

Ambedkar's Vision of Social Justice and its Relevance

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Dr Shyam Kumar

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science
Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi

Abstract:The Indian Constitution aims to promote social justice. The state is responsible for establishing a social order where all citizens have equal access to justice and where the legal system does not discriminate based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. The paper “Ambedkar's Vision of Social Justice and its Relevance” examines Ambedkar's views on social justice in India and the challenge that we face. It also delves into how his quest for social justice is still relevant today.

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Introduction:The concept of rights was secondary to fulfilling responsibilities in ancient Indian conceptions of justice. "Dandaniti" and "Dharma" were two schools of thought in ancient Indian philosophy that prioritised Justice. The concept of justice in "Dandaniti" was highly similar to contemporary ideas about law, its enforcement and punishment. Virtuous behaviour by dharma was known as justice, and dharma was another terminology for the code of obligations. In Hindu tradition, justice was thus associated with carrying out dharma-prescribed obligations. Liberal and Marxist perspectives characterise contemporary theories of justice. Liberals argue that a just society must protect individual rights

and freedoms, but Marxists argue that equality is essential. Those who hold the latter view feel that eliminating current inequities is necessary for society to become fair.

Social justice aims to ensure everyone has freedom, equality, and the ability to exercise their rights. To rephrase, social justice is ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential. As an idea, social justice is complex and has varied interpretations among legal, philosophical, and political scientists. As a set of rights, social justice acts as a check and balance between the well-off and people with low incomes. Its social importance in maintaining social stability and national unity is immense. Social justice is all about the rights of the weak, aged, homeless, economically weaker sections, children, women, and other underprivileged persons.

"Justice is not something which can be captured in a formula once and for all; it is a process, complex and shifting balance between many factors," comments Dias (1985). Justice can take the form of either distributive or natural justice. One definition of social justice is the principle that allows the rule of law to thrive. Since it encompasses economic justice as well, its meaning is more expansive. Its stated goal is the elimination of economic and social disparities. Therefore, social justice seeks to equalise social rights and social controls while eliminating disparities based on gender, ethnicity, class, and income.

The ancient Hindu legal system, which aimed to uphold Hindu dharma, wholeheartedly backed the caste system and the four Varnas. The biggest problem in Hindu society was the apparent inequality and dehumanisation caused by the hierarchical caste system. This system had progressively worse disabilities beginning at birth and severely humiliating and demeaning jobs that certain designated low castes had to do until they died. There was no opportunity to shape a new

social order that could ensure that social justice existed (Zelliot, 2002). Varnashrama dharma's caste structure was an affront to social fairness in and of itself. The caste system and Hindu Varnashrama dharma promoted Brahmins to the position of elite, hereditary social class. They stigmatised the majority of the population, labelling them as "Sudras" or "untouchables" and assigning them the lowly task of physical labour. Both their educational options and their social status were severely limited. As time went on, the privileged class's privileges grew while the other classes' oppression and depression deepened; this social system fostered status inequality and the rejection of equal opportunity for everyone. This caste system is at the root of the prominent social inequalities in India, and the pursuit of social justice aims to eradicate them.

Ambedkar's and Social Justice

Ambedkar was born in the Mahar caste. Socioeconomic inequality and the stigma of being untouchable were everyday experiences for the Mahars (Keer, 1954). The upper-caste Hindus not only avoided the Mahars but despised and discriminated against them. Therefore, no one from the lower castes dared to rise, look up, and converse with the upper class. Schools did not let them in, and temples did not allow them to worship. Social stratification based on the caste system bestowed these harmful customs. Ambedkar was born and raised in a culture like this.

Nevertheless, Ambedkar persevered and eventually earned a bachelor's degree. Upon graduating, he immediately entered politics, fighting for the rights of the oppressed and exposing societal inequities. For social justice and equality, he was an unyielding rebel. He devoted his life to improving people's lives and society in the hopes of reviving humanity. His social liberalism was unparalleled. Justice, equality, and fraternity would form the basis of his new social order. Moral principles

such as brotherhood, equality, liberty, and justice formed the basis of his actions. He was an outspoken advocate for social justice and a key figure in the Constitution's creation, fighting for the rights of the oppressed. He devoted his entire life to helping the downtrodden and oppressed untouchables of Indian society.

Dr Ambedkar's faith was in the strength of his ideas and decrees. Even though he is free, "Man is born in chains everywhere," as the French revolutionary Rousseau said. Equality, liberty, and fraternity—his three revolutionary words—had shaken up France in 1789. Ambedkar chose to battle for equality-based justice after reading Rousseau's writings. Before advocating for political equality, Dr Ambedkar sought economic and social equality and worked to make sure that the oppressed and the underprivileged had a rightful position in society (Gore 1994). As a result, he prioritised social justice over political justice; he believed that everyone should have the same opportunities and that personal liberty should take precedence over societal divisions based on caste.

"Ambedkar is the lawmaker of the 20th century and modern Manu, but unlike old Manu, this new Manu favoured human equality and social justice," remarked P.B. Gajendragadkar, India's former chief judge (Pact, n.d.). The Government of India designated the years between 14 April 1990 and 14 April 1991 as a "Social Justice Year" to commemorate the centenary of Ambedkar's birth, a champion for the downtrodden. This led to the launch of numerous national initiatives aimed at improving the lives of the country's historically marginalised SCs and STs. Southern and Eastern students are eligible for financial aid through scholarships and stipends. There will be no cost to the students in the form of books, instructional materials, and office supplies. New schools and hostels can also make use of these grants.

MNREGA and IRDP have also included provisions. Building housing units for SCs and STs is a critical priority in several housing projects, such as Indira Awas Yojana, which prioritises potable water delivery. They receive help in establishing poultry and dairy operations, two forms of self-employment. Organisations have set up training and coaching centres to help SC/ST. Reserved seats were filled by implementing special programs targeting members of certain classes. Since qualified individuals were not immediately available, the government issued an order to wait to fill the positions until the graduates of those classes proved themselves. All these have been possible to some extent today as Ambedkar dared to fight for social justice and make it a part of the Indian Constitutional framework, though much is yet to be achieved. Because of its multi-faceted nature and many origins, justice is a complex notion to pin down. An aspect of justice that promotes social order based on the tenets of liberty, equality, and fraternity is social justice. Its basic tenet is the need for fraternity and social and economic equality in establishing the kind of society that guarantees every individual's free and equal development. Therefore, to put certain groups on an equal footing with others, social justice may necessitate uneven or preferential treatment of some groups who have needed more values for an extended period.

Every person's freedom, equality, and brotherhood are central to Ambedkar's idea of social justice. As a whole, Ambedkar advocated for a social order predicated on decent interactions between individuals. He disapproved of hypocrisy, injustice, and the exploitation of man by man in the name of religion because he was a humanist and rationalist (Gore, 1994). He advocated for a faith transcending national boundaries, ethnicities, and periods by focusing on fundamental moral values. It should rest on rational thought and the fundamental principles of brotherhood, equality, and freedom. In

Ambedkar's view, the caste system was Hinduism's gravest flaw. He claims that the caste system and untouchability have their origins in the varna system, which in turn causes all inequalities.

Ambedkar advocated for a social order in which birth does not determine a person's noble or untouchable position, but their accomplishments and achievements alone determine their status (Keer 1954). He pushed for a particular treatment program for the country's economically and socially disadvantaged. Several articles in the Indian Constitution, which he oversaw in its drafting, call on the government to ensure that all its inhabitants enjoy social, economic, and political liberty, equality, and fraternity. Other clauses also ensure the oppressed receive preferential treatment in different areas. The Indian Constitution explicitly states that untouchability is no longer practised (Article 17). While addressing the Constituent Assembly to urge their approval of the Constitution, Ambedkar stated, “I have completed my work; I wish there should be a sunrise even tomorrow. The new Bharat has political freedom but has yet to raise the sun of social and economic liberty.”

Relevance Today

Social justice was a progressive issue for Ambedkar. He saw the press as a potent instrument for liberation, social justice, and transformation and disapproved of violence. He published *Janata*, *Samata*, and *Mook Nayak* but they could have sold better. Maybe it was because they were full of progressive and unconventional ideas. Much of the credit for the Constitution's limitations on the social scourge of untouchability goes to Ambedkar. He established reservation principles to help SCs and STs catch up to the upper classes in terms of education, economics, and social standing by giving them more help in the form of concessions and reservations. Currently, numerous legal safeguards ensure social fairness for all

socioeconomic groups. This has led to the launch of numerous plans and initiatives aimed at the country's holistic development, and there has been some progress in this direction.

However, it is undeniable that there is still a tremendous amount to be bemoaned in social justice. The problematic caste structure of our society and the blind faiths in the Brahminical system that have persisted for millennia have prevented the eradication of social disparities and untouchability altogether. Even though Ambedkar is no more with us, his free India's economic and social gaps have grown substantially. Buildings reach for the sky, and cities are home to bungalows, five-star hotels, and luxury cars; nevertheless, filthy sewers, muddy areas, and shacks evoke images of an existence worse than that of animals. Building an egalitarian society seems like a pipe dream in this scenario (Zelliot 2002).

Conclusion

The principles of social justice and human dignity are enshrined at the core of the Indian Constitution, which ensures that everyone has equal rights, drawing from Ambedkar's ideas. It is noted, nonetheless, that Ambedkar's vision of social justice was never fully realised. Therefore, institutions should use civil society to spread their vision of justice. Enacting the Constitution to dismantle caste prejudice was Ambedkar's way of showing his care for the well-being of India's most marginalised communities. Thus, Ambedkar's social justice principles continue to impact modern Indian society through advocating for constitutional and legal measures to protect the rights and dignity of marginalised groups.

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