Agriculture and Farmer Thinkers : Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar

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Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is well known to all as the architect of the Indian Constitution, the leader of the neglected, the deprived, but they have not come to the fore as an economist, rural benefactor, agriculturist, water and electricity expert. They have done incomparable work in various fields like irrigation, water, energy, and finance along with the exploited sections of the society such as agriculture, farmers, women, workers, labourers, and tribal. The British dismantled the economic structure of Indian society, but did not create a new one. Their views on the agricultural problem in British India and its solutions are still incomparable.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's views on agriculture and farmers are what make the country economically viable. Indian agriculture and rural society were the subjects of Babasaheb's contemplation. Agriculture is the focal point of rural economic development. Therefore, they were adamant that agriculture should be viewed as an industry. If agriculture is developed and farmers become financially viable, the economic transformation will take place in rural areas. To this end, They emphasized on eradication of poverty, eradication of social and economic inequality, eradication of poverty and exploitation of Dalits, etc. The development of agriculture is very important for the development of primary industries in the Indian economy and therefore agriculture has an important place in the Indian economy. Babasaheb had an opinion. They fought for the elimination of the issues of small farmers, landless agricultural labourers, land retention, promises to be taken for their development from agriculture, revenue, etc. From this point of view, they did important work for agriculture and farmers by considering agriculture and farmers. Dr. Ambedkar's views on agriculture and farmers are fundamental, far-sighted, and practical. The present research paper reviews Babasaheb's views on agriculture and farmers.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's thoughts on agriculture -

As agriculture is the focal point of economic development in India, Babasaheb felt the need to focus on agriculture. After the arrival of the British, They realized the deteriorating condition of agriculture, the declining quality of land, low productivity of agriculture, and the problems that arose in agriculture. Therefore, we can see that they presented modern ideas on agriculture with a view to transform Indian agriculture. Dr. Babasaheb's thoughts on agriculture can be expressed as follows.

Irrigation -

Regular and abundant water supply is required to increase agricultural income. For this, Babasaheb took initiative for irrigation scheme for agriculture. From 1942 to 1946, when they were the Labour Minister in the State Cabinet, They had the portfolios of Labour, Irrigation and Energy. They started dams on the Hirakund, Damodar and Son revers in India. They planned the Damodar Valley. The Damodar Valley would have avoided the flood crisis and its damage, but it would also have been used for hydropower generation, irrigation schemes, water supply, water transportation and industry. Dr. Babasaheb proposed the concept of river interlinking project for irrigation. Efforts were made to curb floods during the monsoons and to establish river interlinking projects in view of water scarcity in many areas. Their initiative led to the establishment of the Central Water Commission on 4 April 1947. Dr. A. N. Khosla was the chairman of the commission. Priority was given to irrigation as well as power generation through large dams. Dr. Babasaheb himself took the initiative and played a pivotal role in the construction of Hirakund and Bhakranangal dams.

Khoti methods -

The Khoti system was economic slavery for the farmers. This system existed in Ratnagiri, Kolhapur and Thane areas of Konkan. There was constant discord between the farmers and the farmers. In the Khoti system, since the Khots were of the upper caste, they were inhumanely exploiting the lower caste clans as well as the rural masses. Since there is no direct connection between the government and the land grabbers in this method, the khoti method is used to collect land revenue and pay the farm to the government. Khot had Extortion to farmers, farmers had to do many of their work.
Dr. Babasaheb raised his voice against this khoti system and tried to get the right of land grabbing clan and to bring Rayatwari system in its place. For this, they introduced a bill in the Mumbai Legislative Assembly in 1937 to abolish the khoti system.

**Nationalization of Agriculture -**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar introduced the concept of nationalization of agriculture i.e. community farming. The government should take possession of the land by removing the agricultural rights from the big landowners. By converting agriculture into community farming, equal distribution of farm land should be done irrespective of caste, religion, creed etc. If this is done, the rich, the poor, the agricultural labourers, the clan will not remain. The village level land should be allotted to the clans for farming. As the size of the land is sufficient, the state government will supply biological, chemical and mechanical tools, fertilizers, seeds etc. in such farms. Agricultural produce can be distributed equally to the workers. This will stop the Jamindari system and give impetus to the development of agriculture as well as curb the problem of farmers and stop farmer suicides. Agriculture will be economically advanced.

**Small holding area -**

While studying the income of Indian agriculture, Dr. Ambedkar found that the Indian agricultural sector was divided into smaller pieces, which led to a decline in agricultural income. In this regard, he pointed out the shortcomings of small scale farming in the magazine 'General of Indian Economic Society'. He also clarified that it is not possible to use modern technology in agriculture. Increasing the holding area of the farm would make it convenient for the farmers to supply agricultural inputs, equipment, and credit and also make it possible to innovate in agriculture. Alternative farming will prove to be beneficial for farmers.

**Agriculture Tax and moneylenders Trap -**

The British introduced new agricultural tax system in India. Therefore, the farmer had to pay the entire agricultural tax whether he got income or not. Since they did not get any support from the government, they had to take loans from moneylenders, so the farmers would get stuck in the debt trap forever. Speaking on agriculture, Dr. Ambedkar said that the imposition of tax on agricultural income should be abolished, agricultural tax should be decided on the basis of farmers' viability and land quality, care should be taken not to cause injustice to farmers due to the amount of tax, and agriculture tax should be flexible in land revenue collection. Agriculture and farmers will be financially viable by being free from agricultural lenders.

**Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's thoughts on farmers -**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had closely watched the situation of Indian farmers. They studied the problems faced by the farmers, the downtrodden, the agricultural labourers, the smallholders very meticulously. Therefore, they realized that in order to make the farmers financially viable, it is important for the farmers to be organized as well as the attitude of the society. Dr. Babasaheb felt the need for farmers to unite and fight for their rights to reduce the gap between the upper and lower castes in the society. Therefore, they have come up with valuable ideas on how to be an Indian farmer, how to organize it.

**Farmers and Agricultural Workers -**

Dr. Ambedkar says that the country will be prosper only if farmers and agricultural labourers prosper. They suggested the concept of crop insurance scheme for farmers. From 1928, they took up the issue of farmers to bring justice to the poor and destitute farmers. In August 1936, they formed the Independent Labour Party and published their manifesto. They learned about the problems of farmers and agricultural labourers by starting new businesses, protecting the clan, enacting laws in the interest of the workers, giving land to the landless, providing facilities and participating in various farmers' meetings. They started a movement to solve their problems.

**Social system -**

Dr. Babasaheb, while presenting their thoughts on farmers, says that agribusiness is related to the social system. If we want to change the caste based society, we need to change agriculture. Agriculture should be seen as an industrial field and not just a means of subsistence. Economic development of farmers should be done by providing basic facilities. If the farmer becomes financially capable, it will benefit the agricultural labour and all the elements related to agriculture. Financial resources will reach the last element. The society will change with a positive change in the mind-set of the
rural community. Economic inequality complements and nourishes the caste system. So if economic inequality is reduced, the gap on the basis of caste discrimination will be reduced.

**Farmers Association -**

According to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, if farmers want to solve their problems, it is important for them to have an organization. They had repeatedly elaborated on the need for organization through farmers' meetings and conferences. They did this on the occasion of the farmers' movement. Asking the farmers to stay organised on January 1, 1938, they said, that "You have to work hard to alleviate your grief." The stronger your organization, the sooner your problems will be solved. "They emphasized the importance of farmers' organization to the farmers.

According to Dr. Babasaheb, farmers need to union and struggle to solve their problems. They say that not only change but also revolution is necessary for this.

**Conclusion -**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a leader who thought of agriculture and farmers. Agriculture is the focal point of economic development in rural areas. Therefore, it was imperative that rural areas and agriculture become economically viable. They were working with the idea that change in agriculture was necessary if the social system based on agriculture was to be changed. Due to nationalization of agriculture, agricultural commodities can be guaranteed as per the economic norms of supply and demand. So the farmer will be financially capable. If agriculture, farmers and agricultural labourers prosper, the country will be happy and prosperous. There is no alternative but irrigation to enrich agriculture. They assured the then rulers that without water, agricultural productivity would not increase and water planning was needed to uplift the economic status of farmers.

Dr. Babasaheb did not stop at just mentioning the problems facing agriculture and farmers, but also suggested solutions on farming methods, collective farming, khoti methods, and nationalization of agriculture, co-operative farming, small holdings, and fragmentation of agriculture. They underlined the importance of industry, water and electricity in agriculture. If the government implements the ideology of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the country will become more economically prosperous.

Dr. Babasaheb's thoughtful and practical work on agriculture and farmers at that time is very important, but the relevance of their thoughts and work is still felt today. Their ideology is the highway to agriculture and farmer development.

**References -**

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