

Ambedkar and the Ethics of Inclusion: Rethinking Justice in a Hierarchical Society

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Abstract

This paper endeavours that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's ethical approach to inclusivity and its significance of social justice within a deeply hierarchical caste society. It critically examines how Dr. Ambedkar counters exclusion which was not merely political but also moral, deeply rooted in the principles of equality, dignity, and human rights. This paper highlights how Mahad Satyagraha played an important role to symbolise the equality through the demands of civil rights and social recognition among the marginalized communities. This paper explores Dr. Ambedkar's approach towards universal voting rights, minority protection, and equitable political representation as an essential component of democratic system. He argued in favour of good governance rather than efficient governance which he mentioned as historically legitimized upper-caste dominance and exclusion., this paper will deal with how he raised social and political concerns of the Depressed Classes before the British government. Ambedkar argues for the reservation which is not charity but a moral corrective to historical injustice. By replacing efficient governance with ethical governance, which is truly representative state. Ultimately, this paper's position is that Dr. Ambedkar's demands human rights for all, and he believed that the progressive Untouchables must lead nation building. In nowadays where caste-based exclusion persists, he offers a moral compass for building an egalitarian India.

Keywords: B. R. Ambedkar, Social Justice, Equality, Dignity, Inclusion, Exclusion.

Introduction

Dr. Ambedkar was born in 14th April 1891 in Mhow in colonial India. He was born in the Mahar family. The caste system was a fixed position based on birth in a Hierarchical Society. Their choices, their lives, social status was determined by the Hindu caste system. During the British colonial rule mahar caste got some opportunities to pursue in the British army but later they abolished this opportunity. Although the caste system denied to educate the lower castes but Ambedkar's father was committed to his son's education. He launched Mahad Satyagraha in 1927 as a first Dalit movement in India. He started the satyagraha and drink the water from the chavdar lake which was denied by the upper castes for accessing to lake.

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He advocated for universal franchise, political representation of the Depressed Classes, and safeguards for the minorities before the Simon Commission and other constitutional forum to make inclusive Indian constitution. He believed that not providing universal suffrage and proper representation to the weaker sections would remain unjust and evil. He argued that true freedom could not be granted by the oppressors' castes but must be demanded by the oppressed castes. However, he proposed an administration based on moral grounds and justice rather mere technical efficiency. Therefore, He advocated good governance rather efficient governance. It underscores how his efforts of inclusive administration lead towards equality, dignity, and social justice in modern India.

Dr. Ambedkar believed that education will help to empower the oppressed classes. He always emphasized on pursuit of excellence in knowledge. He thought that self-respect could be achieved through education and knowledge, which enlighten a person. He was opposed to education under religious traditions. Instead of he promoted secular education that fosters liberty and equality. He founded Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha to spread education among the marginalized communities and improve their social and economic conditions. By his relentless efforts he made an egalitarian society in India. He advocated free and compulsory education and promoted reservation to ensure inclusivity. His popular slogan- 'educate, agitate, and organise'- focused to create awareness, resistance against oppression and organized social justice.

Legacy of Mahad Satyagraha in Constitutional Rights.

Dr. Ambedkar's focus was on equal access to public facilities, for example access of water. For this reason, Mahad Satyagraha happened to access the accessibility of water. This struggle is termed as the first walk to freedom. Dr. Ambedkar highlighted that the segregation rule of upper caste in terms of house, directions, and shadow of pollution makes social exclusion for the Depressed Classes. Non- accessibility of water is sound example of social exclusion which still prevails to this day. He viewed public accessibility as the civil rights. Dr. Ambedkar opposed the banning of Untouchables from the military by the British government due it's discriminatory and break of trust and unfriendly nature. Dr. Ambedkar argued that Mahad Satyagraha could be a incident of blood and destruction because oppressors attacked the protestor but Dr. Ambedkar controlled them. This is a clear demonstration that the oppressors caste did not allow to the Depressed Classes even for the water which is a public facility" It is to be compared Mahad Satyagraha with Montgomery boycott in 1955 in the US. In true sense, Mahad Satyagraha was peaceful and impactful. Mahad Satyagraha gave hope to the untouchables in order to their self-identity and dignity.

To expose the hypocrisy of upper caste's led newspaper, Ambedkar started a newspaper, namely Bahishkrit Bharat. He considered Mahad Satyagraha as an opportunity for the untouchables to establish the equality in his newspaper. He viewed the conditions of Untouchables and addressed that those are unlawful and they have the human rights or inherent rights that cannot be taken away. He observed that human rights cannot be merely limited to privileged classes but also marginalized communities. He used the nomenclature of 'Depressed Classes' to unite all the Untouchables. Therefore, He argued that progressive Untouchables can be the pillar for the nation building.

He opposed the use of public property as private property by the oppressors caste. He tried to gather those touchables who had the true sense of fraternity. They could join wholeheartedly like the white joined to the Blacks' movement to end slavery. According to Dr. Ambedkar freedom cannot be come from voluntarily but demanded by the oppressed. He quoted from Martin Luther King, Jr "justice to long delayed is justice denied" (King,1963). Dr. Ambedkar comprehended that taking water from the Mahad lake, opposed by oppressors were not merely the matter of water pollution, they scared that Untouchables could be equal with them. Therefore, the impact of Mahad Satyagraha extended the future Indian constitution for the equal rights to public accessibility.

Universal Franchise and Democratic Rights.

In 1919, Royal Commission did not include any Indian member in the parliament. As a result, Indian National Congress and Muslim league boycotted the commission. In contrast, Dr. Ambedkar decided to participate in the commission to raise the issues of Depressed Classes' which would later contribute to the framing of the Indian constitution. In 1928, Simon Commission arrived in India. The Congress party subsequently organized all parties conference but did not invite Dr. Ambedkar. Despite this exclusion, Dr. Ambedkar submitted statements to the Simon Commission to highlight the concerns of the Depressed Classes. Those statements could give the protection of rights for the oppressed classes which was mentioned in the Montague-Chemsford report. To address these rights, Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha demanded the direct election of the Depressed Classes, political participation via voting, political reforms which influences on the policy of government. The Sabha strongly emphasized the need for universal voting rights of the weaker sections of society so that they could be represented by their own leaders. Dr. Ambedkar wrote, 'Franchise means the right to determine the terms of associated life'.

Dr. Ambedkar argued that Depressed Classes must be recognised as a protected minority to safeguards their civil rights. The Sabha proposed a list of specific demands, including: a) an equitable and just proportion of marginalized communities, b) unrestricted requirements in the army, c) appointment of special inspector of police for every districts, d) effective representation in local bodies. The submissions by the Sabha focused on the legal protection of the minorities rather than giving their right on the hands of majority. Dr. Ambedkar insists on education of the Depressed Classes because he knew that how universal voting rights and proper representation are interlinked with education. He observed, "If they had any right to life, liberty, and property, had certainly no right to education" (Ambedkar, 2019). He further criticised the British government for its failure to promote education among the Depressed Classes. They only focused on the upper caste Hindus.

Dr. Ambedkar demanded the universal voting rights for all the communities. He criticized the administrative power by the British government because of its discriminatory approach towards the upper castes and the lower castes. He pointed out that while the former will be provided with rocky and unfit land for cultivation and on the other side later will be provided with rich and fertile land. He emphasizes on good administration of law rather efficient administration of law. Although, he cooperated with Simon Commission, he also highlighted that the lacking of British government in order to address the issues of Depressed Classes, such as universal

adult franchise, education, and the representation. through these efforts, He negotiated with British government to help shape a more just constitutional framework.

Moral Basis of Inclusive Administration.

According to Dr Ambedkar, the idea of ‘efficiency of administration’ is an exclusionary structure during both the Colonial and pre- colonial eras. He asserted that the upper castes had long enjoyed the social and political power in the name of Brahmin supremacy. Dr. Ambedkar criticised the double standards of the oppressors caste. He argued that the oppressors caste readily accepted the idea of efficiency of administration which is against the inclusion of the oppressed castes, as they themselves were the only beneficiaries of the existing administration. The Brahmins or allied castes got selected in the public services through educational merit and competitive examination, which effectively created exclusion for the backward classes. He wrote ‘the system of competitive examination relied upon may result in fairness to all cast and creates under a given set of circumstances’.

Dr Ambedkar proposed that the selection for public services should be based not only on administrative utility but also on moral grounds, particularly to ensure the inclusion of backward classes. For him, this is an inclusive approach. He argued in favour of inclusion of backward classes rather in administration rather than their exclusion- a practice similar to the British exclusion of Indians from higher public services. He believed that the exclusion of oppressed caste was both evil and unjust. Dr Ambedkar pointed out that the oppressors caste historically controlled power as the governing body and treated the backward class as *servile class*. He emphasized that the political power of oppressors caste could not acquired intellectual superiority rather it was through communalism. They worked on both social conduct and administration. The Manusmriti served as the legal code for the oppressors caste and granted the reservation to all the Brahmins.

He criticized the monopoly of education only to Brahmins classes as prescribed in the Manusmriti. He argued that this exploitation did not occur overnight but had been perpetuated several centuries. The oppressed castes and allied castes had always controlled the power. He wrote, ‘ the Brahmins enslaves the mind and the Bania enslaves the body between them they divide this points which belongs to the governing classes’. He mentioned that the notion of *efficient* was nothing but the reflection of the interests and structural advantages of the oppressors castes. He argued how oppressors caste often pretended that *Nationalism in danger* in order to avoid sacrificing their own privileges. Dr Ambedkar emphasized on good governance rather than efficient governance. For him, a good governance or government is that government which is truly representative. For him, a good governance must be inclusive of the backward classes and must reject their exclusion. Dr. Ambedkar raised concerns of the oppressed classes before the British government how the exclusion of oppressed caste from the public services is morally wrong and that can be solved through reservation.

Conclusion

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar lifelong struggle against caste-based discrimination of Indian society offers a profound ethical perspective for rethinking justice through the lens of inclusion. Dr. Ambedkar insists that true justice must remove the structure of exclusion that deny dignity,

equality, and self-respect to the marginalized communities. His Mahad Satyagraha of 1927, founding of Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, universal franchise before the Simon Commission, and relentless critique of Brahminical monopoly over education and public facilities/ services were not isolated act rather this is a coherent ethics of inclusion. His slogan- “educate, agitate, and organise”- articulated a transformative vision: education as the tool for self-respect, agitation as the tool for inherent human rights, and organise as the collective strength.

His critical analysis of ‘efficiency of administration’ which is detached from morality, creates only hierarchies. In contrast, he proposed a morally grounded administration that includes depressed classes through representation and reservation which actually removes instrument of exclusion. For him, good governance is representative, any system that excludes oppressed is evil and unjust. Dr. Ambedkar not only talked about rights of the Depressed Classes but also offered a universal moral philosophy. The ethics of inclusion remain significant because of its dismantling caste hierarchies. Only by promoting ethics of inclusion through education that liberates, representation that empowers, and the government that includes justice, equality, and fraternity embedded in Constitution.

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