



DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR & EDUCATION POLICY

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ABSTRACT

“I know what is the value of education”-Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Right to education is the fundamental right that every child of India enjoys. Free and compulsory education is the birthright of every child born on the soil of India; it automatically means that there is no need to pay for education. However, this situation has attained with a price. The marginalized lower caste paid the price. B.R. Ambedkar is the finest example and the survivor of the discriminatory practices of the Indian society. There was a time when Indian society deliberately limited access to education. Only upper castes were allowed to attend school, and many castes (Shudra and atishudra) were denied the opportunity of an education. Ambedkar had to face many unforeseen situations, many times drastic, harmful and humiliating, only to attain education. His philosophy of education reflects the experiences that he lived, faced and overcome. In this article, the researcher has tried to explore Ambedkar’s views on education. He is counted among the makers of modern India. He considered the denial of education as an injustice to *the down-trodden*. Ambedkar used a constructive and structural approach to reform the society. Education to him was the sole base of political, social, and economic revolution. He focused on making education free and compulsory by incorporating article 45. He also emphasized women education and education that builds the character of individuals. Ambedkar’s philosophy is influenced by societal problems that he faced.

KEYWORDS: Education; Dalit; Ambedkar; empowerment; Indian Society.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a major game-changer in everyone’s life. It is a mandatory thing for becoming successful in life. The knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic (3R’s) are necessary. Education helps develop physique, social and emotional skills, feelings, and power of thinking, which are considered basic features of human beings. Today, every newborn child has a legal right to receive elementary education on a free and compulsory basis. However, the picture is not as easy as it seems. The history is quite the opposite of the present.

Indian society was deeply rooted in the four *varna* system, i.e. the social division of people into different groups. The education system of India in the past was also completely influenced and based on this caste system. Education was allowed for upper castes and

was not open for all, especially for Shudra and Atishudra. Education to women was also not taken into care. For centuries, these shudra and atishudra, used to be known as untouchables (aachhut), denied an education opportunity. They used to face harsh punishments if they dared to read the Hindu scriptures; not only reading but listening to these religious scriptures was also considered immoral. It looks unbelievable at first sight, doesn't it? It was harsh, painful and disrespectful for those who had to face it. B.R Ambedkar was among those. He had to face all the discrimination that lower castes used to face at that time. However, Ambedkar was different!

Ambedkar is counted among the makers of modern India. Despite being born in a Dalit family and socially and economically deprived family, he touched many milestones in his life. He was among the most educated people of modern India. He had a PhD in Economics from Columbia University and the renowned London School of Economics. Ambedkar is very famous all over the world. He was considered a skilled writer, speaker and most importantly, enlightened scholar. His study fields were very vast and included sociology, political science, philosophy, religion, and many other disciplines. Ambedkar associated himself with education for such a long time that he has his philosophy on education. Let us have a brief look at his philosophy of education.

For Ambedkar, "Education is something which ought to be brought within *reach of everyone*". Here the word everyone has a deep meaning. Everyone means everyone, with no discrimination based on caste and the social division of people. Because the Indian society had snatched all the rights of the *Dalits*, he was in favour of making a policy to make education reachable to all. In his words, "The policy, therefore, ought to make higher education as cheaper to the lower classes as it can be made. If all these communities are brought to the level of equality, then the only remedy is to adopt the principle of equality and to give favoured treatment to those who are below level". Ambedkar considered the denial of education as an injustice to the *down-trodden*. He used to say that some social traditions keep *Dalits* illiterate, and then society makes this illiteracy the basis for enfranchisement. This is a vicious circle that adds to Dalit's insult just because they are born in a lower caste. He was in favour of the removal of illiteracy with the state's support.

AMBEDKAR'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

The philosophy of Ambedkar can be understood by his speeches, writings, research articles, and also by party manifesto and correspondence. The primary aim of Ambedkar's life was to reconstruct the Hindu society. He gave utmost importance to education in his life. He used a constructive and structural approach to reform society. Education to him was the sole base of political, social, and economic revolution. He wanted to create a new sense of thinking and awakening among all individuals. He wanted education to be available to all and not just in the hands of a few upper castes individuals. "The education that makes us neither competent nor teaches us lessons of equality and morality is no more education." – Dr Ambedkar. His main ideas about education are included in the following discussion.

MEANING OF EDUCATION

Ambedkar used to believe that there are three principles in life. "Be educated, be organized and agitate". In Ambedkar's views, education is the only process by which men can be self-enlightened. According to him, "Education is that which make men fearless, teach unity, make understand their birthright and teach a man to struggle and fight for the freedom". He considered education as revolution. If education cannot do these things then it is a dead education and must be set to fire. In the clear words of Ambedkar, "education which does not make capable, does not teach equality and morality cannot be termed as education". Education creates life in society. In his philosophy, he gave utmost importance to self-respect, confidence and human pride. He wanted to develop the qualities like equality, brotherhood, fearlessness and freedom through education. He was in favour of job oriented and skill-based education, which can help people in gaining jobs to earn a livelihood. He believed that "education would be considered completed only when some skill would be associated with it and such skill would generate some employment for the person". He then favoured technical education, especially for backward classes in Indian society.

EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL EMANCIPATION

Education aims at bringing social, economic and political change in people's attitude. Ambedkar, with his experiences in Indian society, was a staunch opponent of social discrimination, casteism, gender inequality, untouchability etc. He thought that education is the only tool to bring structural changes to Indian Society. He thought that education would eliminate the existing gender and social inequalities and establish a sense of brotherhood and mutual respect. In his words, "Education is not only the birthright of every human being but also a weapon of social change".

UNIVERSALISATION OF EDUCATION

Ambedkar was deeply influenced by his mentor John Dewey's view on "Democratization of Education". The prevailing social inequalities in India were the reason for illiteracy. A large Indian society, especially women and individuals belonging to lower castes, was deprived of education. Ambedkar believed that "education is the birthright of every person and nobody can be denied to attain this right". Thus, all democracies of the world should provide the right to education to all the members of the nation irrespective of caste, creed, sex or any other basis.

WOMEN EDUCATION

In his speech on 20th Jul 1942 at Nagpur, Ambedkar said, "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved". He used to point out that if half of the nation (i.e. women) is uneducated, the country cannot progress. In addition to social reformer, Ambedkar was also a strong supporter of women's education. He was clear in his view that the education to women will be reflected in the development of the nation; women need to be educated. He also said, "Education is as necessary for females as it is for males. If you know how to read and write, there would be much progress".

CHARACTER BUILDING

Ambedkar said, "Education without moral values cannot be considered as education in a real sense". He used to believe that if due importance is not given to the moral values and character formation, then the education to the individual will be useless to society. In his speech at Bombay province Depressed Classes Youth Conference, he said, "An educated man without character and humility is more dangerous than a beast. If his education is detrimental to the welfare of the poor, the educated man is a curse to society... Character is more important than education".

FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Ambedkar was in favour of making education free and compulsory for all. He had suffered due to the social inequalities that prevailed in Indian society and wanted to uplift the backward and down-trodden people. Compulsory education would help the down-trodden in learning skills and gain employment to raise society's standard. He believes that everybody has a right to receive an education. All the differences in society are the result of a lack of education. He thought of free and compulsory education for all children in India, thereby including this idea in Article-45 of the Indian constitution.

CURRICULUM

He used to say that students must be trained to learn to "distinguish between the matter of facts and matter of opinion". The curriculum should enable the learners to state the questions on everything fairly (with sympathy). They should be able to analyse a proposed idea and observe what comes before accepting and rejecting it. In the views of Ambedkar, the curriculum of the school education should not be limited to the development of skills in the students. However, he wanted an education that gives due importance to behaviour organization, character development, self-expression and self-realization. He said that the nature of the curriculum should evolve the feeling of self-dependency among learners. He believed that education should be linked to bread than to god. Ambedkar preferred the vocational nature of education. He favoured having a national language that could bind the people of Indian in the bond of unity and equality. Ambedkar always preferred progressive and scientific methods of modern education.

THE TEACHER AND STUDENTS

Ambedkar used to say that "I am very fond of the teaching profession. I am also very fond of students. I have dealt with them. I have lectured them in my life. I am very glad to talk to the students. A great lot of the future of this country must necessarily depend on the students of this country. Students are an intelligent part of the community, and they can shape the public opinion". In the views of Ambedkar, the role of the teacher in moulding the personality of students is crucial. He has a significant impact on the overall personality development of learners. In one of his speeches, he said, "If we have good teachers, then we will be able to create good students". Ambedkar had great regard for teachers, and he was in favour of giving high place to teachers. He said, "teacher plays the most important

role in developing a healthy and complete human personality". He gave supreme moral to the teacher community. A good teacher has a positive attitude toward all individuals in society. He recommended that there should be a high level of scrutiny before the teachers are posted in the schools.

MOTHER TONGUE AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The teaching of school subjects takes place through the use of a language. A language is a tool that helps in the transmission of education. Research studies have reported that the education's effectiveness is improved if the instructions are provided in the students' mother tongue. Ambedkar was in favour of imparting education in the mother tongue of the learners. He also emphasized the learning of one foreign language along with the mother tongue. He used to think that this would help the students in understanding new developments at the global level. Ambedkar proposed to make Sanskrit the national language of India.

CONCLUSION

The philosophy of Ambedkar is a perfect mixture of ancient and modern Indian education. The contribution of Ambedkar in the educational development of a large section of society was significant. He played a key role in the education of deprived sections and *Dalits*. He drafted major laws in the Indian constitution to uplift the downtrodden people in the society. He used to think that education for all is mandatory if the nation wants to develop holistically. He emphasized women and the Dalits' education because these two were lagged in the educational statistics. To establish social harmony in Indian society, he stressed the bridging of the social divides. He made it the duty of the state to provide free and compulsory education to all children by incorporating it in article 45 in the constitution. He is counted among the makers of modern India. He considered the denial of education as an injustice to *the down-trodden*. Ambedkar used a constructive and structural approach to reform the society. Ambedkar emphasized the universalisation of education, which means that John Dewey's Philosophy inspired him. Ambedkar was also a supporter of women's education and worked for lower-caste students by opening separate hostels and colleges.

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