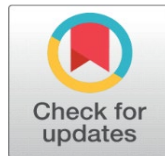
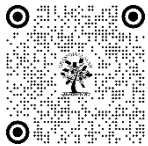


DR. AMBEDKAR VIEWS ON DEMOCRACY: A CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Dr. Suresha K C ¹

¹Associate Professor, Department of Studies and Research Public Administration, Tumkur University, Tumakuru



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ABSTRACT

Dr. B R Ambedkar always argued that Social Democracy is pre-requisite for Political Democracy. Social Democracy is essential for creating an equal platform for people of different caste to engage in societal activities. This is the foundation on which Political Democracy should be constructed. Otherwise, Political Democracy will become meaningless. Adding to this he says economic empowerment can be achieved by the downtrodden only when society archives social democracy. So, this paper tries to address the issue of Ambedkar's views on Democracy, wherein, he rejects the argument of liberals, Marxists, Gandian's and Socialists with regard to democracy and proposes his own views on democracy following the middle path.

Keywords: Political Democracy, Social Democracy, Economic Empowerment, Liberals, Marxists, Socialists

1. INTRODUCTION

Ambedkar rejecting the ideas of liberals, leftists, socialists and Gandian on political democracy, He argues that the political democracy proposed by liberals has problem because it gives primacy to political democracy before social democracy. Gandian thought argues fight against British imperialism is primary than fight for caste equality. Once political independence is achieved social issues can be addressed later. In Case of leftists they argue that capturing political power from Bourgoiva class is primary for the emancipation of the working class. But, Ambedkar argues caste system exists even inside the working class without destroying this caste system achieving political power becomes meaningless. Moreover, Marxism aims at achieving economic equality as the primary concern but without achieving social equality economic equality is not possible.

Socialists argued that parliamentary democracy is alien to India and it is not suitable to India. But, Ambedkar argues that parliamentary democracy existed in India during Buddha's period. Buddha used parliamentary democracy model to conduct Bhikshu Sanghas meeting, means this method was prevalent during that time among many kingdoms. So, parliamentary democracy is not alien to Indian and to its tradition.

Ambedkar accepts liberal model that political democracy is essential for democracy. But, he argues about four major problems of democracy which are detrimental to survival of the democracy itself. They are:

- 1) **Fraternal Solidarity:** Ambedkar argues that fraternal brotherhood is the basis for the survival and success of any democracy. But, Indian society is divided on the basis of caste. So, fraternal solidarity is not possible, this will pave the way for the foreigners or foreign powers to manipulate the political power. This has happened in the past and there is a likely possibility of same happening in the future.
- 2) **Hero-Worship:** India being a feudal society for a long time has led to Hero-Worship. Wherein, political parties based on strong leaders are being followed rather than nation building programmes and goals. This will not only destroy the democratic fabric of country and its future. But, also will destroy the democratic culture inside the party as party workers will be more loyal to the strong leader than to the party and to its nation building ideals. Political party is undemocratic in its functioning in a democracy, how it can provide democratic governance to the people of the nation.
- 3) **Morality:** Ambedkar argues that the survival of democracy depends on addressing the issues of popular grievances. For which, he wants the Government to use constitutional morality. Constitutional morality means Government should initiate dialogue or deliberation to address the grievances within the framework of constitutional values.

Ambedkar views the greatest danger for parliamentary democracy is through its procedure it might be carried away by the wishes of the majority, by which neglects the views of minority. So, there is a potential danger of minority resorting to unconstitutional means to secure itself from the onslaught of the majority. In order to avoid this Government needs to use the tool of dialogue or deliberation between minority and majority to reach a consensus.

4) **Democratic Polity:** Ambedkar argued for political democracy based on the following notions:

- India has history of parliamentary democracy as we can find procedure of parliamentary democracy in the meetings of Bhikshu Sanghas. So, this model is appropriate to govern India.
- Ambedkar rejected French notion of equality because he argued that French notion of equality is based on political sense but he wants equality to be based primarily on social basis. If, equality is not achieved in social sense preliminarily achieving political equality is an impossible task to achieve especially in countries like India.
- Ambedkar stressed on the notion of Fraternity without which democracy is meaningless. Because, Hinduism is the majority religion in India and it is based on caste hierarchy and untouchability. As a result people of all section cannot meaningfully participate in the process of democracy.
- Ambedkar wanted social liberty prior to political liberty. Social liberty means society free from caste, creed, and gender inequalities. Whereas, political liberty means country free from foreign rule. He argues that bringing political liberty without social liberty is like replacing exploitative rule by the foreign power with exploitative rule by the upper caste elite.
- Ambedkar gave thrust to democratic way of settling people grievances. He was clearly against using public policy as a tool to please majority or minority interests keeping in mind the electoral gains. He says if the Government uses public policy as a appeasement tool, it will lead to disastrous consequences in the society leading to social and political unrest as well as permanent enmity between the minority and majority community. This kind of enmity is detrimental to the survival of meaningful democracy.

In Conclusion, Ambedkar wanted political democracy should be established on the strong foundations of social democracy. So, he warned that the Indian Democracy cannot neglect social democracy at the cost of economic or political democracy. If India achieves economic or political democracy without social democracy benefits of this will be garnered by the elite upper caste people leaving the downtrodden weak and suffering. If this happens then question remains to be answered is that have we achieved democracy in true sense?. To make democracy more inclusive social democracy has to be adopted in the procedural as well as normative aspect of the democracy.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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