

## **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Views on Poverty Alleviation**

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### **Introduction:**

Dr. Bhimrao Ramaji Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, who was honored with the highest award of India 'Bharatratna'. He was born on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1891 at Mahu in Madhya Pradesh. He was completed his graduation in Economics and Political Science in 1912. After that he began studying to become a Barrister in London school of Economics and Political Science. He passed the Barrister's examination in 1922. In 1923, the University of London awarded him a Doctor of Science for his thesis 'The Problem of Indian Rupee', the thesis he presented was very popular in which he wrote on the problem of Indian Rupee. In 1925, he submitted his thesis for Ph.D. on 'The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India' to Columbia University in America. He received his Ph.D. in 1927. After that he worked as an economist, a professor and a lawyer. He spent his later life in politics and social work. He was India's first law and justice minister. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a renowned social reformer; he showed great foresight in tackling poverty-related problem, especially when it comes to caste based inequalities. Increasing population is a cause of poverty; Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar expressed his views in his speech for controlling the growing population. He showed cause and effect relationship between increasing population, unemployment and poverty. On 10<sup>th</sup> November 1938, the population control proposal was presented in the assembly in that symbolic situation, in which he recommended that the government to create deeper awareness of birth control among the people, which would help to reduce population and poverty.

Although, he did not work on reducing multidimensional poverty, many of his theories and advocacy work directly addressed the several aspects of deprivation including health, education and living standard.

### **Objectives of research paper:**

Following are the main objectives of the paper:

1. To study conceptual background of multidimensional poverty or poverty.
2. To study vision of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar for poverty alleviation.
3. To assess ideas and principles of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar related to reducing poverty through education

### **Research Methodology:**

The present research paper is based on published official secondary data and information. Information has been collected mainly from various books, research articles, journals, public documents, reports and speeches of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Secondary data has been collected mainly from reports of NITI Aayog published by Government of India, reports of the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) and reports/working paper of Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), All India Survey on higher education, Ministry of education, Census of India, etc. Secondary data collected from various sources have been tabulated and interpreted.

### **Multidimensional Poverty in India:**

At the time of independence, Dr. Ambedkar identified that poverty was a major obstacle to social development. His approach to poverty from a multidimensional perspective includes not only just about economic deprivation but also includes social, political and cultural dimensions.

Poverty means lack of funds (money) to meet necessities such as clothing, food and housing, but more complete picture of poverty can be obtained by using multidimensional poverty measures, which also show who is poor and how they are poor. Multidimensional poverty refers to all of the several forms of deprivation that impoverished individuals face on a daily basis, including poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standard and disempowerment, etc.

**Dimensions and indicators of Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI):**

The measurement of MPI depends on three dimensions and its twelve indicators, which are finalized and categorized by the OPHI for measurement of the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index. MPI captures the percentage of household in a country deprived along three dimensions of health, education and standard of living and twelve indicators such as nutrition, child mortality, maternal health, years of schooling, school attendance, access to cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, housing, assets, electricity, bank account etc. Each of these specific parameters is assigned a value to calculate “deprivation score”. The deprivation score is the sum of the weighted status of all the indicators for an individual. If it is more than 0.33 only, then an individual is considered multidimensionally poor.

**Multidimensional poverty Index:**

Multidimensional poverty is measured by multidimensional poverty index (MPI). Multidimensional poverty index is measured by above mentioned 12 indicators in three dimensions-health, education and standard of living. MPI can be used to inform policy, leading to more cost-effective social programs that more efficiently targets the needs of the poor. It aims to give a multidimensional picture of the people living in poverty and it measures poverty at the individual level in education, health and standard of living.

According to the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index report, the MPI of India is 0.066 in 2023. In 2022-23, 11.28 % of the population suffers from ‘Multidimensional Poor’; they are deprived of education, health, and a decent standard of living. Poverty reduction has long been one of the most important policy goals for the country because poverty is standing like a demon in front of us.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was not directly worked on eradication of poverty but his contributions are deeply connected to the concept of multidimensional poverty. Ambedkar’s efforts for reducing poverty were focusing on addressing three dimensions of poverty. The paper will discuss second dimension of multidimensional poverty index -Education.

**Ambedkar’s Vision for Educational Improvement:**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a strong proponent of education as a means of empowerment. He believed that education was the key and primary tool for achieving social equality, economic independence and to break the vicious cycle of poverty and social discrimination. He recognized that illiteracy and lack of education opportunities was the key factors contributing to the increasing poverty. He advocated for universal access to education aligns directly with one of the core dimensions of multidimensional poverty, particularly for the lower castes, who has been historically denied educational opportunities. This progress on education laid the foundation for economic upliftment and poverty reduction.

**Establishment of educational institutions:** Dr. Ambedkar played a significant role in establishing a number of educational institutions aimed at providing quality education to the underprivileged groups. For instance, he established the People’s Education Society, which established schools and colleges that created specifically to the needs of marginalized groups.

**The importance of Education for Social Justice:** Ambedkar thought that the most effective means of bringing social transformation was education. He argued that without education, the marginalized sections of society would continue to be oppressed and economically disadvantaged. He campaigned for equal access to education and worked to ensure that Dalits and other oppressed communities had opportunities to pursue education at all levels.

**Constitutional Provisions:** As the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, Ambedkar ensured that the right to education was enshrined as a fundamental right. Articles such as article 46 mandated the promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections of society, and article 45 is for provision of the free and compulsory education for children.

**Access to Education for All:** Ambedkar maintained that all citizens, regardless of caste or socioeconomic status, should have the fundamental right to education. The best means of ensuring

equality of opportunity and uplifting marginalised communities, in his opinion, was via education, particularly higher education.

**Educational Improvement and Poverty Reduction:**

**Literacy Rate:** Literacy is the knowledge and ability that people need to increase knowledge and skills, and participate in the process of social development. Increase in literacy has been an important factor in reducing poverty, as education is directly related to improved employment opportunities, efficiency and income level. Ambedkar had taken efforts to increase literacy and provide education to all is now helping a lot in reducing multidimensional poverty. Approximately 8% women and just 27% of males were literate before independence. The low female literacy rate had a negative impact on family planning and population stabilization efforts in India. India has made great progress in revamping its education system through gradual changes. Following table shows literacy rate in India (1951-2021).

**Table No. 1: Literacy Rate in India 1951-2021**

Year	% of literacy rate in India		
	Female	Male	Total
1951	8.86	27.15	18.33
1961	15.35	40.40	28.30
1971	21.97	45.96	34.45
1981	29.76	56.48	43.57
1991	39.21	64.13	52.21
2001	53.67	73.26	64.83
2011	65.86	82.14	74.04
2021	70.30	84.70	77.70

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India (2011), and Ministry of Education, Census of India, 2023

The above table shows the percentage of gender wise literacy rate and total literacy rate in India from 1951 to 2021. Approximately 8% women and just 27% of males were literate in 1951. It means that at that time most of the male and female were illiterate. It had greater impact on employment, productivity, efficiency and income level of the illiterate peoples. The literacy rate has been steadily increasing after 1951. In 1951, India's literacy rate was 18.33% and in 2021 literacy rate in the country is 77.70%. The increase in literacy rates for females and males were from 8.86% and 27.15 % in 1951 to 70.30% and 84.70% in 2021 respectively. According to the 2011 census, during the period 2001-2011, there was an increase in female literacy rate (11.8%) was significantly higher than the male literacy rate (6.9%), indicating a narrowing of the gender gap.

Literacy is considered as an important tool to get rid from the poverty trap. After independence India has shown improvement both in reducing poverty and increasing literacy rate. Poverty has reduced 55% in 1973 to 21.6% in 2014, while literacy rate has increased from 34.45 in 1971 to 74.4 in 2011. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar helped to raise the level of education in the country through various lectures, publications, and legislative provisions which also helped to reduce poverty in India.

**Enrollment in higher education:** For the country's social, economic and national development a higher education system is essential. Higher education that is value-based is required in order to reduce poverty, by empowering young people to become self sufficient through the development of job skills. The proportion of marginalized students in higher education has increased steadily over the decades due to reservation policies and targeted scholarships have been implemented by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. For example, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has shown consistent growth, leading to a more skilled workforce. In India Gross Enrollment Ratio of primary education is very high (100%) as compared to higher education (28.4%). In India upper primary, secondary

and higher secondary levels gross enrollment ratios are 95%, 80% and 58% respectively. Following table shows gross enrollment ratios in higher education in India.

**Table No 2: Gross Enrollment Ratios in Higher Education in India (%)**

Year	% of GER in Higher Education
1950-51	0.7
1960-61	1.4
1980-81	5
1990-91	6
2000-01	10
2014-15	23.7
2020-21	27.3
2022-23	28.4

Source: Unified District Information System for Education,

All India Survey on higher education, Ministry of Education.

The above table shows that the percentage of gross enrollment ratio in India. Higher education GER in India is an increasing trend. The GER in higher education of India has steadily increased from 0.7% in 1950 to 28.4% in 2023. Growth in GER in higher education was highest at 13% during the period from 10% in 2000-01 to 23.7% in 2014-15.

**Conclusion and Suggestions:**

The educational reforms inspired by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar and the subsequently policies implemented by the Indian government have played a pivotal role in reducing poverty. Ambedkar's vision was to tackle the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty by empowering marginalized groups through education, access to basic services, social inclusion, and economic justice. His legacy provides a framework for addressing the various dimensions of poverty. His contributions are highly relevant in today's fight against multi-dimensional deprivation. The emphasis on education as a tool for social justice and economic empowerment has helped uplift millions people from marginalized communities fostering social mobility and reducing economic disparities in India. The connection between education and poverty reduction is well-established. From the 1950s to the 2020s, India has seen a marked decline in poverty levels, with a reduction in absolute poverty from over 70% in 1950 to around 10% in 2020. This reduction is partly due to improved access to education, leading to better job opportunities and economic mobility for previously disadvantaged communities.

However, the extent of poverty in India is very high. 11.28 % of the population suffers from multidimensionally poor. MPI of India is 0.066 and it ranked 62 in the Global MPI in 107 countries which is not good. Therefore, it is necessary to improve status of MPI of India through increasing expenditure of central government on various schemes.

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