

Vol. 4 No. 1, June 2011

ISSN : 0975-1386

Wesleyan Journal of Research

An International Research Journal

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Wesleyan Journal of Research



Bankura Christian College
Bankura-722 101
WEST BENGAL, INDIA

ISSN : 0975-1386

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Published by

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Printed at :

A. T. Press,

Bankura, India

(This is a refereed journal and all articles are professionally screened and reviewed. The articles reflect the opinion/views of the authors. The editorial board is in no way responsible for the same)



Dr. Ambedkar's Ideas on Education and Social Change

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Abstract:

In this paper it is an attempt to draw an outline of Dr B.R.Ambedkar's philosophy of education and social change. Present education system in India has different aims and objectives in regard to our needs and these are incompetent for individual and societal growth. Education should play a role in man's individual and social life both. Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy enlightens us with clear understanding of nature of society and its important components. To understand his philosophy of education one should know about his philosophy of social change. It is our need to understand his philosophy and its implications to every aspect of our lives.

Key words: Ambedkar's Philosophy, Theory of Social Change, Indian Education System, Philosophy of Education, Societal Problems .

Education is the most important component of any developed society. In the words of former President of India Dr. A.P.J.Abdul Kalam, it is the most important element for the growth and prosperity of a nation. It enables us to understand the milestones of the modern society achieved and links common people with the scientific achievements and technological break-through made by our scientists. Yet there are 350 million illiterates in India even now besides a large number of such literates "who have to acquire employable skills to suit the emerging modern India and the globe."¹

The present education system is divorced from the real social content and goals. We as the citizens of the republic are constitutionally committed to democracy, social justice, equality of opportunity, secularism and above all to a welfare state. Educational policy and educational programmes should not merely equip an individual to adjust with society to its customs and conventions, but it should enable him to bring desirable changes in the society. Every educational institute from secondary school to University College should be developed to become an agency of change; it is the dream of Dr. B.R .Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar was a revolutionary, rationalist-humanist, human rights intellectual-activist, a man who looked ahead of his time. His philosophy of education aims at creation of a liberating consciousness, which is not just formal education, but the conscientisation process of education, agitation and organization, put together. Education enriches the intellectual powers of the learners and to promote a respect for reason. It is not enough to know the answers to the question asked; it is equally important to learn to question. A critical, systematically inquiring mind is the end result of 'proper intellectual training'.

It is natural to ask the question "Reform and change to achieve what ?" What type of society we aim at and what type of citizens we wish to produce ? Ambedkar answered these questions. He says, "Knowledge is the foundation of a

man's life"² and man is nothing without society. He gave the conception of an ideal society as "My ideal would be a society based on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. An ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society, there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association. In other words, there must be social endosmosis."

Modern education in India is often criticized for being based on rote learning rather than problem solving. But this is not the conception of Ambedkar. In his own views, it is an instrument to change in the destiny. As he said, "Give up the idea that parents give 'Janma' to child and not destiny (Karma). They can mould the destiny of their child by giving them education." But he knows that it is difficult to enforce education, due to economic disparity and social conditions, for the major part of India including women and *Dalits*, a term referred by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, which means "oppressed". To reduce this economic disparity and social conditions, he fought for his whole life. Due to his efforts after India's independence a number of rules were formulated for the backward Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and for women. He said that, "Education is as necessary for females as it is for males." But this is the reality that women have much lower literacy rate compared to boys, far fewer girls are enrolled in the schools, and many of them dropout. According to a 1998 report by U.S. Department of Commerce, the chief barrier to female education in India are inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities), shortage of female teachers and gender bias in curriculum (majority of the female characters being depicted as weak and helpless).³

Due to lack of political will, pupil teacher ratio, shortage of infrastructure and poor level of teacher training are responsible for the incomplete development of women. The number of literate women among the female population of India was 2-6% from the British Raj onwards to the formation of the republic of India in 1947. Concentrated efforts led to improvement from 15.3% in 1961 to 28.5% in 1981. Since 2001 the literacy for women has exceeded 50% of the overall female population, though these statistics were still very low compared to world standards and even male literacy within India.⁴

In our so called holy culture we can find lots of beautiful ideas on women status, but we can't find any practical implications about it and found them full of miseries. Ambedkar said, "Man's misery is the result of man's inequity and resultant misery." He fought against the traditional mythological and cruel ideology of ancient India and says, "Men are mortal. So are ideas. An idea needs propagation as much as a plant needs watering. Both will otherwise wither and die." So, he dedicated his life to implement his ideas, what he got through critical and reflective thinking, about India's real socio-political and economic conditions.

We can find in Ambedkar's life the qualities of a good student as well as a teacher. After graduating from Bombay University, he received M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the prestigious American University of Columbia and M.Sc. & D.Sc. degrees from the reputed British University of London. Besides he obtained Bar-at-Law degree from the famous Gray's Inn in England. His training under distinguished scholars like John Dewey, Charles Beard and R.A. Seligman helped in sharpening his intellect and in developing his analytical power. Although, he had specialised in economics and law, he also studied history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, religion and political science to develop an interdisciplinary perspective for a proper understanding and analysis of the depressed people of India. His

deep and critical analysis, we can find in his vast writings on all issues related to depressed class and Indian social problems.

In the words of a thinker, "Dr. Ambedkar strongly condemned the caste system because it is based on hierarchy not equality, lack of social efficiency instead of social efficiency, social immobility and opposition to social mobility, destructive tendencies rather than harmony, ex-communication instead of union, endogamy and not on exogamy and on anti-social spirit rather than on social spirit. He also condemned caste system because it prevented assimilation and promoted regression. It not only created differences among the Hindus but also made them inactive, proved to be a barrier to in the way of land reforms, and promoted social backwardness and has done grave injustice to the lower caste." ⁵

The real worth of education is to keep oneself abreast with the deeper aspects of human life. Human knowledge and experiences are, therefore, always in need of crystallisation and recrystallisation. Such processes are continuous and unending, and as such, as inherent philosophy of education instills a deeper faith in humanity- a faith that reconnotes man from merely being a human being.⁶ In the words of Dr. Ambedkar, "A great man must be motivated by the dynamics of a social purpose and motivated by the dynamics of a social purpose must act as the scourge and scavenger of the society." In his thinking man's power is depend upon (i) physical heredity, (ii) social inheritance or endowment in the form of parental care, education, accumulation of scientific knowledge, everything that enables him to be more efficient than the savage and finally, (iii) on his own efforts. He said that, "One should always cherish some ambition to do something in the world. They alone rise who strive."

With the same tone Tagore allows ample freedom for pupils in education not because they lead in undisciplined life but essentially, because they will learn discipline by themselves. He said, "Our life gains what is called 'value' in those of its aspects which represent eternal humanity in knowledge, in sympathy, in deeds, in character and creative works. And from the beginning of our history we are seeking, often at the cost of everything else, the value of our life and not merely success. In other words, we are trying to realize in ourselves the immortal man so that we may die but not perish. This is the meaning of the utterance in the *Upanishad*: "Tam vedyam *purusham* veda, yatha ma vo mrityum parivyathah."..... "Realize the person so that thou mayst not suffer from death." ⁷

It is our suggestion that the aims and objectives of education should include individual as well as social aims, with emphasis of social transformation are constructing society to make it modernised, productive, participative, value oriented and nation committed to its constitutional obligation. With efforts of Dr. Ambedkar India got a constitution which incorporated the principles of liberty, equality and justice. In the constitution he provides for one man one vote (universal adult franchise), a common All India Civil Service to man the important posts, independent judiciary, free and compulsory education to the children upto 14 years of age etc. The heart of the constitution, is the fundamental rights guaranteed to every citizen and Directive Principles to the executive and legislature for the governance of the country. Dr. Ambedkar, the chief architect of our constitution, also included secularism and economic democracy in the constitutional scheme so as to transfer the stagnant Indian society into an egalitarian and vibrant social order.⁸

Dr. Ambedkar wanted to create India as a country in which all have equal civil rights. He worked as eradicator of evils from society but he couldn't succeed fully. He wanted to establish a corruption free society in which all are

equal. So, we have to finish this work. He wanted to secularize politics and wanted to protect politics from narrow-mindedness, theology and traditionalism. His inspirational tone always made the young people of India to realise the true nature of humanity. This is the right time when we have to recall and remember the philosophy, ideals and principles of Dr. Ambedkar for the betterment and enlightenment of our country and establishment of world-peace.

Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy of life enriched with the feelings of social justice and peace. He dedicated his whole life to secure social justice and equal status for all. People in general and the youth in particular should follow Ambedkar's philosophy as a teacher, social reformer, political thinker and above all an educationist. Youth will contribute their share whole heartedly in building the nation fraternity, justice and should understand his philosophy as a whole. We sum up our discussion by the great saying of Dr. Ambedkar :

"Man is mortal. Everyone is to die some day or other. But one must resolve to lay down one's life in enriching the noble ideals of self respect and in better human life."

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