

Dr. Ambedkar and An Analysis of Indian Democracy

Date of Submission: 07/08/2021, Date of Acceptance: 22/08/2021, Date of Publication: 23/08/2021

Abstract

This paper studied Dr. Ambedkar's ideas from a broad perspective of democracy. Most people consider him only as a messiah of Dalit or who had only worked for them, but this is a parochial perspective. Dr. Ambedkar was a firm supporter of democracy. 20th November 1930 at the plenary session of the Roundtable in London, he said, "We need a government in which those in power understand when the obedience of the Government is lost and resistance begins, then they do not hesitate to change the codes of conduct of social and economic life in view of the needs of justice and time, only the Government which is the Government of the people, is for the people and elected by the people." Today, in the 21st century, Babasaheb Ambedkar has become a world personality through the architect of the Constitution and has solid foundations. In this research paper, we have focused on his intellectual insights about democracy and its challenges. Apart from this, this paper will also highlight his contribution in the other sphere of social science.

Keywords: One Man-One Vote, Social Democracy, Economic Democracy, Social Justice, Anarchy, Liberty, Justice, Equality.

Introduction

In today's Indian democratic environment, we were thinking and discussing a lot about Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar and not as dalit theorist or as a saviour. Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar was a great constitutionalist, educationist, patriot, social reformer, philosopher, journalist, and economist. Most of all, he was an ideal student and always an ideal student. Apart from economics, political science, history, sociology and law, he had also mastered in painting, sculpture, tabla playing, violin playing, music art and cooking. He had proficiency in English, German, French, Marathi, Hindi, Pali and Persian. Babasaheb did many things to improve the lives of people from all walks of life in the country while holding many positions in his lifetime. Dr. Ambedkar was a firm supporter of democracy. November 20, 1930 at the plenary session of the Roundtable in London, he said, "We need a Government in which those in power understand when the obedience of the Government is lost and resistance begins, then they do not hesitate to change the codes of conduct of social and economic life in view of the needs of justice and time, only the Government which is the Government of the people, is for the people and elected by the people."¹

In his extraordinary speech in the Constituent Assembly of India on November 25, 1949 ², he made three warnings in the context of the Indian democratic system — the first warning was about the threat of street agitation rather than constitutional methods, which he called the grammar of anarchy. He believed that we should resolve each of our disputes through constitutional means within the constitutional framework. A true democracy is one in which necessary social, political, and economic changes can be made without violence and bloodshed. If his warning had been taken seriously by the governments of the country, all the local, state level and national class-specific agitations, violence, sabotage that have taken place so far could have been prevented, whether it was Godhra riots, Muzaffarnagar riots or Jat agitation for reservation, which saw open violence, sabotage,. Here, Iqbal recalls that Jhamuriyat is the index order where votes are counted and not weighted. I mean, here, I mean not to deny the principle of one vote, but to the chaos based on class interests committed in violation of the Indian Constitution and law and order on the strength of numbers, which Babasaheb Ambedkar called the grammar of anarchy in Indian democracy.



Ritesh Bhardwaj
Associate Professor
Dept. of Political
Science,
Shyam Lal College
(Eve.)
University of Delhi
Delhi, India



Pinki Punia
Associate Professor,
Dept. of Political
Science,
PGDAV College,
University of Delhi
Delhi, India

The second warning was given by Ambedkar on the difference between political democracy and social democracy. He said that India has given franchise to every adult Indian (one person, one vote), which will give political equality to all. But he also said that at the social level, our society is based on the principle of multi-level non-equality, which means the development of some people and the downfall of some. If there is an imbalance between political rights and social diversity, the victims of inequality will break the framework of a political democracy that the Constituent Assembly of India has painstakingly created. Here, Dr. Ambedkar said that merely achieving equality in political life cannot establish true democracy unless there is social equality and social justice in a democracy. He therefore described political equality and social equality as the basis of democracy.³

Objective of the Study

The aim of this paper is to discuss and analyse the concept of democracy in Ambedkar's perspective. This paper addresses the three challenges in front of Indian Democracy, which was highlighted by Ambedkar in the constitutional assembly. We have correlated these challenges in the context of contemporary democratic structure of India.

Main Text

According to Dr. Ambedkar, nationality has been a great power in the history of humanity. It is a sense of unity it should not belong to any particular class. Ambedkar has the right nationalism, the abandonment of caste sentiment. He believed that nationalism can only assume relevance if the distinction between caste, race, colour and gender is forgotten and social brotherhood is given the highest place in it. Dr. Ambedkar was in Favour of personal equality and freedom in Indian democracy. Some members of the Constituent Assembly had demanded that the people of India be replaced by 'Bharat Rashtra' in the preamble.⁴ Babasaheb Ambedkar asked him, 'How can people belonging to thousands of castes and sub-castes be a nation? The sooner we understand that socially and psychologically, we are not a nation now, the better. Baba Saheb believed that India is still a society divided into thousands of castes and castes are anti-national, they spread disharmony in social life and create jealousy and animosity among castes and castes. Since India lacks the 'consciousness of the entire class', there cannot be brotherhood in Indian society and no nation can be built without brotherhood. Therefore, if the nation is created, there has to be a brotherhood between the societies and the individuals. On the other hand, Dr. Ambedkar also described the nation as a philosophy and in reality called it a combination of many groups. He described the nation as a master of memories of a high cultural heritage. On the above grounds, Dr. Ambedkar linked the nation to the self-representation and rights of individuals and groups and described nation building as the ultimate goal of establishing these rights. He described the establishment of the rights of social

groups, especially those deprived of social, economic, political, religious, educational, etc., as an intended sign of nation building for thousands of years and for this ideal purpose he contributed incomparably to the formulation of the Constitution of India by taking two years, eleven months and seventeen days. Therefore, Babasaheb Ambedkar is also called the Architect of the Constitution, but Dr. Ambedkar's goal was not just constitution making, he wanted nation building and established the right of all social groups to self-represent in nation building.⁵

It is also important to remember the third warning of Dr. Ambedkar. Ambedkar has asked Indians not to follow a leader blindly. Ambedkar had cited liberal thinker John Stuart Mill as saying that in a democracy, citizens should never put their freedom at the feet of any individual. No matter how great that person is, he should not be given enough strength to crush the constitutional institutions. Dr. Ambedkar had quoted J.S. Mill's views and said, "If a nation has no right to control another nation to serve its own interests.⁶ Similarly, one person has no right to control another person to serve his own interests. Ambedkar had said that there is nothing wrong in being grateful to the great people who served the country, but the extent of this gratitude should be known. Irish patriot Danyal O'Connell had said that a man should not be grateful at the cost of his honour and no woman should be grateful at the cost of her dignity and similarly no country should be grateful at the cost of its freedom.⁷

Ambedkar further said that this warning is more relevant in India than in any other country, as devotion and individual worship are more in Indian politics than in any other country. Devotion in religion may be the path to the liberation of the soul, but in politics, devotion and individual worship is the surest path to downfall and dictatorship. Indira Gandhi, for example, had no qualms about her praise. From 1969 to 1974, he made himself a symbol of the country. After finishing the Privy Purse, nationalising banks and winning the war against Pakistan, she believed that the country should worship her. The worship of the average person was also promoted by some people. M. F. Husain painted his paintings like Durga, said Devkant Barua, a distinguished Assamese poet and Congress leader, 'India is Indira, Indira is India'. Doordarshan is called Indira Darshan. The conduct of Indira Gandhi and her fans shows the dangers of devotion in politics. As Ambedkar said, the result came as collapse and finally dictatorship.

Indira Gandhi was the first leader of India politics who was worshipped in Indian politics, but then there were many leaders whose fans worshipped her. Bal Thackeray, M. G. Ramachandran and N. T. Ramarao was felicitated by their fans at the level of superhuman beings. After this, the worship of the deceased leaders is also going on. Shivaji for the Marathas and Subhash Chandra Bose for Bengalis are similar leaders. Sonia Gandhi encourages worship of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi. Paradoxically, today Ambedkar's person has also become a sect of worship. In a

message to Madras's 'Jai Bhim' magazine on his 55th anniversary, Dr. Ambedkar said, Personally, I don't like to celebrate anniversaries.⁸ The leader of India is given the same respect as the Prophets, which is bad for democracy. Researcher is against individual worship, Babas, deities, the concept of rebirth, the entry of the soul into another body, Mesmerism, Tantra Mantra and Astrology, Dr. Ambedkar did not believe at all. Dr. Ambedkar referred to Kalama Sutta in the context of Buddha's teachings (called the first manifesto of independent thinking) that Buddha has said that do not believe anything because it is written in the Scriptures or that it has been happening long ago or scholars and elders say so. Put everything to the test of your experience and with it and it is beneficial for you and others. Today, if we want to show respect to Babasaheb Ambedkar, his person will not work with worship, but his thoughts, ideals, lifestyle has to be brought into his conduct and thoughts, his statement has to be fulfilled in what is still lacking. Narendra Modi is now becoming a sect. Like the Congress or other regional parties, the BJP has not been controlled by any one person. Advani, Murlī Manohar Joshi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee gained equal importance during his rise. Even after Vajpayee became prime minister, he was a little above other leaders. But perhaps now it has all changed. In the 2014 elections, the BJP has brought itself under the control of one person.

Apart from these three warnings given in the Constituent Assembly of India, if we look at his overall (social, political, economic) views on democracy, they appear relevant in their time and in many ways even beyond their time. In the field of economic democracy, he presented a thesis for PhD in 1916, titled 'National Dividend for India: A Historical and Analytical Study'. In March 1923, he presented his thesis 'The Promise of the Rupee: its Origin and Its Solutions' for DSC in Economics. Dr. Ambedkar has made a very scholarly discussion on the mudra problem. According to Dr. Ambedkar, closing the mint can remove inflation and internal price imbalances. He said that gold should be the standard of price and accordingly there should be flexibility in the currency as well. Dr. Ambedkar concluded that India has suffered a lot from the adoption of a monetary policy of gold exchange standard. India should replace its currency exchange rate, gold exchange standard with gold standard. So that there is not much fluctuation in the currency exchange rate and there is no greater boost to speculation.

On monetary policy, he also clashed with a Nobel Prize-winning economist like J.M. Kens, who favoured the gold exchange standard. After some time, the Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance, also known as the Hilton Youth Commission, came to India. Every member of this Commission had the book 'The Problem of the Rupee' as a reference book. The views that Dr. Ambedkar presented to the Hilton Youth Commission on India's currency problem were an important contribution to the currency problem. The Commission submitted its report in 1926. Based on

the same report, the Reserve Bank of India was established on 1st April 1935.

On July 2, 1942, Dr. Ambedkar was inducted as a Labour Member in the Executive Council of the Viceroy. At that time, he supported the workers in all the struggles of the owning labourer's and on 7th May, 1943; he chaired the Standing Labour Committee established by the Tripartite Labour Conference and took the initiative to set up joint labour committees and employment offices. He implemented the Provident Fund for the social security of the workers. He also played a role in fixing working hours for job seekers. He believed that a person's working hour should be fixed. In April 1944, Dr. Ambedkar introduced an amendment bill to provide paid leave to the workers who are working continuously. Dr. Ambedkar asked the workers to ask the capitalists why they did not spend money to raise the living conditions of the workers. According to Dr. Ambedkar, an agreement is necessary for industrial peace, amendment of labour dispute law and minimum wage law. He said that industrial peace can be established on the basis of law. For this, the tripartite route will be favourable. He said that industrial peace can be established only by eliminating exploitation, by labour welfare and through right industrial relations.

Dr. Ambedkar was made minister of the Central Public Works Department (CP-W-D) in the Executive Council of the Viceroy. While holding the post, Dr. Ambedkar presented a multipurpose Damodar Valley Development Plan for Bengal and Bihar in August 1945, which resembled the Tennessee Valley Project in the US. Under the scheme, works like water for irrigation, water traffic, power generation, etc. In November 1945, he launched a multipurpose scheme for the development of rivers in Orissa, which eventually came into effect as Hirakund dam. Just a few years ago, the Government of India launched the River Linking Scheme, which was first given by Babasaheb Ambedkar in water management. He said that the development of power generation and irrigation schemes is essential for India's industrialisation and economic development. He presented a detailed plan for the development and excavation of India's mineral wealth and reconstituted the Zoological Survey of India.

Dr. Ambedkar believed that India can be empowered only if women are strong. In a letter to a friend from New York on August 4, 1913, he criticised the principle that man receives everything in this world on the basis of birth or according to past deeds. Dr. Ambedkar wrote in the same letter, "It is wrong that parents give birth only to a child, not the future." Parents can make their children's future brighter. If we follow this principle, we can see a wonderful day quickly and if we pay attention to the education of boys and girls, we can progress quickly. You can see for yourself the beneficial results by educating your daughter.

Dr. Ambedkar believed that women constitute half of the population of any country and therefore, any country can progress only when its women had equal opportunities for progress. At an

All India Women's Conference in Nagpur, Dr. Ambedkar had said, "If I look at the progress of a community on a scale of how much progress its women have made, I have been the biggest supporter of the upliftment and liberation of women and I have tried my best to improve the condition of women in my community and I am proud of it. Addressing the public after the Nirbhaya incident, Uttar Pradesh Samajwadi Party President Mulayam Singh Yadav said, "When a young man makes a mistake, he gets seduced, but that does not mean that he should be hanged. Based on this statement, we can gauge their patriarchal mindset. The Manu Smriti book in India ignores the interests and rights of women. In protest, Dr. Ambedkar collectively cremated Manu Smriti. He believed that because of Manu Smriti, women could not get their due rights.

In all government and non-government institutions, women are facilitated by maternity leave for women employees, in fact, it was Babasaheb Ambedkar's thinking. In 1942, when Dr. Ambedkar was appointed as a labour member in the Executive of the Governor General, Babasaheb Ambedkar arranged maternity leave for the first time in India. Later, Article 14, 15 of the Constitution provided that there would be no discrimination against women on the basis of gender and incorporated such right to equality as fundamental rights. Not only that, as Law Minister, Dr. Ambedkar introduced the Hindu Code Bill in Parliament, which was aimed at creating a uniform code of conduct for communities divided into different sects, in which women got equal rights in matrimonial matters, in case of divorce from husband, in case of succession, in case of adoption, in terms of maintenance. Dr. Ambedkar had said many times that He was more interested and happy to pass the Hindu code than to frame the Constitution. There is no other example of a politician fighting for the interests of women, but sadly, today, many women are still unaware of baba sahib's actions and efforts in his interest. If we look at the readable material of women's study today, we hear the names of many feminist experts like Mary Wolstein Craft, J.S. Mill, Shulamith Firestone, Sheila Rowbotham, etc., but nowhere has Babasaheb Ambedkar's contribution to the study material been highlighted. In the 1986 Shahbanu case, the Supreme Court was the first to strongly advocate the Uniform Civil Code and thereafter, there were several demands in Indian society. Recently, the issue is again under consideration of the society in triple talaq. The solution to all these contemporary problems can be clearly visible in Dr. Ambedkar's vision.

Dr. Ambedkar used to say, "According to the orders in the Scriptures, a lot of oppression has been committed against the Shudras and untouchables as well as the entire woman race, irrespective of caste. Dr. Ambedkar used to say that I want to benefit the entire woman race of India by passing the Hindu Code Bill. I saw many young women and adult women who belonged to the golden caste and deserted by their husbands, who were abandoned by their husbands and made a nominal four-five rupees a monthly living for their

livelihood. Such women were crying with their parents or brothers on the day of their lives. Because of this situation, the parents of such women were also in mourning. Even today, we can clearly see this situation of women in Vrindavan widows who are only waiting for their last moments. Dr. Ambedkar said that when a Hindu husband abandoned his first wife and got married second, third or fourth, such a first wife could get divorced by staking such tyrannical husbands on the strength of the law (Hindu Code Bill) and marry someone else for a living. The Hindu code bill also had a strong feature that the marriage of any two Hindu brides, irrespective of their caste distinction or caste distinction, was valid and that the children born out of them were legitimate officers in ancestral property. Earlier, children born out of conflicting castes, castes, sub-caste marriages were not considered valid or justified to get a share or share in ancestral property.

For centuries, the practice of adoption or adoption, according to the orders and prevailing customs contained in the scriptures, facilitated only the homogeneous, but the Hindu code not only gave the right to adopt any Hindu boy and girl child but also empowered the property of the adopted parents. However, Dr. Ambedkar's progressive thinking did not go down well with those at the Centre of power at that time and he did not allow the Hindu Code Bill to be passed, which talked about women's empowerment, and Dr. Ambedkar even resigned as a law minister. Later, in 1955-56, the Hindu Code Bill was passed in several pieces such as the Hindu Marriage Act, the Hindu Succession Act, the Hindu Lap and the Alimony Act. Dr. Ambedkar also played an important role in passing these laws. He helped the then Law Minister, Shri Patskar, by explaining in detail every section of the Hindu Code and preparing answers to the arguments against it in advance. Dr. Ambedkar's dream (Hindu Code Bill) came true when the Hindu Succession Act was amended in 2005 to give equal rights to the daughter in an ancestral property like her son.

Hardly any other leader thought and did as much as Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar thought of for every section of the country. Dr. Ambedkar was not just a politician, but a social reformer and truly the voice of the poor, women, farmers and marginalised people. He understood their pain very well, he was in favour of equality, which is why he worked for every section that was marginalised whether it was women, farmers, or exploited sections, raised their voice of their rights and fought for their rights. Though the people in power constantly ignored Dr. Ambedkar's views and propagated him only as a class representative, after reading Dr. Ambedkar and knowing the work done by him, it is true that Dr. Ambedkar was not only pro-one but pro-people of a particular class. In other words, we can say that Dr. Ambedkar belongs to everyone.

Conclusion

Today, in the 21st century, Babasaheb Ambedkar has become a world personality through the architect of the Constitution and has solid

foundations. Ambedkar Peeth has been established at Columbia University, USA on the personality and creativity of Dr Baba Saheb. Since 1964, people like O.M. Lynch, L.N.R. Elliot, Gail Omvedt, Lila Saskil, Christophe Jaffrelot have been continuously researching Babasaheb's personality and creativity. India's Dalit NRIs are celebrating Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary in the UK, USA, Australia, Germany, Spain, Italy, France, Middle East, etc. Statues of Babasaheb Ambedkar have been installed at Japan, London School of Economics, Columbia University, York University, Kennedy, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, and students are researching them. In particular, he has also taken cognisance of the work done by him for establishing human rights from the United Nations and installed his statue at its headquarters on April 17, 2016. Therefore, on the above basis, we can call Babasaheb Ambedkar a world personality or a world hero. On the 126th birth anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar, this yatra of his personality and work actually goes from nation builder to *Vishwa Vibhuti (world personality)*.

References

1. Agarwal, Sudarshan, ed. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Man and His Message: A Commemorative Volume*, Prentice-Hall of India, 1991.
2. Ahir, Diwan Chand, *Ambedkar the Great*, Blumoon Books, 2000.
3. Bahinipati, Priyadarshi, ed. *B R Ambedkar: An Enlightened Iconoclast*, New Academic Publishers, 2015.
4. Bhardwaj, Ritesh and Pinki Punia eds, *Dr Ambedkar: Multiple Facets*, Alankar Publishing House, 2017.
5. Chahal, S. K. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: The Maker of Modern India*, Nirmal Publishing House, 2018.
6. Das, Prafulla Chandra, *Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar: A Visionary of India*, Manak Publications, 2019.
7. Deva, Shanthy and C. M. Wagh, *Dr Ambedkar and Conversion*, Dr. Ambedkar Publications Society, 1965.
8. Jadhav, Narendra, *Ambedkar: Awakening India's Social Conscience*, Konark Publishers, 2014.
9. ___ *Ambedkar: An Economist Extraordinaire*, Konark, 2015.
10. Jadhav, Praveen, *Ambedkarism: Essays on Select Economic and Cultural Issues*, Rawat Publications, 2013.
11. Jaffrelot, Christophe, *Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability: Fighting the Indian Caste System*, Columbia University Press, 2005.
12. Keer, Dhananjay, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, Popular Prakashan, 1954.
13. Lee, Alexander, *From Hierarchy to Ethnicity: The Politics of Caste in Twentieth Century India*, Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Endnotes

1. Bhardwaj, Ritesh, *Pharos of Social Justice: Dr. Ambedkar in Bhardwaj, Ritesh & Kumar, Dharmender (Ed.) Dr Ambedkar: One Man, Multiple Facets*, Apple Books, 2017.
2. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/792941/>
3. Bhardwaj, Ritesh, *Pharos of Social Justice: Dr. Ambedkar in Bhardwaj, Ritesh & Kumar, Dharmender (Ed.) Dr Ambedkar: One Man, Multiple Facets*, Apple Books, 2017.
4. Agarwal, Sudarshan, ed. *Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Man and His Message: A Commemorative Volume*, Prentice-Hall of India, 1991.
5. Krishnaiah, B., *Philosophy of Dr B R Ambedkar and Its Relevance to Contemporary India: Impact on Life, Literature and Politics*, Prestige Books International, 2018.
6. For analysis of Mill's politics, see Dennis Thompson, *John Stuart Mill and Representative Government*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976.
7. <https://www.livemint.com/Home-Page/JHyUYyj oMzBFWSKuptd8LK/BR-Ambedkara-man-of-many-parts.html>
8. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/why-we-should-not-worship-ambedkar/article23529703.ece>.