

DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR VIEWS ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECT OF DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

In general usage, the term "democracy" refers to political democracy. One man, one vote is the basis of political democracy. Dr. Ambedkar, on the other hand, has a unique perspective on democracy, based on a thorough examination of the political, social, and economic conditions that existed in India during his lifetime. By "democracy," Ambedkar means major changes in people's social and economic lives, as well as people's acceptance of those changes without resorting to squabbles and bloodshed. A democratic society, according to Ambedkar, should be built on the trinity of liberty, equality, and brotherhood. Only a democratic society, he believed, could provide political democracy. The elimination of socio-economic inequalities in a democratic society is essential. It demanded social equality. To put it another way, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was determined to ensure that the notion of one man, one vote translated into one man, one value not only in a person's political life but also in his or her economic and social life. This paper examines Ambedkar's views on democracy in general, with a focus on its socio-economic aspects. The paper also discusses Ambedkar's perspectives on Indian democracy and how to make democracy a source of social equality.

KEYWORDS: Ambedkar, Democracy, Socio-Economic Aspect, Equality

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1966) was an eminent jurist, a brilliant constitutionalist, a brilliant scholar, a daring leader of the people, a hero of the oppressed, and India's greatest Buddhist revivalist. In both his beliefs and actions, he is renowned as an ardent supporter of democracy. The definition of democracy given by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is multi-faceted. It was discovered that Ambedkar maintained unwavering trust in democracy. Democracy plays a unique role in his vision of an exploitation-free society, which he defines as "one person, one vote" and "one vote, one value." Democracy entails any person's ability to participate in the decision-making process affecting her or him; it also entails liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Ambedkar was a true democrat who fought for a democratic society based on natural justice, equity, and classification based on aptitude, talent, and vocation. The origins of democracy are found in social interactions, not in the form of government. In India, he saw the caste system as a severe impediment to democracy. 'The primary condition precedent for democracy's proper functioning is that there must be no obvious inequities in society,' he stated. There must be legal provisions in place to alleviate suffering and protect the rights of the oppressed. To achieve social endosmosis, society must be founded on the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. On economic inequalities, Ambedkar claims are inherent in the capitalist economy, rendering the

political equality guaranteed by democracy useless. According to Ambedkar, parliamentary democracy has been vitiated by the failure to grasp that political democracy cannot exist without social and economic democracy. As a result, while parliamentary democracy acquired a passion for liberty, it never established a nodding acquaintance with equality. It failed to recognize the importance of equality and did not attempt to strike a balance between liberty and equality, resulting in liberty swallowing equality and producing a progeny of inequalities (Keer, 1962, 490).

DEMOCRACY: THEORY AND PRACTICE

The phrases 'democracy' comes from the Greek words 'demos' and 'Kartos,' with the former meaning 'people' and the latter meaning 'power'. "Democracy is simply a form of government, according to J.R. Lewis, "but a form of government that exists to supply and preserve a better society and to give the maximum amount of liberty for individuals consistent with the attainment of order and security within the State" (Lewis, 1966, 14). Abraham Lincoln's common definition of democracy is "Democracy as Government of the People, by the People, and for the People" (Kshirsagar, 1992, 53). Democracy, according to Walter Bagehot, is "government through discussion" (Kshirsagar, 1992, 53). Democracy, on its own, means little more than that political power ultimately rests in the hands of the entire adult population, and that no smaller group has the right to dominate. When democracy is qualified by one of the other

words with which it is connected, such as liberal democracy, representative democracy, participatory democracy, or direct democracy, it takes on a more meaningful definition. As more countries aspired to build democratic administrations in the late twentieth century, a democratic revolution swept the globe. Democratic transformations in such countries sparked hope for a better, more peaceful world. Democracy, according to Francis Fukuyama, had prevailed over communism and other rival ideologies. He predicted that democracy will eventually spread throughout the world (Fukuyama, 1989).

Samuel Huntington looks at the history of democracy in America since its inception. Since democracy first washed up on America's coast, he concluded, there have been three waves of democratization and two reverse waves. More than thirty countries became democratic during the first democratic wave (1828–1926). When Benito Mussolini took power in Italy in 1922, a reverse wave began. Many new democratic countries fell to communist, fascist, and militaristic doctrines between 1922 and 1942. Only twelve countries were democracies by 1942. Following World War II (1943–1962), the second wave of democratization occurred, with the United States and its allies promoting democracy in West Germany, Italy, Austria, Japan, and South Korea. Military coups throughout Latin America and Asia, as well as the establishment of several African countries, characterized the second reversal wave, which lasted from 1958 to 1975. A third of the world's democracies had fallen under authoritarian rule by 1975. Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Greece, Turkey, India, Pakistan, South Korea, the Philippines, and other countries experienced a reversal. Almost all of Africa's newly independent countries were dictatorial. Many social scientists began to believe that democracy was unfit for emerging nations. The third wave of democracy began in southern Europe in the mid-1970s, with Portugal, Greece, and Spain leading the way. As the soldiers returned to their barracks, it swept throughout Latin America. It moved into Asia, restoring democracy in India, Pakistan, Turkey, the Philippines, and South Korea. It eventually expanded to Eastern Europe's communist regimes. Between 1974 and 1990, thirty nations made the transition from authoritarianism to democracy, roughly tripling the number of democracies on the planet. Negotiations, elections, and nonviolence were used to bring about the third wave of democratization in most situations. The level of economic development of a country has a significant impact on the consolidation of democracy. It results in a more informed society and attitudes conducive to a democratic political culture, such as trust and tolerance. Compromise and conciliation between various groups are easier to achieve when there are more economic riches. Democracy follows a "two-step forward, one-step backward rhythm," as Samuel Huntington put it (Huntington, 1991). Prior democratic experience, the political institutions that

have been built, and the level of economic development are all factors that influence the consolidation of democracy. In a democracy, the administration and opposition leaders must collaborate, which frequently necessitates drawing on previous experience.

AMBEDKAR'S VISION ON DEMOCRACY

Democracy, according to Ambedkar, is "a structure and manner of government in which revolutionary changes in the economic and social lives of people are carried about without violence" (Lokhande, 1977, 23). He went on to say that democracy is "a style of associated life" (Shabbir, 1997, 18). The origins of democracy can be found in social relationships; in the shared lives of the people who make up a community. Ambedkar is a firm believer in the rule of law. In his vision of democracy, the government should be in charge of delivering revolutionary changes to the people's economic and social lives without causing conflict. Ambedkar disagreed with Marx on the methods for achieving the goals and objectives embodied in socialism. He argued for democratic means, believing that while democratic means are slow, they are more enduring, stable, and permanent. Ambedkar never campaigned for violence or bloodshed. He consistently urged his supporters to settle their problems in democratic, nonviolent, and constitutional methods (Thorat, 2007, 8).

Political democracy, according to Ambedkar, cannot survive without social and economic democracy. According to him, the greatest way to create socio-economic democracy is to first obtain political democracy. The relevance of political, social, and economic democracy as a concept stems from the fact that citizens of any nation cannot enjoy their rights without them. To realize the aims of equality and fraternity expressed in our Constitution's Preamble, the coexistence of all three democracies is required. For emphasizing the necessity of democracy, Ambedkar said, "It appears to me that there lays on us a very fundamental duty to see that democracy does not vanish from the planet as the guiding principle of human relationships," he further argues, "We must be both true and loyal to it if we believe in it. We must not only be adamant in our belief in democracy, but we must also vow not to assist the opponents of democracy in uprooting the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity in any way" (Vikrant, 2016, 308-10).

Political democracy, according to Ambedkar, is founded on four premises: (a) the individual is a goal in and of himself. (b) The individual has some inalienable rights, which the constitution must protect. (c) As a condition of receiving a privilege, the individual shall not be asked to sacrifice any of his constitutional rights. (d) The state may not transmit authority to private individuals to regulate others (Ray and Ray, 2011, 80-81). Individual dignity, political liberty, social progress, and human rights are essential

constitutional safeguards that constitute Ambedkar's basic decent democratic principles in political democracy. To him, 'the ground plan refers to a community's social structure, to which the political plan is intended to apply. Because the political structure leans on the social structure, political democracy and liberty are worthless if they are not beaked and bucked up by equitable social patterns. The social structure has a huge effect on the political structure, he claims. It may change the way it works. It may neutralize it or possibly turn it into a cherish' (Ray and Ray, 2011, 80-81). It is also critical that the people analyze the ground plan, which includes social ties, before passing any judgment on any scheme of political relationship or creating plans for economic improvements. Democracy should be viewed as both a social and a political technique.

SOCIAL ASPECT OF DEMOCRACY

'Democracy is not a type of government, but a form of social organization,' Dr. Ambedkar declared (Khalil, 2015, 5). He believed that the foundations of democracy can be found in social relationships and the associated lives of the people who make up a society. He was adamantly opposed to a small segment of society manipulating cultural symbols for their gain and furthering their supremacy, a process that he saw as undemocratic and detrimental. Political democracy, in his opinion, is not an aim in itself, but rather the most effective means of achieving social and economic values in society. He wanted social democracy to go hand in hand with political democracy. Unlike many others, he prioritized social components of democracy over political ones, unlike many others who focus solely on the political and institutional aspects of democracy. Ambedkar was more concerned with people's social ties than with the separation of powers and constitutional safeguards for democracy (Khalil, 2015, 5).

Ambedkar refers to major changes in the social and economic lives of the people and acceptance of those changes by the people without resorting to disputes and violence by using the term 'democracy (Lokhande, 1977, 23). As a result, he condemned the caste system and urged for its abolition. Ambedkar thought that society was more than just a collection of organisms. It's something that's founded on people's attitudes. The term 'society' does not just refer to a collection of close-knit groups of males living together. It entails the exchange of cultures, traditions, beliefs, and ideas between various communities. Ambedkar agreed with Dewey's definition of democracy as associated living: "society is the act of associating in such a way that experience, ideas, emotions, and values are communicated and become common" (Shabbir, 1997, 18). As a result, for the formation and entrenchment of an equal society, there should be fluid communication and exchange of ideas and experiences. In India, however, the caste system operates as a

roadblock to the establishment of a community based on equality. Therefore, Ambedkar believes that a caste-based society should be abolished and that there should be social endosmosis. What would be the opposite of a caste-based society? A democratic society, according to Ambedkar, should be founded on the trinity of liberty, equality, and brotherhood.

On the one hand, Ambedkar saw the theological foundation of caste as a major impediment to democracy in India; while on the other hand, he saw the Buddhist doctrines of liberality, equality, and fraternity as the foundations for democracy. "It is a typical occurrence that particular names get connected with certain thoughts and sentiments, determining a person's attitude toward men and things," he writes. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra are high and low caste hierarchical distinctions based on birth and act accordingly" (Jatava, 2001, 100).

There should be no tyranny of the majority over the minority in a democratic society. The minority must always feel secure in the knowledge that, despite the majority's control of the government, the minority will not be harmed or oppressed. Harold Laski was admired by Ambedkar for insisting on the moral order as a fundamental requirement of democracy. He claims that democracy will crumble if there is no moral order. It necessitates the existence of a "public conscience" (Ray and Ray, 2001, 76-77). "A political democracy without an economic and social democracy is an invitation to turmoil and danger," he went on to say (Ray and Ray, 2001, 76). Only social democracy can guarantee the people's right to liberty, equality, and fraternity. As a result, democracy is not simply a form of governance but also a way of life that may be used to achieve social justice. Social justice ensures that society promotes the well-being of all citizens. Democracy is a way of life that is constantly changing. It places a high value such as tolerance and peaceful techniques.

Education for individuals who desire to deconstruct the caste system, according to Ambedkar, will boost India's democratic prospects and place democracy in safer hands. The class structure is a positive threat to democracy in Indian society. Rich and poor, high and low, owners and labourers, and permanent and sacred aspects of social organization were all distinguished by this class structure. Practically speaking, in a class structure, there is tyranny, vanity pride, arrogance, greed, selfishness, insecurity, poverty, degradation, loss of liberty, self-reliance, independence, dignity, and self-respect on the one hand, and insecurity, poverty, degradation, loss of liberty, self-reliance, independence, dignity, and self-respect on the other (Ambedkar, 2014, 40).

The goal of democracy, according to Ambedkar, is to serve the interests of society as a whole, rather than any

particular class, group, or community. As a result, while addressing in Poona about the 'conditions prior for the effective working of democracy,' Ambedkar highlighted, "The first condition which I believe is a condition precedent for the successful working of democracy is that there must be no glaring injustices in the society." There can't be any oppressed groups. A suppressed class cannot exist. There must not be a class with all of the advantages and a class with all of the responsibilities. Such a thing, such a divide, such a societal arrangement contains the germs of a bloody revolution, and it may be hard for democracy to heal them (Ambedkar, 1962). According to him, true democracy opposes the oppression of minorities. Minority persecution and exploitation, in whatever form, is an affront to democracy and humanism. If suppression continues, democracy will devolve into tyranny.

ECONOMIST ASPECT OF DEMOCRACY

Ambedkar discovered a strong link between a person's social and economic life. His perspective on the significance of economic democracy is both eye-opening and instructive. Ambedkar distinguishes between the lives of animals and humans. An animal's primary priority is to satisfy its bodily needs/desires, such as nutritional needs, reproductive needs, and so on. Man, too, seeks satisfaction for his physical appetite. However, because of the virtue of thinking, man is a greater species than any other animal. Reason enables him to think, question, examine and analyze life and everything that makes it up. Thus, an animal's ultimate objective is to satisfy its physical need, whereas 'man's ultimate goal is civilization' (Lokhande, 1977, 37). According to Ambedkar, Culture is critical to humanity's progress. 'The goal of human society must be to enable every person to enjoy a life of culture, which is a civilization of the intellect as opposed to the fulfilment of just bodily needs. To live a life of culture is to live a life worthily but to live a life of simply physical desires is to live a life worthily. To live is to make vanilla ice cream — it's as simple as that. But to live a life worth living entails adding chocolate syrup to vanilla ice cream, or even dusting almonds and cashews on chocolate-laced vanilla ice cream — it involves bringing value and purpose to life' (Lokhande, 1977, 37). He argues, humans, on the other hand, devote the bulk, if not all, of their time and energy to achieving a simple and secure existence. It becomes tough to add value to it. It becomes tough to live a life worth living. A cultured life becomes tough because, to live a life worth living, one must first live it.

Ambedkar introduces the concept of leisure at this point. The existence of leisure in one's life is essential for living a cultured life. Instead of creating vanilla ice cream, leisure allows a person to engage his or her time and energy in adding value to his or her plain and uncomplicated life. A

person's leisure permits them to afford culture. Answering the question, 'What is leisure?' Ambedkar writes, "Leisure signifies the decrease of the toil and effort necessary for meeting the physical necessities of life" (Lokhande, 1977, 37). Leisure merely preserves a man's resources (not all, but the majority) that he would have spent on acquiring essential life necessities. His ability to pursue greater life goals is made possible by the availability of stored resources. It allows him to work on civilizing his mentality.

Ambedkar's theory does not specify whether politics belongs to the domain of human culture. In popular parlance, politics is characterized as a struggle for power. The desire for power is analogous to bodily desires in that it is a primal want. However, it may be argued that power would not come first in a hierarchy of basic bodily desires because survival and everything it necessitates is the first few desires of human life. As a result, authority is being pushed into the cultural realm. In his political philosophy, Aristotle enabled a citizen to participate in state matters if he had the time. Aristotle believed that owning land and slaves provided leisure (Lokhande, 1977, 37). Ownership of property provided financial stability, whereas having slaves at one's disposal ensured that they took care of the household's day-to-day business, freeing up valuable time for their master. Thus, leisure enables an individual to pursue higher goals rather than being locked in a monotonous rut in Aristotle's perspective. Unlike Aristotle, Ambedkar never advocated for the use of slavery (albeit the term had a very different meaning at the time of each of these thinkers) to provide leisure.

Ambedkar attempted to provide an answer to the question of how leisure may be achieved. Dr. Ambedkar recognized the need of producing some things that are required for basic human requirements in this environment. The effort required to produce these things consumed the majority of man's time and energy. Leisure can only be offered if the amount of effort required to manufacture these essential products is minimized. This leads to a more pressing question: What can supply leisure? "Only when the machine takes the place of man (is leisure developed)," says Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (Lokhande, 1977, 37). There is no other way to generate leisure. Machinery and contemporary civilization are thus essential for emancipating a man from the life of an animal, providing him with time, and enabling him to live a cultured existence.

Ambedkar was a strong supporter of economic democracy. In his opinion, economic democracy was just as vital as political democracy. 'The constitution seeks to establish an ideal in front of people who will constitute the government, and that goal is economic democracy' (Lokhande, 1977, 39-48). Economic democracy meant, only

one thing to Ambedkar: one man, one value. He wished to build the foundations of economic democracy on this premise. Ambedkar was also concerned about how economic democracy should be procured. On this subject, he was receptive to a variety of viewpoints. He was well aware that the capitalist system was the ideal form of economic democracy for some, while the construction of a socialist state was the best form of economic democracy for others, and the communist system was the ideal state of economic democracy for yet others. Such viewpoints were respected by Ambedkar. He believed that the Directive Principles of State Policy had been purposefully phrased in such a way that persons with various points of view may accomplish the ideal of economic democracy in their unique way. As a result, he desired that political democracy be bolstered by economic democracy to make his ideal of one man, one value a reality. At a period when the Indian National Congress lacked a clear plan or blueprint for the country's economic structure, Ambedkar had already proposed the notion of 'one man, one value' (Lokhande, 1977, 39-48). However, Ambedkar was well aware that the theory of one man, one vote had been enthusiastically adopted in the political arena, with positive outcomes. However, in the economic realm, this political theory did not transfer into the much-touted 'one man, one value.' According to Dr. Ambedkar, 'one man, one vote' should be translated into 'one man, one value.' It didn't.

Ambedkar attributed the problem to constitutional lawyers' long-held beliefs about the constitution-making process. The main purpose of the constitution, according to these constitutional lawyers, was to create a responsible government and prevent government tyranny. Adult suffrage and fundamental rights were never considered by such old-school constitutional lawyers. They failed to see that times had changed and that the constitution's scope needed to be expanded. The constitution had the authority to dictate the shape and form of not only the political but also the economic organization of the society. Ambedkar believed that it was past time for a constitution to establish a framework within which the political and economic systems could function. The constitution should not be afraid to describe the type of economic structure it wants the state to have or the economic ideal it wants the state to pursue. Furthermore, Ambedkar believed that countries like India, which were latecomers in the field of constitution-making, should not repeat the mistakes of others.

SUCCESS TO INDIA'S DEMOCRACY

Ambedkar believes that a democratic nation like India must meet certain essential criteria to succeed. To begin with, democracy requires an effective opposition. Opposition parties keep the ruling party in check. They operate as watchdogs, scrutinizing the government's policies and

programs. The presence of opposition, according to Ambedkar, ensures a responsible and accountable administration. Second, having a permanent and neutral civil service is necessary for carrying out and implementing the government's plans and programs. The term 'neutral' simply refers to the bureaucracy's lack of affiliation with any political party. This empowers civil servants to work without fear of reprisal. Third, democracy should not result in 'majority' tyranny. Minorities should be safe and protected by a government dominated by the majority. Minority interests should be acknowledged and supported. Furthermore, the majority should not damage or impose on the minority's feelings.

Fourth, Dr. Ambedkar believed that democracy would crumble in the absence of moral order. 'A conscience that becomes agitated at every injustice, no matter who is the sufferer, and it means everyone, whether he suffers that particular wrong or not, is prepared to join the aggrieved to secure justice' (Lokhande, 1977, 28). A country's constitution may promote a specific way of life. But, at the end of the day, it's just a series of written rules. Value-based citizenship, which makes a citizen accountable and active, must emerge in a community. It cannot instil in individuals' feeling of morality' (Lokhande, 1977, 28).

Fifth, persons must have access to a set of essential human rights, sometimes known as fundamental rights, without discrimination. Apart from the provision of fundamental rights, systems and procedures must be in place to ensure that people's rights are not violated or infringed upon by others or the state. As a result, a proclamation of rights needed to be followed by a list of remedies. Sixth, the oppressed classes must be granted appropriate political power by being adequately represented in the country's legislature. Furthermore, they must be able to elect their representatives through adult suffrage and a separate electorate. As a result, empowering the poor ensures the smooth operation of democracy. Seventh, Ambedkar believed that the absence of conspicuous inequities in society was critical to the successful operation of democracy. A society with socioeconomic differences has the germs of a bloody revolution, which democracy may not be able to cure (Lokhande, 1977, 24).

Finally, Ambedkar believes that democracy must allow for a manner of life that ensures and establishes social justice. As in the words of Lokhande "Social justice necessitates that the society promotes the wellbeing of all, not just the greatest happiness of the largest number otherwise the majority's interests may take precedence over those of minorities" (Lokhande, 1977, 24-28).

AN ASSESSMENT

Ambedkar's ideas on democracy are far too timely, reasonable, and sensible to be overlooked. Consider a situation in which an individual reaps the benefits of constructing a community founded on equality, liberty, and fraternity. What if he just appreciates these rewards in one area of his life? What if, on a person's priority list, that particular facet of life (politics) comes after the other two relevant aspects of life (economic and social aspects)? Fundamental rights are useless to someone unable to provide for his or her family. 'It would put our political democracy in jeopardy,' as Ambedkar concluded (Shabbir, 1997, 58).

In India, Ambedkar desired to see social democracy flourish. He stated unequivocally that political democracy cannot succeed unless social democracy is at its foundation. He warned the country in the direction, that, "On January 26, 1950, we will enter the life of contradictions; one man, one vote, and one value will be recognized in politics. If our social and economic structures continue to violate the idea of one man, one value, we will suffer in our social and economic lives. How much longer do we have to live this contradictory existence? How much longer will we continue to reject social and economic equality? We will only succeed in preserving our political democracy if we continue to deny it for a long time" (Kshirsagar, 1992, 61).

When it comes to the concept of democracy, it's clear that Ambedkar believed in it wholeheartedly. Democracy plays a unique role in his vision of an exploitation-free society, which he defines as 'one person, one vote, one value.' He characterized parliamentary democracy as 'Voting by the people in favour of their owners and handing over the rights of ruling over themselves'. This shows the breadth of his ideal, which far outstripped the Indian Constitution and any popular perception of him. His idea of democracy appears to be entirely focused on the people. Ambedkar was a fervent believer in the importance of social and economic democracy to political democracy's success. He believed that political democracy is the most potent vehicle of achieving society's social and economic aspirations, rather than an aim in and of itself.

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