

Relevance of Dr.Ambedkar's thoughts on Inclusion and Excellence in Indian Higher Educational Institutions for Present Times



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Abstract

Dr. Ambedkar's contribution and vision towards Higher education is exemplary. His writings show his deep interest in education. According to him the fundamental purpose of education is developing the values of equality, justice, liberty and fraternity among the students. Ambedkar talked of Inclusive education. His view was that depressed class can rise if education is provided to them. They were ignored for centuries. It is only the education system which can abolish caste system. He was a great educationist who stood for compulsory education. Dr. Ambedkar also stressed about excellence in Higher Education. He talked of making the university and colleges as partners in terms of equality and would be participating together in promoting both the undergraduate and the post graduate studies. He emphasised quality research in higher education. He said that separation of under graduate work from post graduate work means the separation of teaching from research. His thoughts paved the way for making the present education system Inclusive, effective, strong and towards excellence in higher education. The Right to Education (RTE) Act is also very much related to his thoughts on Inclusive Education. His thoughts are also used by UGC for excellence in higher education. This paper studies the relevance of Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts on Inclusion and Excellence in higher education in India.

Keywords: Inclusion, Excellence, Higher Education, Equality, Opportunity.
Introduction

Babasaheb Ambedkar was one of the most outstanding intellectuals of the world in the 19th century. He was a great scholar and an institution builder. Through his study on the development of education in Maharashtra during the reign of Peshwa and during the early British period he came to know that education was only the right of higher castes. He wanted to abolish this system and wanted that education should be provided to all irrespective of caste, class or sex.

According to Dr.Ambedkar "Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of everyone. The education department is not a department which can be treated on the basis of quid pro quo. Education ought to be cheapened in all possible ways and to the greatest possible extent." (Moon, Vasant, 1991, p.40-41)

His ideas of democracy, Inclusive education, freedom and equality are still relevant in present times. The recently legislated Right to Education (RTE) Act is a milestone in the journey towards achieving the goal of universal, equitable and quality education. The RTE Act mainly focuses on the following:

1. Education is now a fundamental right for a child in India in the age group 6-14 years.
2. All aspects of the Act are now justifiable as a Fundamental Right i.e. violation of any clause of the Act can be taken up in court by any citizen-not just the person/s directly involved and adversely affected.
3. There will be no discrimination whatsoever of any kind when it comes to enrolment.
4. Norms and standards for all schools (government and private), including teacher qualifications, will be detailed without which no school will be recognised.

5. Private schools will have to reserve 25% of their seats for the disadvantaged

Thus from the provisions made in "Right to Education" it can be proved that the thoughts of Ambedkar before Independence are brought in reality as in 'Compulsory and free education' in India to bring children in the flow of education. The most important point is that the law has granted 25% reservation for economically disadvantaged communities to be expelled from dominating class in education and dalits can be liberated from the dominance of certain classes.

He recognised that education is the vital element for the development of society and human beings. He fought for providing education to the depressed classes. His educational philosophy was influenced by the western pragmatic philosopher called John Dewey. According to Dewey,

Education in its broad sense is the mean of social continuity of life. John Dewey established 'educational society' to organise the school education of his community with the philosophy. (Malliah, L.C & Singh, Bhupendra, p-62). According to Ambedkar, education was a blend of pragmatism of Dewey and Dhamma of Buddha .He realised that status of dalits and tribals is much lower in comparison to other communities. The role of educational policies for depressed classes is emancipator as education has been identified as the primary factor in development and as an instrument for social change and as having the potential to annihilate the caste system (Rafaqi, 2013 In Malliah (Ed.) 2016). Higher education is also a means of social mobility .For national development higher education provided to its students should be inclusive, equitable, uncovering inequalities, diverse in terms of gender, religion and ethnicity. In India ,the past decade has witnessed tremendous growth of private institutions and the policies and strategies of the government are reluctant in any sizeable investments in higher education. Now higher education has become a sector of minor importance and privatization of education seems to be high on the agenda of the government. Ambedkar was very farsighted and had foreseen commercialization of education in India. He was against the commercialization of education and criticized the existing government.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find the relevance of Dr. Ambedkar's contributions in the field of Higher Education in present times.
2. To explore the issues of Inclusion and Excellence in Indian Higher Educational Institutions as suggested by Dr. Ambedkar.

Methodology adopted for the Study.

Secondary sources of existing literature were consulted for the study. Historical and analytic approach was adopted. Dr. Ambedkar's ideas and thoughts related to matters of Inclusion and Excellence for Higher Education were collected by visiting various libraries and also from internet.

Higher Education and Ambedkar

Ambedkar thought it was only through education that dalits can be liberated from illiteracy,

ignorance and superstitions and thereby fighting against injustice, exploitation and oppression. He founded people's education society (P.E.S.) in 1945, which started a college on June 20, 1946. This institution was founded by him with a view to promoting higher education among the lower middle classes and especially among the scheduled castes. He had the view that there is a great responsibility of the government for providing educational opportunities. He worked as a professor in Law College and later as the Principal of the Government Law College in 1935. According to him aims and functions of the university education should be to ensure that the teaching done there is suited to adults and that it is scientific, detached and impartial in character. He said education should be given in such a way that it promotes intellectual, moral and social democracy. He laid stress on hostel facilities in colleges as majority of the down trodden masses live in villages. (Moon Vasant, 1991, pp.37-71). He always stressed on well equipped libraries to be affiliated to all his educational institutions and gave importance to co-curricular activities and introduced them in all his institutions. He advised students to take the fullest advantage of the facilities offered by the government for studies in higher and technical fields. He was of the opinion that owing to the stratification of society, the SC's occupy economically a very low place in the Indian economy. The status and conditions of SC's could be improved only by technical education, which gives place for occupying executive posts. (Leeta, F.A, para 4)

An individual is empowered with creative thinking, knowledge, reasoning and compassion for fellow beings through education. Closing the avenues of education from ones reach is nothing but blinding the person. He found that such an unkind act was performed over a section of the society called Dalits and Sudras and thereby subjugated them to permanent disadvantage in all aspects of life and personality growth. Dr Ambedkar said, "*Higher education, in my opinion, means that education which can enable you to occupy the strategically important places in state administration.*"

"I cannot forget ,rather I am sad, that many people do not realise that the Caste system is existing in India for centuries because of inequality and a wide gulf of difference in education, and they have forgotten that it is likely to continue for some centuries to come. This gulf between the education of Brahmins and non-Brahmins will not end just by primary and secondary education. The difference in status between these can only be reduced by higher education. Some non-Brahmins must get highly educated and occupy the strategically important places, which has remained the monopoly of Brahmins since long. I think it is the duty of the state .If the government cannot do it, institutions like "Maratha Mandir" must undertake this task." (Malliah, L.C & Singh, Bhupendra. 2018, p-63).

This suggestion by Dr. Ambedkar tends towards Inclusion in Higher Education. During the Bombay University amendment Act, Ambedkar made important interventions and gave his views on

university education that are still very relevant to promote higher education in India. He also gave suggestions on higher education by submitting written evidence before the University Reforms Committee in 1925.

Concept of Inclusion and Excellence in Universities and Colleges as promoted by Dr. Ambedkar

Functions of University according to Dr. Ambedkar

Dr. Ambedkar said "One of the fundamental functions of the University, as I understand it, is to provide facilities for bringing higher education to the doors of the needy and the poor....I look upon the University primarily as a machinery, whereby educational facilities are provided to all those who are intellectually capable of using those facilities to the best advantage (Moon, Vasant, 1991, p-61). "Ambedkar's idea of pooling the teaching resources of both city colleges and universities to avoid duplication and to improve efficiency is still valid. He suggested that most of the colleges in a city offer similar courses and this could be organised in such a fashion that the lecturing system was pooled and the students in the different colleges were allowed to listen and attend to the lectures to be delivered in any one particular college, the professors who are lecturing would be easily released to do some other kind of special work." (Moon, Vasant, 1991, p-47)

Babasaheb Ambedkar also opposed the difference between undergraduate teaching and post graduate teaching. He said, "if the object of the bill is to promote higher education and research, the best method would be not to separate the colleges from the university as has been done now, but to make a synthesis in which the University and the colleges would be partners in terms of equality and would be participating in promoting together, both the undergraduate and the post-graduate studies (Moon, Vasant, 1991, P-48)

After Independence when University Education Commission (1948-49) was framed, it also contained the provisions of inclusion in higher education. Education Commission (1964-66) also had all those recommendations which were suggested by Dr. Ambedkar for Inclusion and Excellence in Higher Education. He talked of removal of disparities and providing equal educational opportunities to the poor. The National Policy on Education (NPE-1986) as updated in 1992 lays special emphasis on removal of disparities and equalisation of educational opportunities attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality, particularly SC's, ST's and educationally backward minorities. (Mishra, B.K & Mohanty, R.K, P-365)

Ambedkar talked about the importance of research in Universities. The segregation of postgraduate work from undergraduate work means the separation of teaching from research. He emphasized that a teaching university should really function as a teachers university in the sense that teachers hold all academic and administrative posts. As a result Ambedkar argued for the adequate representation of different communities in the senate

to control the university affairs. Ambedkar wanted Inclusion along with Excellence in Higher Educational Institutions of India. He explained that the objectives of university education are

1. To train students to make distinctions between matter of fact and matter of option,
2. To distinguish issues and to separate questions each on its own merits and without an eye on their bearing on some cherished theory,
3. Learn to state fairly the position of those to whose practical conclusions the learner is most stoutly opposed.
4. Be able to examine the suggested idea and see what comes of it, before accepting it or rejecting it and
5. To develop an original student who should be able to weigh evidence, to follow and criticize arguments and put his own value on authorities. (Chalam, K.S. 2008, p.26-27)

Ambedkar realised quality higher education a priority for the society and essential for national development. He wanted to improve the efficiency of colleges.

In the last five decades, attempts have been made to improve education for all and for the weak in particular, to improve their economic and social standing. Over 30% of the allocation on education was spent to improve education of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Many factors, however, operate to deny the weak sectors of their right to education and to prevent them from fully participating in various educational efforts. (Dhawan, M.L p-278)

Many educationists argue that a class-divided system of education has played a central role in moulding the patterns of uneven development and disenfranchisement in postcolonial India. A careful look at the education reveals two dominant trends from 1998 onwards. First is the ongoing process of communalization of education in the name of "Indianizing" or nationalizing education. "Casteization" of education is also on the agenda under the slogan of spiritualization. Although noble ideals are projected, the ultimate aim is to thrust upon the citizens the agenda of Hindutva force, or the right-wing Hindu nationalist force. Another trend is the "marketization" of education. Market forces have been trying to highjack education for their own vested interest. The Sangh parivar, or the right-wing Hindutva force, is hell-bent on introducing change in the educational system with the stated objective of "Indianization, nationalization and Spiritualization." The right wing is attempting to manipulate and alter the basic structures of society and polity to serve its objective. The corporate sector wants a steady market and wants to influence the ruling class to fundamentally change education. In the long run, these changes will uphold and maintain the hegemony of the dominant caste, the upper class and retain a skewed, hierarchical and patriarchal social order. This process seems to be gaining upper hand, but citizens and civil society are trying to work for a democratic, plural, egalitarian and just social order (Dhawan, M.L. 2005, P-279)

Women' Education

Dr Ambedkar always spoke for the justice of poor and deprived. His contribution towards women empowerment is incredible. As an architect of Indian constitution he brought equality by the rule of law in India. He emphasized on the women' right to education, right to property, involvement in the political process and gender equality. In 1920 he started his paper Mook Nayak and Bahishkrit Bharat in 1927 to raise his voice for the liberation and emancipation of women. He emphasized on women's education. He supported maternity benefit bill for women labourers. Along with the women of depressed class, he expressed his thoughts for the emancipation of all women. In Indian constitution he provided equal status to women as of men by including many provisions in it. He said sexual discrimination should be rooted out from the society and all should get equal opportunity. (Ahir, D.C.1990)

Ambedkar included Womens' right in the preamble of Indian Constitution like (i) Equality of status and opportunity and

(ii) Fraternity assuring dignity of the individual and national unity to all the citizens of India without any discrimination of caste, creed or sex. Some articles in Indian constitution related to women's rights.

Article 14: All are equal in the eyes of law and equally protected by the law.

Article 15: Prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex.

Article 15(3) enables positive discrimination in favour of women.

Article 16 mentions there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in all matters relating to employment or appointment to any office without any discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, creed and sex.

Article 24 prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in factories, mines or in any other hazardous employment.

Article 39 and 39(d) state equal means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work.

As per **article 41** the state shall guarantee within its economic limits to all the citizens, the right to work, to education and public assistance in certain cases.

In **article 42** the state makes provision for Human conditions of work and maternity relief.

Under **article 44**, the state provides a uniform civil code to all the citizens throughout the territory of India.

Article 46 mandates "The state shall promote with special care, the educational and economic interests of people of weaker sections and in particular, of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

Article 47, The state to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health and so on.

Baba Saheb Ambedkar fought tooth and nail for women's economic liberation and for securing women's rights. He stressed the need to safeguard the dignity and to respect the women folk. (Azaad, S.M. 2013)

Conclusion

Ambedkar's contribution towards education and his vision towards Inclusion and Excellence in higher education should be traced and nurtured. Ambedkar realised education to be a priority for the society. According to Ambedkar the basic theme of philosophy of education is inculcating the values of liberty, equality, fraternity, justice and moral character among the boys and girls of all communities. Ambedkar's educational thoughts seem to be a milestone for the present situation. The changes in education both at primary level and in higher education system proposed by Dr. Ambedkar before Independence are now being taken up by the government for bringing excellence and for making it inclusive in a true sense. The policy measures suggested by Dr. Ambedkar for bringing about inclusion and excellence in higher education are found to be relevant today. His ideas were very innovative and pragmatic. The idea of pooling the teaching resources of both city colleges and universities to avoid duplication and to improve efficiency are still relevant. The decisions taken by the University Grants Commission (UGC) about university and research in it are undoubtedly the product of Ambedkar's thoughts in this era.

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