A new decade for social changes
Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar’s Views on Social Justice: An Appraisal

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Abstract. Baba Sahib Bhim Rao Ambedkar views on social justice are the very basis of the Indian Constitution. The social justice means providing equal social opportunities to everyone to develop their personalities, associated with equality and social rights. In every state it becomes important to secure a social order based on justice and creating an equal opportunity available to everyone. Mostly, the people are being treated with discrimination in size, color, caste, religion, race in the society because of they are mostly uneducated and from marginalized sections of the society that creates a social disorder and inequality among them. Hence, the need of the social justice is an inevitable and is the only weapon to prosper the people towards their active participation in the development and mainstream of the society. However, it becomes important to establish an egalitarian social, economic and political order in diverse society like India. It’s in this backdrop the article tries to explore the concept of social justice and Ambedkar view on it. How far Ambedkar’s reflection is visible in Indian Constitution and its relevance in the present times.

Keywords. Contemporary Relevance, Egalitarianism, Freedom, Indian Constitution, Social Justice

Introduction

In every democratic nation people wanted to live freely rather than the merely to survive. In order to have them so, the democratic setup required to absorb a sense of socio-economic and political equality and liberty (Mungerkar, 2017: Viii). The social justice aims to provide all an equal social opportunity to develop their personalities, associated with equality and social rights. According to Ambedkar, the very foundation of social justice is based on moral values and self-respect and for the recognition of three basic principles of equality, liberty and fraternity that he continued his struggle as spiritual (Raghavendra, 2016:24–29).

The Indian Constitution has incorporated justice through socio-economic and political justice. The concept of social justice is evolving and keeps changing with the passage of time. It evolves itself into progressively new patterns and expands its frontiers and assumes new dimensions.

The Social justice has its importance and relevance in the Indian context. The society is divided into caste and community lines creating mental borders and barriers of exclusiveness on the basis of superiority and inferiority. These inequalities in turn pose threat to the democracy in India. The concept of social justice moves along with the objective of removing inequalities
and creating equal opportunities to all citizens in social, economic and political affair. Mostly, the people are being treated with discrimination in size, color, caste, religion, race in the society because of they are mostly uneducated and from the marginalized section of society. Whereas, the need of the social justice is inevitable and the only weapon to prosper the people towards their active participation in the development and mainstream of the society (Sahu, 2013).

The Ambedkar’s philosophy of social justice has been the greatest influence and inspiration having its major impact on depressed/deprived classes in India. In particular, making them aware of their basic rights and the way to live a life with dignity and the class consciousness. The impact of Ambedkar’s philosophy has been so high in our society to establish an egalitarian society and has been worshiped by the millions of people in India (Nandan, 2016:20-27). The entire philosophy of Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar revolves around the creation of an egalitarian social order. Wherein, there is no place for type of inequality and oppressive social order of low and high, pure and polluted.

Ambedkar firmly believed in the most cherished moral value of fraternity and inclusiveness and in turn needs to flourish in a society enriched with the principles of equality and liberty. Ambedkar was of the opinion that freedom without social and economic parity is superficial and can’t help in creating an egalitarian society (Kumar, 2013). In a multicultural society like India that is divisive on caste and community lines, we have a large downtrodden section of people that have historically been denied basic human and civil rights. Which were essential for socio-economic, political and spiritual growth of each and every member of the society. Ambedkar’s sole objective was to restore the lost dignity and self-respect to the millions of downtrodden in the society and to prepare them to stand for equal rights on their own strength. He firmly believed that liberty, equality and fraternity should become the real strengths of India, which would lay the foundations of democracy in India rooted in its social domain.

Ambedkar holds a view that very premises of democracy in India should be on social democracy. In turn social democracy is dependent on equal opportunity accessible to each in a society. There should not be any pyramidal structure based on hierarchies and inherited claims with special privileged rights. Ambedkar was visionary man and he produced huge of written published works and well documented writings to put his views forthwith to establish an egalitarian society. He was never an armchair intellectual rather down to earth person relinquishing various opportunities to lead a rich and luxurious life. By working with the people at grassroots level Ambedkar tried to uplift them from the heaps of social exclusion and miserable socio-economic condition.

Nonetheless, in order to have consciousness among downtrodden Baba Sahib Ambedkar launched numerous newspapers like Mook Nayak, Janata, Bahishkrit Bharat and Prabudh Bharat. Ambedkar was of form belief that it’s impossible to achieve the egalitarian society without acquiring political Power. In this regard, he founded political parties Labour Party of India and Scheduled Castes Federation of India and prepared a blueprint for the Republican Party of India. Babasaheb tried all possible efforts to make Hinduism as an inclusive one by certain social reforms. Wherein, the depressed classes should not suffer on the basis of their origin of birth.

Further, Ambedkar launched satyagraha for the entry of lower castes, known as depressed classes in to public spaces of utility, advocacy for inter-cast marriages and religious sites, organized common kitchen eating’s etc. Through his deep sense of philosophical understanding, Baba Sahib Ambedkar even embraced Buddhism to have an egalitarian society in India. The main aim was the true realization of his goal for the downtrodden section of people throughout his constant struggle in life. This distant dream and his legacy are still carried
forward even today to have an equal social order free from discrimination in society. It is against this backdrop the study will try to look deep into following purposes of the research study.

**Review of Literature**

There is variety of literature available on Dr. Ambedkar’s ideas of conceptualization of social justice and its relevance in contemporary times. However, the aim of the present article is to review a few important literatures pertinent to the study.

Ambedkar’s (2014), ‘Annihilation of Caste’, is an important document of Indian socio-cultural history. The study places the caste in a wider global context and raise the issue of discriminatory practices related to caste. All the important points raised by Ambedkar on democracy, citizenship and social discrimination has a huge contemporary bearing. In many ways the books serve the contested issue, concerning Gandhi, Indian politicians and elites, contemporary trends in Indian politics and marginalization of Ambedkar. In all these Ambedkar emerges out a provocative and modern thinker. The Roy has done a great thing by keeping alive the debate about case and relocating Ambedkar thoughts in contemporary scenario.

Mungerkar (2017), ‘The Essential: Ambedkar’, The study of edited volume shows one how steep the decline has been. The clarity and thoroughness with which Ambedkar tackles the issues of the day are matched only by the clarity he brings to them. In this book the finest extract of Ambedkar body of work has been extracted finely by arranging the issues such as caste and untouchability, the philosophy of Hindu religion, the making of Indian constitution and emancipation of women. The Ambedkar known for his view on the discrimination of backward classes, particularly the untouchables and caste politics practices as such are the pathbreaking ideas, most of which are prevalent today.

Raghavendra (2016) the present article tries to conceptualize the concept of social justice through Indian historical times that is through ancient approach to modern approaches to justice. The author focuses on the spirit of the constitution of India by locating the social justice embedded in it. In which he tries to argue that it’s the duty of the state to secure the social order in which legal system of a state promotes justice and equal opportunity to all irrespective of his or her caste and status. Further, the article explores the study on social justice and Ambedkar’s ideas on social justice in the Indian context by exploring its contemporary relevance.

Rodrigues (2011) The article tries out to define the key concern of justice in contemporary political philosophy through the contribution of Rawls and Ambedkar’s preoccupation of writings with the political practices revolving around justice and Sens’s contributions in relations to justice. The article states that though there is a shared ground across among them, concerns on the issue of justice and also different stances in their own respective and to which extent they can be justified. Therefore, justice is a human endeavors and concern based on reason and deliberations.

Kumar (2013) The article examines the issue of social justice through a common parlance as in terms of encirclement of political and economic policy. It’s a contested and debatable term but as a statement of fundamental axiom of value in political and economic life. However, state has to play an important role to have just and egalitarian society. His just society was based on equality, liberty and fraternity. It is in this very context the present article explores the concept of social justice and understands the Ambedkar’s notion of social justice. However, there is no dearth of literature on this very Ambedkar’s views on social justice in the Indian context. Whereas, it’s a humble attempt to review a few literatures related to the relevance of the present study.
Objectives of the Study

1. To introduce in brief the conceptual framework of social justice
2. To examine and analyze the role of Ambedkar’s reflection in making of Indian constitution.
3. To understand in brief the Ambedkar’s notion of social justice and its contemporary relevance.

Methodology

The present study will be based on the data and sources collected from the secondary sources pertaining to relevant policy documents and policy reports, debates and speeches, books, articles and journals. Further, to inquire into ideas of Ambedkar’s reflection in Indian constitution and notion of social justice with its contemporary relevance.

Theoretical Framework: Discussions and Findings

Ambedkar’s Reflection: In Making of the Indian Constitution

Baba Sahib Bhim Rao Ambedkar Known as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is considered as father of Indian constitution and played an important role in the making of constitution of India. He also chaired the drafting committee and it came as a surprise to him even to be elected to be its chairman (Kashyap, 2010:160). There is no doubt about the fact that Indian constitution in one way or the other is shaped by the social and political philosophy of Ambedkar. The inherited caste system prevailing in India assigns to individuals a particular set of roles and functions to do since or even before birth. Not only this, it provides a specific economic, cultural and educational right to perform without a liberty to change. Thereby, inherited caste system not only ignored one’s capabilities, preferences but also led to the curtailment of socio-economic rights and liberty to the lower castes. Rather in contrary, it gave an immense privileges and rights to the higher castes, especially Brahmins (Thorat, and Kumar, 2008:5).

Undoubtedly, Ambedkar was the person who continuously fought and struggled against the evils of untouchability and exploitation within the inherited caste system in India caste system in India. Hence, seeing all sorts of discrimination to the lower castes in India, engraved for creating a place for protecting the rights of millions in the constitution of India. Thus, Ambedkar put forth and drafted many provisions in the constituent assembly for protecting the rights and the interests of the depressed and downtrodden sections of society in India (Rodrigues, 2007:471). The following articles and its clauses incorporated in the Indian constitution, likewise Article- 15 (4), Article-16 (4), Article-19(1) (d) Article-29 (2), shows Ambedkar vision in shaping the philosophical connotations of social and economic justice through the constitution of India. Although, these numerous provisions have been incorporated in the constitution, these articles made a special provision for protecting rights and interests of depressed classes that is, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India.

The various articles under part III of the constitution of India have the influence of Ambedkar vision and his philosophy on social justice. The article-14 as it argues that ‘State shall not deny to any person equality before the laws or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India’. Similarly, the article-15 argues that, ’prohibits the discrimination on the bases of religion, caste, race sex or palace of birth’ in India. Further, the article-17 is one among the historic and charter of freedom through which, provision was made in the Indian constitution by abolishing the untouchability and its practice considered against the laws in India. This law was path breaking and brought a significant social revolution in India by criminalizing the untouchability practices and severe punishment to be given to those preaching in accordance with the laws in India.
In addition to the above these, article-23 argues that outlaws forced labour in India and has been consistently as tool in establishing the control over lower castes in rural India by the dominant caste rule or feudal rulers. All these above provisions incorporated in the constitution of India eradicates the evil practices of untouchability and socio-economic inequalities causing fragmentation of society, as well as posing challenges to the democratic pattern in India.

Besides these above provisions, Indian parliament has passed the untouchability offences act in 1955. It was amended from time to time in 1976 and prevention of atrocities Act of 1989 against SC &ST, to safeguard and to ensure of justice, freedom, equality and prevention of any atrocities or violence against the members of SC and ST members or individuals. Baba sahib Ambedkar struggled a lot for the empowerment of downtrodden or depressed classes but the fact also remains that these efforts were not good enough to have egalitarian society or society based on prevention of atrocities and violence. These constitutional provisions will become futile or useless. Unless, there are no legal provisions to safeguards and protects the rights of the marginalized sections of society, in case of violation or denial of rights granted to them by the constitution of India (Thorat, and Kumar, 2008). Further, Ambedkar was aware of the fact that there are certain dominant sections of society that is privileged class, may deny the basic rights and justice to the people from lower section of society.

Nonetheless, in order to protect and safeguard the interest of commoner legal provision were also made under article-32 known as constitutional remedies or writs, the very heart and soul of the constitution of India. The article-32 provides every citizen to approach the highest court in India-supreme court in case of violation of their fundamental rights or constitutional privileges assigned to them within the frame work of constitution of India. Any citizens of country can approach the court in case of infringement of their rights by the states or individuals. The article-32 provides the right to all citizens of the country to approach the Supreme Court, if their fundamental rights and constitutional privileges are violated by any state institution or individual

Possibly, one can argue further about the part IV of the constitution of India, ‘directive principles of state policy’. Though, these are merely directives or set of instructions to the state in comparison to the fundamental rights. Nevertheless, the directive principle does promote the social and economic democracy by guiding the state to protect the interest and rights of underprivileged section of society. For an example the article-46 of the directive principles says that, ‘the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the SCs and STs and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation’. However, one can see the right to education the directives principles becoming the part of constitution under Article-21-A as a right to education. Hence, one can say that Ambedkar sought to establish the social justice to the depressed section of society through his candid clear philosophy of social justice enumerated in the constitution of India.

**Ambedkar’s Notion of Social Justice: Contemporary Relevance**

The very idea of social justice is very important for the welfare of the society and leads to the self-respect as well as dignity of the individuals. Ambedkar views on social justice are very dynamic and progressive. As social justice means equal opportunities provided to everyone to develop their personality associated with equality and social rights. The idea of social justice has affected various developmental policy and social welfare programme for the depressed section of the society in India. One can see the very notion of justice as propounded by Ambedkar has an impact on various developmental programs across the states in India.
While forming the constitution making in India and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar role as a term are considered synonymous in India. It was through his intellect, legalistic and humanistic contribution to the constitution that makes social democracy in India more egalitarian. Ambedkar thought of removing all sorts of oppression within the society by incorporating certain provisions in the constitution of India. In this regard, he made many provisions in constitution of India for the SCs/STs /OBCs and religious minorities, women and children.

The states have been assigned with the duty and responsibility to protect, promote and safeguarding the interests of the weaker section of the society. In his opinion, the cause of injustice is created by inequalities like caste practices, untouchability and denial of basic human rights to the underprivileged section of society. Even though, to make women free and independent by giving them equal rights at par with men has been a major concern to him. Interestingly, to address the issues of concern to women was part of his social reforms and great vision to have equal rights to men and women.

Thus, not only the socio-economic field, the political representation to the depressed sections was given to have equality in term of decision making and governance. Today, we can see the result of Ambedkar’s continuous efforts, there are members of parliament, members of the legislative assembly, the government administrators, professors and doctors from among the downtrodden castes. By incorporating the principle of reservation, he tried to make an improvement to provide extra support to SCs and STs to enable them to progress educationally, economically and socially to uplift themselves to be at par with the privileged class within the society (Raghavendra, 2016:27-28).

This is evident today, that many legal provisions as discussed earlier too, have been made to give social justice to all classes. In this way, many developmental schemes and social welfare programs have been initiated by the government of India for an overall inclusive growth of the country and various measures has been taken to achieve it. Nonetheless, his writings and published magazines/papers like Mooknayak, Janata, Bahishkrit Bharat, Prabudh Bharat remain powerful tools to combat evil in society that discriminates individuals on the basis of their caste and class (Chumber,2016). He considered mass media as a powerful instrument for social change.

Simultaneously, in the age of globalization and information technology, there are certain challenges in the fields of social justice to be achieved fully. Due to the complex nature of Indian Society, we can see few instances of social differences and conflicts at grass roots level due to ignorance and certain societal myths and class structure. In such a situation, the thoughts of establishing a society based on equality appears certain time a distant dream. However, due to the legal provisions and certain safeguards to underprivileged and changing nature of society, the social justice can be achieved gradually in India as theorized by the Ambedkar.

Conclusion

Baba Sahib Bhim Rao Ambedkar struggled a lot for the realization of an egalitarian society to be based on social democracy. This is visible through his notion been incorporated in Indian constitution making the provisions and safeguarding the interests of weaker section of society providing them all equal rights and human dignity. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was aware of the rights of the depressed classes of the Indian society and thereby demolishing the existing caste practices untouchability and caste-based discrimination through making provisions with the constitution. Therefore, Ambedkar’s notion of social justice holds its relevance in modern times in our society to protect the rights and dignity of the depressed sections of Indian society through the constitutional provision being made and legal procedures being made punishable in case of violation of basic rights of any individual.
References


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Ambedkar firmly believed in the most cherished moral value of fraternity and inclusiveness and in turn needs to flourish in a society enriched with the principles of equality and liberty. Ambedkar was of the opinion that freedom without social and economic parity is superficial and can’t help in creating an egalitarian society (Kumar, 2013). In a multicultural society like India that is divisive on caste and community lines, we have a large downtrodden section of people that have historically been denied basic human and civil rights. Which were essential for socio-economic, political and spiritual growth of each and every member of the society. Ambedkar’s sole objective was to restore the lost dignity and self-respect to the millions of downtrodden in the society and to prepare them to stand for equal rights on their own strength. He firmly believed that liberty, equality and fraternity should become the real strengths of India, which would lay the foundations of democracy in India rooted in its social domain.

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Besides these above provisions, Indian parliament has passed the untouchability offences act in 1955. It was amended from time to time in 1976 and prevention of atrocities Act of 1989 against SC &ST, to safeguard and to ensure of justice, freedom, equality and prevention of any atrocities or violence against the members of SC and ST members or individuals. Baba sahib Ambedkar struggled a lot for the empowerment of downtrodden or depressed classes but the fact also remains that these efforts were not good enough to have egalitarian society or society based on prevention of atrocities and violence. These constitutional provisions will become futile or useless. Unless, there are no legal provisions to safeguards and protects the rights of the marginalized sections of society, in case of violation or denial of rights granted to them by the constitution of India (Thorat, and Kumar, 2008). Further, Ambedkar was aware of the fact that there are certain dominant sections of society that is privileged class, may deny the basic rights and justice to the people from lower section of society.

Nonetheless, in order to protect and safeguard the interest of commoner legal provision were also made under article-32 known as constitutional remedies or writs, the very heart and soul of the constitution of India. The article-32 provides every citizen to approach the highest court in India-supreme court in case of violation of their fundamental rights or constitutional privileges assigned to them within the frame work of constitution of India. Any citizens of country can approach the court in case of infringement of their rights by the states or individuals. The article-32 provides the right to all citizens of the country to approach the Supreme Court, if their fundamental rights and constitutional privileges are violated by any state institution or individual

Possibly, one can argue further about the part IV of the constitution of India, ‘directive principles of state policy’. Though, these are merely directives or set of instructions to the state in comparison to the fundamental rights. Nevertheless, the directive principle does promote the social and economic democracy by guiding the state to protect the interest and rights of underprivileged section of society. For an example the article-46 of the directive principles says that, ‘the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the SCs and STs and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation’. However, one can see the right to education the directives principles becoming the part of constitution under Article-21-A as a right to education. Hence, one can say that Ambedkar sought to establish the social justice to the depressed section of society through his candid clear philosophy of social justice enumerated in the constitution of India.

Ambedkar’s Notion of Social Justice: Contemporary Relevance

The very idea of social justice is very important for the welfare of the society and leads to the self-respect as well as dignity of the individuals. Ambedkar views on social justice are very dynamic and progressive. As social justice means equal opportunities provided to everyone to develop their personality associated with equality and social rights. The idea of social justice has affected various developmental policy and social welfare programme for the depressed section of the society in India. One can see the very notion of justice as propounded by Ambedkar has an impact on various developmental programs across the states in India.
While forming the constitution making in India and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar role as a term are considered synonymous in India. It was through his intellect, legalistic and humanistic contribution to the constitution that makes social democracy in India more egalitarian. Ambedkar thought of removing all sorts of oppression within the society by incorporating certain provisions in the constitution of India. In this regard, he made many provisions in constitution of India for the SCs/STs/OBCs and religious minorities, women and children.

The states have been assigned with the duty and responsibility to protect, promote and safeguarding the interests of the weaker section of the society. In his opinion, the cause of injustice is created by inequalities like caste practices, untouchability and denial of basic human rights to the underprivileged section of society. Even though, to make women free and independent by giving them equal rights at par with men has been a major concern to him. Interestingly, to address the issues of concern to women was part of his social reforms and great vision to have equal rights to men and women.

Thus, not only the socio-economic field, the political representation to the depressed sections was given to have equality in term of decision making and governance. Today, we can see the result of Ambedkar’s continuous efforts, there are members of parliament, members of the legislative assembly, the government administrators, professors and doctors from among the downtrodden castes. By incorporating the principle of reservation, he tried to make an improvement to provide extra support to SCs and STs to enable them to progress educationally, economically and socially to uplift themselves to be at par with the privileged class within the society (Raghavendra, 2016:27-28).

This is evident today, that many legal provisions as discussed earlier too, have been made to give social justice to all classes. In this way, many developmental schemes and social welfare programs have been initiated by the government of India for an overall inclusive growth of the country and various measures has been taken to achieve it. Nonetheless, his writings and published magazines/papers like Mooknayak, Janata, Bahishkrit Bharat, Prabudh Bharat remain powerful tools to combat evil in society that discriminates individuals on the basis of their caste and class (Chumber, 2016). He considered mass media as a powerful instrument for social change.

Simultaneously, in the age of globalization and information technology, there are certain challenges in the fields of social justice to be achieved fully. Due to the complex nature of Indian Society, we can see few instances of social differences and conflicts at grass roots level due to ignorance and certain societal myths and class structure. In such a situation, the thoughts of establishing a society based on equality appears certain time a distant dream. However, due to the legal provisions and certain safeguards to underprivileged and changing nature of society, the social justice can be achieved gradually in India as theorized by the Ambedkar.

Conclusion

Baba Sahib Bhim Rao Ambedkar struggled a lot for the realization of an egalitarian society to be based on social democracy. This is visible through his notion been incorporated in Indian constitution making the provisions and safeguarding the interests of weaker section of society providing them all equal rights and human dignity. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was aware of the rights of the depressed classes of the Indian society and thereby demolishing the existing caste practices untouchability and caste-based discrimination through making provisions with the constitution. Therefore, Ambedkar’s notion of social justice holds its relevance in modern times in our society to protect the rights and dignity of the depressed sections of Indian society through the constitutional provision being made and legal procedures being made punishable in case of violation of basic rights of any individual.
References


