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An Analytical Study of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's views on Land Reform and Agricultural Development in India



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Introduction :

India is largely an agricultural country. Being the largest industry in the country, agriculture is the source of livelihood for over 65 per cent of population in the country as per the census 2011. This shows the predominance of rural economy in India. In the rural sector, land is the principal source of employment and income. If the fountain head of income-benefits only a minor fraction of the rural population the structure of land ownership fails to meet the ends of social justice. In the pre-independent India, the agrarian structure was characterized by wide ranging inequality, high concentration of land ownership and exploitation of weaker class. Hence, the best course for bringing a reduction in the inequalities of income is to bring about a reduction in inequalities of land ownership.

Moreover, since the advent of planning in India, 'growth with social justice' is the Nation's foremost task. But, with the existed unequal distribution of land holdings, on the one hand, and the fast growing tiny, small and marginal farmers; rural artisans; landless agricultural labourers and socially and economically backward groups like SCs/STs, on the other hand, created the most disturbed situation in the Indian agricultural scenario. And also, these groups were neglected from socio-economic-political equality for a long period. As a remedy for the above situation, the Government of India has taken several steps through land reforms.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar published a number of articles on economic problems, particularly the problem of agricultural economy of the country. Among the various problems of agricultural economy in India, he has concentrated on agricultural production. He explained close relationship between agricultural production, productivity and size of land holding.

Objectives of Study :

The objectives of the study is as follows-

1. To study the meaning and concept of land reform.
2. To study the situation of land reform in India.
3. To study the views of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar on land reforms and agricultural development.

Meaning & Concept of land reforms:

Land reforms usually referred to redistribu-

tion of land from the rich to the poor. More broadly, it includes regulation of ownership, operation, leasing, sales, and inheritance of land (indeed the redistribution of land itself requires legal changes). According to Webster's dictionary land reform means measures designed to effect a more equitable distribution of agricultural land, especially by government action. It necessarily includes a redistribution of rights to land from large landholders to benefit the rural poor, by providing them with more equitable and secure access to land.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Views on Land Reforms & Agricultural Development:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar explained his views on India's agricultural problems in his various writings & speeches. In his essay on "Small Holdings in India and their remedies" he was told that small holding of land is a critical problem of Indian agriculture so he suggested collective farming. Also he was introduced a bill seeking the abolition of Khoti System on 17th September, 1937 in the Bombay Legislative Council and worked for abolition of Mahar Watan. In his "State and Minorities" he suggested a plan of State socialism. But at that time Indian Government was not pay attention on the thoughts of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. So from the long time we face various problems related to agriculture in India. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar said, the increased number of small, fragmented and uneconomic holdings are a great setback for the agricultural development in India. Further he said that, size of the holdings is said to be greatly harmful to Indian agriculture. The number of separate plots in each holding will show how greatly fragmented it is. Thus, these small and scattered holdings have been a real cause for anxiety regarding our great national industry. Further, he expressed two very noteworthy but equally sad facts regarding economic life in India : (1) that it is largely an agrarian country, and (2) that its agricultural productivity is the lowest.

Dr. Ambedkar further states that - "attention has now been concentrated on the excessive sub-division of fragmentation of agricultural holdings. Enlarge and consolidate the holdings it is confidently argued; and the increase in agricultural productivity will follow in its wake". In this regard, he advocates that, "the evils

of fragmentation are very great and must be met by a comprehensive scheme of consolidation." Further, he expressed that "though fragmentation does subserve the ends of distributive justice it renders farming in India considerably inefficient as it once did in Europe."

But the whole argument of large-scale economies and maximising production is theoretical. Some of the farm management studies reveal that gross output per acre is greater on small farms than on large farms. According to Professor Lewis, the size of farm is not very material in securing high yields. The experience of Japan - a country of small farms - justifies that labour-intensive methods can result in higher productivity per acre. Similarly, the large-sized collective farms of U.S.S.R. have not been able to produce yield rates comparable to those of Japan. Consequently, historical evidence supports the imposition of ceiling because such a policy can enlarge employment and while meeting the ends of social justice does not in any way act as a hindrance to achieving maximum production.

This is mainly due to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's emphasis on how to increase the productivity in agricultural sector, on the one hand, and how to drive the increased idle rural population into industrial sector on the other. For this, he states that a small farm may be economic as well as a large farm, for economic or non-economic does not depend upon the size of land but upon the due proportion among all the factors including land. Consequently, the remedy for the ills of agriculture in India does not lie primarily in the matter of holdings but in the matter of increasing capital and capital goods. That capital arises from savings and that savings is possible where there is surplus in a common place of political economy.

On the other hand, he showed the way for industrialization as "with the increasing ruralization of India and continually decreasing proportion of land under cultivation, the volume of idle labour must have increased to an enormous extent." As a remedy to this, he stated, "industrialization is a natural and powerful

remedy. In short, strange though it may seem, industrialization of India is the soundest remedy for the agricultural problems of India." This shows his scientific outlook and Western influence on his economic philosophy.

However, though considerable progress has so far been achieved in the industrial sector, it does not meet the requirements of surplus rural, as well as urban, population in India. Hence, land reforms and industrial development should be taken together. Of course, steps have already been initiated in this regard for the speedy implementation of both the land reforms and industrial development, since the advent of planning in India. However, "a review of land reforms reveals that has been achieved as well as a great deal that requires urgent attention. There are many steps between objectives and legislation and between laws and their implementation. Hence, it is necessary to identify the deficiencies and take steps for their elimination."

Conclusion :

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a strong advocate of land reforms and of a prominent role for the state in economic development. Dr. Ambedkar recognized the inequities in an unfettered capitalist economy. Dr. Ambedkar stresses the need for thoroughgoing land reforms, noting that smallness or largeness of an agricultural holding is not determined by its physical extent along but by the intensity of cultivation as reflected in the amounts of productive investment made on the land and the amounts of all other inputs used, including labour. Dr. Ambedkar also stresses the need for industrialization so as to move surplus labour from agriculture to other productive occupations, accompanied by large capital investments in agricultural to raise yields. He sees an extremely important role for the state in such transformation of agriculture and advocates the nationalization of land and the leasing out of land to groups of cultivators, who are to be encouraged to form cooperatives in order to promote agricultural.

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