



Original Article

DR. AMBEDKAR VIEWS ON DEMOCRACY

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Abstract:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was one of the illustrious sons of India, Who struggled to restructure the Indian society on the most egalitarian and humanitarian principles. He was not only a great national leader but also a distinguished scholar of international repute. He was the first Indian political thinker who realized the inapplicability of the western pattern of democracy to India. For him, it was not enough to make a distinction between the state and society, state and government and state and nation. But he went to the roots of these institutions and pointed out, the importance of taking into account the elements constituting these institutions, that is the people. Western writers like Harold Laski and Melver did not go further than suggesting a distinction between the state and society and so on, they made only superficial references to the social and economic status of the various classes of people, who constitute the society and the state.

Keywords: *Humanitarian Principles, State, Society, Democracy, Western Pattern, Economic Welfare, Social Welfare etc.*

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Introduction:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was one of the illustrious sons of India, Who struggled to restructure the Indian society on the most

egalitarian and humanitarian principles. He was not only a great national leader but also a distinguished scholar of international repute. He was the first Indian political



thinker who realized the inapplicability of the western pattern of democracy to India. For him, it was not enough to make a distinction between the state and society, state and government and state and nation. But he went to the roots of these institutions and pointed out, the importance of taking into account the elements constituting these institutions that is the people. Western writers like Harold Laski and Melver did not go further than suggesting a distinction between the state and society and so on, they made only superficial references to the social and economic status of the various classes of people, who constitute the society and the state.

Dr. Ambedkar criticized the western writers, in his book, what congress and Gandhi have done to the untouchables? To him, western writers failed to recognize the social and economic contradictions. In the life of the Indian Society such as the position of the governing class of India and its intention to wards the service classes, the raisondetre of the demands of the service class, for constitutional safe guards and relation of the governing class to the congress.

The definitions of democracy given by Walter Bagehot or Abraham Lincoln were not satisfactory to Dr. Ambedkar. Bagehot defines democracy as “Government by discussion”, Lincoln as-the Government of the People, by the people and for the people.

Thus according to Dr. Ambedkar a mere façade of democracy would not achieve the purpose of democracy, which should be the welfare of the whole people.

Meaning of Democracy:

According to Dr. Ambedkar: Democracy means a form and method of government where by revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the peoples, are brought about without bloodshed. If democracy can enable, those who are running to bring about fundamental changes in the social and economic life of the people, and the people accept those changes without restoring to bloodshed, then I say that there is a democracy that is the real test, it is perhaps the severest test. But when you are judging the quality of material, you must put it in to the severest test. To him democracy is a mode of associated living. He regarded that roots of democracy were to be found in social relationship in terms of the associated life between the people who formed the society. Poverty, illiteracy and caste destinations were the positive dangerous to the democracy”.

He sought to remove contradictions generated by social and economic inequalities. He wanted to establish the principle of one man, one vote and one value, not only in political life of India but also in social and economic life. In other words, he wanted political democracy to be accompanied by social democracy.

To Dr. Ambedkar Social democracy involves two things: an attitude of mind, an attitude of respect and equality towards their fellows and a social organization free from rigid social barriers. To him, democracy was incompatible and inconsistent with isolation and exclusiveness resulting in the destination between the privileged and the unprivileged. He wanted high political objectives, but they



must keep harmony with social aims. He regarded democracy as both a social ideal and a political method.

Parliamentary Democracy in India:

During the discussion in the constituent assembly Dr. Ambedkar said that “Personally Speaking” I am very greatly attached to the parliamentary system of Government. We must understand what it means and we must preserve in the constitution. To me, parliamentary democracy is unknown to us at present, but one time had parliamentary institution. India was far more advance in ancient times. If you go through the “Suktas” of Mahaprinnibban, you will find ample of evidence in support of my point. In these Suktas it is stated that, while Bhagwan Buddha was dying at Kushinagara message to the effect was sent to be Malla’s who were setting in the session at that time, they were devoted in parliamentary institutions. When they received the message about Buddha they decided that they shall not close the session but would carry on with their work and will go to Kushinagar after finishing the business of the parliament, and he stated that there are many rules about parliamentary procedure, and practices. The system of secret ballot followed in Buddhist Sanghs, which called SalapatrakaGrahakas.

According to Dr. Ambedkar there are three main things inherent in parliamentary systems of government, they are:

1. Parliamentary government means the negation of hereditary rule. No person can claim to be hereditary ruler.

Whoever, he wants to rule, must be elected by the people from time to time. He must obtain the approval of the people. Hereditary rule has no sanction in parliamentary system of government.

2. Any law, any measure applicable to the public life of people, must be based on the advice of the people chosen by the people. No single individual can presume the authority that he knows everything that he can make the laws and carry the government. The laws are to be made by the representatives of the people in parliament; they are the people who can advice the men in whose name the law is proclaimed. That is the difference between the monarchical system of government and the democratic systems of government. In monarchy, the affairs of the people are carried on the name of monarch and under the authority of monarch. In democracy the affairs of the public are carried on in the name of the head of the state, but the laws and the executive measures are the authority, on which the government is carried on the head of the state is the titular, head, he is merely a symbol. He is concrete ‘Murthi’, he can worship but he is not allowed to carry out the government of the country. Which is being carried out through in his name the elected representatives of the people.
3. Parliamentary system of the government means that, at a stated



period those who want to advice the head of the state must have the confidence of the people in themselves renewed.

To him, “this is also not enough parliamentary system of government, but is much more than the government by discussion. There are two pillars, on which the parliamentary systems of government rest. These are the fulcrum on which the mechanism works. Those two pillars are (1) an opposition and (2) free and fair elections.

Essential Conditions President for the Successful Working of Democracy:

Dr. Ambedkar advocated some essential conditions president for the successful working of democracy they are:

- 1. No Glaring Inequalities in The Society:** He was conscious of the social and economic inequalities in the Indian society. According to him, for the successful working of democracy there must be no glaring inequalities in the society. There must be statutory provisions to safeguard the interests of the suppressed and the oppressed people. Society must be based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, in order to ensure social endosmosis. Dr. Ambedkar thought that it is necessary to annihilate the caste system in the Hindu society and to bring about a revolutionary change in the attitude and the thinking of the Hindus.
- 2. Existence of The Opposition:** The existence of an effective opposition is an important factor in successful

working of a democracy. After every five years, those who are in authority, must be subjected to scrutiny by the people, who will decide their continuance as the party in power. There are two aspects of the vote power, one is the long term vote of five years and the other an immediately ready and then to challenge the government. Thus, the effective opposition is a sinequanon of democracy.

- 3. Equality in Law and Administration:** There must be equality in law and administration. There must not be a spoils system, as is to be found in the USA, for efficient functioning of democracy. There is a need of permanent civil services implementing the policy of the government without fear of the executive. He further quoted that one need not, at this stage, dilate too much on equality before the law. Although, there might be cases here and there, where there is no equality before the law. But what is important is the equality of treatment in administration.
- 4. Constitutional Morality:** There must be a steady growth of constitutional conventions and the people must be educated in the scrupulous observance of these conventions. The people should not allow rein for their respect and loyalty to the leader to grow into blind faith of Bhakti Cult. Dr. Ambedkar cited the example of George Washington, when he



requested by the people to stand for the second time for the president ship of American, Washington said –“My dear people you have forgotten the purpose for which we made this constitution. We made this constitution because we did not want a hereditary monarchy and did not want a hereditary ruler for a dictator.

In the name of democracy there should be no tyranny of the majority over the minority. The minority must always feel safe although the majority is carrying in the government, the minority will not be hurt and the minority will not be impose upon. Thus, there should be adequate scope for motions of ensure or the adjournment motions of the minority to redress their grievances.

Dr. Ambedkar appreciated Herald Laski for his insistence on the moral order as a requirement of democracy. He says that, if is no moral order the democracy will to to pieces, it requires a public conscience. According to Dr. Ambedkar, public conscience means, conscience which becomes, agitated at every wrong, no matter who is the sufferer and it also means that everybody, whether he suffers that particular wrong or not, is prepared to join the aggrieved to secure justice. He cautioned that, with the making of the constitution, the task of building a democratic society is not over the task has only began and the people have to make efforts to accomplish it. A political democracy without an economic and social democracy is an invitation to trouble and danger. Social democracy alone

can assure to the message the right liberty equality and fraternity.

Thus democracy is not only a form of government but also a way of life, through which social justice can be established, with a deep faith in parliamentary tradition. Dr.Ambedkar fully agrees with the view that, there should be three necessary functions of government.

1. To make laws.
2. To execute them and
3. To punish those who commit breach of law.

He believes that only by dividing the powers of government each department can function with the utmost care and effectiveness.

Limitations of Parliamentary Democracy:

According to Dr. Ambedkar, there are some limitations leading to failure of parliamentary democracy in a country.

1. In parliamentary democracy, the executive may be held up by the legislative, which may refuse to pass the laws, which the executive wants. If it is not held up by the legislature, it may be held up by the judiciary, which may declare the laws as illegal. Parliamentary democracy gives no free hand to dictatorship and that is why it became a discredited institution in countries like Italy, Spain and Germany, which readily welcomed dictatorship. Dr.Ambedkar is against dictatorship, there is also a great deal of discontent and dissatisfaction against parliamentary democracy in the countries where people are



opposed to dictatorship. The discontent against parliamentary democracy. This is the idea of freedom of contract.

2. There is another wrong ideology, which has vitiated the institution of parliamentary democracy. This is the failure to realize and feel that political democracy cannot succeed where there is no social and economic democracy, there is bad organization. “All political society get divided into two classes; the rules and the ruled. This is an evil. If the evil stopped here, it would not matter much, but the unfortunate part of it is that the division becomes so stereotyped and stratified that rulers are always drawn from the ruling class. This happens because, generally people do not care to see that they govern themselves they are content to establish a government and leave it to govern them. Dr.Ambedkar warns the harbingers of democracy that if parliamentary democracy fails in this land, the result will be rebellion, anarchy and communism. He says- “I want you to take not of these eventful certainties, and if you wish that the parliamentary democracy prevails in this country, if you are satisfied that we will be assured of our liberty of thought speech and action, if we should preserve our independence, if we cherish the inherent right of individual liberty then it is your duty as a student, as intelligent community of our country to strive your utmost, to cherish this parliamentary systems of

government in its true spirit and to work for it. To him a parliamentary democracy can be maintained under guarantees of freedom of speech and criticism together with political and economic initiative for the individual.

Conclusion:

Thus, according to Dr. Ambedkar the democracy is not only a form of government, but also a way of life through which social justice can be established. Social justice demands that the society should provide the welfare of all is not merely the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Otherwise, the interests of the majority might gain precedence over those of the minorities.

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