



Ambedkar : As Saviour of Farmers Rights

Raju Bajantri (1) And Dr. Mahalinga K. (2)

1) Research scholar Department of Studies and Research in Political Science Tumkur University, Tumkur. And Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, GFGC Athani. email- rajubajantri31@gmail.com Mob - 9986475867

2) Associate professor Department of Studies and Research in Political Science Tumkur University, Tumkur. email- malingak@gmail.com Mob – 9481528773

Abstract

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar (1891-1956) is widely recognized as chief architect of the constitution of India, the protector of neglected and deprived, an great economist, rural benefactor, true defender of labor rights, champion of human rights, etc. Along with that he is great protector of farmers rights. His legacy lies in nuanced and progressive agrarian issues. His prospective on agriculture were mainly concentrated on the strive for exploitation against farmers, land reforms, collective farming, consolidation of land holdings, land redistribution, modernization of agriculture, essence of farmers associations, state socialism of agriculture. Dr. Ambedkar initiated movement against exploitation of the peasantry system called Khoti system. Through constitutional provisions Ambedkar not only solve the agriculture problems of that time but he laid a concrete foundation for Indian agriculture and farmers upliftment of India. Now its time to execute all the thoughts of Ambedkar which are very relevant for all time for dealing with issues like modernization of agriculture, irrigation, inter-state water disputes, land distribution, government support for farmers.

Key words : Farmers, Rights, Land reforms, Collective farming, Agriculture, Movement.

Introduction

As real social engineer of India Dr. Ambedkar was political thinker, philosopher, savior of millions, true architect of the society, great scholar, tremendous activist, boundless reformer, the protector of neglected and deprived, advocate of human rights of all the sections of the society, visionary of welfare state, and welfare economics. Dr. Ambedkar deeply believed that each person as an individual should be treated with dignity and valued. Irrespective of caste, creed, wealth and other things. He opposed the widespread social system. He advocated for the education for all the sections of the society especially for marginalized, poor, downtrodden, suppressed and oppressed people of the society and made them conscious of their rights. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar throughout his life fought for rights of the people, those who were denied social, educational, political, economical and religious. According to Ambedkar one cannot attain real freedom without economic strength. So economic disparity must be eliminated. Since India being predominantly an agricultural country, and its development is pivotal for the advancement of the Indian economy. Ambedkar conducted extensive study of the Indian agriculture, wrote several research articles, conducted seminars and conferences to tackle the problems of agriculture and farmers. His views are farmers rights, land reforms, collective farming, consolidation of land holdings, land redistribution, modernization of agriculture, essence of farmers associations, state socialism of agriculture, irrigation, inter-state water disputes, government support for farmers, cultivation of waste land, legal and policy framework for private lending to farmers. This research explores Dr. Ambedkar's perspectives on agriculture in India and intellectual reforms for rural transformation.



Review of literature :

Kanchan D, (2021) According to Ambedkar India's small and marginal farmers facing the problem of low productivity due to primitive tools, lack of technical awareness, lack of access to market, insufficient financial facilities, weak bargaining power, lack of credit and post-harvest services are main reasons for poverty of farmers and minimum production of agriculture and backwardness of Indian economy.

Arya Rajendra kumar, (2014) Dr. Ambedkar examined numerous social and political challenges, he shared his insights in three publications, "The Problem of the Rupee", "Provincial Decentralization of Imperial Finance in British India" and "East India Company Administration and Economic Policy". In this works Dr. Ambedkar addressed the land reforms, collective farming, consolidation of land holdings, land redistribution, modernization of agriculture, issues related to Indian currency, provincial finance and national economic planning.

Objectives :

1. To Examine Dr. Ambedkar's contribution to the farmer's movement.
2. To understand Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts on rights of farmers.
3. To To Examine Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts on Indian agriculture.
4. To understand the agriculture related constitutional provisions provided by Dr. Ambedkar.

Research Methodology :

As a qualitative research approach this research paper is based on secondary source of data. Based on sources such as journals, books, websites, theses and other appropriate materials.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as the leader of the farmer's movement

In 1929 Dr. Ambedkar involved in the work of awakening the farmers who were subjected to exploitation of inhuman atrocities by landlords under the cruel Khoti system. Which is the land revenue system in Konkan region of Maharashtra. Along with Konkan Prant Shetkari Sangh founded by Rao Bahadur Sitaram Keshav Bole, he organized several farmers' associations and formed a movement for the abolition of feudalism. Dr. Ambedkar organized Kunabi, Mahar, Maratha, Chambhar and Muslims who were exploited by this Khoti system and held a series of meetings at the village and taluk levels. He called on his community of Mahar people to provide protection to farmers, who were skilled in the army, to protect farmers from the landlords.

What is Khoti system?

Khot means landowner. It is a system where landowners collect land revenue from tenants and give it to the king. Khots used to keep a part of it for themselves. This was continued even during the colonial period. The British did not oppose the landowners and agreed to the Khoti system. It was an anti-life, anti-farmer, feudal system. Each landlord Khot used to take an average of half of the crop grown by the farmer. Along with that the farmers had to do 60 days of free labor in the gardens and houses of the landlords in a year. According to the contract given by the landlords, the farmer's right to plow was only until the harvest of that year's crop. Millions of farmers were victims of such ruthless system.

Ambedkar participated in the meetings of farmers organized in Thane, Ratnagiri and Colaba districts of Konkan region to inspire them to lend hand in this movement, used to speak inspiring words to the farmers and encouraged them to fight for their rights. He advised farmers to choose alternative ways to get rid of poverty and humiliation. When police cases falsely filed against the farmers by the landowners, he advocated in court on behalf of the



farmers. This influenced the farmers of the Konkani region accepted Ambedkar's leadership. He wrote a series of articles in the newspaper "Bahishkrit Bharat" and created awareness among the farmers to refuse to paying land taxes. In the feudal system that emerged in rural India after the colonial period, Dalits were subjected to more humiliation, exploitation, and atrocities. Ambedkar's peasant politics also succeeded in achieving unity among Dalit and Shudra farmers in rural areas.

As the tenant farmers' movement was in full swing. The Bombay Presidency Legislative Assembly elections were held. In 1936, Dr. Ambedkar founded the Independent Labor Party. He was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly of the Bombay Presidency in 1937. As a legal expert, Dr. Ambedkar introduced a bill which ensure legal reforms that offer lasting relief to farmers through the complete elimination of Khoti system in the Legislative Assembly on 17 September 1937. He was the first leader who introduce a bill in all the Provincial Assemblies across India for the abolition of the peasant serfdom system. But this bill was not taken up for discussion in the Legislative Assembly. Angered by this, Ambedkar formulated the Farmers' Assembly Chalo program in 1938. Under the leadership of farmer and labor leaders. preparations were made to bring farmers to Mumbai for the procession. Thousands of farmers were brought to Bombay. Farmers from all the parts gathered marched towards Azad Maidan. participated in the procession.

On 10 January 1938 enormous farmers' march entered the Legislative Assembly Hall for demanding to pass the anti- Khoti system bill. Everywhere there was slogan "May the farmers movement continue " this "Assembly chalo" was the largest farmers' movement in India before independence which is remarkable till today and its role model to all the farmers and farmer movements. More than 25,000 Konkani farmers led by Ambedkar, to pass the bill. The then Prime Minister B.G. Kher, who accepted the farmers' appeal, was amazed by the strength of the farmers. While addressing the farmers' march, Ambedkar said, "Farmers should be ready to go to jail for the enforcement of their rights, I too ready to serve in jail time with you." He continued, "You have registered the strength of lakhs of farmers against a government that is only on the side of thousands of landowners. This struggle will pave the way for the liberation of the farmers." Through this great movement Dr. Ambedkar became unquestioned leader of peasant movement this bill was not enacted because the government dissolved the Assembly and Legislative Council in 1939. As Dr. Ambedkar was completely devoted all his time to frame the constitution of Indian, he guided his followers and farmers to continue of movement, who struggled until the anti-Khoti system act was passed in 1949 which leads the victory of the peasant struggle. Dr. Ambedkar was successful in building a strong peasant organization in the rural areas and in preventing inequality and atrocities against Dalits. Through this he become champion of farmers rights as well as led the foundation for essence of farmers organizations.

Urge for Farmers Association

Dr. Ambedkar urged the farmers, it is essential to be organize in order to effectively address their problems. He emphasized the need for unity and collective action of farmers and encouraged them to be united and focused. January 1938, he stated that farmers must work hard to improve their conditions. As stronger their organization, the easier it would be to solve their problems. He showed the importance of organization to farmers.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar thoughts on Indian agriculture

India is predominantly an agriculture country, and its main source of subsistence for huge part of the population. As Dr. Ambedkar explained this sector facing numerous problems like small holdings, outdated farming tools as well as methods, gamble with monsoon rainfall,



low productivity, small landholdings etc. Indian agriculture has remained underdeveloped due to past challenges, many of which still persist today. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who was very keen about this challenges made prominent contributions through constitutional provisions to uplift agriculture.

Abolition of the Zamindari System

Dr. Ambedkar vigorously condemned the Zamindari system and criticized Zamindars, who were the oppressors of the farmers. According to Ambedkar, actually zamindars did not cultivate the land but grew rich by exploitation and advantage of the farming community. Dr. Ambedkar seen this system as a major obstacle to the social and economic development of the farmers. Dr. Ambedkar's vision was to strengthen farmers to ownership of the land which they cultivate. Excluding intermediaries would ensure the welfare of the farmers.

Redistribution of Land

According to Dr. Ambedkar land would be allocated based on need as well as competence of farming instead of caste, creed or social hierarchy. According to Ambedkar Dalits and other marginalized communities should get land to farming because this communities suffered from the centuries. Dr. Ambedkar advocated that agriculture land served not only as a means of livelihood but also stood as symbol of status and self-respect. So government should provide access land to empower this communities which break the social constraints imposed by the caste system on them. His focal point of land redistribution is establish equality in all strata of the society. According to Dr. Ambedkar land should distribute fairly so that no one individual or community holds too much while others have none. This will not only solve the problem of land issue but also help to economic empowerment of Dalits and other backward communities to achieve economic freedom and social respect.

Land Ceiling Laws

Dr. Ambedkar firmly advocated to limit on how land an individual could possess. He believed that if land was accumulated in the hands of few definitely it will leads to the oppression of landless and small farmers. Through land ceiling law government can restrain the monopolization of land from affluent landlords and assure that excess cultivable land could be circulate to the landless and deprived. This reform was very essential to curtail rural poverty. By land ceiling law fair distribution of agricultural sources could be utilize for social justice.

Nationalization of Agriculture

Dr. Ambedkar advocated the of nationalization of agriculture. The government should seize land by eliminating the agricultural rights from wealthy landholders. To promote Agriculture it should be transformed into community farming, distributed equally to all without discrimination based caste, religion or creed. As the size of the land is sufficient according to their ability of farming, the government can provide agriculture basic materials to promote agriculture. The produce of the agriculture can be allocate among the workers, which will not only stop the Jamindari system but also restrains the problem of farmers and stop farmers suicides and agriculture will achieve great success.

Consolidation of land holdings

According to Dr. Ambedkar each piece of land would have a unique survey number and it would have adequate. Land below this size will not be accepted under the law and it should be registered in the name of single person, which would better stop the divisions after consolidation. Dr. Ambedkar recommended industrialization is the most effective approach to



solve farming problems, which provide job options and reduce the pressure on agriculture. He states that industrial development can avoid the fragmentation of land into smaller pieces.

Democratic State Socialism

As a champion of farmers rights Dr. Ambedkar proposed democratic state socialism which includes nationalization of agriculture and insurance, government should provide fertilizers, pesticides, capital, seeds and other needs for collective farming, agriculture income should distribute after remittance of land revenue tax. Unfortunately constitution committee rejected this proposal.

Constitutional provisions to Agriculture:

Through his wide range of exploration of miseries faced by the farmers in the Zamindari, Ryotwari and Khoti System Dr. Ambedkar made constitutional facilities to address the farmers problems.

Abolition of the Zamindari System

According to Article 31 (A) of the constitution of India this evil system was abolished and protection measures were implemented to land reforms laws. This ensures unjust land ownerships are overthrown ensured more equitable redistribution of land.

Social Justice through land distribution

Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts aimed to address the deep rooted social and economic inequalities. Land ownership was a symbol of power and prestige, which led to caste discrimination. His thoughts are clearly enshrined in the Directive Principles of State Policy. As stated in the Article 39(B) and 39(C), its responsibility of state to ensure that wealth and resources could not concentrate in the hands of few.

Dignity of human being

Historically Dalits and marginalized farmers and agricultural laborers were exploited by upper caste landlords. Dr. Ambedkar liberated farmers, agricultural laborers and marginalized communities from exploitation by making untouchability an illegal and punishable offence under Article 17 of the Constitution. This allowed Dalits and marginalized people to get fair wages for their labor and the right to land.

Granted nobility to life by Living wages

Dr. Ambedkar, by implementing the provision of a living wage under Article 43, stated that it is the duty of the state to provide everyone with the opportunity to have food, shelter, clothing, education, health, life insurance etc. which provided farmers, agricultural laborers, and workers with the opportunity to receive fair remuneration and to obtain better working conditions.

Establishment of welfare state

Dr. Ambedkar embodied his commitment to social and economic justice in Article 46, which included provisions that the state should strive to protect the economic, educational and social interests of the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC), thereby realizing the concept of a welfare state through the upliftment of these classes.



Conclusion :

Dr. Ambedkar is the greatest thinker of India in the 20th century. He organized the largest mass struggle of farmers for the elimination of exploitation and protection of farmers' rights in India. Dr. Ambedkar emphasized the importance of the peasant struggle. Through land reforms and protection of farmers' rights, he radically transformed the entire Indian society and laid the foundation for an equal society which is free from exploitation. By playing a leading role in economic development, he identified the exploitation and inequalities in the uncontrolled capitalist economy. He scientifically stated that instead of identifying agricultural holdings on the basis of their area, they should be identified on the basis of the investment made in its production, labor consumption, capital and production. He scientifically stated that the lack of agricultural ownership has been the main reason for the exploitation of Dalits, backward class and marginalized people in India for centuries, and how the landlords and landowners in the society have manipulated the farmers and agricultural workers. He said that the pressure on agriculture can be prevented by creating jobs with the establishment of industries, as most people depend on the agricultural sector. Ambedkar has made his own contributions to the development of agriculture through the nationalization of agriculture and the collective farming method. Ambedkar, who said that the state should play a significant role in the development of farmers, has become a real social engineer of India by incorporating many measures for the development of agriculture and farmers in the Constitution.

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