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Role in Nation Building

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Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Thoughts on Family Planning

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Abstract:

This research paper is concerned with the thoughts of family planning in the perspective of Dr. Ambedkar. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was not only the Dalit leader whereas he was in true sense the National leader of India. According to Dr. Ambedkar, population growth is not the only cause of food shortage. It also affects education, health and other amenities. Dr. Ambedkar believed that population growth could be controlled through family planning. Dr. Ambedkar sought to pass a resolution in support of government-funded birth control in the Bombay Legislative Assembly in 1938. But it is unfortunate that we have still not focussed towards the problem of overpopulation highlighted by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

Keywords: Dr. Ambedkar, Family Planning, Poverty, Birth-control.

Introduction:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) was the savior of the masses, the savior of the Dalits, the architect of the Indian Constitution, the sociologist, the jurist, the economist, the anthropologist, the ethnographer, the political scientist and the historian. He was not only the Dalit leader whereas he was in true sense the National leader of India. But here the people have turned a blind eye to Dr. Ambedkar's huge work and considered him only as a Dalit leader. He was the leader of the underprivileged class, women, farmers, agricultural laborers, minorities and the poorer in this country. This research paper is concerned with the thoughts of family planning in the perspective of Dr. Ambedkar.

Today, India's population is over 138 cores. Our country ranks second in the world in terms of population. China ranks first. Unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and inflation have risen sharply in the country due to population growth. World Population Day is celebrated to make people aware of the effects of population growth. Various events are held around the world. On July 11, 1987, the world's population reached five billion. Since then, the UNO has declared this day as World Population Day. Many countries in the world are facing population crisis. Population ratio, gender ratio is being discussed all over the world.

More than half of the world's population lives in Asia. Due to low literacy rates in China, India and many other countries, they are experiencing population growth. In particular, India will be recognized as the world's most populous country by 2030, without limiting the Indian population. Without knowing this fact, in the public meeting of R.S.S. on November 17, 2005 Sarsanghchalak K. Sudarshan appealed to the Hindu community that from now on every Hindu couple must give birth to at least three children. I mean, from now on, we used to start with *Hum Do, Hamare Do, Hum Do, Hamare Tin or Char*. (Yadav 2006) The appeal is based on the sole religious sentiment on the Muslim's growing population. Any religious organization, be it Muslim or Hindu, must first consider the future of the nation. It is

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unfortunate for India that even in the 21st Century bigoted leaders are giving more priority to religion than to the nation. It needs to realize the thought of Dr. Ambedkar i.e. "we are Indians firstly and lastly". The population of India was stable till 1921 but the population of India increased rapidly after 1921. The global recession has had an impact on India's economy. Poverty and unemployment have increased in urban and rural areas due to agricultural backwardness and recession in the industrial sector. Due to this problem created in the country, Indian economists have focused on the problem of population growth after 1030.

Dr. Ambedkar sought to pass a resolution in support of government-funded birth control in the Bombay Legislative Assembly in 1938. In the same year Dr. Ambedkar had given the solid solution for the elimination of the poorness of India and that was nothing but the Birth control. To improve the social and economic condition of India the important bill about birth control on behalf of Dr. Ambedkar, his party leader Shri. P. J. Roham had been presented in the Bombay assembly in the same year. He said, "Bombay is the gateway of India and this movement also entered this country through that very gate. It would be in the fitness of things, therefore, that it should also be nurtured in this very province...Birth control movement has afforded such an opportunity to our provincial government and it is hoped that they will not let it slip but will fully utilize it to be the benefit of themselves and the people." (Shivangi 2) His resolution was defeated with eleven members voting in favor of the Bill and fifty two members opposing it on grounds that it would spread immorality and cause a breakdown of the Indian family unit. The resolution consisted of the limited size of the family and also the urgent need for proactive measures among the masses regarding birth control.

During a visit to India in 1935, Margaret Sanger, India's leading social activist and chief propagandist of the family planning movement, agreed with Gandhi that he should have a small family after discussions with Mahatma Gandhi. But they did not approve of the use of artificial means to control the birth rate. Mahatma Gandhi in his interview was against the use of contraceptives by the Indian women, which according to him "contraceptives are an insult to womanhood". (Shivangi 6) He again says that Indian society is spiritual. Therefore, he had questioned why self-control and celibacy could not control the birth rate. He says a married couple should have sexual relations only until they have a child and then control themselves for life. But according to Dr. Ambedkar, celibacy and self-control are not logically appropriate in the context of the common man's sexuality. He said that in many countries, celibacy has become useless for controlling the birth rate. This is because the appetite of each person may be different depending on the individual, just as the physical appetite is also different from person to person. So the world today has proven that the rate of children is higher in poor families. And the reason behind that is poverty. In the same way that food shortages increase appetite, sexual appetite causes family growth and, in principle, increases poverty. Dr. Ambedkar criticized poverty as "it is bitter and terrible poverty that makes the parents expose their infants. In the light of such instances, it is futile to hope that ordinary persons will be able to avoid progeny merely through self-control." (Moon 267) Furthermore, Dr. Ambedkar on the urgency of family planning gave the example of Western nations where

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modern contraception is utilized by persons of all races, religions and strata. For instance, it was found that the notion that the Roman Catholics are against birth-control is unfounded. France is a Roman Catholic country and still it is notorious that the birth-rate in that country is quite low..." (Moon 269)

If you want to live a safe life in old age or get rich, you need to have more children? This kind of superstition has grown in many. And it is this mentality that is causing population growth. Therefore, if we want to think in terms of economic development of the country, it is necessary to eradicate poverty without focusing only on population control. In fact, the fruits of economic growth will reach the poor and raise their standard of living. Under the Integrated Rural Development Program, importance has been given to poverty alleviation schemes since 1980. But good plans are only on paper. Dr. Ambedkar has said that the government should accept this challenge and come forward to implement better plans. According to Dr. Ambedkar, physically and mentally weak couples give birth to sick children. And such children are a great stress on the society and as a result the society suffers socially and economically.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar emphasised that, "some measures to control the population such as ban on child marriage system, increasing age of marriage, economic empowerment of women are also limited, ineffective and impractical. Therefore to avoid more unexpected births and to maintain control on various diseases, we should use such scientific instruments of birth control. He confidently advocated that family planning is the only one measure to control the population. He considered the problem of population in respect of family, child development, female health and food grain supply." (Jeur 4)

Dr. Ambedkar himself suffered from a weak economy. Subhedar Ramji Sakpal had a total of fourteen children. Dr. Ambedkar was fourteenth. As a result, while Dr. Ambedkar was studying at Elphinstone College in Mumbai, he could not afford good clothes, good shoes, good coat and sufficient pocket money. He said that his father was responsible for such a low standard of living because of more children. With so many children in the family, it is difficult to provide for the basic needs of everyone. Even Dr. Ambedkar gave birth to more children but he regretted. He mentioned it in a gathering of untouchable students. Lack of nutrients and food increases the mortality rate of infants and mothers and such anti-social elements lead to the deterioration of the society. Many girls turn to prostitution due to hunger, so women should take various legal steps to reduce the birth rate so that they can avoid unwanted children.

Due to the high level of poverty in India, Dr. Ambedkar was of the view that the government should implement poverty alleviation programs. And the population must be controlled if poverty is to be eradicated. In his opinion, the only illusion is that modern technology has increased the food supply and eliminated the food problem through parallel distribution of income. So the production did not grow as per expectation. The best way is to create a small family by controlling the parallel distribution of food production. According to him, population growth is not the only cause of food shortage. It also affects education, health and other amenities. As a result, many were forced to beg to support their families. Some

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have even committed suicide. People's rule cannot eradicate poverty and unemployment. So at least the government should first take measures to control the double digit growth. Dr. Ambedkar believed that population growth could be controlled through family planning. If the modern technique of family planning and the education in this context is widely understood, the ashes of the population can be prevented. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that it is not an accident that a child should be born only when it is needed, before becoming a parent. And that requires public awareness.

Today, it is a matter of remorse that even in the 21st century India is still mired in religious strife. Persistent forced pregnancies, the responsibility to take care of the family, the accepted abnormal abortion method have reduced the life expectancy of women. One of the major reasons behind the rising mortality rate of women today is their continuous delivery. Women are anxious about their pregnancy, childbirth and child rearing. How many children are taking birth to depend only on her decision? These ideas of Dr. Ambedkar are useful for empowering women and giving them self esteem. So B. R. Ambedkar's thoughts are on women's freedom.

We have to salute Dr. Ambedkar for his forthright thoughts. Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts were nothing but the merely thoughts but it was the future planning. It is the proper time to recognize his thoughts concerning family planning as the best remedy to solve the problem of overpopulation. Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts were ahead of the time and was neither accepted nor assimilated by the contemporary society which was confined in the deep clutches of spirituality and superstitions. The Union Government of India implemented the family planning policy from the first year plan i.e. 1951. This is the indication of the society that Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts have been accepted at mass level. At present overpopulation is one of the major problems before India. Even today his thoughts on family planning are highly relevant. But it is unfortunate that we have still not focussed towards the problem of overpopulation highlighted by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. In short, if responsible parents follow Dr. Ambedkar's ideas, it will help in raising the standard of living of the family and consequently keep the number of members in the family limited and ultimately the population will be controlled automatically.

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