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Contribution of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to Indian Education and Society

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Abstract: Bharat Ratna Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was dynamic person in Indian history. He was contributed as an economist, sociologist, legal luminary, educationalist, journalist, Parliamentarian, editor, social revolutionist, height of the human rights etc. He was a first highly educated scholar within untouchable community in India. He wrote three scholarly books and many papers on economics. Indian economy is mixed economy and have impact of changes in social, political and economical changes before and after independence. He represented problem of physical and economical exploitation of rural poor through his movements. Dr. Ambedkar has given new socio and political view to Indian economics. Dr. Ambedkar decided to “changeover from economics to law and politics” He argued for fixed gold standard for exchange rate. He told that low exchange rate increases exports and boosts internal prices. In the age of global market vision 20-20 mostly contain his economical thoughts. The economically use of public funds and its proper utilisation for planned objectives can be growth the economy of nation. Democratic people must to enlightened each other for his canon and judicial provisions regarding public funds and its uses. It is solution for positive impact on elected representatives. He proceeds to say that, if agriculture is to be treated as an economic enterprise, then, by itself, there could be no such thing as a large or small holding. He also suggested ‘Industrilisation’ as a helpful and effective solution for both agriculture and Indian economy. In his early life he scholarly contributed Indian Economy with his writings. Within middle of 20th century he devoted his life for upliftment of backward classes with constitutional efforts. He was a scholar modern economist and his thoughts background of current scenario. Now the days need to upliftment of real economical backwards to build economically powerful nation.

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Introduction:

After long years of neglect, the ideas of B.R. Ambedkar seem to be gaining currency. While his thoughts on Indian society and politics have garnered more attention, some of his economic ideas too deserve greater attention.

Known largely as the father of the Indian Constitution and a leader of Dalits, Ambedkar began his career as an economist, making important contributions to the major economic debates of the day. He was, in fact, among the best educated economists of his generation in India, having earned a doctorate in economics from Columbia University in the US and another from the London School of Economics.

Ambedkar’s London doctoral thesis, later published as a book, was on the management of the rupee. At that time, there was a big debate on the relative merits of the gold standard vis-à-vis the gold exchange standard.

The gold standard refers to a convertible currency in which gold coins are issued, and may be

complemented with paper money, which is pledged to be fully redeemable in gold. In contrast, under the gold exchange standard, only paper money is issued, which is kept exchangeable at fixed rates with gold and authorities back it up with foreign currency reserves of such countries as are on the gold standard.

Ambedkar argued in favour of a gold standard as opposed to the suggestion by John Maynard Keynes that India should embrace a gold exchange standard. He argued that a gold exchange standard allowed the issuer greater freedom to manipulate the supply of money, jeopardizing the stability of the monetary unit.

Ambedkar’s Columbia dissertation was on the state-centre financial relations under the guidance of Edwin Seligman, one of the foremost authorities on public finance in the world. Ambedkar argued that under a sound administrative system, each political unit should be able to finance its expenditure by raising its own resources, without having to depend too heavily on another.

Ambedkar's views on the rupee and on public finance were responses to the raging economic problems of the day and not all of his analysis may be relevant today. But some of the principles he enunciated such as that of price stability and of fiscal responsibility remain relevant even today.

Of all his academic publications, the one that has aged best and has great relevance for contemporary economic debates is a 1918 essay on farming and farm holdings published in the journal of the Indian Economic Society.

In that essay, Ambedkar considered the problem of small landholdings in India and their fragmentation. After examining various proposals to consolidate and enlarge such landholdings that were being debated in those days, Ambedkar came to the conclusion that such proposals were fundamentally flawed.

Economy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Ambedkar argued that land was only one of the factors of production required to produce crops, and unless it was used in an optimal proportion with other factors of production, it would be inefficient. Landholdings should, therefore, not be fixed but should ideally vary with the availability of other factors of production: increasing with the availability of farm equipment and shrinking if the latter shrank.

Any proposal to enlarge holdings can be entertained only if it can be shown that the availability of farm implements has grown considerably in the country, argued Ambedkar. And he then marshalled data to demolish that argument by showing that capital stock had, in fact, declined.

Ambedkar argued that the real challenge lay in raising the stock of capital and that will be possible only if there is greater savings in the economy. This was not possible as long as a great mass of people depended on land for their livelihoods, he reasoned. Therefore, he posited industrialization as the answer to India's agricultural problem.

"In short, strange though it may seem, industrialization of India is the soundest remedy for the agricultural problems of India," Ambedkar concluded. "The cumulative effects of industrialization, namely a lessening pressure (on land) and an increasing amount of capital and capital goods will forcibly create the economic necessity of enlarging the holding. Not only this, industrialization by destroying the premium on land will give rise to few occasions for its sub-division and fragmentation."

What is most remarkable about Ambedkar's analysis is that he was able to conceive of the notion of "disguised unemployment" much before it came into vogue in development economics, and that he

was able to anticipate one of the key insights of Nobel Prize-winning economist Arthur Lewis three decades before Lewis formulated his famous two-sector model of the economy.

Lewis presumed that developing economies had surplus and idle labour in the farm sector, and showed how transferring labour from farms to factories would raise savings and productivity levels in both sectors, leading to overall growth. The model Lewis formulated in 1954 was far more elaborate than what Ambedkar outlined in his essay, but there are striking similarities in the way both framed the issue.

Ambedkar returned to this theme in a 1927 speech made on the floor of the Bombay legislative assembly (as it was then called), which was debating a proposal for regulating landholdings.

Ambedkar warned of the folly of such regulation, reiterating his arguments made in the 1918 essay. He argued that the enlargement of landholdings by controlling the partition of immovable property and sale of consolidated holdings would create a small crust of wealthy landowners and a large mass of landless "paupers".

Despite his objections to many social customs sanctioned by Hindu scriptures, Ambedkar voiced his approval of the Hindu law of inheritance, which, according to him, prevented the creation of plutocracy, which primogeniture (the right of succession belonging to the firstborn child) would surely have created. A better way of addressing the problem of fragmentation was to introduce cooperative farming, and "to compel owners of small strips included therein to join in cultivation without destroying private ownership".

In later years, Ambedkar's energies were devoted more to politics and social change rather than economic analysis, but even his writings and speeches on politics reflected a deep engagement with economic issues and questions of political economy.

Just as his politics are today being appropriated by politicians of all hues, his economics today has become a battleground between the left and the right, with both sides claiming that he was actually on their side. But a careful reading of Ambedkar's writings dispels the view that he was either a champion of a laissez-faire economy or a revolutionary socialist.

Ambedkar's views on economics were as complex as his views on politics and it is likely that one shaped the other. As his views on India's agrarian problems indicate, he saw no contradiction between advocating for industrialization on the one hand and cooperative farming on the other. And in both cases, he supported his arguments with

examples of countries in other parts of the world which had adopted the solutions he was advocating. More than doctrine, empirical evidence seems to have guided many of his policy positions.

Although Ambedkar spoke out in favour of industrialization and urbanization, he also warned of the ills of capitalism, arguing that unfettered capitalism could turn into a force of oppression and exploitation.

It was Ambedkar who proposed to the Constituent Assembly that the chapter on fundamental rights in the Constitution should include both negative rights (relating to civil liberties) as well as positive rights (relating to social and economic justice). In a memorandum on this subject, Ambedkar outlined his vision of the rights of citizenship in a free India, and explained why it would entail extensive state control over the economy.

Ambedkar included a section on remedies against "economic exploitation", which proposed, among other things, that key industries should be owned and run by the state and that agriculture should be a state industry. Ambedkar argued that a modified form of state socialism in industry was necessary for rapid industrialization, and that collective farming was the only salvation for landless labourers belonging to the "untouchable" castes.

Anticipating the objections of "constitutional lawyers" who may think that Ambedkar's formulation went beyond the scope of the usual kind of fundamental rights, Ambedkar argued that such a view would be based on a very narrow understanding of fundamental rights. If the objective of such rights was to protect individual liberty, his proposals did the same, Ambedkar argued.

Ambedkar argued that an economy based purely on the profit motive violated two tenets of political democracy: one, it allowed private employers, rather than the state, to govern the lives of individuals, and two, it may force an individual to give up his constitutional rights to gain a living.

"If a person who is unemployed is offered a choice between a job of some sort, with some sort of wages, with no fixed hours of labour and with an interdict on joining a union and the exercise of his right to freedom of speech, association, religion, etc., can there be any doubt as to what his choice will be?" Ambedkar wrote. "The fear of starvation, the fear of losing a house, the fear of losing savings if any... are factors too strong to permit a man to stand out for his Fundamental Rights."

Responding to libertarian lawyers who argued for minimum state intervention to protect liberty, Ambedkar argued that withdrawal of the state may lead to liberty but that liberty is "liberty to the

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landlords to increase rents, for capitalists to increase hours of work and reduce rate of wages".

"In an economic system employing armies of workers, producing goods en masse at regular intervals, someone must make rules so that workers will work and the wheels of industry run on," he wrote. "If the state does not do it, the private employer will. Life otherwise will become impossible. In other words, what is called liberty from the control of the state is another name for the dictatorship of the private employer."

Both the political and economic structure should be defined by law to translate the rule of one man, one vote to the doctrine of one man, one value, Ambedkar argued. Countries such as India should profit from the experiences of other countries and define the shape and structure of the economy in the Constitution itself, he felt.

Yet, Ambedkar's radical proposals did not win the support of the Constituent Assembly. Instead, many of the provisions outlined in his memorandum found place in the Directive Principles of State Policy, which, though important, are not justiciable in a court of law.

Ambedkar seemed to have accepted that compromise with equanimity when the chapter on directive principles was finalized in late 1948, even though just a year earlier (in 1947), he had made an impassioned plea for making socioeconomic rights justiciable. "How and why Ambedkar's position on social and economic rights changed remains a puzzle," writes political scientist Niraja Gopal Jayal in her 2013 book, *Citizenship and Its Discontents*.

Although Ambedkar resented Jawaharlal Nehru for, among other things, not including him in the cabinet committee on economic affairs (and cited that as one of the reasons for his resignation from the cabinet), his views on the economy and the role of the state mirrored those of Nehru.

Both Nehru and Ambedkar advocated state ownership of key industries to drive rapid industrial growth without closing avenues for private enterprise in the country. Like Nehru, Ambedkar was influenced by the dominant intellectual paradigm of the day, which emphasized a large role of the state in economic affairs.

Both men were also likely influenced by the ideas of Fabian socialists, and their social democrat counterparts in the US. One of the biggest influences on Ambedkar was American educationist and philosopher John Dewey, who became the president of the League of Industrial Democracy in 1939, and who subscribed to a broad conception of social democracy.

Despite accepting certain insights from Marxism, particularly the concept of exploitation in

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society by one group against another, Ambedkar differed with Marxists in many respects. In an essay titled Buddha or Karl Marx, written a few weeks before his death, he analysed the similarities and differences between the ideas of Buddha and those of Marx, and argued that the ideas of the former were more appealing.

Ambedkar pointed out that even Buddha had spoken about the evils of exploitation in society, even if he did not use the Marxist parlance of class conflict, and had warned that private property brought sorrow and suffering to the world. According to him, both Buddhism and Marxism aimed to root out exploitation and suffering, but the means were different.

While one appealed to the conscience of man to change himself, the other relied on violence and the dictatorship of the proletariat to achieve it. The latter was unacceptable to him because it did not recognize the value of human life. To him, the three ideals of liberty, fraternity and equality were compatible only with Buddhism.

Ambedkar was also critical of Indian socialists who failed to take into account caste while planning for class struggle. In that brilliant but undelivered speech written in 1935, The Annihilation of Caste, Ambedkar argued that it was impossible for the poor to form a common front against the rich as long as they maintained caste distinctions.

Ambedkar argued that it was not enough for the socialist to say that he himself did not believe in caste; if he wanted to be taken seriously, he would have to undertake a vigorous programme of social reform to remove caste distinctions in society.

"That the social order prevalent in India is a matter which a socialist must deal with; that unless he does so, he cannot achieve his revolution; and that if he does achieve it as a result of good fortune, he will have to grapple with the social order if he wishes to realize his ideal—is a proposition which in my opinion is incontrovertible," wrote Ambedkar. "He will be compelled to take account of caste after the revolution if he does not take account of it before the revolution."

Despite his disagreements with Marxist methods, and his resentment against socialists for not taking caste seriously, Ambedkar shared their concerns about economic inequality in the country. In his concluding speech to the Constituent Assembly,

he warned that without economic and social equality, political equality will eventually be jeopardized. Political democracy will last only if we make it a social democracy as well, he said.

"On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions," said Ambedkar. "In politics, we will have equality, and in social and economic life, we will have inequality. In politics, we will be recognizing the principle of one man, one vote and one vote, one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man, one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up."

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