

**Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Approach and policy of population control**

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**ABSTRACT:**

In this research paper explore the ideas of Dr. Ambedkar on birth control and family planning and problems of over population. I use to for the references Dr. Ambedkar writing and speeches volume, Its beneficial to Indians for better health and sound economy

**KEYWORDS:** Ambedkar-Birth Control-Poverty and Burden of Population-Majors.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar was one of our greatest jurists, economists, crusading champion of human rights, and social reformer. What is well known about Dr. Ambedkar's fights against social prejudices in India, but what is little known is how he had also impacted his impression on the economy through his views and thoughts.

As an economist, Dr Ambedkar propagated that the state is the owner of the land. To him, the basic industries should be state monopolies and rest should be controlled by the private owners. He thought that the "democratic state socialism" can be achieved by state control over land, some basic industries, religions, caste and through an elaborate scheme of the constitutional method. According to him, caste consciousness hampers all the economic systems.<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly, enough Dr Ambedkar had also suggested free economy, globalization, liberalization and privatization as early as in 1923 side by side with state-owned basic industries, land and insurance. He had stressed that the value of a rupee must be kept stable if the policy of the free economy is to be successful. Hence, one can say that Dr Ambedkar, a man educated in USA and UK, was "not an armchair economist" but he was "an economist in thought and action with a rare vision".<sup>2</sup>

Ambedkar realised very earlier that the increased population would be a burden on the growing economy of free India's future development. Therefore, to eradicate poverty, unemployment, and safeguard reproductive health, Ambedkar favoured proper birth control policies and measures to be implemented by the government for progressive and stabilised growth and development.

If we talk about India, it has the youngest population in the world with 472 million children<sup>5</sup> still globally India contributes about 21% of the total global burden of child death. The current population of India as per the census of 2011 is 1210.2 million.<sup>3</sup> This increased population is a burden on the economy and the future development of India. Dr Ambedkar was quick to acknowledge this problem when on behalf of Dr B. R. Ambedkar, the speech delivered by Shri P. J. Roham on 10th November, 1938 in Mumbai Provincial Assembly on a non-government resolution was to be considered, it is a fundamental base to understand the thoughts of Dr B. R. Ambedkar on family planning and population control. Of course, B. R. Ambedkar himself wanted to present the resolution, but due to some unavoidable circumstances, he could not attend. The resolution was comprised of the limited size of the family and also the urgent need for proactive measures among the masses regarding birth control. According to Ambedkar there were "few people have an adequate idea of the immense loss sustained by children born of persons who are handicapped either physically, mentally or financially. The prevention of the births of such children would reduce the death-rate among mothers who succumb to child-birth and its concomitant diseases, lower infantile mortality, improve public health by removing the many diseases due to want of even the prime necessities of life felt by many persons, check the offences perpetrated by persons suffering from intense poverty and would bring about an all- round uplift of society by affording full scope to its spiritual advancement."<sup>7</sup>

Dr B. R. Ambedkar emphasised that some measures to control the population such as the ban on child marriage system, increasing the age of marriage, economic empowerment of women are also

limited, ineffective and impractical. Thus to avoid the unexpected births and to maintain control of various diseases, he emphasised upon the use of scientific instruments of birth control. He advocated that family planning is the only one measure to control the population. He considered the problem of population in respect of family, child development, female health and food grain supply. The following pages will discuss Ambedkar's views and thoughts on the necessity of population control policies by the government and the problems our country is subjected to due to increased rate of population.

**OBJECTIVES:**

The following are the chief objectives of this study-

- a. To explore the vision of Ambedkar with special reference to population-control policy.
- b. To document Ambedkar's ideas on birth-control in colonial settings and its impact on post-colonial India.

**METHODOLOGY:**

The methodology of the paper is, qualitative as well as exploratory.

**POVERTY AND BURDEN OF POPULATION:**

Poverty is the cause of overpopulation in our country, unfortunately, today also. The poor people have a notion that the more children you have, the more hands to work and earn. But what they ignore is the fact that those earning hands have the mouth too. It's because of poverty that the poor parents fail to rear their children properly. As Ambedkar himself born in a low-income family, he understood the lack of facilities whether it is food or education, a child faces because of poverty. But this challenge, he considers was because of the parents who for the purpose of economic strengthening of the family gave birth to more children. Thus he emphasised that eradication of poverty is essentially more than the introduction of measures to control overpopulation. For he opined, "in our country, the same condition prevails in cities like Bombay. A few exceptions apart, it is observed that virtue is palsied where poverty prevails. Further on it will be shown how it is well-nigh impossible to uproot poverty without the aid of birth-control.

He criticised poverty as "it is bitter and terrible poverty that makes the parents expose their infants. In the light of such instances, it is futile to hope that ordinary persons will be able to avoid progeny merely through self-control."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Dr. Ambedkar on the urgency of family planning gave the example of Western nations where "modern contraception is utilised by persons of all races, religions and strata

**SOCIETY AND POPULATION:**

Dr B. R. Ambedkar further recognised that the common people even illiterate were sensible enough to understand the significance to modern medicine and if proper promotion of latest research executed properly and birth control measures were made available to them by the colonial government they would use them at a greater extent, than expected.

Ambedkar was against the politicisation of welfare measures for personal gains by political parties. He criticised about the people who in order to increase their mass base and the political base does not strengthen the institutions promoting contraceptive measures. For he said, "Some people think that they would be losers if the numbers in their particular race, religion, or region are lessened. They are afraid that their adversaries would thereby be enabled to gain ground over them. In the first place, it is necessary to remember in this connection that the rate of increase of a population does not necessarily dwindle down as soon as family limitation is resorted to. That rate is dependent not merely on the birth-rate but chiefly on the survival-rate with the exception of London, all the (above) towns are solidly Roman Catholic, yet they all have a lower birth-rate than London. Three of them are in Mussolini's Italy.

In his speech in Legislative Assembly of Bombay Presidency he considered that the “lower classes do take advantage of contraceptives as soon as they are made cognizant of them, the need being greater in their cases. The masses in our country, though illiterate, are intelligent enough to know in what their own interest lies and hence there is no doubt that they will fully utilise this invention also as soon as they are made aware of its existence. Vasectomy would be found to be useful in the case of such persons and hence Government and municipalities must provide facilities in this respect in their hospitals, etc.”<sup>5</sup>

**MARRIAGE AND BIRTH-CONTROL:**

Dr. Ambedkar quoted the conclusions drawn by Mr. P. K. Wattal on the fertility-enquiry based on the 1931 census that “even when late marriages would come into vogue generally, there is no chance of population being appreciably checked thereby. More children would live up to mature ages and hence there is a chance of an increase and not a decrease in the rate of growth of our population.”<sup>6</sup> He emphasised on the birth-control even when the government increased the age of marriage for girls and for people being unable to marry at proper ages.

**ECONOMY AND BIRTH-CONTROL MEASURES:**

India’s economy primarily rests on agriculture. Even today agriculture is the mainstay of our economy as about 70% of our population depends on this industry. Thus, it increases the burden on land which forces the people to withdraw and look for other sources else thrown to the mouth of utter poverty. As an economist, our expectations increase on how Dr Ambedkar visualised the role of population control policy in the development of the country further maintaining the economic balance of the state. He considered that the economic independence of women has nothing to do with family planning as women working on fields still have many children.

It was believed that independence would change the then situation, but Ambedkar disagreed with them. By comparing the situations in America and other western countries asserted that due to overpopulation countries like Holland, America, Britain failed to feed its population with proper diet. Hence the rate of malnutrition is higher among the children and people of the state and thus failed to prepare for health policy for all. He considered that India could gain economic development and maintain the standard of life of the masses only if there is a comprehensive policy for population control as “with every opportunity afforded for its expansion, population begins to grow rapidly and thus nullifies all the advantages secured through great efforts.”<sup>7</sup>

**CONCLUSION:**

It is unfortunate that we have still not focussed towards the problem of overpopulation highlighted by Dr. Ambedkar. It is a high time when if we underestimate the suggestions and warnings of the great leaders and intellectuals of our country we would face utter disorder, poverty, unemployment and ill-health. Ambedkar advocated birth control measure to be a prominent and sole measure through which a country can beat the consequences of over-population. He propagated the modern scientific investigations of twentieth century in the country for the welfare of women and children which failed to attract attention of leaders and masses. His vision for the new India was the path of continuous and comprehensive economic progress which could be achieved by checking the growth of population through birth-control measures.

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