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## **B.R. AMBEDKAR'S SCRUTINY ON PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES**

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**Abstract:-**To many of us Bharat Patna Dr. B.R Ambedkar Is known as the architect of the Indian Constitution, Messiah of lower and oppressed classes, and a social revolutionary and reformist who fought for the upllftment of his downtrodden caste companions for the attainment of an equitable social order and justice (1,2,3). His contribution comprising In depth studies and critical analyses of caste and caste - system Is well known and majority of the Ambedkarites and Ambedkar scholars zero in their attention and interest on his social, economic, and political thought and philosophy However Dr. Ambedkars vision as an environmental and developmental planning expert of exceptional caliber is not so well known.

In the present paper the author has tried to bring into focus the scientific and ecological expertise of Dr Ambedkar and to highlight the relevance of Dr. Ambedkar's thought and philosophy in environmental conservation and resource management in the current grave scenario of ecological crisis and raging controversy in developmental planning

**Keywords:** Scrutiny , Planning Development , Preservation Of Environmental

### **INTRODUCTION:-**

Dr. Ambedkar had immense foresight for planning for the future development. Though he gave most of his time and energy to a ceaseless, unrelenting struggle for the upliftment of the oppressed and the annihilation of caste, yet he found time for deep and sincere thought to the country's future planning with an accent on developing the environmental resources for all sections of Indian society He was clearly ahead of his times, here as elsewhere. The ecological crisis had not escalated to its present form. Not many were aware of its being a potential danger.

The futuristic environment sciences were nowhere on the horizon, yet he was busy pondering over this unattended and unexplored field. Indeed Dr. Ambedkar paid pointed attention to it and advocated rational and sustainable utilization of environmental resources.

### **VIEWS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Dr. Ambedkar considered environmental resources as common human property with no provincial barriers. He was very clear about the community or joint-ownership of environmental resources across the land. He considered them as property to hi share by all to the best advantage. He was also aware that a clear far-sighted national policy was required for a skilful planning and development of environmental resources, which then was conspicuous by its absence, as he boldly asserted while add resin, the representatives of Central Bengal and Bihar Governments in Bengal Secretariat In Calcutta on January 3, 1945. He clean admitted that it was not far from the truth to say that so far has been an absence of a positive all India policy for the development of resources.

The Government of India is very much alive to the disadvantages arising from the present state of affairs and wishes to take steps to evolve a policy which will utilize the water resource of the country to the best advantage of everybody and to put out water resources to the purpose which they are made to serve in other countries observed Dr Ambedkar.<sup>4</sup>

He was also very much concerned about environmental resources planning for national development. He considered

environmental resources as concern of Central Government and not that of provincial Governments. He made particular reference to one of the recommendations of Damodar River Flood Control Committee appointed by the Government of Bengal in 1944. In II recommendation No. XIII the committee had stated.

During the course of discussions it was felt by the committee that it will be an advantage in the solution of flood control and conservation problems if forests and rivers of India are made it concern of the Central Government.<sup>5</sup>

Dr Ambedkar had perceived problems of environment resources availability and distribution in his address at Damodar Valley Scheme Conference held in Calcutta in 1945, Dr Ambedkar strongly defended national interests of environmental resources treating them above the provincial jurisdiction. He considered that since environmental resources observe no political boundaries and were often found in more than one province, they could not be subjected to provincial boundaries.

Making particular mention of the water resources Dr. Ambedkar said "Irrigation has been the only purpose of our waterways policy. Further we have not taken sufficient account of the fact that there is no difference between railways and waterways, and if railways cannot be subjected to provincial boundaries neither can waterways at any rate those that flow from province to province. On the contrary we have allowed our constitution to make a distinction between railways and waterways, with the result that railways are treated as Central but waterways are treated as provincial.

The disadvantages of this error are many and obvious. To give one illustration, a province needs electricity and wishes to utilize its water resources for the purpose but it cannot do so because the point at which water can be dammed lies in another province which being agricultural does not need electricity and has no interest in it, or money to finance the project and would not allow the needy province to use the site. Complain as much as we like, a province can take such an unfriendly attitude and justify it in the name of provincial autonomy"[1]

Thus, Dr. Ambedkar not only advocated a new policy for environmental resources but also stressed the need to evolve a policy which would utilize resources of the country to the best advantage of everybody. The present day controversy over the Narmada Valley Projects and the tussle between the States of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh can be easily understood in the light of Dr Ambedkar's point of view on planning and management of environmental resources.

## **VIEWS ON PRESERVATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES**

Dr Ambedkar had a very clear perception and positive attitude towards conservation of environmental resources. He advocated conservation of resources in terms of sustainable utilization for the betterment of mankind. Presiding over a conference held at Cuttack in November 1945. In which representatives of the Central Government and the Governments of Orissa, the Central Provinces and the Eastern States participated in order to discuss the possibilities of developing Orissa rivers. Dr. Ambedkar placed his views on conservation of environmental resources. He stated:

"If conservation of water is mandatory from the point of view of public good, then obviously the plan of embankment is a wrong plan. It is a means which does not serve the end, namely conservation of water and must, therefore, be abandoned. Orissa delta is not the only area where there is so much amount of water and there is so much amount of evil proceeding from that water. The United States of America had the same problem to face. Some of the rivers like Missouri, Miami and Tennessee have given rise to the same problem in the U.S.A. Orissa must, therefore, adopt the method which the U.S.A. adopted in dealing with the problem of its Rivers. The method is to dam the rivers at various points to conserve water permanently in reservoirs. There are many purposes which they serve besides irrigation."<sup>7</sup>

This gives a clear idea of his approach towards conservation of resources. He believed in conserving natural resources by maximum and multipurpose utilization. Under his leadership the conference decided to develop Orissa Rivers for the conservation of water along with intended purposes of flood control, irrigation and drainage, soil conservation and power development.

Dr. Ambedkar's thinking and attitude towards conservation of natural resources was not just of problem consciousness but that of problem solving. Floods were then and even today are considered environmental havoc. Floods are a major cause of human misery in India.

An area of 40 million ha i.e. nearly one-eighth of the country's geographical area is flood prone. The total area affected annually on an average is 7.7 million ha. The cropped area affected annually is about 3.5 million ha and was as high as 10 million ha in the worst year (1978). The total loss of crops, houses, cattle and public utility on account of flood menace was estimated to be Rs. 26,800 crores during the period 1953-87. Maximum flood damage was estimated to be of the order of 4059 crores in 1985.<sup>8</sup>

According to non-official source [9] the total damage caused by floods works out to Rs. 768 crores per year and about 1500 deaths annually. During 1953-87 floods affected on an average 7.66 million ha of land, destroyed crops in over 3.51 million ha, killed some 1 million (one Lakh) cattle, damaged 1.2 million houses and affected 31.84 million people.

The major sufferings from the flood damages are borne by the poor and weaker sections of our society. The socio-economic condition of these vulnerable sections goes on deteriorating with successive floods.

Dr. Ambedkar looked at this environmental problem in a strikingly different perspective. Speaking at Cuttack conference, he stated:

It is wrong to think water in excessive quantity is an evil. Water can never be so excessive as to be evil. Man suffers more from lack of water than from excess of it. The trouble is that nature is not only niggardly in the amount of water it gives. It is also erratic in its distribution alternating between drought and storm. But this cannot alter the fact that water is wealth. Water

being the wealth of the people and its distribution being uncertain, the correct approach is not to complain against nature but to conserve the water'<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Ambedkar summed up the essence of Buddha's Dhamma as purity of mind, purity of body and purity of speech. He was 'greatly Impressed by the spirit of contentment and simple life praised by the Buddha which at the same time condemns the rich who never give but still amass. 15 Buddhism Insisted upon the control of greed and craving which in fact Is the key to generating ecological consciousness also. Want of this consciousness has led to growing consumerism in the present day world.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thus by embracing and reviving Buddhism Dr.Ambedkar paved the way to maintain the ecological balance. When he advocated Buddhism, he did not have the ritualistic and worship-based religion in mind but a religion that enjoined the practice of the Four Truths and the Eightfold Path which constitute the essence of the Eco-philosophy.

Dr. Ambedkars contribution to the developmental planning, particularly on environmental resources, their conservation and management. Is greater than that of any other known modern environmental expert or planner indeed his contribution to future planning Is of the highest order because he not only perceived the need of sustainable utilization of resources for the development of the poor and weaker sections of the contemporary society but also advocated conservation of those resources so that their future availability remained ensured.

Great men while paying attention to contemporary problems. perceive and give thought to distant future also. So way back In 1940s when environmental problems and ecological crises were not even perceived by many of the planners and experts. Dr 13 P. Ambedkar was very much conscious about the preservation of ecological environment. This is something very extraordinary in Dr. Ambedkars personality and reveals the multi-dimensional greatness of his thinking and philosophy Dr.B.R.Ambedkar was, thus, not just a great reformer or a firebrand revolutionary or a sanguine social scientist but a visionary environmental planning expert and resource conservationist par excellence rolled into one He was as much ahead of his times as we are behind ours.

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