

Dr. Ambedkar's Educational Thoughts and Their Relevance to Present Society



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Abstract

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar-a great freedom fighter, constitution maker, political leader, philosopher, thinker, economist, editor, social reformer and a deep scholar has made significant efforts to lead the society on the path of liberty, equality and fraternity.

He secured the highest academic honors from some of the most prestigious universities of the world. It is proved by a recently conducted survey by 'History TV 18 and CNN IBN' in June 2012. 'Who is greatest Indian after Mahatma Gandhi? Is the question asked from the people of India. The contestants include first PM Jawahar Lal Nehru, Singer Lata Mangeshkar, Industrialist J.R.D. Tata, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Indira Gandhi etc. The final cumulative ranking was conducted following the three ways poll; ranking by jury (online and on ground), ranking by popular votes and ranking by market research. Finally, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar declared as winner.

Historian Ramchandra Guha stated on the declaration of results "Dr. Ambedkar's legacy has been distorted to suit particular interest. He was a great scholar, institution builder and economic theorist"

Keywords: Depressed Class Education, Women Education, Primary Education, Higher Secondary Education.

Introduction

Ambedkar's important contribution to the education sector was his belief that 'education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of everyone.' Education ought to be cheapened in all possible ways and to the greatest possible extent. He urged this plea because he felt that "we are arriving at a stage when the lower orders of society are just getting into high school, middle schools and colleges, and the policy of this department therefore ought to be to make higher education as cheap to the lower class as it can possibly be made."

Objectives of the Study

The present paper is an attempt to highlight Dr. Ambedkar's educational thoughts based on the education of education for depressed class and different levels of education. It also proves the relevancy of his ideas in present political and social scenario of India.

Methods and Materials

Secondary data collected from internet, government documents, news papers, published papers, books and speeches delivered by Dr.Ambedkar in parliament, various conferences and meetings in pre and post independent India.

Analysis and Discussion

Education of Depressed Class and Women

Ambedkar put due stress on the gender equality and the need for education to depressed class as well as women. He quoted statistics from the report of education and hunter commission to point out that depressed classes are the worst suffers in education sector in proportion to their population. So he stressed that principle of favoured treatment must be adopted in their case. He stated "It is the education which is the right weapon to cut the social slavery and it is the education which will enlighten the downtrodden masses to come up and gain social status, economic betterment and political freedom. (Ambedkar 1979:39-42)

He considered education as a tool of women empowerment because education to women is the most powerful instrument of changing their position in the society. Education also brings reduction in inequalities and also acts as a means to improve their status within the family. So he stated that women should be given all round development, more importantly social education. He emphasized that each and every section of Indian women should be given their due share and it is a must to maintain and protect dignity and modesty of women. He advocated the

women education as educated women can show the courage to deny the life of slaves and insist on the principle of equality. They can get real respect and their own identity.

Primary Education

Ambedkar was convinced that primary education is very important for the depressed sections as it provides them necessary platform to enter into public life. Ambedkar pointed out that, "The object of primary education is to see that every child that enters the portals of primary school does leave it only at a stage when it becomes literate and continues to be literate throughout the rest of his life." (Ambedkar 1982: 40)

Ambedkar also cautioned regarding the trend of dropout rate at the initial stage. He stated "if we take the statistics, we find that out of every 100 children that enter a primary school only 18 reach the fourth standard; the rest of them, that is to say, 82 out of 100, relapse into the state of literacy." (Ambedkar 1982: 40)

Ambedkar stressed to spend more money on primary education. He made a historical appeal for more grants to develop primary education for all section during 1927 in his legislative council debates in the Bombay Assembly. (Ambedkar 1982:40)

Ambedkar was also against the commercialization of education and criticized the existing government, "out of the total expenditure which we incur on arts colleges, something like 36 percent is financed from fees ; out of the expenditure that we incur on high schools, something like 31 percent is financed from fees ; out of the expenditure that we incur, on middle schools, somethings like 26 percent is derived from fee:" (Ambedkar 1982:40)

Higher Education

Ambedkar made important interventions during the Bombay University Amendment act and gave his views on university education that are still very relevant to promote higher education in India. Ambedkar also gave suggestions on higher education by submitting written evidence before the university reforms committee in 1925.

According to Ambedkar, "one of the fundamental functions of the university, as I understand it, is to provide facilities for bringing the highest education to the doors of the needy and the poor" (Ambedkar 1982)

Ambedkar argued for the adequate representation of different communities in the senate to control the university affairs.

The objective of university education is 'to develop and original student who should be able to weigh evidence to follow and criticize argument and put his own value on authorities. (Quoted by chalam 2008: 26-27)

Ambedkar's idea of pooling the teaching recourse of both city colleges and universities to avoid duplication and to improve efficiency is still valid. He held that most of the colleges in a city offer similar course and this could be organized in such a fashion that the lecturing system was pooled and the student in the different colleges were allowed to listen and attend to the lectures to be delivered in any one

particular college, the professors who are lecturing would be easily released to do some kinds of special work. Ambekar (1982:47)

Ambedkar was perhaps the first educationist who wanted power to be given to the academic council in matters of academic affairs in the university. (Quoted in Aryama 2007: 348-349)

On June 20, 1946, the establishment of the people's education society was an important step Ambedkar took to contribute to the spread of higher education among the backward classes. The society gave monthly scholarship, provided cheap accommodation and paid immense attention to students' problems and encouraged progress. The society had made good progress in this direction and running a number of colleges. (Kadam 1993:210)

Concluding Remark

Thus, Ambedkar suggested several policy measures for the development of education starting from primary to university that can be found to be relevant today to make the education sector effective and accountable. His ideas are full of innovations and quite pragmatic. His emphasis on the economic value of education that is the utilization of scare recourses for the development of education, the idea of the pooling the teaching resources of both, city colleges and university to avoid duplication and to improve efficiency etc. are still very relevant.

Ambedkar has deliberately included Article 45 in the directive principles of state policy that, "the state shall endeavors to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." The government of India has passed the bill of Right to Education act 2008 and paid a great tribute to the contribution of Ambedkar to mass education. Government's policy of universalization of elementary education focusing particularly poorer sections and the girl child. There are several challenges to cherish Ambedkar's vision of universal education. There is need to frame such policies starting from the primary stage to the higher stage that help to realize the vision of Ambedkar

The American writer, Professor Eleanor Zelliot, in her book on Dr. Ambedkar writes: "..... Dr. Ambedkar was not only concerned that the depressed classes have education, but education itself is bettered."

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