

GLIMPSES OF DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S VISION ON EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to study the contribution of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in Philosophy and Education. Ambedkar that education is a necessary pre-requisite for the reconstruction of society under the principles of equality and justice. He said that 'Education is what makes a man fearless, teaches him the lesson of unity, makes him aware of his rights and inspires him to struggle for his rights'. If it does not fulfill its objectives, it is useless. Dr. Ambedkar strongly held that education should be a priority for the society and utilized for growth of individuals with character. He puts all his efforts to ensure the educational opportunities to all the citizens of independent India. His burning message was 'Educate', 'Agitate' and 'Organize'. According to Ambedkar Primary education occupies a significant place in the educational reconstruction of a developing country. He recognized that, lack of education was the main cause for the backwardness of poor people. That is why he laid more stress on higher education than on primary education, "Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of every one", was the fundamental educational thought of Dr. Ambedkar.

KEYWORDS: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, contribution to field of Education, Primary Education, Higher Education, University Education, Women Education.

(I) Life Sketch of Ambedkar :

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born on 14 April, 1891 at Mhow in Maharashtra. He was the fourteenth and last child of Ramji Maloji Sakpal and Bhimbai Murbadkar Sakpal. Ambedkar was born into a poor low Mahar (dalit) caste, who were treated as untouchables and subjected to socio-economic discrimination. He was attended school but segregated and given little attention or help by teachers. Ambedkar was not allowed to sit inside the class. When he needed to drink water, someone from a higher caste had to pour that water from a height as he was not allowed to touch either the water or the vessel that contained it. He was required to sit on a gunny sack which he had to take home with him. These are the few instances of oppression that Ambedkar faced in his early life in school. His teacher at school Mahadev Ambedkar changed his surname "Ambedkar" from "Ambavedekar". Ambedkar passed his B.A. Examination from the Elphinston College in Bombay in the year 1912.

In 1913, Ambedkar received a scholarship and moved to United States for post graduate education at Columbia University. He passed M.A. in 1915 with Economics. He was very much influenced by John Dewey and his work on democracy who was his teacher at Columbia University. He completed his Ph.D. in Economics in 1927. Dr. Ambedkar throughout his life worked for welfare of depressed classes. He tried to spread education among them and improve their economical condition. He gave to the people self-respect, dignity and most importantly moral courage to fight.

(II) Vision of Education and Ambedkar:

The aim of Ambedkar's vision of education is to spread enlightened idea among the people for the reconstruction of the society on the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. According to Ambedkar – "Education is a weapon of creation of mental and educational development, weapon of eradication of social slavery of economic development of political freedom". The basic theme of his philosophy of education is inculcating the values of liberty, equality, fraternity justice and moral character among the peoples of all shades by the way of his educational Philosophy. Ambedkar was not only the man of age and builder of the construction but is the founder of a new social order for the betterment of the downtrodden. Ambedkar knows that education is a necessary pre-requisite for the reconstruction of society under the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity in the philosophy of the Buddha in the form of Prajna, Karuna and Samata. These three principles of Buddhism appealed to B.R. Ambedkar. The aim of Ambedkar's vision of education is to inculcate wisdom — to differentiate between right and wrong; compassion – towards fellow human and belief in social-equality – among students. Ambedkar believed that only with education the Dalits could make progress. Ambedkar's famous slogan was 'Educate, Agitate and Organise'. According to Babasaheb Ambedkar "Knowing that education is the way to progress in life, students should study hard and become loyal leaders of the society." As a basic principle in life he stressed education as of great instrument, so in Nagpur, on July 29, 1942, he rightly said "Be educated, be agitated, be organized, be confident, never give up, these are the five principles of our life."

- a) **Educate:** Education has an immense impact on the human society. We all know, education is the cornerstone of progress and advancement as it leads to increased awareness particularly social awareness and more responsible state leadership. Obviously, education includes the teaching of knowledge through reading, speaking, listening and writing. Therefore, we are constantly being educated and educating each other.
- b) **Agitate:** The word 'agitate' to B.R. Ambedkar is a mental revolution and not agitate physically. He believed that after getting education the individual can start agitating mentally. The central thought behind Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's agitate lies in "have faith in your strength".
- c) **Organize:** To organize the educated and agitated minds is the next mission. So according to Ambedkar we must get ourselves educated and our thoughts will agitate so that we can collectively organize, which Dr. Ambedkar emphasized in order to bring all sections of the depressed classes together. Agitated will help the people to unite and struggle for their common goal as one force. Only education can bring this change.

(III) Ambedkar's View on Meaning of Education:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was not only the father of Indian Constitution but was a great freedom fighter, Political leader, Philosopher, thinker, writer, economist, editor and a revivalist for Buddhism in India. Ambedkar strongly believed that education should be provided without any discrimination to all the citizens of independent India. "Education is something ought to be brought within the reach of everyone", was the fundamental educational thought of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Dr Ambedkar said, "Education is what makes a person fearless, teaches him the lesson of unity, makes him aware of his rights and inspires him to struggle for his rights." He believed that education is a movement. If it does not fulfil its objectives, it is useless.

Dr. Ambedkar believed in liberal education and based on religious inspiration of non-theistic nature. Education according to Dr. Ambedkar was a blend of Pragmatism of Dewey and "dharma" of Buddha. He thought that education would enlighten his people and bridge the gap between the higher classes and untouchables, education must be available to all, irrespective of caste, status and sex. He believed that Indian education from ancient to British period remained restricted to the members of upper strata of society. He was against the disparity in education of different classes in India. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar gave importance in favour of equality of opportunities in education among all communities in the society.

(IV) Educational institutions founded by Dr. Ambedkar:

Ambedkar said "The progress of any society depends on the progress of education in that society." Education is the most important tool in the hands of society to control, conserve and make progress of the society. It helps us in understanding the milestones achieved by our civilization and familiarizes common men with the scientific and technological inventions. Education is not only equips the men and women to achieve but also to bring change in the society. In the words of Ambedkar, every educational institution should be developed to become an agency of change. Ambedkar took many initiatives for the educational empowerment of Dalits. On 14 June 1928, he founded Depressed Classes Education Society, Bombay which was also known in Marathi as Dalit Education Society. Under this society, he established hostels in Panvel, Thane, Nasik, Pune and Dharwad for high school students belonging to Dalit Community to promote education among untouchables. On 8th July, 1945, he founded people's Education Society. Under this society he established Siddharth College of Arts and Science, Bombay in 1946. Soon several educational institutions were set up under the patronage of this society such as Siddharth Night School in 1947; Milind Mahavidyalaya, Aurangabad in 1950; Siddharth College of Commerce and Economics in 1953; Milind Multipurpose High School in 1955 and Siddharth College of Law in 1956. On 20th July, 1924, Ambedkar founded 'Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha' with the following aims:

- (i) to promote the spread of education among the Dalits by opening Hostels,
- (ii) to promote the spread of culture among the Dalits by opening libraries, social centres and classes of study circles, and
- (iii) to advance and improve the economic condition of Dalits by starting Industrial and agricultural schools.

In the Bombay Presidency debates of 1927 and 1928 he has raised several issues relating to education which became important for policy formulations on education. In this memorandum to the Simon Commission on “concerning the state of Education of the Depressed classes in Bombay presidency” submitted on behalf of the Bahish Krita Hita Karini Sabha, he gave numerical data to bring out the miserable condition of the untouchables in the education sector. He has pointed out that enrolment of the dalits constitute 0.87% of the total primary education and 0.14% in Secondary and Zero (0%) in higher education. Therefore, Ambedkar wanted Protection for the Dalits through guarantee by making the education of the depressed classes as the first charge on the state Revenue. He is perhaps one of the first economists in the world who had realized the economic importance of education.

(V) Ambedkar’s vision of Primary Education:

Dr. Ambedkar said, “Education is what makes a person fearless, teaches him the lesson of unity, makes him aware of his rights and inspires him to struggle for his rights.” He believed that education is a movement. If it does not fulfill its objectives, it is useless. Primary education occupies a significant place in the educational reconstruction of a developing country. Primary education refers to “free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years”. Ambedkar calculated that the rate of dropout prevailing at that time was 82% in primary education. Based on the statistical evidence, he pointed out, “we find that out of every 100 children that enter a primary school on 18 reach the fourth standard; the rest of them, that is to say, 82 out of every 100, relapse into the state of illiteracy”. Hence, he warned that without printout education the Indian society would remain to be largely an illiterate society. He knew that the problem of primary education is the problem of nation. He in the conference of Mahabaleshwar held on may 31, 1929 addressed that “The problem of the spread of primary education is the most dominating one. The spread of primary education is the base of national development. So it needs to implement a compulsory act of primary education”. Ambedkar was of the firm view that the government should spend sufficient money on educating society, particularly on primary education. The Annual dropout rate of scheduled castes in school education according to Educational statistics at a Glance published by Government of India in 2016 is as follows; primary 1.14% , upper primary 4.38%, secondary 18.66% and senior secondary 1.81%. He further emphasized to be connected with education system at the Primary level for gaining the basic education. Hence, he once said that, “it is not enough to send children to school, it is also necessary to keep them connected to the school till they get basic education. Just like planting trees is not enough, it is also necessary to irrigate those trees by giving them fertilizers and water, otherwise they will not take long to die.”

(VI) Aims of Higher Education:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was the student of John Dewey, his educational thoughts were pragmatic. As a pragmatist his views on education was elaborated in the works of “The Bahshkarit Hitakarini Sabha” established by him in 1924. According to him the fundamental aim of Higher education was the spread of higher education among the depressed classes. Ambedkar stressed upon the minds of his people, the importance of self-respect and self-elevation. He encouraged them to take higher education for their progress. He thought that the progress of a community always depend upon how its members advanced in education. That is why he laid more stress on higher education than on primary education. He founded the People’s Education Society (P.E.S) in 1945, which started a college on June 20, 1946. He was against the disparity in education of different classes in India. Therefore, he stated that the depressed classes should be treated as minority along with the Muslims. Ambedkar gave importance in favour of equality of opportunity in education among all communities in the society. During the inventions of Bombay University Amendment Act, he suggested that the fundamental foundation of the University is to provide facilities for bringing the highest education to the doors of the needy and the poor bright students of the all sections of the society.

(VII) University Education:

Ambedkar was a popular teacher. We can find his teaching notes printed as part of his writings by the Government of Maharastra. He worked as a professor and afterwards as a principal of a college. He was of the opinion that colleges should not be separated from the university. He said that colleges should be partners on terms of equality and participate in promoting together the cultural progress of both Undergraduate and Post-Graduate studies. He wanted that the undergraduate faculty and the Post-Graduate faculty should work in an integrated fashion. If both the faculties run together in a University, the students at the Undergraduate level may get the opportunity to attend the lectures of the senior and distinguished professors.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said that the aim and function of the University education should be:

- (i) to ensure that the teaching done that is suited to adults,
- (ii) that it is scientific, detached and impartial in character,
- (iii) that it fills the mind of students with facts,
- (iv) that it enables him to critically study the leading authorities with perhaps occasional reference to first hand sources of information,
- (v) that it implants in his mind a standard thoughtness and inculcates in him sense of value for reaching at the truth.

He appealed to the students to reorganize university ideas to meet the requirements of the modern world and to make the university a place for knowledge and not a centre for training clerks. He felt that University should not mould the students but that it should provide the atmosphere for the students to mould themselves through independent investigation of truth.

(VIII) Ambedkar's View on Education Women and Unprivileged Community :

According to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, "Education is the birthright of every person and this right cannot be denied to anyone." He also said, "Education is what makes a person aware of his existence, potential and power." Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, as the chairman of the Drafting Committee, realized that law is a strong instrument of creating a just social order. He strongly advocates the "Women Education", hence he says that "I measure the progress of a community with the degree of progress women have achieved." He made a noble attempt to accommodate women's and depressed classes rights in the constitution of India by virtue of Article 30(1) which gives the linguistic or religious minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. Article 30(2) allows state to grant aid to all type of educational institutions, from discriminating against on the ground that it is under the management of a linguistic or a religious minority. Article 29(2) of the constitution of India defines the protection of interest of minorities and ensures that no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state receiving aid out of state funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them. He knows that Education can empower and bring the excluded groups into main stream of the society, so he rightly said "Without education, we (Dalits) would not be able to substitute for important posts." He also said that, "If you have two rupees, then take one rupee food and one rupee book. Because food will help you live and the book will teach you how to live." He also holistically viewed that "Education is what makes a person aware of his existence, potential and power"

Dr. Ambedkar thought that the downtrodden progress would be greatly accelerated if male education was pursued side by side with female education.

He strongly believed that if women were educated the entire family will be educated. Dr. Ambedkar started involving women in the struggle, for eradication of caste systems and for upliftment of the under privileged sections. He motivated women and addressed them to participate in the struggle against caste prejudices. He encouraged women to organize themselves.

(IX) Morality, Unity and Character Education:

Ambedkar wants to through education to moralize and socialise the people. He stressed five elements i.e. wisdom, modesty, compassion, learning and friendship on the basis which every student should build his character. In his speeches at Nagpur, on 20th July, 1942 he said that, "Learn to be clean and free from all vices. Educate your children. Slowly instill ambition in their mind. Assure them that they are going to be great person. Destroy their inferiority complex. Don't be in a hurry to get them married." According to Ambedkar "Education is a sacred institution. Minds are cultured in school. Schools are a sacred place for making good citizens." He further said that, "you got educated doesn't mean everything is done. There is no doubt in the importance of education, but along with education, morality should also improv. Without morality, the value of education is zero." In a public gathering, Mumbai on 28th October, 1954 he advocates that "I am a devotee of Gautama Buddha, Kabir and Mahatma Phule, and I worship of Learning, Self-Respect and Character." Ambedkar wants not only Morality but also the Unity, Integrity and Character development through education, that's why he said "Education is what makes a person fearless, teaches him the lesson of unity, makes him aware of his rights and inspires him to struggle for his rights."

Conclusion:

The educational thoughts and Philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar are more realistic and pragmatic than idealistic. As one of the greatest educationists of India, Ambedkar expressed his views on education was the main key to open the doors of light, vision and wisdom. He says that education and society have a bounded relationship because the progress and development of society is possible only through education. He believed that education can act as a change agent to bring equality in the society. He motivated the Dalits to merge with the upper caste in social, economical and political aspect through the slogan of educate, agitate and organize. He said that women must be treated equally and given equal prestige and position.

Ambedkar's thought is very much needed today, his thought should be applied in every aspect of education like policy formulation, curriculum development, management, etc.

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