

1st Ambedkar Memorial Lecture



On the occasion of 124th Birth Anniversary of Dr. Babasheb Ambedkar

Theme:

Dr. Ambedkar and Democracy in 2015

Democracy is not merely a form of Government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards our fellow men.

Dr.B.R Ambedkar

Speakers



Prof.Satish Deshpande
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Mr.Subhash Gatade
Journalist

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Head
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Organized by
Student Union, Department of Social Work, University of Delhi

Date: 17th April 2015

Time: 11:00 to 1:30 pm

My definition of democracy is - A form and a method of Government whereby revolutionary changes in the social life are brought about without bloodshed. That is the real test. It is perhaps the severest test. But when you are judging the quality of the material you must put it to the severest test.

Dr.B.R Ambedkar

Dr.B. R Ambedkar one of the greatest political thinker strongly believed in the idea of democracy. Ambedkar viewed democracy as an instrument of bringing about change peacefully. Democracy does not merely mean rule by the majority or government by the representatives of the people. This is a formalistic and limited notion of democracy. Ambedkar argued that the meaning of democracy would be understood in a better fashion if we view it as a way of realizing drastic changes in the social and economic spheres of society. Ambedkar's idea of democracy is much more than just a scheme of government. He emphasises the need for bringing about an all-round democracy. A scheme of government does not exist in vacuum; it operates within the society. Its usefulness depends upon its relationship with the other spheres of society. Elections, parties and parliaments are, after all, formal institutions of democracy. They cannot be effective in an undemocratic atmosphere. Political democracy means the principle of 'one man one vote' which indicates political equality. But if oppression and injustice exist, the spirit of political democracy would be missing. Democratic government, therefore, should be an extension of a democratic society. In Indian society, for instance, so long as caste barriers and caste-based inequalities exist, real democracy cannot operate. In this sense, democracy means a spirit of fraternity and equality and not merely a political arrangement. Success of democracy in India can be ensured only by establishing a truly democratic society. Along with the social foundations of democracy, Ambedkar also took into consideration the economic aspects. It is true that he was greatly influenced by liberal thought; still he appreciated the limitations of liberalism. Parliamentary democracy, in which he had great faith, was also critically examined by him. He argued that parliamentary democracy was based on liberalism. It ignored economic inequalities and never concentrated upon the problems of the downtrodden. Besides, the general tendency of the western type of parliamentary democracies has been to ignore the issues of social and economic equality. In other words, parliamentary democracy emphasised only liberty whereas true democracy implies both liberty and equality. This analysis becomes very important in the Indian context. Indian society was demanding freedom from the British but Ambedkar was afraid that freedom of the nation would not ensure real freedom for all the people. Social and economic inequalities have dehumanized

the Indian society. Establishing democracy in such a society should be nothing short of a revolution both political as well as social. This would be a revolution in the social structure and attitudes of the people. In the place of hereditary inequality, the principles of brotherhood and equality must be established. Therefore, Ambedkar supported the idea of all-round democracy. Ambedkar's idea of democracy and ideology popularly known as "**Ambedkarism**" is based on the principle of Equality, Liberty, Fraternity and Humanism.

The Student Union, Department of Social Work, University of Delhi is organizing first Dr. Ambedkar Memorial Lecture on the occasion of his 124th Birth Anniversary. This event is in endurance of his idea of a democratic society where dignity becomes important for each and every individual. We at the department of social work, Delhi University salute the contribution of this great visionary leader who not only fought for the political revolution but also argued for the social revolution. His legacy is an inspirational source for generations to come.