

Dr. Ambedkar's views on Primary Education

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Babasaheb Ambedkar had considered the education as tool of bringing social change and true emancipation. For this, he recognized the need of introducing democratic model in education. His personal experience itself was the testimony of the fact that how education can be used as a powerful instrument to transform the life of under-privileged section of the society. As per Babasaheb, besides liberating the under-privileged communities from various kind of social restrictions, education imparts the modern values into them to fight with the different types of social evils and orthodoxies. Education decreases the overall reliability of marginalized classes on local elites of rural areas while providing the several new avenues for the livelihood and opportunities to do away with traditional occupations. While raising a sense of pride and self-respect, education makes them aware of caste based subjugation and exploitation which ultimately leads to achieve freedom and empowerment in true sense. He recognized the fact that the education is an important means to attain power in politics and economy and therefore he gave his famous call i.e. 'Educate, Agitate and Organize'. This paper aims to discuss the Ambedkar's view on education with special reference to the primary education. Ambedkar vociferously advocated for reforming education system during the colonial period. After the independence he contributed his views on the several educational reforms and founded few important educational institutes. He emphasized on the need of education system which serves to all. It is also a matter of grave concern that the instead of following the path shown by one of the greatest social reformer and educationist of modern India, his ideas are yet overlooked in present school education system of our country. In this context the current paper highlights the need of including Babasaheb's thoughts in educational curriculum.

Introduction

Dr. Ambedkar devoted his whole life for the upliftment of the marginalized classes in society. As an obvious outcome, he was severely criticized by the supporter of the then orthodox ideologies, which strongly believed in cast based hierarchical society. Ambedkar found that the one of the most effective way of uplifting the Dalits and the tribal was to provide them access to schooling. In a letter written to the Anti-Untouchability League, Babasaheb mentioned his thought about education and described that empowerment of the depressed communities would be simply rely upon fact that how effectively education is provided to these backward classes (Chatterji, 2008). He did prescribed numerous strategies for transforming the education system from basic level to higher studies of his time and it is needless to mentioned that in the present scenario too, in order to make the education system more responsive and effective, those policies are quite relevant. His thoughts about education were very innovative and fully practical.

He had highlighted the economic aspect of education while emphasizing on the proper utilization of limited economic resources for the advancement of education. According to him,

for the progress and development of the society education worked as foundation. He believed that one of the prominent reasons of backwardness of Indian society and its snail paced development lies in the fact that the people overlooked the need of materialistic requirements of life and were quite apathetic towards the knowledge which promotes requirements of securing materials. For Ambedkar education was not only simply perceived as tool of personality development or means of employment, but it was an effective and important instrument to transform the backward and orthodox society (Kumar, 2011).

He considered education as catalyst for social transformation and precondition for initiating any social movement. He believed that it is the education which can liberate the depressed classes from various forms of regressive social evils which ultimately equipped them to fight with different type of subjugations and marginalization's. He was of the opinion that an educated Dalit could easily get rid of from those activities which are traditionally assigned them from centuries and make them untouchable in society. Education would break the old exploitative divisions of labour which was based on caste while enabling the depressed class to choose the modern professions (Kumar, 2011).

Importance of Education

Ambedkar proposed the idea of linking education with the socio-economic needs of the people of underdeveloped countries to bring about the social change. As per him the education system should be structured in a manner so that it could match up with realities of Indian society. For this he founded People's Education Society and introduced Diploma courses to make the students professionally capable of holding various responsible jobs. In this regard he had also established few more institutes such as Siddharth College of Mass Communication and Media and the Siddharth Institute of Industry and Administration. But still, despite giving so much emphasis on formal education, he also understood the importance of informal education given at home and by different sources such as newspapers. According to him informal education is also crucial for the betterment of the society (Sirswal. R. D, 2011).

Babashaheb had several time spoke on the issues concerning education in parliament of India. In the parliament he expressed his worries about the sluggish pace of the development in the area of education for children. He quoted the report of Indian government and conveyed a deep concern while referring the very ordinary rate of progress of education. He mentioned that while following the pace of educational progress given in the report, it would take forty years for boys of school-going age to be brought under education and for girls even the duration would be much higher i.e. three hundred years (Bhatia, K. K. and et.al. 1988) . He was also concerned about the fact that day by day the budget of education was increasing but the number of the students was not increased. He was very critical of improper and unfair utilization of government's fund. He referred the amount of fund allocated to education during the period of 1916-17 to 1922-23, in which the funds were raised about hundred percent but the increased number of students was only twenty-nine percent (Kumar, 2011). He was of the opinion that government should spend significant amount on education and it should be atleast equal to the amount which is collected by the revenue department as excise duty.

Dr. Ambedkar's view on Primary Education

It is needless to mention that for the developing country like India, educational transformation substantially depends upon the structure of primary education. That is why from the very beginning, when the social reform movements started during the Indian renaissance period, proper programs and actions for primary education were significantly emphasized. Later the founding father of our Indian constitution also duly recognized the need of providing basic education, in order to fulfil the hopes desires of the people of newly independent India, which they envisaged during the freedom movements. In the constitution, before the enactment of article 21(A), article 45 had the provision that the state would provide free and compulsory education for the children up to fourteen years. This was mentioned in the part 4 of the constitution known as Directive Principles of the State Policy (Bhatia, K. K. and et.al. 1988). After the 86th amendment of the constitution, article 21(A) added in the constitution which also provides the provisions for free and compulsory education for the children up to fourteen years. But now it has become fundamental rights which is legally mandatory for the states. Furthermore, through this amendment previous provision of the article 45 has been replaced by new provision which provides guidance to the state to arrange early childhood care and education for the children up to the six years (Bhatia, K. K. and et.al. 1988). Babasaheb too vociferously supported for free and compulsory primary education. According to him the very objective of primary education is to make the every child literate. Moreover, he also believed that the object of primary education is also to ensure that children do not leave the education until they become literate and be literate for their whole life. As per Babasaheb, there should not be any type of discrimination in providing education to people on the basis of their particular economic and social status.

He was also the great supporter of gender equality and always equally emphasized for the women education till the matriculation level. He recognized the fact that everyone, irrespective of their gender, should have at least minimum ability to read and write and thus primary education is must. In his speech of Bombay Legislative Assembly on 12-07-1927 (Parmar, R. V 2016), while referring the one of the Indian government report, he had shown his apprehension about state of the fund wastage allocated to primary education and massive dropouts of the students at primary level. He mentioned that only 18% students could reach from class one to fourth standard (Ambedkar, 1982: 40). Problem of school dropout is still persistent in the Indian education system which he visualized in his own time only and alarmed the government for dealing with it. He comprehended that only sending the children to the school is not enough but it is equally important to ensure that they are completing their essential primary education. In the same speech he urged to the education minister to raise the fund for primary education (Ambedkar, 1982).

Babasaheb always wanted from the people belonging to the depressed class to be aware of their social condition and strive for the progress. He opposed the provisions of 'Compulsory Primary Education Act, proposed in education reforms act of 1921, which was taking of transferring the primary education from provincial government to school boards. Ambedkar felt that it will against that backwards classes as the school boards, which must be drawn from the villages, would discriminate the backward classes and do not believe in the fact that education is needed for whole society rather than it is the concern of Brahmin only. He believed that access of such government services should be safeguarded for the backward classes as it would encourage

them to achieve primary education. He also mentioned that the Primary Education Act is erroneous because through this act the power regarding education is transferred to the people who are not aware of the fact that how backward society needed the education. In these local boards, there is only one representative belonging to backward classes and thus they find themselves as unaccompanied in any decision making issue. They have to work with those communities, who never be sharing the idea of advancement and progression of backward classes. Therefore Ambedkar urged to government that it should appoint some inspection agency which would take care of the interests of backwards communities and regulate the boards, which are given charge of education department in a manner so that they cannot overlook them.

He proposed the idea of giving few special facilities such as hostel accommodations and scholarships etc. to backward classes by the government, in order to promote higher education among them. But at the same time he knew the fact that unless these people are not provided proper primary educations and government is not taking steps to promote primary education, such facilities for higher education are meaningless to them. In the same speech of 12-07-1927 he referred some government data to highlight the wastage of public money allocated to primary education. He mentioned that about 50% of educational funds allotted for primary education was gone into wastage (Kumar, 2011). He was of the opinion government should allocate the adequate fund for primary education and utilize them in a manner that the every child entered in primary education could reach to fourth class.

While citing some more government figures, he spoke about the problem commercialization of education, which also a one of the grave threat for current education system too particularly those who belong to backward and poor class. Dr. Ambedker mentioned that as per the government data, in arts colleges 36 percent of total expenditure, in high school about 31 percent of total spending and around 26 percent of middle school's expenditure are collected from fees only (Kumar, 2011). As per Ambedker it was nothing but complete commercialization. He felt that the education is such an essential component of social services which should be under the easy access of every one. Education department cannot be run on the basis of cost benefit analysis. But it is mainly a service which should be either given for free or at very low cost. Ambedker said that it is the time when people belonging to lower order of society started entering into the education at different levels. So the education department must make the education economical.

He was against the policy of making separate schools for the backward class community because it would further create more division among so called high casts and untouchables. He suggested that books for the students should be written in an easy and simple language. To promote the education among backwards community, he felt that the teachers who are involved in teaching the untouchable class should be encouraged by giving the awards and special incentives by the government. Despite so much emphasis given to the primary education, Babasaheb knew that only primary education is not sufficient for empowering the grass root sections of the society (Ambedkar, 1982). Thus he viewed that the people should be also promoted for higher studies.

In his speech, he elaborated that how untouchables face discrimination and apathy in promotion for education compare to other classes. He mentioned that it is the duty of government to make the agency which take care of backward societies that they are not subjected to any discrimination. He examined the Bombay province census report to understand the advancement of education in different communities. There were four communities-the first class are known as advanced hindus, were lowermost in number but their advancement in education was first at all the levels of education i.e. primary, secondary and college education. The second class was known as intermediate class, was highest in terms of population but third at all levels of education. Third class was known as backward classes which included the untouchables, hill tribes and criminal tribes, were second in terms population but lowermost at all the levels of education. The fourth class was Muslims which were third in terms of population but second in in terms of advancement in education at all the levels. The table given below provides the comparative display that how the educational advancement of different communities was different in Bombay province in his time (Kumar, 2011).

Indian classes	Total number of the students in the primary education per 1,000	Total number of the students in the secondary education per 1,00,000	Total number of the students in the college education per 1,00,000
Advanced Hindu	119	3,000	1,000
Mohammedans	92	500	52
Intermediate class	38	140	14
Backward class	18	14	Nil (or nearly one if at all).

<http://mulnivasiorganiser.bamcef.org/?p=129>

The above table simply suggest that the how backward classes are underrepresented in the education sector. Babasaheb observed the realities of Indian society which is full of differences. Given the fact that the inequality in terms of progress and status was the basic nature of Indian society, Dr. Ambedkar felt that the to create a just and equitable society, the only way is to follow the principle of inequality which prefers most to those who belongs to lower level or are least advantaged. For Mohammedans already government had applied this principle. The case of backward classes was really worrisome. There was no limit of their deprivation and no other classes were facing such backwardness. Ambedkar felt that the principle of equality should have applied to the backward classes first.

Conclusion

As it has been discussed throughout the article that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar believed the fact that education is one of the powerful means of transforming the lives of backward classes. In the area education, he had given much emphasis on primary education as he considered that it is the foundation for empowerment of depressed class. Ambedkar was much ahead of his time and his ideas are still very relevant. So, it is a matter of utmost important to collect and trace his contributions and vision regarding the education. Ambedkar understood well that how education is important for whole society and how it can bring radical changes in the traditional

society while creating so much avenues of opportunities for backward classes. Ambedkar's ideas regarding primary education are very useful for the current academic discourse as what he visualized as the problems are still haunting the primary education. The problem of fund allocation, wastage of funds and commercialization of education are the issues which are even more relevant in current scenario. All these factors make him more relevant as his thoughts help in understanding the perspectives which have been missing in the discourse of education. These perspectives he acquired in the course of long struggle. Thus, these knowledge should be documented and mentioned in textbooks across all over the countries. Babasaheb was an intellectual as well as a leader, who shouldered the responsibility of lightning the lamp of enlightenment among for the most depressed classes. It was his immense courage and highly intellectual capabilities through which he fought with the repressive and unfair cast based biased practices. (Sirswal, 2011). However, it is matter of greatest dismay that his thought regarding education are not dully given consideration by the governments. It needs to be understood that his ideas are not only limited to the empowerment of depressed class of the society but they are significant for all section of society. The world's one of the greatest document, Indian constitution is testimony of the fact that what kind of society he had envisaged in his ideas.

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