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Dr. Ambedkar's Philosophy on the Labour Policy

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Abstract:

This paper is regarding work of Bharatratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar- one of the most respectful crusaders of societal development in India. He is a scholar, a learned jurist, outstanding states man, fighter for human rights, eminent economist, and an activist for the basic rights of depressed class of society, last but not the least he was an architect of the Indian Constitution. By his efforts the interest of labour and working class were promoted. He had significant impact on the labour movement and provided setting up of the Indian labour conference and standing labour committee, enactment of labour laws, establishment of the chief labour commissioner's organization, appointment of legislative committee, machinery for fixing minimum wages, standing orders for industrial development, recognition of trade union, minimum wages Act & social security measures. In the various capacities, he not only suggested but also attempted to implement the labour reforms. As a prominent economist and a crusader for the equitable social justice, he always thought about the agriculture labour problems wherein he suggested the integrated transfer the surplus labour from the agriculture to industry which is the only remedy for the development of the country. He believed that it is the surest remedy, which can help in lessening of pressure on the land, and increasing the amount of capital goods would forcibly create the economic

necessity of enlarging the land holdings. He believed in the intersectoral transfer of labour from agriculture to industry. Paper derived that Dr. Ambedkar was a visionary and had foreseen the future of the Indian economy before almost seventy years and accordingly made relevant suggestions regarding the labour policy and land reforms. Following his thinking it should be possible for our country, to march towards the economic reform with a human face.

Introduction:

This paper is tribute to the Bharatratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar- one of the most respectful person of India: a scholar, a learned jurist, outstanding states man, fighter for human rights, eminent economist, a crusader for the basic rights of depressed class of society and last but not the least an architect of the Indian Constitution.

Being an outstanding personality in the branch of economics, Dr. Ambedkar visualized economic plan for free India nearly a century ago and defined it, which is also relevant in the prevailing time. He defined the economic plan as,

"Ultimate object of all planning must be raising the standard of living of the people as a whole and to ensure employment for all. To that end the purchasing power of the people must be increased by improving efficiency and productivity of labour on the one hand and simultaneously development and reorganization of the agriculture, industries and services on the other"

It is pertinent to note that Dr. Ambedkar thought of the problems of Indian industrial labour, Agriculture labour & industrialization, Migration of farm labour to the industry and lastly Land reforms. He suggested and even formed drafts of various laws regarding these issues and even enacted them in his time when he was authority under various capacities. His ideology regarding industrialization, labour policy and land reform is very relevant even today.

To understand the same we must study his multipronged approach to economic planning for the upliftment of labour and there by Indian society and nation.

Dr Ambedkar's Vision for Labour Policy:

Dr. Ambedkar was in favour of keeping labour in the concurrent list of our constitution, so that their interests are adequately served by the uniformity of legislation throughout the union and to ensure uniformity with international regulations.

By his efforts the interest of labour and working class were promoted. He had significant impact on the labour movement and provided setting up of the Indian labour conference and standing labour committee, enactment of labour laws, establishment of the chief labour commissioner's organization, appointment of legislative committee, machinery for fixing minimum wages, standing orders for industrial development, recognition of trade union, minimum wages Act & social security measures. In the various capacities he not only suggested but also attempted to implement the labour reforms.

Labour Law Reforms:

As a labour member in the third meeting of the Tripartite Labour conference on 7th May 1943 emphasized on the joint consultation of the representative of the employers and employees. He also equally emphasized on the food, clothing, shelter, education, amenities, and health resources to be provided to workers. A resolution was also adopted to set up the machinery, which will investigate the question of wages and earning in the said conference.

As a member of legislative council, labour movement during the year 1928 in Bombay was supported by him. He also emphasized protection of the interests of women worker. He suggested about the maternity benefit of women labour and recommended that the mother ought to get a certain amount of rest during prenatal period and such burden ought to be borne by the government.

During his tenure as a labour member, he amended the factories Act for three times. In 1944 the bill for the holidays for industrial worker was moved, which was enacted on 3rd April 1945. The Act allowed workers to avail compensatory leave if weekly off remained unutilized.

The amended Act provided 10 days paid leave to adult and 14 days leave to child. Another amendment was adopted on 4.4.1946 restricted the daily and weekly working hours for workers. He proposed for adult workers 9 hrs and 48 hours in perennial factories and 10 and 50 hrs in the seasonal factories. He also suggested that if the laborer works more than this, overtime is to be paid and overtime should be double the normal rate. Dr. Ambedkar justified that the Industrial worker worked for longer hrs during the Wartime and needs relief.

Dr. Ambedkar twice amended the Indian Mines Act. In 1945 through an ordinance rules which were made by the government to maintain crèches for the children of those establishments where women workers are employed. Again in february 1946, he suggested to keep adequate separate bathing place for men and women workers which are hygienic.

Regarding Industrial Employment Standing Orders Act, 1946, he proposed that the Act should not only in paper to implement for the terms and conditions for the employment but they should actually be implemented. Terms and conditions of employment should be certified by the competent officer meant for this purpose. The register should be maintained for the same. Dr. Ambedkar introduced a bill-The Industrial employment (standing orders) bill in Central Assembly and the same was passed in 13.4.46.

Present Labour Laws and Dr. Ambedkar's Vision

Presently under the Industrial Dispute Act, 1947, the works committee in the factories employing 100 or more workers is compulsory. The composition of works committees are the bipartite consisting of equal number of the workers representatives and employers representatives. Dr. Ambedkar afforded for the enlistment of labour, the main function of the committee is to secure and preserving the interest of workers by promoting and maintaining good industrial relations. Similarly under Bombay industrial Relations Act, 1946 formation of various committees like Joint Management Council and Joint committees are mandatory to protect the

interest of worker. Violation of the above provision leads organization towards the penalization.

The maternity benefit Act enacted in the year, 1961 is to protect the dignity of motherhood and the dignity of the new baby's birth by providing for the full and healthy maintenance of the workman and her child at the important time when she is not working. Under the provisions of this Act, all the women either employed directly or through contractor, domestic women employees employed in mines factories, plantations and allow in the other establishments are entitled to get benefit of cash and non-cash benefits including leave for maternity. Leave for the miscarriage and tubectomy operation under section 9&13 of the Act is included as the additional benefits. The violation of the Act leads to the imprisonment which may extend upto one year or fine or both.

Dr. Ambedkar's vision was very clear. What he thought was reflected in the amended Factories Act of 1948, where in the Daily hrs and weekly hrs of the work are fixed as 8 and 48 respectively, which are also prevailing in the seasonal industries also. His suggestion of the overtime payment is also prevailing as under the Factories act 1948. The overtime is to be paid to the workers in factory is twice than the normal wages if they work more hours than the prescribe.

Presently as per the Indian Mines Act, 1952, section 46 refers that woman employees are prohibited for underground work and allowed to work above the ground between 6 am to 7 pm. Also as per the sec 19,29,21 the provision for the separate latrine and urinals to be provided in proportion to the number of male and female employed in the in and provide for such other matters in respect of sanitation in mines. So, the suggestions of Dr. Ambedkar were very relevant in the prevailing era.

As per industrial standing orders Act, 1946 there is the provision to certify standing orders within 60 days from the date of the actual functioning of the undertaking. The standing orders are to be certified by the commissioner of labour who certifies it after the due verification, amendment, confirming or altering the standing order in order to convey it in the written terms and conditions of the services of the employees. As per the provision of the Industrial employment standing order Act 1946, the said standing orders are to be placed at the place where the majority of the workers take entry in the organization.

Dr. Ambedkar views on the strike and the right to strike are very educative for the development of trade unionism in India. He decided to set up the standing labour committee on 7/5/43 and also labour conference was organized. It was decided to setup the standing labour management committee at least in the factory units. He emphasized to established employment exchanges so that safeguard of skilled and unskilled labour can be protected. He tried to formulate full employment policy for labour; a state supported and patronized labour welfare system to form a tripartite labour tribunal system to solve industrial disputes, to develop an idealist labour participatory mechanism in nation building. Dr. Ambedkar throughout his life argued for evolving state patronized and supported labour welfare system for our country. He opined that the government should directly intervene in the areas where the labour interests are involved. He

always conceptually tried to advocate the need for linking wage determination to productivity and minimum needs of the labour. He always advocated for the labour tribunals for soiling labour problems in the organized sector, He felt that the management, labour and government should sit across the table to discuss, explain and explore the issues of labour unrest and find out the solution for the labour problems.

This shows that ideology of Dr. Ambedkar was very relevant in the prevailing era, as the compulsory enactment of the labour laws is mandatory. Regarding performance based salary the nowadays organizations are very keen about that and emphasized on the productivity based wages. Even Government of India rethinking the raising the salary considering the criterion of productivity and efficiency.

Land Reforms & Transfer of Surplus Labour

Dr. Ambedkar, a prominent economist and a crusader for the equitable social justice, always thought about the agriculture labour problems wherein he suggested the integrated transfer the surplus labour from the agriculture to industry which is the only remedy for the development of the country.

He believed that it is the surest remedy, which can help in lessening of pressure on the land, and increasing the amount of capital goods would forcibly create the economic necessity of enlarging the land holdings. He believed in the intersectoral transfer of labour from agriculture to industry.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, an idle labour is the calamity and instead of contributing to the national income, it consumes the meager surplus, which in turn prevents capital formation. Even if more capital and capital goods, there will be increase in the idle labour on the given size of the farm as more capital and capital goods does not require much of labour force. He also felt that it is not the law of inheritance that was the evil, but high pressure on the land makes the situation worst.

He advocated the transfer of labour from agriculture to industry by considering the industrialization as soundest remedy for the agriculture problems of India. This moment is the best narrate his quote from the *London times* prove his suggestions.

"The value of farm lands decreases in exact proportion as the ratio of agriculture to other industries increases, that is where all the labour is devoted to agriculture, the land is worth less than where only half of the people are the farm workers and when only a quarter of them are so engaged the farms and their products are still more valuable. Manufacturer and varied industries thus not only benefit the manufacturer, but are of equal benefit and advantage to the farmers as well"

He preferred fast industrialization for the reasons that industrialization facilitates consolidation of land, lessen the premium of land. It is a barrier against future subdivision and consolidation. The surplus labour of the agriculture itself can be accommodated in industries and so problems

of unemployment can also be solved. For the landless labour he emphasized for the collective farming which could have been the responsibility of the state government. State should be the owner of the land and land is required to be redistributed among the people. So no landless people are there. Though it has been declared policy of the government of India that the Land reform should be recognized to constitute a vital element both in terms of the anti poverty strategy and for modernization and increased productivity in agriculture, very little achievement is made in this regard. Thus Dr. Ambedkar preferred industrialization for many reasons as referred above. His views on industrialization for an emerging country have constituted the core of the norms for the formulation of Industrial Policy resolution 1956 of free India. Maximization of output efficiency and productivity was the major concern of Dr. Ambedkar in his time for the industrialization. For him the agriculture was to be state industry. He recommended that the state should acquire also with the key and basic industries and insurance. He suggested that all the agricultural land held by private individuals, whether as owner or tenants should be mortgaged and pay them compensation equal to the value of the land. Further the state should divide the land acquired into farms of the standard size and should let out the farms for cultivation to the residents of the village as tenants.

Realising of Ambedkar's Vision -Special Economic Zone

Government of India had introduced SEZ (special economic Zone) policy for the land reforms and liberalization. SEZ is defined as „delineated duty free enclaves and are deemed foreign territories for the purposes of trade operations, duties and tariffs .A SEZ may be set up in the public private or joint sector or by the government, subject to the compliance with the policy and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Commerce. The policy requires the minimum size of the SEZ to be 1000hectars.To contribute into the country's GDP and creating large employment opportunities land areas suitable for certain projects to be identified and decided. The big industrial projects will acquire the large chunks of land which further contribute the industrialization of the country and development of the land. Due to this, the price of the capital land and human capital will be high.

Unfortunately , Dr. Ambedkar's suggestion for the land reform as" State socialism" was not accepted at the relevant time, for both the development of the smallholding of agrarian land as well as for the development of the industrialization. Now after so long through SEZ, government of India had tried to acquire the land and for its development allot it to the large industrial houses.

SEZ in turn had to create large employment opportunities. The owner of the small holding will be encouraged to sell their land which is small and non productive and in turn the industry will give handsome compensation with the employment opportunity. Ultimately the complete process will result into the productivity of involved individual's development of industry and optimum utilization of land used.

The survey carried out by the National Sample Survey Organization in 2012-13, showed that for 56% of the marginal land owning family's (with land less than 0.01 hectare) employment

is agriculture, and that was their principal source of income. Another 23% reported livestock as their principal source of income. Also survey says that large no. of the workers in unorganized sector is occupied by the agriculture workers. If government of India wished by its future developmental policies of the Indian economy, can divert the major portion of the unorganized labour to the organized sector.

Conclusion:

It can be derived from the above discussion that Dr.Ambedkar was a visionary and had foreseen the future of the Indian economy before almost seventy years and accordingly made relevant suggestions regarding the labour policy and land reforms. Following his thinking it should be possible for our country, to march towards the economic reform with a human face.

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