brahmins presented history before the Indian minds, he enlightened the socially, economically and educationally depressed classes of the Indian society. Thus, in its truest sense, Mahatma Jyotiba Fuley is the pioneer of democratic reforms in India.

The ideal democracy means, “The government of the people, by the people and for the people.” But looking at the present

imbroglio in Indian state, democracy may not be worthless to say that it is the governance by the politicians, of the politicians and for the politicians.

While explaining the scope and character of democracy, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar mentioned, “Democracy is a form and method of Government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed”.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar : His undisputable faith in democracy

Despite of criticism for his non-participation in the freedom struggle, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar happily and responsibly accepted the task of drafting the Constitution of India. His relentless work as the chairman of the Drafting Committee was applauded and was taken cognizance of. Thus, he is called as the Architect of Indian Constitution.

Dr. Ambedkar had an ardent faith in democracy. But looking at the historical underpinnings and the prevalent socio-economic and cultural stratification in the society at the time, he believed that the democracy in India is not a spontaneous



evolution. Rather, he believed that the democracy in India is the outcome of the western philosophy of democracy. He was always concerned about its success in Indian setup. Dr. Ambedkar was against all forms of dictatorship but he strongly opined that the democracy is an impressive weapon at the hands of the dalits, working classes and women through which they can fight for their rights and issues. His concern for these depressed classes is evident from the stand he took for the rights and issues for these classes, his elaborate and thought provoking writings and speeches addressed to the masses for the success of democracy. Especially, his speech at the Law Library Hall, Pune on 22nd December, 1956 in which he precisely talked about the success of Parliamentary democracy in India is an example of his ardent faith and farsightedness in democracy. The speech is still relevant and throws a dark light on today's socio-political condition in India.

Unified society as a success of Democracy

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The first and foremost prerequisite condition for the success of democracy is the non prevalence of inequality in the society. Such kind of inequality in society is

not only detrimental to form a society based on emotional integrity and unity but also it breeds violence, hatred and separatism among the masses. In the post-independent India, it is true that the poor and destitute class of the society had reaped the benefits of India's success story but near about 15 to 20 per cent affluent class grabbed a large stake in it. Due to economic developments, the hike in the percentage of Gross Domestic Product in the last 15 to 20 years is a welcome sign for the country but its benefit did not reach equally to the stakeholders of the society. Thousands of crore are being spent and invested on various social development measures but the poor and destitute people are deprived of these facilities and are being unheard of their plights. To keep intact the vested interests of the rich class, a corrupt and a parallel system is responsible for the wretched condition of the underprivileged people. Consequently, even after 60 years of independence, approximately 30 to 35 percent people are under Below Poverty Line living their lives in dire conditions.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar fought for the eradication of casteism and untouchability from the society and



advocated the cause of empowerment of women. This further resulted in the formation of the Hindu Code Bill. But due to its non passage as an act, he immediately resigned as the Law minister. Looking at the political conundrum on the issue of 33 percent reservation for women in the parliament, the reformative cause Dr. Ambedkar took for women empowerment seem relevant today.

Conscientiousness amongst political parties :

Dr. Ambedkar, in this regard, asserted that a strong and influential opposition party and an environment of consensus between ruling and opposition parties is a mantra of success in a democracy. As it is the duty of the opposition party to have checks and balances over the ruling government so is a moral responsibility of the ruling party to respect the stand taken by the opposition. It is a believed principle in a democracy that the political parties strive to hold the reign of power using the method of diplomacy. But the political parties should not forget that the conscience in democracy is also a backbone in it.

Ethics and morals

The third condition, Dr. Ambedkar said is to keep constitutional ethics. Keeping aside the temptations caused by the power struggle, to keep and nourish morality and ethics is of utmost importance for the democracy.

Equality before Law:

“Equality before law is the fourth prerequisite condition”, Dr. Ambedkar mentioned. Apparently, though, it seems simple and easy but it is not so. The very idea of equality before the law becomes more meaningless and worthless due to the deep rooted social and economic inequality rampant in the society.

Guarantee to Security:

Dr. Ambedkar asserted that the last condition is to guarantee the security of minority and underprivileged class by the majority people. The majority and minorities are the correlated concepts. In the political spectrum, keeping in mind the vote bank, today’s majority class is tomorrow’s minority and today’s minorities may play the role of majority in the government. Despite the fact, Indian society is replete



with religious and linguistic majority and minority groups. India is well-known for its unity in diversity. It is a moral responsibility of a majoritarian class to look after the minority people in a country. At the same time, the minority society should also show positivism and participate in staking their claim for their rights. Keeping in mind India's religious, linguistic and regional intolerance, it is the need of the hour to constitute a political environment to create harmony and peace in India.

Presently, Indian democracy is undergoing a test of time. Looking at the present scenario, a lingering doubt peeps into mind whether the people of India would sustain its democratic principles. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar says, "Till the British rule in India, we held the Britishers responsible for the good and the bad in the country. But today, in modern India, the onus lies in us to do best for the betterment of our countrymen. We should act more responsibly further."

Summing up :

Tragically, caste, religion, casteism, terrorism are becoming more vibrant. Diversity is considered to be the vital

characteristic of a modern democratic society. But the inequality which emanates through this diversity should also be eliminated completely. Dr. Ambedkar always believed that unless we strive for political awareness, internal security, integrated political parties, autonomy of media, judiciary and print and electronic media. We would not be able to stake claim for the righteous living of the people unless we build India as a sovereign, socialist and republic nation.

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