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**DR. AMBEDKAR'S VISION ON INDIAN FARMING****DR. LAXMIKANT SHARMA****ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR****PG DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT****D.A.V. COLLEGE****AMRITSAR****ABSTRACT**

*Dr. Ambedkar had an in depth study of the plight of the poor masses living in rural India who were having dependence on agriculture for their livelihood. Dr. Ambedkar was very much concerned about the problems of Indian farmers well as the Indian agriculture. His views on the state of Indian agriculture are very logical and seem to have relevance even in the present context of our economy. One is small and fragmented holdings over which scientific cultivation is not possible and the other is lack of capital and other inputs which are not available in the desired amount to the poor farmers due to which they are not able to cultivate the land effectively. Dr. Ambedkar suggests the consolidation of holdings and collective farming to tackle this problem. Dr. Ambedkar showed his deep concern about the increasing concentration of land in the hands of a few big farmers leading to inequality among farmers and exploitation of small farmers and agricultural labourers. In this respect he suggested state should be the owner of the land and it should take a lead to distribute the land to the farmers. Dr. Ambedkar suggested imposition of income tax in farm sector also on the pattern of business sector i.e. on the basis of capacity to pay.*

**KEYWORDS**

Collective Farming, Consolidation, Fragmentation, Inequality.

**INTRODUCTION**

**D**r. B. R. Ambedkar has done a lot of work on Indian economy. He has given his views on almost each area having utmost importance for the economy, in his various articles, papers, and publications from time to time. He was of the opinion that development strategy of India should focus on reducing inequalities and eliminating exploitation of masses in the economy. Dr. Ambedkar believed that if he succeeded in struggle- struggle for a just social order- it will prove a blessing for all Indians, not merely any group (Sirswal,2010). He had an in depth study of the plight of the poor masses living in rural India who were having dependence on agriculture for their livelihood. Dr. Ambedkar was very much concerned about the problems of Indian farmers well as the Indian agriculture. His views on the state of Indian agriculture are very logical and seem to have relevance even in the present context of our economy. The present paper aims to analyse Dr. Ambedkar's outlook on Indian agriculture and its significance in the current scenario of our economy.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER**

The paper aims to study Dr. Ambedkar's views pertaining to various aspects of the Indian agriculture specifically with the following objectives:

- To discuss Dr. Ambedkar's thought on the backwardness of Indian agriculture
- To study the causes of the poor condition of the agriculture and solutions as suggested by Dr Ambedkar.
- To discuss Dr. Ambedkar's views on agriculture taxation.
- To analyse the relevance of Dr. Ambedkar's views in the present context of Indian economy.

**DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY**

The present paper is based on secondary data collected from various issues of Economic Survey published by Ministry of Finance, Government of India and information collected from various journals, research papers and books. The paper is divided into three sections. Section I concentrates on Dr. Ambedkar's views on Indian Agriculture. Section II discusses his views on agriculture taxation. Section III summarizes the discussion and brings out important conclusions of the study.

**SECTION I**

Dr. Ambedkar had a vast study on Indian agriculture. His views on agriculture were published in his article "Small Holdings in India and Their Remedies" published in 1918. He was of the opinion that small size of holdings was the major cause behind some of the vital problems of Indian agriculture which included high cost of farming, low productivity, low income of farmers and correspondingly their low levels of living. He criticized the traditional definition of economic holdings and refined that economic land holding is not depending the size of land holdings but proportion of factor inputs to the production (Jamma and Damji, 2012). It means that agricultural productivity not only depends upon the size of holdings but also on the availability of some of the key factors like capital, labour and other inputs. So agricultural productivity was low due to small size of holding on the one hand and non-availability of these inputs on the other. He, therefore, suggested that state should make provision for these inputs for the peasants to be used for cultivation as the later are not in a position for this due to their inability to do so. This becomes clear when **Dr. Ambedkar (1918)** says that state should supply capital which is essential for farm activities. For the solution, he also advocated the practice of co operative or collective farming in farm sector as according to him poor peasants are not in a position to use costly inputs individually. Moreover, the collective farming can solve the problem of small size of holdings. Dr. Ambedkar was also concerned about the increasing concentration of economic power in the form of land in the hands of a few big farmers and landlords. He opined that this concentration was the prime cause of the exploitation of small farmers and agricultural labourers. Hence he suggested collective ownership of land as a fundamental right (Sarode,2013). Presently, we are observing acute poverty on the one hand and large and growing economic inequalities on the other in the field of agriculture. We see a gap between big and small farmers which has widened a lot in the past five decades. Data given in Tables below shows the number and percentage of poor i.e. below poverty line in India at three points of time which obviously puts light on the pitiable conditions of the small farmers in our country.

**TABLE I: NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF POOR**

Year	Number of Poor(in millions)			Poverty Ratio(%)		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
1993-94	328.6	74.5	403.7	50.1	31.8	45.3
2004-05	326.3	80.8	407.1	41.8	25.7	37.2
2009-10	278.2	76.5	354.7	33.8	20.9	29.8

Source: Economic Survey-2012-13

Table I shows the data of numbers of poor and their percentage in rural as well as in urban areas and in India as a whole in different years. Table makes it clear that extent of poverty in India is a matter of concern for India as the number of poor in rural areas in India was 278.2 million in 2009-10 which although declined from 328.6 million in 1993-94 but still it is a very big figure and amounts to one-third (33.8%) of the rural population. It is also clear that the extent of poverty in

rural areas is even more than that found in urban areas. The problem of poverty is more acute in some of the major states of India which is shown in the Table II.

TABLE II: STATE OF POVERTY IN MAJOR STATES

State	2004-05		2009-10	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
AP	32.3	23.4	22.8	17.7
Assam	36.4	21.8	39.9	26.1
Bihar	55.7	43.7	55.3	39.4
Gujarat	39.1	20.1	26.7	17.9
MP	53.6	35.1	42.0	22.*9
Oddisa	60.8	37.6	39.2	25.9
UP	42.7	34.1	39.4	31.7
WB	38.2	24.4	28.8	22.0
India	41.8	25.7	33.8	20.8

Source: Economic Survey-2012-12

Table II presents a very gloomy picture of some big states of India as far as the extent of poverty is concerned. Bihar leads the rest of the states where 55.3 percent population is below poverty line in 2009-10 which virtually didn't show any tendency to come down since 2004-05. Similarly in MP(42%), Assam(39.9%),UP(39.4%) and Orrisa(39.2%) in 2009-10 present the similar picture. Moreover, it is also evident that in these states, poverty in rural areas is far more than poverty in urban areas. The poor standard of living of the farmers can be known from their expenditure on consumption. Table III puts some light on the low standard of living of farmers in terms of their low consumption levels.

Tables III: AVERAGE MONTHLY PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE ON CONSUMPTION (IN RUPEES)

YEAR	CONSTANT PRICES(2004-05)		CURRENT PRICES(2011-12)	
	RURAL	URBAN	RURAL	URBAN
2004-05	558	1052	558	1052
2009-10	599	1200	927	1785
2011-12	707	1359	1281	2401

SOURCE: ECONOMIC SURVEY-2012-12

Table III shows that rural people were just spending rupees 558 on monthly consumption at constant prices(2004-05) which rose to just 707 rupees in 2011-12. At current prices too, the same picture is exhibited as not much difference is found. Rural people spent on an average rupees 558 in 2004-05 which although increased to 1281 in 2011-12 but still indicates the low level of living of farmers. But the average consumption level of people in urban sector is much higher i.e. almost double at rupees 1052 in 2004-05 and 1359 in 2011-12 at constant prices. In such a scenario, views given by Dr. Ambedkar pertaining to collective ownership of land and collective farming seem to have relevance even in present circumstances. Dr. Ambedkar stated that the collective farming must be introduced with the abolition of intermediaries, the State must be the owner of the land and it should take a lead to distribute the land to the farmers (Saharila,2012). Another very important aspect of Indian agriculture is the huge amount of manpower engaged in farm activities. Dr. Ambedkar(1918) was very much clear about this problem when he said that a large agricultural population with the lowest proportion of land in actual cultivation means that a large part of the population is superfluous and idle and even if the lands are consolidated, and cultivated through capitalistic enterprise, it will not solve the problem as it will only aggravate the evils by adding to our stock of idle workers. However, Dr. Ambedkar gives a solution to this problem. He says that only way to tackle this problem is to take the people away from the land and therefore he suggested that industrialization of the economy is the best solution for the agricultural problems in India which means a shift from agriculture to secondary sector. Keeping in view the huge unemployment found in the rural areas of the economy, specially the disguised unemployment which is contributing nothing to the total output, a shift from agricultural to industrial sector as suggested by Dr. Ambedkar is really noteworthy as well as praiseworthy. What is more important is that such a suggestion was made by him around one hundred years ago although the same was implemented by the government after independence in the pursuit of development.

## SECTION II

Dr. Ambedkar's views on taxation are of utmost importance for the Indian economy. According to him, taxation has a vital role to play in a country like India where it has to mobilize required amount of resources so that development plans are carried out. Role of taxation becomes more important in a situation when the tax paying capacity of the masses is very low. The reason is obviously the low level of income. He further says that taxation has a unique responsibility of curtailing the consumption levels of people specially of high income group so that the capital thus generated is mobilized for productive investment. So taxation is the major fiscal tool in the hands of the government. But the same has not been implemented in an effective manner. According to Dr. Ambedkar, the socio-economic development of the economy depends primarily upon the availability of adequate finances and their proper utilization (Ingole, 2010). In general, in the context of taxation, he gave a number of suggestions like the practice of progressive taxation putting less burden on poor and more on richer section. He was in favour of a system of taxation based on the tax paying capacity of the people. He was also of the opinion that taxes should not lower the living standards of people in the economy. However, Dr. Ambedkar's views about taxation on farm sector needs to be studied specifically in the present context of agriculture. In agriculture sector, he was not convinced with the system of land revenue followed by the British Government. In his opinion, the prevalent system was unjust and against the interest of poor masses. The system was not based on the principle of equity and had more burden on have nots. In his views, there should not be discrimination in the methods of levying tax on the income from agriculture and business. But in case of land revenue, every farmer, irrespective of his income is brought under tax net.(Saharila, 2012).

So here, we come to know two very important aspects of his philosophy regarding tax structure to be used in the farm sector.

- He was against levying land revenue tax on all farmers by the government without paying attention to their paying capacity.
- He was in favour of agriculture income tax but the method of levying it should be same as used in the business sector.

Above views of Dr. Ambedkar is of much significance in the present scenario of Indian agriculture as well as for economy as a whole. There are wide disparities in the income levels among the people in the rural India. According to an estimate of RBI, the top 10 percent of the people in rural areas get 25 percent of the national income while the bottom 20 percent of the people get only 9 percent share in national income of the country. A similar study conducted by NCAER also showed the presence of wide disparities in the income of rich and poor in the rural area. Even after the six decades of independence, government has not been able to levy income tax on farm sector. A large group of farmers who are big landlords and have huge agricultural income do have the capacity to pay tax. An income tax can be imposed on this class. The tax thus collected can be used for the wellbeing of the poor farmers and development of rural areas thereby reducing the income inequalities in villages. However, there seems lack of political will on the part of the government to do so as there is a strong lobby of influential people in the government and in the political sphere who are against any such move.

## SECTION III

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar considers two basic factors behind the backwardness of Indian agriculture. One is small and fragmented holdings over which scientific cultivation is not possible and the other is lack of capital and other inputs which are not available in the desired amount to the poor farmers due to which they



are not able to cultivate the land effectively. Dr. Ambedkar suggests the consolidation of holdings and collective farming to tackle this problem. He also suggested entrusting the job of supplying tools and capital to the government.

In the present scenario, these views given by him carry much weight age in the sense that 79% of the total land holdings in India are small and 70% of the farmers are not under cooperative cover. Therefore consolidation and collective farming do have importance for the farming community.

Secondly, Dr. Ambedkar showed his deep concern about the increasing concentration of land in the hands of a few big farmers leading to inequality among farmers and exploitation of small farmers and agricultural labourers. In this respect he suggested state should be the owner of the land and it should take a lead to distribute the land to the farmers. In this connection, we observe that that inequalities among farmers have grown to a large extent. The land ceiling act and distribution of surplus land have not been so effective so under such circumstances we should rethink about these reforms from Dr. Ambedkar's perspective. Dr. Ambedkar suggested imposition of income tax in farm sector also on the pattern of business sector i.e. on the basis of capacity to pay. This suggestion by Dr. Ambedkar is the need of the hour because keeping in views the growing inequalities in this sector it would be better to go in for such a move in case of farmers who reach beyond a certain income limit and more importantly the amount thus collected should be spent on the wellbeing of small farmers in the very agricultural sector only.

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