



B. R. AMBEDKAR'S VISION OF DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

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Abstract

B.R. Ambedkar's contribution to making modern India become vital in the discourse of nation-building. While there are numerous studies on B.R. Ambedkar's life, struggle, and contribution, his vision of development particularly economic development and planning is a neglected area of study. Though he was trained as a professional economist, his ideas were not paid much attention. Ambedkar ideas, and insights in the fields of agriculture economy, land distribution, labor policy, water and power planning, family planning, etc continue to have relevance and importance in the 21st century. The paper is an attempt to understand and analyze the relevance of B.R. Ambedkar's Vision of Development and planning.

Keywords: *B.R. Ambedkar, Caste, Dalits, Democracy, Development and Planning.*

Introduction

Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Bheem Rao Ramji Ambedkar is well known as B.R Ambedkar (1891-1956). He is a Scholar, politician, constitutionalist, well-versed in comparative religion studies, a leader of the oppressed, and trained as a professional economist. Ambedkar writings and struggles are deeply influenced the untouchable and downtrodden people and continue to become more relevant to the changing socioeconomic and political conditions of the Indian society. After many years, people are recognizing his works, ideas, and philosophy in socio, political fronts, however, his economic thinking and views on planning are largely neglected and have yet to get much attention¹. Ambedkar was one of the most highly educated economists in our country with an MA and PhD in economics from Columbia University, USA, and a DSc (Doctor of Science) from the London School of Economics. His early academic writings particularly his MA thesis on 'Administration and Finance of the East India Company' which evaluates the finances of East India Company. His PhD Dissertation (1917) on "Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India" is an important contribution to the understanding of Centre-State financial relationships and public finance in general. His DSc dissertation at the London School of Economics (1923), the "Problem of the Rupee Its Origin and Its Solution" is a major contribution to the field of Monetary economics².

B.R. Ambedkar was actively involved in organizing and mobilizing the untouchables. He spoke on behalf of all oppressed people. He extensively did research and wrote on various issues. Apart from Ambedkar academic writings, there are his Memoranda and evidence given to various government commissions, speeches delivered in different legislative bodies, and many articles which all carry the economic content and his expertise on economic thinking. Ambedkar as a nominated member of Bombay Provincial Legislative Council (1926) and later as an elected Member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly (1937 to 1939) was offered critical comments on provincial budgets presented then. He also dealt with the problem of Indian agriculture and poverty and fought against oppressive

¹ Jadhav, Narendra. (1991) 'Neglected Economic Thought of Babasaheb Ambedkar', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vo.26, Issue No. 15, 13, April. Pp. 980.

² Jadhav, Narendra. (2015) '*Ambedkar; An Economist Extraordinaire*', Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi. Pp.10-12.



systems such as Khoti system and Mahar Vatan. In the 1930s, Ambedkar emerged as a labor leader and played a significant role in the Indian labor movement. He also founded a political party called the Independent Labour Party (ILP, 1936) which carved out a unique place in Indian politics. As a representative of the Untouchable in 1942, Ambedkar was appointed as a minister in the Viceroy's Executive Council. Being a member in the council, he made remarkable contributions to labor welfare, employment and skill development, power, water, management and mineral resources management, and public works. So, it is unfair to deny Ambedkar contribution to economic development of Indian society. Ambedkar had a broader vision of national development, reducing him only to the leader of the downtrodden is an insult to him. Therefore, it is imperative to engage and discuss his views on economic development and planning³.

B.R Ambedkar as an enlightened economist presented a perspective critique of the doctrine of Marxism in his essay entitled, 'Buddha or Karal Marx' and spelled out his views on the ideal strategy for India's economic development in his memorandum 'States and Minorities' (1947)⁴. In the interregnum, Ambedkar provided a provocatively original analysis of the economic dimensions of the social problems that plagued India, especially the caste system and untouchability. Being drafting committee chair of the Indian constitution, Ambedkar emphasized both economic and social equality for an inclusive Democracy. This chapter aims to introduce and discuss the most neglected thinking of Ambedkar on strategies for economic development and views on planning on agriculture, family, water, power, and labor policies. Finally, it is discussed the relevance of Ambedkar's idea of state socialism.

B.R. Ambedkar on Economic Development

B.R. Ambedkar believed that the thrust of the strategy for economic development is to eradicate poverty, exploitation, and social suffering. Unlike the Marxian view, Ambedkar argued that economic exploitation is rooted in multiple aspects of human life that are beyond the material base. According to Ambedkar, the caste system is an obstacle to economic development. The chaturvarna and caste system divides and hierarchies human beings. So, the caste not only divides the labor it also divides the laborers. It is not that the occupation of each caste decides their caste occupation, the caste system decides each caste's identity and occupation. This predetermination of the caste occupation of each caste restricts labor and capital mobility. Hence, Ambedkar emphasized that for the overall development of the human being both material and social-cultural have to be addressed. Further Ambedkar also argued that untouchability is not only religiously rooted, it is an economic exploitation. It is worse than slavery. In slavery, the master had a responsibility to feed, clothe, and keep him/her in good condition so that the value of the slave would not come down. In contrast to this in the caste system, untouchability the upper castes do not take responsibility for maintaining untouchables. The caste system permits exploitation without obligation; hence, Ambedkar calls it unmitigated and uncontrolled economic exploitation. Hence, he had a critical view of economic development in its embodied social structures. Ambedkar while commenting on caste structure in his "Buddhism and Communism" work, argued that economic determinism is not the motive of all human relationships. For Ambedkar state and its institutions an important instruments for economic development. In his book 'State and minorities', he argued that the state has to protect the rights of marginalized

³ Ibid, pp. 13.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 12-13



communities and has to play a crucial role in the equitable distribution of resources. Hence, Ambedkar proposed state socialism as the alternative model to emerging capitalism, which we will deal with at the end of the chapter.

B.R. Ambedkar suspected the individual incentives for economic development and emphasized the state welfare policies. His strong belief in constitutional methods for the overall development of the nation negates the violent approach of any agitation. Further, he argues that political freedom will be meaningless without socioeconomic equality. Ambedkar attributed the key role to industrialization and favored economic planning particularly in the infrastructure and social service sector, progressive labor laws, and planning with a focus on the downtrodden. The theoretical arguments for industrialization were nevertheless developed within the framework of mainstream economics, assuming a private economy. Before the 1940s, Ambedkar emphasized industrialization as a progressive method under the public sector, except for his insistence on state or public ownership and distribution of electric power.

However, between the mid-1930s and late 1940s, Ambedkar's position changed radically on economic development in which he critically analyzed capitalism, the positive role of the state, the abolition of a feudalistic land tenure system (like Khoti and Mahar Vatan system in Maharashtra), cultivation by cooperative farms and production and distribution of electric power under state ownership and control. Again, these measures were put forward assuming the inevitability of capitalist organization (although occasionally he showed a preference for socialism). The precise statement of the alternative radical economic and political framework, which he departed from the earlier position came in 'State and Minorities' written as a memorandum for constituent assembly in 1947. The economic section of this document calls for 'state socialism' involving the nationalization of basic and key industries such as insurance and agriculture, land, and its working with collective farms with peasants treated as tenants of the state. Ambedkar's idea of state socialism is focused on three aspects a) State ownership of agricultural land and key industries to meet the demands of the poorer strata of society. b) Maintenance of productive resources by the state; and c) A just distribution of the common produce among the different people without any distinction of castes or creed. Ambedkar tried to incorporate this aspect of economic development into the constitution. However, some are included and some are not materialized.

B.R. Ambedkar's Vision of Economic Planning

B.R. Ambedkar had the most relevant ideas and views on various public policies. Because of his deep understanding of Indian social and economic structures and his dedication to social transformation, he visualized progressive public policies. Moreover, he was involved in policy-making being a representative in legislative Councils and Assemblies, Minister, and drafting Committee Chairmen of the Indian Constitution. Here, the following sections deal with some of the fields in which Ambedkar had strong futuristic views and was involved in public policy-making.

Agriculture Planning

B.R. Ambedkar contributed many ideas on agrarian planning. To refer to his views on agrarian systems, he published a paper on 'Smallholdings in India and their remedies' in 1918⁵. When there was a crisis in Indian agricultural production in British India, the British Indian academicians and administrators felt that there was low productivity in Indian agriculture, it is because Indian peasants

⁵ The paper is published in Journal of the Indian Economic Society in Vol.1, 1918.



cultivated small holdings. In connection, scholars like H.S Jevons of Allahabad University, Harold Mann, and G.F Keatinge of Bombay proposed the consolidation and enlargement of land holdings in the hands of individual farmers through a range of administrative measures⁶. Ambedkar critically examined the above suggestions and solutions. He argued that there could be no such thing as called correct size of agricultural holdings. He emphasized that Land is only one of the many factors of production that is dependent upon the proportion in which the other factors of production are combined. Ambedkar observed that

"The chief object of an efficient production consists in making every factor in the concern contribute its highest, and it can do that only when it can co-operate with its fellow of the required capacity. Thus, there is an ideal of proportions that ought to subsist among the various factors combined, though the ideal will vary with the changes in proportions". From this 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"⁷.

Therefore, Ambedkar argues the inadequacy of other factors of production. The inefficiency of capital which is needed for acquiring "agricultural stock and implements" arises from savings. But as Ambedkar remarks saving is possible where there is a surplus is a commonplace of political economy. Even this is a surface reason the ultimate cause being 'the parent evil of the mal-adjustment in her social economy'. This is partly defined as the non-availability of sufficient land in India to give her prosperity through the means of agriculture alone. Here Ambedkar made the insightful observation that "A large agricultural population with the lowest proportion of land in actual cultivation means that a large part of the agricultural population is superfluous and idle"⁸. So even if the land holding is enlarged, the problem is not going to solve rather it will aggravate the problem, adding to the idle labor. Ambedkar observed that

"India is caught between two sides of pincers, the one side of which is progressive pressure of population and the other is limited availability of land in relation to its needs. The result is that at the end of each decade we are left with negative balance of population and production and a constant squeezing to standard of living and poverty. The population pressure is giving rise to an army of landless and dispersed families as well. It can be stopped when agriculture is made profitable. Nothing can open possibilities of making agriculture profitable except a serious drive in favour of industrialization. For it is industrialization alone which can drain away excess of population into gainful employment other than agriculture"⁹.

The policy prescriptions suggested based on theoretical formulation conceived in 1918 were also rearticulated in the debate on the Small Holders' Relief Bill in 1927 in the Mumbai Provincial Legislative Council. However, it was in 1943, eventually incorporated into the objective of the post-war reconstruction plan. The section on general objectives, which relates to the sectoral dimension,

⁶ Ambirajan, S. (1999) 'Ambedkar Contribution to Indian Economics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.34. No.46/47 (Nov.20-26). pp. 3283.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 3284.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 3284

⁹ File No. 1(4), Proceedings of the Reconstruction Committee of the Viceroy's Council- The Policy Statement on Irrigation, Waterways and Power prepared by the Labour Department, 1943, p.45.



read: 'Agriculture is and will remain India's primary industry but the present imbalanced economy has to be rectified by intensive development of the country's industries so that both agriculture and industry may develop side by side. That will enable the pressure of population on the land to be relieved and will provide the means required for the provision of better amenities'¹⁰. Therefore, Ambedkar suggested and emphasized taking away people from land and developing industrialization. So that the surplus which is generated in the industry will also benefit agriculture. The shift from primary industry to secondary industry is necessary for proper economic planning. Ambedkar also further talked about agricultural labor and their welfare. In the party manifesto of the Independent Labour Party, he promised that

"... the ILP suggested the starting of land mortgage banks, agricultural producer's cooperative societies and marketing societies. The pressure of population on land was aggravated by the fragmentation of holdings, and it was a direct cause of the poverty of the agriculturists. The protection of an agricultural tenant was urgent, and the benefits that an industrial worker gets must be advanced to the agricultural worker also. In respect of land problems, the schemes of land settlement for the unemployed and landless must be adopted. Though industrialization progressed, agriculture was bound to remain the foundation of India's economy. For increased agricultural production, mechanized agriculture, large farms, introduction of cooperative and collective farms must be devised. The principles of minimum wage must be introduced for agricultural labour"¹¹.

The nationalization of land and collective farming has not materialized so far. The minimum wages for agricultural labor also have not become a reality though there is a 100-day programme for rural poor for minimal survival. The nation has yet to take policies, which radically change the nature of agriculture and the welfare of the farmers and agricultural labor. Ambedkar in his active role in the legislative body in Bombay focused and fought against the system like Mahar Vatan. *Mahar Vatan*¹² was yet another form of unbridled exploitation of the rural poor. A section of the rural poor belonging to the Mahar caste was subjected to this mode of oppression in Maharashtra. "Mahar Vatan is an atrocious system, a system which has no justice in it whatsoever under this system. If the Government desired that these people should work for it, the Government must take upon its shoulder the responsibility of paying these Mahars. It ought to not vicariously throw off this burden in a most careless way upon a third party, the ryot; but that is exactly what is happening under the system".

On March 19, 1928, Ambedkar introduced a Bill in the Bombay Legislative Council to amend the Bombay Hereditary Offices Act, of 1874. It was not passed in the Council. Eight years later, the Bill

¹⁰ File No. 1(10), Proceedings of the Four Meetings of Consultative Committee of Economists, 1943, p.45

¹¹ Sontakke, Y.D. (eds, 2004) '*Thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*', Samyak Prakashan, New Delhi, pp.271.

¹² "According to the Bombay Hereditary Offices Act (1874) the Mahars holding low-level Government jobs were treated as servants for all work of all Government Departments at any hour of the day and night for a pittance. In the absence of a Mahar servant, any member of his family was forced into Government service. The duties of these Government servants were never clearly defined. As such, all sorts of odd jobs were assigned to them, including the disposal of carcasses of animals and running alongside the Tonga of a Government officer from one destination to another. For this arduous and ceaseless work, the Mahars were compensated with a piece of land called Vatan and what was referred to as baluta (that is, the collection of grain made by Vatan holding Mahars from their villages). At times, they were also entitled to cash wages of a meager amount". (Cited in Narendha Jadhav, 2015 Ambedkar: An Economist Extraordinaire, Konark Publisher Pvt.Ltd. New Delhi. pp. 110)



was reintroduced by Ambedkar. The Bill could not pass even the second time. Mahar Vatans were finally is also abolished under the Bombay Inferior Village Vatans Abolition Act 1 of 1959. Khoti¹³ was a peculiar system of land tenure that prevailed in pockets of the Konkan region of Maharashtra. Khots had rights to land that was cultivated by farmers and, in return, Khots collected land revenue from them and passed on a part thereof to the Government. It was an oppressive system that had subjected a vast majority of the rural poor in the region to virtual serfdom. All farmers and their families coming under the system were treated by Khots as bonded labor, generation after generation. This exploitation had continued in the region for several decades. On September 17, 1937, Ambedkar introduced a historic bill as an elected Member of the Mumbai Legislative Assembly aimed at the abolition of the Khoti system. The Khoti Abolition Bill caused unprecedented turmoil in the then-Mumbai Province. Khots in Konkan organized a counter-agitation. A persecution campaign began, resorting to physical attacks. In those years of turmoil, Ambedkar toured extensively, addressed rallies after the rally, and roused awakening among the rural poor for their rights. Inspired by his leadership, the poor and oppressed refused to give up their struggle. However, this movement of the rural poor, which transcended the barriers of caste and creed, culminated eventually in the abolition of the Khoti system in 1949¹⁴. The following section deals with water and power planning.

Water and Power Planning

B.R. Ambedkar as a Cabinet Member, from 1942 to 46, was instrumental in laying the foundation of India's water and electric power planning. In the early 1940s, which was a crucial period for economic development, he qualitatively shaped Indian economic planning. An independent Department of Labour had been created in November 1937, which was earlier a part of a combined Department of Industry and Labour. Subjects like irrigation, electricity, and other areas related to public works were also transferred to the newly created Department of labor. During the same time, the post-war economic plan for the reconstruction and economic development of India was then taking shape. The labor department began all India planning for the development of irrigation, waterways, and navigation. As Sukdev Thorat observed that the efforts were moved toward the following objectives¹⁵.

- A. The emergence of a definite all-India policy with regard to the development of water and electric power resources in the country.
- B. The creation of an administrative apparatus and technical bodies at the centre to assist the states in the development of irrigation and electric power resources, such as the present -day central Water Commission and Central Electricity Authority;
- C. The adoption of the concept of River Valley Authority or Corporation to overcome constitutional problems regarding the jurisdiction of central and state Governments and to develop irrigation and hydroelectric power from inter-state rivers;

¹³ The Khoti system is one of the minor land tenures in the Bombay Presidency. It is found mostly in the Ratnagiri district and in some parts of the Kolaba and Thana districts. The terms of the Khoti tenure are in some cases regulated by law, in some by custom and usage, and in the rest by the grant. The Khoti tenure differs from the ordinary Ryotwari tenure in as much as in the latter the Government collects revenue directly from those who are in occupation of the land while in the former the Government is required to employ the services of the Khot to collect revenue. (Cited in Narendha Jadhav, 2015 Ambedkar: An Economist Extraordinaire, Konark Publisher Pvt.Ltd. New Delhi. pp. 110)

¹⁴ Jadhav, Narendha. (2015) 'Ambedkar; An Economist Extraordinaire', Konark Publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi. Pp.107-109.

¹⁵ Thorat. S. (2007) "Water and Power Policy" in Sukhadeo Thorat and Aryama (ed, 2007) 'Ambedkar in Retrospect', Rawat Publications. Pp. 94.



- D. The introduction of the concept of regional and multipurpose development of river valley basin for the first time in India; and
- E. The initiation of some important present-day river valley projects, major and minor, which include the Damodar River Valley, some River Valley, Orissa River Schemes including the Mahanandi, the Chambal River Scheme and the schemes for the rivers of the Deccan.

B.R. Ambedkar particularly emphasized the use of rivers for navigational purposes. The storage scheme that Ambedkar visualized would not only give irrigation and electricity but also provide a long line of internal navigation. This perspective he subsequently emphasized this for projects on Damodar, Mahanadi, Sone, and other inter-state rivers. Ambedkar asserted: ‘The Damodar project must be multipurpose project.... it should not only deal with the problem caused by floods it should also provide for irrigation, electricity, and navigation... there has not been enough realization that our policy for water resource development must be a multipurpose policy to include all possible uses of water¹⁶.

The Damodar Valley Project was to be the first in a series. He reiterated his belief in multipurpose projects in the second conference on the Damodar Valley Project. He stressed that the purpose of the river is not only to stop the flood but there should be consensus on using and building the multi-purpose project which will be useful for irrigation, electricity generation, navigation, etc. Similarly, the Sone Valley Project was treated as a multipurpose river management scheme. Ambedkar stressed the multipurpose use of water even more emphatically in the case of the Mahanadi River Referring to the water problem, he stated:

Orissa...must adopt the method which the U.S.A. adopted in dealing with the problem of its rivers that method was to dam rivers at various points to conserve water permanently in reservoirs. Such a storage scheme as applied to the rivers of Orissa will have a special feature namely that it will not only give irrigation and electricity but also provide a long line of internal navigation. My comments are that this should be regarded as the only method and treated as an immediate programme rather than as an ultimate aim¹⁷.

In the conference on Orissa's rivers, he urged the participants to adopt the regional approach: ‘For a balanced appreciation of the situation it is necessary to carry out comprehensive surveys and investigations to ascertain the possibilities of irrigation, navigation, power development and their facilities in delta as well as in the drainage as a whole. Investigations far carried out have been mostly limited to the delta’. The second aspect, which he emphasized, was the creation of an instrument of the River Valley Authority to deal with the problem of inter-state rivers. He stated that the projection of inter-state rivers could be a success only if it was treated as a regional project. It could not succeed with local treatment. The systematic steps towards the introduction of the concept of River Valley Authority (or projects on inter-state rivers) and the creation of two technical expert bodies at the Centre, namely, the Central Waterways, Irrigation, and Navigation Commission and the Central Technical Power Board were attempts to provide technical advice for the multipurpose development of water resources on a regional basis. He made this clear in the first Calcutta Conference: ‘As a preliminary step for securing the best use of water resources of the country the Government of India have created a central

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 112.

¹⁷ Ibid, PP. 113.



organization, called the Central Technical Power Board, and are contemplating to create another to be called the Central Waterways, Irrigation, and Navigation Commission. The objectives that have led to the setting up of these two organizations are to advise the provinces on how their resources can be best utilized and how a project can be made to serve purposes other than irrigation. A similar association was highlighted at the conference on the Sone River. Ambedkar expounded on the nature of the new water policy at the First Calcutta Conference. He said:

It is not far from true to say that so far there has been an absence of positive all-India policy for the development of water resources. There has not been enough realization that our policy for waterways must be multipurpose policy so as to include the provision for irrigation, electrification, and navigation. The government of India is very much alive to the disadvantage arising from the present state of affairs and wishes to take steps to evolve a policy, that will utilize the water resource of the country to the best advantage of every, and to put our water resources to the purpose, which they are made to serve in other countries.

In recognizing his contribution to the development of Damodar Valley Project, H.C Hart wrote about the enterprise.

They could take account of the rain that falls and the conformation of the valley and how they might fit together, but the other elements, namely, to get the will of the inhabitants in the valley, to get the government of Bihar and Bengal to agree to multi-purpose development of the Damodar, make them accept the concept of River Valley Authority to administer the work of building the Dam, and finally share the costs of development were in the best sense political questions. For thirty months the planning of the Damodar fell in the hand of politicians- the man who in the political sense decided that Damodar would be developed was the Minister of labour, Dr. Ambedkar. He successfully overcome the obstacles with great skill and contributed to a plan as bold politically as it was hydraulically. Slowly in quite negotiation and in conferences after conferences, vital political interests were discussed and somehow fitted together¹⁸.

Labour Policy

B.R. Ambedkar immensely contributed to the understanding of labour and labour policy. Ambedkar involvement in labour movement began formally in 1934 when he came to the president of the Bombay Municipal Karamchari Sangh. However, the visible movement came with the formation of the independent labour Party (ILP). With the party formation, he began to be involved and articulate his views on various platforms. He was also critical of trade unionism and communist leadership on labour issues. He critiqued the communist leadership for the neglect of caste and brahmnaism which deeply rejected the workers' solidarity. Hence, he directed workers to fight both Brahmanism and capitalism at a time. The Bombay presidential Government introduced an Industrial Disputes Bill in 1938, which dealt with various aspects of industrial relations. The provisions in the bill attempted to deny the right to strike and other labor welfare facilities. Ambedkar then was a representative of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in the Bombay legislative assembly, he argued in favour of the labour and trade unions. He defended the right to strike and further argued that "if the right to freedom is a divine right" then the "right to strike is also a divine right". Thus, according to Ambedkar "to penalize a strike

¹⁸ Henry. C. Hart, (1956) '*New India's Rivers*', *Orient Longman*. Pp 72-3.



"amounts to "making the worker slave" as "slavery is nothing else but involuntary servitude" which is "contrary to ethics" and also "contrary to jurisprudence"¹⁹.

B.R. Ambedkar examined the issues of 'one industry, one union' from a different perspective. He argued that no doubt, a trade union has to pursue economic issues such as wages, hours of work, and other working conditions, etc., which are called 'purely trade union objects viz., old age pensions employment benefits to the members, providing a pension for their widows, and so on. But, in addition to these pursuits, Dr. Ambedkar held, that a trade union also has a political purpose. Under this condition, it is bound to more than one union. Ambedkar opposed the provision of the Bill empowering the Registrar not to "register more than one union in any local area in respect of any industry or occupation, as the case may be". Wage is one of the important aspects of labour life and employees always feel that they receive less than they are supposed to receive. Ambedkar justified the feelings of the workers and maintained that the workers' wages should be made "the first charge on the profits of the industry". Ambedkar advocated the uniformity of labour legislation in India. When Ambedkar become part of a Labour member in the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1942, he took initiatives to promote uniformity in labour legislation in India. The smooth function of the industry depends on the stakeholders' relationships and their role in coordination. Keeping this view Ambedkar urged constant dialogue and negotiations among three parties the employee, the employer, and the government. With this objective Ambedkar initiated to the establishment of two important organisations in India as a labour member. That is 1. Tripartite Labour Conference and a Standing Advisory Committee. both these organizations shaped the industrial relations and trade union movement in India.

In 1943, Ambedkar introduced the central Assembly the War Injuries (Compensation Insurance) Bill. It is intended 1) To give compensation to workmen who may become victims of war injuries and 2) To employers to insure against liabilities upon them. Women constitute fifty percent of the workforce and they are always discriminated against in labor welfare. Ambedkar was sympathetic to the welfare of women labour. In 1943 he introduced an amendment to the Mines Maternity Benefit Act, of 1941. The original bill constituted maternity leaves. In 1945, he once again sought to amend the Mines Maternity Benefit Act. This time the purpose of the amendment was to extend the maternity benefit to pregnant women working in mines, below the ground²⁰.

B.R. Ambedkar was active and influential as a Labour Member until the Viceroy's Executive Council was dissolved in May 1946. As a labour minister, Ambedkar moved several bills among which two are significant 1. The Indian Trade Unions (Amendment) bill (November 13, 1943), this bill sought to compel an employer to recognize a Trade Union and the bill imposed certain conditions on a trade union to make the trade union worthy of recognition by an employer²¹. The second bill (the Factories Act, 1934 (April 4, 1944, November 1, 1944, and February 21, 1946) dealt with a range of issues related to some power to the Government to ask certain particulars, provisions for making washing places obligatory on all factories and give power to Government to prescribe the requisite number of fire escapes, the loss of compulsory holidays, compensatory holidays, minimum working hours, holidays with pay and payment on overtime, etc. Ambedkar used frequently standing Labour

¹⁹ Mugekar, Bal Chandra. (2007) "Labour Policy" in Sukhadeo Thorat and Aryama (ed, 2007) '*Ambedkar in Retrospect*', Rawat Publications. Pp. 80.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 85-86.

²¹ Jadhav, Narendra. (2015), pp. 136.



Committees to discuss the issues related to labour welfare, illustratively, health insurance for industrial workers (Six meetings, March 17, 1945) and housing for industrial workers (Seventh meeting, December 1945)²².

Family Planning

B.R. Ambedkar believed that family planning is necessary to create better future generations. He endorsed that birth control through family planning is the only remedy to solve the problem of overpopulation. He also emphasized that having too many children is a crime, parents should provide better education and health facilities to their children than they had. In Ambedkar's view, overpopulation leads to poverty and women's health problems. Population control is a boon to women and poor people. In the year 1938, Ambedkar prepared the bill on a measure of birth control and he made Independent Labour Party (ILP) members pass a resolution to introduce the bill in the Assembly. Ambedkar himself wanted to introduce the bill, but due to unavoidable circumstances the task was assigned to party member P.J Roham on behalf of Ambedkar and ILP P.J Roham presented the bill in the Bombay Provincial Assembly. The bill argues that

"I beg to move this assembly recommends to the Government that, given the urgent need of limiting the family units, Government should carry in intensive propaganda in favour of birth control among the masses of this Province and should provide adequate facilities for the practice of birth control.

Very few have an adequate idea of the immense loss sustained by children born of persons who are handicapped either physically, mentally, or financially. The parents as well as the society also suffer very much. The prevention of the births of such children would considerably reduce the death rate among mothers who succumb to child-birth and its concomitant diseases, lower infantile mortality, improve public health, check the offenses perpetrated by persons suffering from intense poverty, and bring about an all-round upliftment of the society by affording full scope to its spiritual advancement.

Illiterate and a large mass of rural India get married early. They are prone to many diseases and habits. Many women's lives become unproductive and invalid, even lose their lives under diseased conditions. So, early marriage also forces them to have children before their marriage age. Family and social pressure caused women to get pregnant. Even if she refuses to have children if she goes for an abortion, it is a heavy burden on women's health. If she allows unwanted children again it will affect the proper care of children which is nothing but a burden to society. So, birth control is the only solution for all these problems. Whenever a woman is unwilling to bear a child for any reason whatsoever, the shed must be in a position to prevent conception, it is her choice society is in no way intervening. Society would in no way benefit from the addition of unwanted progeny. Children who are happily welcomed by their parents can be of social benefit hence every woman must be enabled to prevent conception quite easily. Broadly, there are two ways of thinking about birth control one and the second modern contraceptive. As for the first way, it must be remembered that while continence in the unmarried state may be possible, it is ignorance to expect from young couples who got married and have lived together for years and are fond of each other. Therefore, Ambedkar argued that

²² Ibid, PP. 137.



Self-control has been proven to be absolutely useless for birth control from the experience of several countries and ages. Even the advocates of continence cannot claim that an ordinary person will be able to eschew sexual intercourse altogether throughout their lives. The laying aside of continence even if we assume that self-control enables certain persons to bring about birth control, we cannot draw the conclusion that others will be able to follow them. It is necessary to remember that, just as appetite for food differs in the case of different persons, so sexual appetite also varies from person to person... if men had to bear the pangs which woman have to undergo during childbirth, none of them would ever consent to bear more than a single child in his life²³.

Unfortunately, the bill was not supported by the majority. The resolution was rejected by 1 against 52 votes. If it had been supported, the problems might have been minimized. Ambedkar's Contemporary social reformer R.K Karve has also started the work for birth control in Maharashtra. He also started a journal *Samjswatay* to educate the people. Ambedkar used to publish articles in this journal when R.K Karve was criticized by some religious people for his work, Ambedkar supported and encouraged R.K Karve to fight for birth control. Ambedkar on 17 December 1939 in front of untouchable students, clearly mentioned that people should have a minimum number of children. He further advised that all of you must take care of the family planning. He said that taking proper care of our child is also nothing but one kind of social work because you are preparing a good citizen for the future of society. Ambedkar critiqued Gandhi's approaches like continence (Brahmacharya) and self-control to reduce birth rates and population. He argued that self-control has been proven useless for birth control in many countries and ages. Therefore, it is necessary to remember that appetite for food differs in the case of different persons, so sexual appetite also varies from person to person²⁴. The traditional belief that more children mean more security in old age and help earn money leads to poverty and health problems in the family. Hence, he suggested that the Government has the responsibility to be aware, educate, and train people on proper family planning and population control.

"Although, it may be admitted that self-rule may affect some betterment of the lot of our masses, no lasting and appreciable improvement in the economic condition of our people can be hoped for unless the growth of our population is deliberately checked. As has been already explained, with every opportunity afforded for its expansion, population begins to grow rapidly and thus nullifies all the advantages secured through great efforts. Hence, experience has made many scientists to hold the view that, unless precaution is taken to regulate population growth by means of birth-control along with efforts to improve the economic condition of the people, there cannot be any substantial and permanent rise in the standard of life of the masses"²⁵.

In 1938 when the bill was introduced in the Bombay legislative Assembly agitations for self-rule were going on, Ambedkar also cautioned that there is a general assumption that the self-rule will improve the quality of life and facilities of the country. Unless the Government takes immediate precautions for

²³ Speech at Bombay Legislative Assembly delivered by Shri P.J Roham as guided by Dr. Ambedkar who could not attend the assembly on that day. Shri Roham pointed out that Dr. Ambedkar was the father of the speech. (Bombay Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol. 4 (November, 1938) reproduced in BAWs Vol.2, pp.263-76).

²⁴ Ibid, pp. 264-65.

²⁵ Moon, Vasant. (eds, 1982) '*Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writing and Speeches*, Vol 2, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai, p.274.



birth control and improves the economic conditions, overpopulation will nullify the advantages and opportunities that the nation aspires to utilize. Ambedkar while he was addressing untouchable and other women, advised that "Learn to be clean; keep free from all vices. Give education to children...Do not be in a hurry to marry: marriage is a liability. You should not impose it upon your children unless financially they can meet the liabilities arising from marriage. Those who will marry will bear in mind that to have too many children is a crime. That parental duty lies in giving each child a better start than its parents had"²⁶. Sanghamitra Acharya opined that "Ambedkar pushed for a limit on the number of children in a family due to the health of the women instead of the conventional reason of population control"²⁷.

Relevance of Ambedkar's views on economic development and Planning

B.R. Ambedkar believed that the state has a great role to play in ensuring and expanding the liberty and equality of the people. He argued that the state has to play a crucial role in the economic life of the people and inequitable distribution of wealth. Ambedkar suggested the collectivized method of cultivation and a modified form of state socialism in the field of industry. Balachandra Mungekar argued that Ambedkar's state socialism can be described as 'Democratic Socialism' in which Ambedkar proposes:

1. Ownership and running of the key industries by the state.
2. Insurance industry to be the monopoly of the state. The state makes obligatory to every citizen to take an insurance policy commensurate with his income. This would, on the one hand, offer security to the individual and on the other would give resources to the state for planning and undertaking economic development.
3. Agriculture to be a state industry. The state to acquire ownership of all land so that there would be no landlord, no tenant and no agricultural labourer. The erstwhile landlords to be paid appropriate compensation.
4. Nationalization of land and collective farming. The land acquired by the state to be let out to the residents of the village without distinction of caste, gender or religion, in size of standard farms, the state to provide all the necessary inputs, and after making due payments to the state in lieu of the services rendered by it as well as the revenue, the remaining produce to be shared among the tenants as prescribed by the government²⁸.

While responding to the resolution related to the aims and objectives of the future Constitution of India moved by Jawaharlal Nehru on 13 December 1946, as a practical strategy, Ambedkar as a member of the Constituent Assembly argued for a socialistic economic framework for Indian society. In response to the "Aims and Objectives" resolution, Ambedkar said.

I must confess that coming as the resolution does from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who is reputed to be a socialist, this resolution, although non-controversial is to my mind is very disappointing. I should have expected him to go much further than he has done... there are certain provisions

²⁶ Narake, Hari. (eds, 2003) '*Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writing and Speeches*', Vol. 17 (III), Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai, pp.282-283.

²⁷ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/dr-ambedkar-pushed-family-planning/article26937231.ece>

²⁸ Mungekar, Bhalchandra (2007) 'Quest for Democratic Socialism', in Sukhadeo Thorat and Aryama (ed, 2007) '*Ambedkar in Retrospect*', Rawat Publications, pp.123-124.



which speak of justice, economic, social and political. If this resolution has a reality behind it and sincerity of which I have no the least doubt coming as it does from mover of the Resolution, I should have expected some provision whereby it would have been possible for the state to make economic, social and political justice a reality and I should have from that view expected the Resolution to state in most explicit terms that there may be social and economic justice in the country, that there would be nationalization of industry and nationalization of land. I do not understand how it could be possible for any future government, which believes in doing justice, socially, economically and politically, unless its economy is a socialist economy²⁹.

In the wake-up Soviet, collapse, China's economic reforms and East European country's failure in a socialist economy where the control of bureaucratic and technocratic are controlled and with unequal social structures. So, we need a democratic socialism. Democratic socialism is an important insight we have to consider in the ongoing capitalist globalization economy where the rich control the market and state. Ambedkar also argued for both better material conditions and spiritual values. He felt that Buddhism could constitute the moral foundation of a socialist society as it did not subscribe to the idea of God or soul and believed in socialism, secularism, and a communitarian way of life³⁰. In one of the instances, Ambedkar argued, "Man must grow materially as well as spiritually. Society has been aiming to lay a new foundation as summarized by the French Revolution was welcome because of this slogan. It failed to produce equality. We welcome the Russian Revolution because it aims to produce equality. But it cannot be too much emphasized that in producing equality the society cannot afford to sacrifice fraternity or liberty. Equality will be of no value without fraternity or liberty. It seems that the three can co-exist only if one follows the way of Buddha. Communism can give one but not all"³¹. Ambedkar is also a strong believer in the constitutional means to achieve social transformation. Therefore, he rejected any kind of dictatorship or monopoly, disapproval of violence as a matter of principle, and social change secured through peaceful means and the consent of people is more durable and sustainable.

Conclusion

B.R. Ambedkar's contribution towards economic development and planning is rich and carries deeper insights. However, for a long time, Ambedkar ideas have been neglected by scholarly circles and policymakers. Now, there is a need to learn from his vision of economic development and planning. Ambedkar argued for industrialization to overcome the crisis in agriculture and its unemployment. For industrial development, he thought that infrastructure development like electricity, labour, transport, etc is necessary. His emphasis on water management has created a foundational base for the multipurpose water project of river water utilization. Further, he emphasized river water utilization for electricity, irrigation, and drinking water. His views on family planning are most relevant in the context of the increasing consequences of overpopulation and nutrition deficiency among children. According to Ambedkar, the state should play a crucial role in educating and controlling the population rather than

²⁹ Ambedkar (1946), Comment on Nehru's Resolution on Aims and Objectives, "Dr. Ambedkar: Principal Architect of Constitution of India" in Vasant Moon (eds, 1994), Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writing and Speeches, Vol. 13, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai, pp.7-13.

³⁰ Rodrigues, Valerian. (2007) 'Good Society: Rights, Democracy and Socialism', in Sukhadeo Thorat and Aryama (ed, 2007) '*Ambedkar in Retrospect*', Rawat Publications. Pp. 149.

³¹ Mugekar, Bal Chandra. (2007) "Labour Policy" in Sukhadeo Thorat and Aryama (ed, 2007) '*Ambedkar in Retrospect*', Rawat Publications.



leaving to people voluntary control. Ambedkar defended labour welfare and dignified life. His contribution towards minimum wages, employee security, the right to strike, and labour laws all shaped the Indian labour policy. There is a need to learn a lot from Ambedkar on labour in the changing nature of the LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation) process.

B.R. Ambedkar emphasized the role of the state in bringing equality and equitable distribution of resources among all citizens in the growing inequalities. He strongly believed in democratic state socialism and parliamentary democracy for the overall development of the nation. For Ambedkar, state socialism is important to address the economic and social inequalities. Mere political democracy will not be sustained unless there is socioeconomic equality among people. Therefore, he suggested that the nationalization of major sectors like land, agriculture, insurance, etc will contribute to inclusive development. Ambedkar envisaged that the state and its constitution are inevitable for the welfare of marginalized groups. So, the incorporation of Ambedkar's ideas and thinking into planning and policymaking has great potential for the overall development of the nation and its effective governance.

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