

Ambedkar's Role in Educating the Marginalized

Sameena Nadaf

Research Scholar, Dept. of Studies and Research in Sociology,
Karnataka University, Dharwad.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17805563>

ABSTRACT:

For the Dalit community, Dr Ambedkar was a hero towering over all others and a social activist, but for the world at large, Ambedkar was an alert and alive thinker. Ambedkar's writings played an important role in turning him into an international figure. Ambedkar believed that education is a movement. If it does not fulfil its objectives, it is useless. True education cradles humanity, generates sources of livelihood, imparts wisdom and imbues us with egalitarianism. Even before Independence, he was recognized as a jurist of rare intellect. He raised some pertinent questions about education in Indian society while speaking in the Bombay Legislative Council on 12 March 1927. He was deeply concerned that India was lagging behind in education.

KEYWORDS:

Ambedkar, Babasaheb, Education, Marginalized, Dalits.

.....

Introduction

In the second half of the 19th century, social reformers had launched an acerbic attack on brahmanical rituals through their books. Jotirao Phule's Gulamgiri was one of them. In the South, Periyar and Narayan Guru sounded the bugle against the Varna system. A few decades later, Ambedkar was given the responsibility of drafting the Constitution of the newly independent India in due recognition of his merit and scholarship. He became the country's first law minister. Since then, Ambedkar's thoughts have grown in relevance with each passing year. Thereafter he made efforts to educate the marginalized masses to a great extent.

Once Dr Ambedkar said that the amount of money which we are spending on primary education is to a large extent really wasted. The object of primary education is to see that every child that enters the portals of a primary school does leave it only at a stage when it becomes literate and continues to be literate throughout the rest of his life. But if we take the statistics, we find that out of every hundred children that enter a primary school only eighteen reach the fourth standard; the rest of them, that is to say, 82 out of every 100, relapse into the state of illiteracy. We

have yet to overcome the problem of school dropouts. Dr Ambedkar had grasped this problem long ago. He realized that only sending a child to school was not enough. It is also important to keep them in school till they have attained primary education. Only planting a sapling is not enough. It is also necessary to tend it with water and fertilizers; otherwise it will die sooner or later. Therefore Ambedkar requested the honourable education minister to spend more money on primary education, if for nothing else, at least for the purpose of seeing that what he spends bears some fruit ultimately.

As Dr Ambedkar had deep concern for the lower sections of society, he stated that we are arriving at a stage when the lower orders of society are just getting into the high schools, middle schools and colleges, and the policy of education department therefore ought to be to make higher education as cheap to the lower classes as it can possibly be made. This country is composed of different communities. All these communities are unequal in their status and progress. Economically speaking or socially speaking, backward classes are handicapped in a manner in which no other community is handicapped. Thus Dr Ambedkar's views on education were in consonance with India's geographical, social and economic situation and reflected scientific reasoning.

Three Goals: Educate, Unite, Struggle

Dr Ambedkar's views on education have yet to be studied deeply – this despite the fact that he had been working in the field of education since he founded the Hitkarini Sabha in 1924. Ensuring that more and more of the backward classes got an education was among the priorities of the Sabha and with that purpose, it established a number of colleges, hostels, libraries and reading centres. At the initiative of the students and under the guidance of the Sabha, a monthly titled Saraswati Belas was launched. The Sabha established hostels in Solapur and Belgaun in 1935 and a free reading centre, a hockey club and two hostels in Bombay.

In 1928, Dr Ambedkar constituted the Depressed Classes Educational Society. In 1945, he founded the Lok Shaikshik Samaj for to ensure that the backward classes got higher education. This organization started a number of colleges and middle schools. It also extended financial assistance to hostels. In brief, the Lok Shaikshik Samaj played an important role in making higher education accessible to the Dalits. Dr Ambedkar's writings pertained not only to economics, the law, the Constitution and

political science, but also to sociology, philosophy, religion, anthropology, etc. He also had an abiding interest in education. It was not limited to theorizing. He took pains to give a practical shape to his views.

Ambedkar believed that education was the most important means of raising the people's standard of living. His slogan was "Educate, unite, struggle". However, his views on education were eclipsed by his seminal work for Dalit emancipation. "Educate" is the first word of his famous slogan. The reason is education's undeniable role in the building of human character and consciousness. Only an educated person can understand his class interests and bring about class unity. Education propels a person on the path of struggle.

Dr Ambedkar said, "Education is what makes a person fearless, teaches him the lesson of unity, makes him aware of his rights and inspires him to struggle for his rights." He believed that education is a movement. If it does not fulfill its objectives, it is useless. Dr Ambedkar unambiguously stated that an education that does not make a person capable, that does not teach him equality and morality, is not true education. True education cradles humanity, generates sources of livelihood, imparts wisdom and imbues us with egalitarianism. True education makes society alive.

Goals of Education

Human dignity and self-respect were central to his social philosophy. He wanted to use education to establish justice, equality, fraternity, freedom and fearlessness in society. He wanted to replace the birth-based society with a value-based one. It goes without saying that these moral values can be promoted only through education. Ambedkar was deeply influenced by Buddhist philosophy and he advocated development of morality in all people. He said only such objectives of education are meaningful that aid in making humans happy and prosperous and helping society progress. He was also in favour of making education relevant to employment. Education can help make society stable. Good behaviour and good conduct arise from logical reasoning and that can be acquired only through education, experience and dialogue. Ambedkar's objectives of education were the same as his social, economic and political objectives. He was a strong proponent of logical and scientific education.

He considered education as a means for self-expression, for building self-esteem and character, for determining proper conduct and for

learning through experience. He believed that the students should try to understand and unravel earthly and transcendental mysteries. He advocated instructing children in different regional languages. Despite having respect for all languages, he felt the need for a common language that would become the means of communication between people of different parts of the country and thus promote unity and integrity. He was for scientific methods of teaching, especially vis-à-vis higher education. He said that real education should not awe us; it should appeal to our logic and reason. He believed that religious instruction had no place in curricula. He was for using a worldly yardstick to assess the value of education. He stood for a uniform education for all classes and that was why he advocated scientific and progressive curricula, based on the principles of social democracy.

Dr Ambedkar was not a professional educationist and he has not made any theoretical analysis of teaching methodologies. But despite that, he has put forward excellent ideas on education. He was convinced that there shouldn't be much difference between the teaching methodologies for graduate and postgraduate classes. He believed that teaching shouldn't be separated from research. He advocated autonomy of universities in admissions, teaching, examinations and appointments.

Dr Ambedkar's thoughts are not only relevant for the Dalit community but for the entire Indian society. Today, we talk of enhancing the budgetary allocation and expenditure on education. But what we envisage is a maximum two per cent of the total budget. Ambedkar had raised this demand long ago. While we have implemented Right to Education for the primary classes, no one is concerned about what a student will do after acquiring primary education.

Conclusion

Ambedkar ultimately suggested that if the government is sincere about promoting education among the Depressed Classes, there are certain measures which it must adopt some suggestions. Unless the Compulsory Primary Education Act is abolished and the transfer of primary education to the school boards is stopped, the education of the Depressed Classes will receive a great setback. Unless primary education is made mandatory and the admission to primary schools is strictly enforced, conditions essential for the educational progress of the backward classes won't be created. Unless the recommendations made by the Hunter Commission

regarding the education of the Mohamedans are applied to the Depressed Classes, their educational progress will not be realized. Unless entry in the public service is secured for the Depressed Classes, there will be no inducement for them to get an education. Thus he made such provisions in the Indian Constitution which would help the Dalits and the deprived get education and employment.

References:

1. Dhananjay Keer : Dr. Ambedkar : Life and Mission, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1995.
2. Ambedkar, B.R. : The Indian Antiquary, Vol. XLVI, 1971
3. Das, Bhagwan : Thus Spoke Ambedkar, Vol 1, Bheema patrika Publication, Jullundar, 1977.
4. Nithiya, P. (2012) Ambedkar's vision on the Empowerment of dalit education. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research. 1 (2), 47-52
5. Sirswal. R. D. (2011). Dr.Ambedkar's Ideas on Education and social change. Wesleyan Journal of Research. 4 (1), 180-183
6. n Sowbhagya , G. (2014). Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Philosophy on Higher Education and its Relevance to the present society. International Educational E-Journal.3,(2), 177-181
7. Valeskar. P. (2012). Education for liberation: Ambedkar's Thought and Dalit Women's Perspective. Sage. 9, (2), 245-271
8. Ambedkar, B.R. (1979), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol.1 (compiled by Vasant Moon), Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay

Funding:

This study was not funded by any grant.

Conflict of interest:

The Authors have no conflict of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

About the License:

© The Authors 2024. The text of this article is open access and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.