

Original Article

Principles of Marxism and Buddhism as a tool, propounded by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to implement the Concept of justice under the Preamble of the Indian Constitution

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Abstract

The philosophy of Buddhism and the philosophy of Karl Marx have made a significant impact on the history of mankind. The former is the ideology that deals with culture, civilisation, and the way of life of human beings, and the latter is a political concept. Still, both are equally capable of influencing various fields of human life and society. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar was an expert in both philosophies. He has made a detailed comparative analysis of these philosophies in his writings. While drafting the Constitution of India, Dr Ambedkar incorporated the merits of Karl Marx's ideology under the concept of socialism. Dr. Ambedkar was a great scholar of Buddhism. He has dynamically interpreted Buddhism. While drafting the Indian Constitution, he inserted specific provisions for the creation of the Buddhist mindset/culture as one of the means for implementation of the concept of Social Justice, Economic Justice and Political Justice.

Keywords: Karl Marx – Marxism – Russian Revolution 1917 – Gautam Buddha – Buddhism – Comparative Analysis of the Principles of the Marxism and Buddhism – Socialism – Preamble of the Constitution – Social, Economic and Political Justice – Article 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 21 of the Constitution – Affirmative Actions – Buddhist Mindset/Culture as a mean to implement the concept of the Justice in the Preamble.

Introduction

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a true Buddhist. He has scientifically interpreted Buddhism. At the contemporary time, the philosophy of Karl Marx was also on the rise. As a researcher Dr. Ambedkar was aware of the merits of the ideology of Karl Marx. He has made a comparative analysis of the Marxist and the Buddhist philosophies. While drafting the Indian Constitution, he inculcated the features of these ideologies in the Constitutional provisions in order to implement the objectives of Social, Economic, and Political Justice enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution.

Principles of Marxism

In the words of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Karl Marx is the father of modern socialism, who was always keen to prove his socialism as scientific socialism. In the middle of the 19th century, Karl Marx had propounded his philosophy of Marxism/Socialism/ Communism or Communist ideology in his famous book titled 'Das Kapital'.

In the words of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Karl Marx's theory of socialism rests on the following principles

1. The purpose of socialism is to reconstruct the world and not to explain the origin of the Universe.
2. The forces that shape the course of history are primarily economic.
3. Society is divided into classes, owners and workers.
4. There is always class conflict going on between the two classes.
5. The workers are exploited by the owners who misappropriate the surplus value, which is the result of the workers' labour.
6. The exploitation of the workers can be put to an end by nationalisation of the instruments of production, that is, the abolition of private property.

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7. This exploitation is leading to greater and greater impoverishment of the workers.
8. The growing impoverishment of the workers is resulting in the revolutionary spirit among the workers and the conversion of the class conflict into a class struggle.
9. The workers outnumber the owners; the workers are bound to capture the State and establish their role, which he called the dictatorship of the haves-not.
10. These factors are irresistible and therefore socialism is inevitable.

The first Communist revolution contemplated by Karl Marx came into existence in Russia in the year 1917, followed by heavy bloodshed and ultimately in the creation of the dictatorship of one political party and one person. Since then, Marxism has been subjected to constant criticism. Marxist ideology, subject to a few exceptions like the People's Republic of China, Cuba, North Korea and Eastern European countries, never got the popular support in other member States of the International Community. As stated by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the following four principles of the communist ideology propounded by Karl Marx are still able to maintain their relevance.

1. The function of Marxist philosophy is to reconstruct the world and not to waste its time in explaining the origin of the world.
2. There is a conflict of interest between class and class.
3. The private ownership of property brings power to one class and sorrow to another through exploitation.
4. It is necessary for the good of society that the sorrow be removed by the abolition of private property.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar knew that the above-mentioned principles of Marxism are relevant regarding their existence and applicability; therefore, he compared these principles with Buddhism.

Principles of Buddhism

It includes the noble Eightfold Path prescribed by Lord Buddha which consist of the following Principles (i) Right views that is freedom from superstition (ii) Right aims, high and worthy of the intelligent and earnest men (iii) Right speech that is kindly, open, truthful (iv) Right conduct that is peaceful, honest and pure (v) Right livelihood that is causing hurt or injury to no living being (vi) Right perseverance in all the other seven (vii) Right mindfulness that is with a watchful an active mind and (viii) Right contemplation that is earnest thought on the deep mysteries of the life.

On the first surviving principle of Marxism, there is complete agreement between the Buddha and Karl Marx. Buddhism is silent on the issue of the Origin of the World, the concept of Aatma & Moksha. Lord Buddha has refrained from answering the questions, such as whether the word is eternal. Is the soul the same as the body? Is there a life after death? In the words of Lord Buddha "This (these) question is (are) not calculated to profit, it is not concerned with Dhama, it does not redound even to the elements of right conduct nor to detachment nor to purification from last, nor to quietude, nor to tranquilization of heart, nor to real knowledge, nor to incite of the higher stages of the path, nor to Nirvana therefore it is that I express no opinion upon it."¹

About the second surviving principle of Marxism, that there are classes in society and constant conflict going on among those classes, Buddhism shares the same opinion. In the words of Lord Buddha, "there is always a strife going on between Kings, between nobles, between Brahmins, between householders, between mother and son, between the son and father, between a brother and sister, between sister and brother, between companion and companion."²

Regarding the third surviving principle of Marxism that private ownership of property brings power to one class and sorrow to another through exploitation, the Lord Buddha had opined that the existence of sorrow is because of possession; if there is no possession of any sort or kind by anyone or anything, then there will be no grief at all.

About the fourth surviving principle of Marxism, that the concept of private property should be removed, the rules of the Bhikku Sangh under Buddhism are crystal clear. According to these rules, the Bhikku can have private property only in the following eight articles and no more. These eight articles are: three robes or pieces of clothes for daily wear, a griddle for the loins, an alms-bowl, a razor, a needle, and a water strainer. The Bhikku was completely forbidden to receive gold or silver for fear that he might buy some material things with the help of it.

Thus, Marxism only ensures equality, but Buddhism, with the noble Eightfold Path, not only procures equality but also liberty along with fraternity. Only equality without fraternity and liberty is of no value.

The Balance of Marxism & Buddhism under the Constitution and Buddhism as a means to Implement the Concept of Justice: Approach of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

The objectives of the Indian Constitution set by Dr. Ambedkar and accepted by the Constituent Assembly are as follows,

1. Procuring Social, Economic Justice for the downtrodden & poor and political Justice for all.
2. Securing Equality of status and opportunity.
3. Providing Liberty of belief, faith and worship to all.
4. Assuring individual Dignity, Fraternity and Unity and Integrity of the Nation.

Dr Ambedkar, while drafting the Indian Constitution, had considered the utility of the principles of Marxism and Buddhism. He appreciated the concept of equality and distribution of economic resources and wealth of the nation under Marxism and has adapted the said concept in the form of Economic Justice in Part IV of the Constitution. Dr Ambedkar was aware that equality not coupled with liberty and fraternity will not have a long life. Therefore, explicitly, he had incorporated the concept of equality, liberty and fraternity under the Indian Constitution.

¹ Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches, Unpublished Writing, Vol. 3, Government of Maharashtra P. No. 445

² *IBID*

Dr Ambedkar, under Article 14 of the Constitution, has provided equality to all classes and persons in the Indian Territory. Article 15 forbids discrimination only on the grounds of race, religion, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them. Article 16 has assured the equality of opportunity in public employment in favour of all Indian citizens. The untouchability has been abolished by Article 17, and the special status by way of titles has been abolished by Article 18 of the Constitution in order to establish equality among Indian citizens. Articles 19 and 21 have conferred the fundamental freedoms and right to life and personal liberty on Indian citizens. Thus, in the Constitution, on the line of Buddhism, the liberty and, based on the concept of Marxism, the assurance of equality have been given to Indian citizens.

Dr Ambedkar equally wanted to give Social, Economical and Political Justice to the SCs, STs and socially and educationally backward classes of the Indian society therefore under Article 14, 15, 16 he has introduced a full-fledged scheme of the affirmative actions which includes policy of reservation and other social/economical welfare policies in favour of the SCs, STs and other socially and educationally backward classes of the Indian citizens. At the same time Dr. Ambedkar has taken care that the interests of the other classes of Indian society will not be hampered because of the said schemes of affirmative actions, as he wanted to maintain equality and liberty in the society in a perpetual manner by creating fraternity among all the classes. Dr Ambedkar was sure that fraternity among various classes of the Indian society is necessary for the survival of the country; if there is no fraternity among the citizens of the country, then it cannot survive, and in that situation, equality and liberty automatically will come to an end.

Dr. Ambedkar was expecting the Indian society at large to accept and follow the Buddhist mindset/culture based on the true scientific approach where Indian society itself will be voluntarily happily sharing the dues in form of economic resources, means of production, opportunities of education & employment, respect which the rest of the society owes to SCs, STs & educationally and socially backward classes.

Conclusion

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was sure that if abovementioned principles of the Buddhism have been adopted by Indian society at large in their behaviour pattern then all the provisions under the under the Part III and the Part IV of the Constitution will be able to be successfully implemented in Indian Legal System creating real equality, liberty, fraternity strengthening the unity and integrity of the country and also procuring individual dignity and justice to all deprived classes of the Indian society.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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