



Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Philosophy of Social Justice: An Overview

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Abstract:

The cutting edge thought of social equity is worried about introducing another social request with no line which could get rights and benefits for the various segments of society overall and the helpless and oppressed segments of society specifically. As an entire, it is effectively that any veritable democratization interaction can be begun in India just through friendly equity. For that, the liberation of the Dalits, by a rebuilding of confidence, is particularly required. The vision of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has given us an exhaustive program for accomplishing social equity in India. Thus, all reformist and majority rule powers must acclimatize the philosophy and vision of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar for the foundation of veritable social equity. The present paper highlights the philosophy of social justice advocated by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

Keywords: Social justice, social democracy, justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, dignity, etc.

In about four decades Ambedkar went through various phases. He led the struggles of untouchables for securing the human rights of drinking water from public tanks; for separate electorates to the depressed classes. He organized the first Independent Labour Party and later the Scheduled Castes Federation. He became the Labour Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1942, and later became the Law Member of the first cabinet of Independent India. He was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly of India and became known as the 'Architect of the Constitution. In the last phase, he renounced Hinduism and embraced Buddhism. He subordinated his movement for social emancipation to religious reform movements.

One of the reasons why India faces many problems like illiteracy, corruption, unemployment, poverty, dogmatism, and intercommunity conflicts, is that the Indian Government has failed to distribute wealth and the burden of responsibility among the citizens based on social justice. Secondly, citizens are not made aware of their rights, duties, and responsibilities, nor have they internalized social values like liberty, equality, and fraternity. Dr. Ambedkar has contributed to the first task through his role in drafting the Indian constitution. He contributed to the second task by presenting and propagating his social philosophy.

The need for making citizens aware of their duties, rights, and responsibilities was felt by many social thinkers and reformers to a greater or less extent. In ancient times, the thinkers like Charvaka, Mahavir, the Buddha, Kabir, and Nanak made attempts to teach constructive social values to Indians and promote social unity and religious tolerance. In modern times, social and religious reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Jotiba Phule, Agarkar, V.R.Shinde, Shahu Maharaja and many others made similar attempts. Though Dr. B.R. Ambedkar can be said to belong to the same tradition of social thinkers and reformers, his contributions are different from most others in an important way. Unlike many others, Dr. Ambedkar vehemently and directly attacked Hindu social philosophy, which formed the basis of traditional Indian society and religion and emphasized the need to form a new society on the foundation of social justice to ensure the amelioration of the downtrodden and backward classes. He was sure that just social order would go a long way in making the citizens aware of their rights, duties, and responsibilities and promoting the spirit of nationalism and patriotism among the people. Thus, Dr. Ambedkar's critique of Indian society and his quest for national and social integration, as also his endeavor to solve social problems like inequality, and discrimination against the downtrodden and backward classes was governed by a distinctive concept of social justice. Hence we need to draw on Dr. Ambedkar's social philosophy in our efforts to tackle the social problems India is facing.

We can talk about social justice from different perspectives, like political, social, economic, and religious. Therefore it is very difficult to give a single definition of social justice. According to Prof. D.R. Jatava defined of social justice

Social justice is that sort of justice which prescribes certain ideals closely related to human society; it sustains the existence and continuity of the individuals, family, society, and the nation; its implementation safeguards the interests of the weaker sections of society; this removes all the serious unjust imbalances found between man and man so that the lives of all the citizens become improved and emancipated. As a result, every man, according to his potentiality and merit, may avail of the opportunities for acquiring social goals of his liking and outlook. (Ambedkar, 25)

Social justice as a guiding and evaluative principle is always dynamic because it takes stock of the changing situation and suggests the abolition or modification of unjust custom, tradition, and social structures to promote the welfare of the people and the preservation of the rights of the poor and weaker sections of society. Social justice being multifaceted deals with various aspects of human life and society, focusing on the preservation of the rights of the handicapped, marginalized, and depressed people. It deals with the people who are intentionally made victims of exploitation, injustice, and unsociability, e.g., bonded laborers and unpaid scavengers.

Social justice also critiques the laws, traditions, dogmas, customs, manners, and usages that are used to perpetuate injustice. There are two considerations behind the concept of social justice; namely, social justice as governed by a divine element and social justice as governed by an individual who has a purity of mind i.e. morality. So far as the first consideration is concerned, it was advocated during the early Vedic period where a certain conception of God and in terms of the karma theory. So far as the second consideration is

concerned it was advocated by Carvaka, Buddhism, and Jainism. Instead of giving importance to the divine element, they gave primacy to man and his righteous action.

Dr. Ambedkar accepted that there are moral and legal considerations behind the concept of social justice. He also accepted justice as a guiding and evaluative principle. His concept of social justice was based on human values such as liberty, equality, and fraternity. He agreed with the explanation of Prof. Bergson,

Justice has always evoked ideas of equality. Rules and regulations, right and righteousness are concerned with value equality. If all men are equal, all men are of the same essence and the common essence entitles them to the same fundamental rights and equal liberty. (Bergson,16)

He believed that if these values are cultivated by individuals then there will be neither caste barriers dividing them, nor any obstacles created by caste preventing the individual from a suitable career. Each individual will have sympathy and respect for others. This is what Dr. Ambedkar called social democracy. According to him, social democracy is a way of life, which accepts liberty, equality, and fraternity. These three are not separate but together form a trinity. Dr. Ambedkar said, "These three form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy." (Ambedkar, 1216)

According to Dr. Ambedkar, liberty shapes the human finds expression in his action. Through liberty, the hidden talents of the individual are expressed. It enables man to make his destiny. Equality binds men together through reciprocities, cooperation, and social sympathy. Fraternity creates an atmosphere that is conducive to the enjoyment of liberty and equality. According to Dr. Ambedkar, "Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians, all Indians being one people. It is the principle, which gives unity and solidarity to social life." (Ambedkar, 1217) Prof. Jatava termed Dr. Ambedkar's concept of social justice as a mode of life, giving every man his rightful place in society.

Its precepts may be: to live honorably, to respect all, to injure no one, and to give every man his due without any artificial discrimination in mind and unnatural classification in society. The other precepts of social justice are the supremacy of constitutional rule, equality before the law, safeguarding fundamental rights, the performance of duties, adherence to social and legal obligations, and finally, a staunch faith in the values of justice, liberty, equality, fraternity and dignity of human personality." (Ambedkar, 97)

Thus, according to Dr. Ambedkar, the concept of justice does not merely mean the distribution of social wealth, but a mode of life based on liberty, equality, and fraternity. In short, the essence of Dr. Ambedkar's concept of social justice is the unity and equality of all human beings, independently of considerations of class, caste, gender, and caste, concerning respect, rights, benevolence, mutual love, sympathy, tolerance, and charity towards fellow beings, the dignity of all citizens, the abolition of caste-distinction, education and property for all, goodwill and gentleness. (Ambedkar, 106)

Thus, in a nutshell, Dr. Ambedkar insisted on social justice because it includes all kinds of justice, namely, legal, economic, political, divine, religious, natural, distributive, administrative as also the welfare

of children and women. With this elaboration of Dr. Ambedkar's concept of social justice, we can see how he has used it as an evaluative principle for Indian society.

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