

DR. Ambedkar's View on Indian Agriculture

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ABSTRACT

Dr. Ambedkar was one of the great personalities who analyzed the Indian agrarian problem from the viewpoint of an economist. His main concern for agriculture arises for the two reasons i.e. the existence of surplus labor and the resultant superfluous unemployment. He had some important contributions in the field of agriculture like land holdings, collective farming, and land revenue, which are the most relevant in the present time. He stressed rapid industrialization as the solution to all agricultural problems. In this study, an attempt is made to describe the thoughts of Ambedkar on Indian agriculture.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Ambedkar was born on the 14th of April, 1891, in the Mhow at present in Madhya Pradesh. He was the last as well as the 14th child of Ramji Maloji Saknal. He was a multidimensional personality of India, who a jurist, economist, politician as well as social reformer [1]. He was the principal architect of the Indian constitution and the first law minister of India. He was also the frontrunner of many Dalit movements, a campaigner against social discrimination and supporter of the right of women and the labor.

Ambedkar had many contributions to the field of Indian agriculture. He had written various articles, research papers and he was the organizer of various seminars and conferences to get a solution for Indian agriculture. His thought on India agriculture was reflected in his article 'Smallholdings on Indian agriculture and their remedies' (1917) and 'status and ministers' (1947). The land is the only one factor among many factors of production and the productivity of Indian agriculture is highly dependent upon the proportions of other factors used in the production process [2]. He argued that the chief object of production mainly consists of making every factor contribution is highest in concern. It is possible only when it can operate with its fellow in the required capacity.

According to, land should be let out to the villagers for cultivation without discrimination based on caste, creed, and in a manner that there will be not any landlord, tenant, and even the landless labor. The small size of landholdings is a reason for low production in India and the solution of this is the consolidation of landholdings. He had emphasized on collective and cooperative farming in the country, which is much relevant today. With this paper, I have tried to analyze Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts on Indian agriculture descriptively.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The abolition of khoti system

Khoti system was prevailing in some parts of Maharashtra, which was subjected to the vast majority of rural farmers to oppression and exploitation. In the 'khoti system', 'khots' serves as zamindars, which had the right to land and the land was cultivated by farmers. The revenues were collected by khots and a part of it was shared with the government. Ambedkar initiated a movement opposing the khoti system in 1929 through an agricultural conference. He found an independent labor party, whose main slogan was the abolition of the 'khoti system'. After a long struggle, the exploitative system was abolished in the year 1949.

Small farmer agrarian economy

Dr. Ambedkar devoted his entire life to making dynamic changes in society. His main motive was the improvement of the condition of the downtrodden people of India. He stated that land is not only one-factor affecting agriculture but it is one among many factors. According to him the factors of production should be used in ideal proportions, and its productivity varies with the changes in ideal proportions. He suggested that if agriculture is to be treated as an economic enterprise, then there would be nothing as small and large holding. The problem is not using land as large or smallholdings but the problem rests on the inadequacy of other factors of production. The inefficiency of capital needed for acquiring agricultural stock lessens savings. He also made an important statement regarding the problem of disguised unemployment in the field of agriculture. To him, a large part of the agricultural population is idle or superfluous as the large agricultural population is engaged in the lowest proportion of land in actual.

The nationalism of land and collective farming

After fighting with the unequal land holdings and persistence of tenancy with unfair rents and uncertain tenure by 1947, Ambedkar gave special emphasis on the radical solution of nationalism of land and collective farming. Then he felt that neither the tenancy legislation nor consolidation of land holdings could improve agricultural productivity. These measures alone could not help in solving the persistent problems of small farmers and landless laborers. He suggested the nationalization of entire agricultural land with the aim of collective farming for the solution of all ills of the Indian agrarian system. For him, the state's main obligation is to supply the capacity necessary for agriculture as well as industry. The organized agricultural land should be divided into farms of standard size and let out the farms for cultivation to the residents of the village. The farm should be cultivated as a collective farm; the farms should be run by the rules and directions issued by the government, tenants should share the produce of the farm among themselves in a prescribed manner after lifting out the payment of charges livable on the farm.

Rapid industrialization

In an article in 1918, Dr. Ambedkar stated that the solution to rural stress is rapid industrialization. He stated industrialization is the soundest remedy for all agricultural problems in India. The cumulative effects of industrialization like lessening the pressure of surplus labor and the increasing amount of capital goods can forcefully create the economic necessity of the holdings. Industrialization also helps in destroying the premium on land and provides few opportunities for sub-division and fragmentation of landholdings. Thus to him, industrialization is a natural powerful remedy.

The thoughts of Ambedkar are found relevant in the present scenario. The view on landholding that there are no economic and uneconomic holdings is there, but the appropriate proportions of other factors determine the productivity is extremely true. His idea of cooperative farming to yield higher production with low factor inputs is also relevant in the current situation, where everywhere the problem of fragmentation and smallholding exists in India. His thought on state socialism for agricultural development is seen to be followed by many states of India at present. As in India, the supply of essential capital to the agricultural sector and distribution of its production is done by the state government. The land revenue system, as dreamt by Dr. Ambedkar was seen to be fulfilled today. At present, the land revenue on land is based on taxable capacity. The tax is agriculture is thus progressive.

DISCUSSION

The socio-economic development of Indian farmers is directly linked to agricultural development in India. In Indian agriculture, all most 80% of the farmers are found small and marginal. The small and marginal farmer is facing the common problem of low productivity, the use of primitive tools, lack of technical knowledge, lack of market for the produced, inefficient bargaining power, lack of post-harvest services, inadequate credit facilities and insufficient capital to produce a quality product with the small size of landholdings [3]. Due to this, the problem of unemployment and illiteracy is more acute in India. The subdivision and fragmentation of landholdings are the main cause of agricultural backwardness in India, as explained by Dr. Ambedkar.

Ambedkar put more emphasis on collective farming with the government's rules and regulations. The share of productivity by all tenants should be prescribed according to government rule. The state must finance the resources for cultivation like the supply of water, draught animals, manures; seed, etc are the duty of government to increase the agricultural output. He addressed industrialization as the panacea for all agricultural diseases. According to him the investment in agriculture is the primary industry for India.

The average size of landholding is continuously declining, which is a major concern for Indian agriculture. Due to the defective system of the law of inheritance, the excessive burden of population, and the decay of the cottage industry the fragmentation of land in India was started [4]. Due to the fragmentation of landholdings the modern technology in agriculture faces hurdles in being adopted. So, most of the farmer depends on inadequate primitive and traditional technology, for which agricultural productivity becomes lower. So, the concept of cooperative and collective farming for only the solution of most of the problems arose in Indian agriculture. He emphasized the real cause of small landholdings and for him, the excessive pressure of population is more the cause of fragmentation and in the availability of other profitable sources is the major cause of small farming.

Since about 78% of the Indian farmers fall under the category of small and marginal farming with the landholdings of five acres or less than five acres. To help the farmers the present government is working on the recommendations of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on the agricultural sector in some states like Maharashtra. The concept of group farming which is being pushed by the government is based on Ambedkar's recommended model [5]. Many states governments including chief minister Devendra Fadnavis has trying to incorporate the group farming, higher capital investment in the agricultural sector, intense cropping to double the production and channelization of production with the market to ensure the doubling of farmer's income is some policies included in the state plan for the year 2016-2019, which are derived mainly from Ambedkar's model.

Ambedkar was against the traditional land revenue system of the British Government. He, therefore, suggested the progressive and equitable taxation in India.

CONCLUSION

It is noticed that the small size of land holdings is one of the important obstacles in adopting modern techniques in India. So, the adoption of collective & cooperative farming is the best solution to deal with that problem in context to India, which was suggested by Dr. Ambedkar in those times, and still, it is relevant today. He also suggested the unified system of taxation in the collection of revenue from agriculture. In the present era of globalization, agricultural growth is stagnant and continuously declining. It is suspected that the reason for such a declining trend is the government's concentration on technical problems and ignorance of institutional problems related to Indian agriculture. He stressed the rapid industrialization for agricultural growth and the enhancement of the Indian economy. But actually, the problem of the Indian economy is not only of smallholdings but also of scattering holdings.

The scattered and fragmented holdings result in raising the costs of production, which lowers the profit arising out from the agriculture sector. So, the suggested solution is not only enlarging landholding by the adoption of collective farming but also the investment of capital and capital goods in Indian agriculture is recommended. Since the surplus from Indian agriculture is low, so savings also tends to become lower, this lowers capital formation. Dr. Ambedkar also argued for the existence of surplus and idle population existing in Indian agriculture, as these people are not performing any productive work and serving as disguised unemployed. The concepts used by Ambedkar in those days such as collective farming & cooperative farming, the role of the state in agriculture, and the land revenue system are still relevant today.

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