

B.R. Ambedkar and his philosophy of Land Reform: An evaluation

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Abstract

The present analysis is concerned with Ambedkar's philosophy regarding land reform and its relevance in present day scenario. Dr. Ambedkar stresses the need for thorough land reforms, noting that smallness or largeness of an agricultural holding is not determined by its physical extent alone but by the intensity of cultivation as reflected in the amounts of productive investment made on the land and the amounts of all other inputs used, including labour. He also stresses the need for industrialization so as to move surplus labour from agriculture to other productive occupations, accompanied by large capital investments in agriculture to raise yields. He sees an extremely important role for the state in such transformation of agriculture and advocates the nationalization of land and the leasing out of land to groups of cultivators, who are to be encouraged to form cooperatives in order to promote agriculture.

Introduction:

Inequality in the control of land constitutes a principal obstacle to broad-based rural development in many developing countries. Land reform providing secure and equitable rights to productive land for the rural poor should clearly be a high priority of states and other actors committed to the pursuit of socially and ecologically sustainable development.

In an agrarian economy like India with great scarcity, and an unequal distribution, of land, coupled with a large mass of the rural population below the poverty line, there are

compelling economic and political arguments for land reform. Not surprisingly, it received top priority on the policy agenda at the time of Independence. In the decades following independence India passed a significant body of land reform legislation. The 1949 Constitution left the adoption and implementation of land and tenancy reforms to state governments. This led to a lot of variation in the implementation of these reforms across states and over time, a fact that has been utilized in empirical studies trying to understand the causes and effects of land reform.

Land reform, according to Webster's dictionary, means measures designed to effect a more equitable distribution of agricultural land, especially by governmental action. It necessarily includes a redistribution of rights to land from large landholders to benefit the rural poor, by providing them with more equitable and secure access to land. More broadly, it includes regulation of ownership, operation, leasing, sales, and inheritance of land (indeed, the redistribution of land itself requires legal changes). Successful land reform, from the viewpoint of the rural poor, has invariably contained a confiscatory element from the viewpoint of large landholders, who lost some of their previous rights and privileges. Land reform is necessarily a political process. When land tenure relations are really altered to benefit tenants, landless workers and near landless peasants, it implies a change in power relationships in favour of those who physically work the land at the expense of those who primarily accumulate wealth from their control over rural land and labour.

As the basis of all economic activity, land can either serve as an essential asset for the country to achieve economic growth and social equity, or it could be used as a tool in the hands of a few to hijack a country's economic independence and subvert its social processes. During the two centuries of British colonization, India had experienced the latter reality. During colonialism, India's traditional land ownership and land use patterns were changed to ease acquisition of land at low prices by British entrepreneurs for mines, plantations etc. The introduction of the institution of private property de-legitimized community ownership systems of tribal societies. Moreover, with the introduction of the land tax under the Permanent Settlement Act 1793, the British popularized the zamindari

system at the cost of the jajmani relationship that the landless shared with the land owning class. By no means a just system, the latter at least ensured the material security of those without land.

Owing to these developments, at independence, India inherited a semi-feudal agrarian system. The ownership and control of land was highly concentrated in a few landlords and intermediaries whose main intention was to extract maximum rent, either in cash or kind, from tenants. Under this arrangement, the sharecropper or the tenant farmer had little economic motivation to develop farmland for increased production. Naturally, a cultivator who did not have security of tenure, and was required to pay a high proportion of output in rents, was less likely to invest in land improvements, or use high yielding varieties or other expensive inputs likely to yield higher returns. At the same time, neither was the landlord particularly concerned about improving the economic condition of the cultivators. As a result, agricultural productivity suffered and oppression of tenants resulted in a progressive deterioration of their plight.

In the years, immediately following India's independence, a conscious process of nation building looked upon problems of land with a pressing urgency. Comprehensive land reforms were among the first priorities of the Government of India immediately after Independence. For this the manifold imbalances of the colonial legacy of two centuries had to be dismantled, and a new beginning made. It was a semi-feudal system that was inherited from British rule. A handful of intermediaries rack-rented a large mass of hapless tenantry. A widespread system of subletting, often several rungs deep, worsened the situation by reducing the holdings to uneconomic proportions. In this system, neither the intermediaries had any interest nor the tenants any incentive or resources for introducing land improvements or for using HYVs or other costly inputs likely to yield higher returns. With the objective of achieving social equity and ensuring economic growth, the land reforms programme was built around three major issues:

1. Abolition of intermediaries.
2. Settlement and regulation of tenancy.

3. Regulation of size of holdings.

Ambedkar as an economist was a reflection of Ambedkar as a political Statesman. He worked on economic matters when it became expedient in the field of politics. Ambedkar has expressed his views on land reform, mode of farming. The working behind all his thinking on land reform was to lift the untouchables who were predominately landless or small cultivates. The outmoded methods of cultivation were gradually decreasing its splendor and they must be replaced by joint or collective farming was his basic dominating thought.

The present analysis is concerned with Ambedkar's philosophy regarding land reform and its relevance in present day scenario.

Ambedkar as an Economist: Dr. Ambedkar wrote three scholarly books on economics : i) Administration and Finance of the East India Company, ii) The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India, and iii) The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution. The first two books represent his contribution to the field of public finance: the first one evaluating finances of the East India Company during the period, 1792 through 1858 and the second one analyzing the evolution of the Centre- State financial relations in British India during the period, 1833 through 1921. The third book i.e. 'The problem of the Rupees: Its Origin and its Solution is considered as magnum opus in economics. On his return to India, Dr. Ambedkar did not write any book on economics per se, though several of his other contributions during that period carry a distinctive imprint of the economist in him. As a member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly (since 1926), Ambedkar gave effective expression to the grievances of the rural poor through his mass movements. His successful struggle against the prevailing land tenure system called Khoti liberated a vast majority of the rural poor from an extreme form of economic exploitation. His successful agitation against Mahar *Watan* emancipated a large section of the rural poor from virtual serfdom. He presented a bill in the State Assembly aimed at preventing the malpractices of money-lenders hurting the poor. A distinctive feature of Dr. Ambedkar's scholarly contribution is his perceptive analysis of economic dimension of social ground, such as, the caste system and untouchability. While

Mahatma Gandhi had defended the caste system on the basis of division of labour, Ambedkar came out with a hard-hitting critique in his book 'Annihilation of Castes' (1936), pointing out that what was implicit in the caste system was not merely division of labour but also a division of labourers. Dr. Ambedkar's attack on the caste system was not merely aimed at challenging the hegemony of the upper castes but had broader connotation of economic growth and development. In his memorandum submitted to the British Government titled "States and Minorities" in 1947, Dr. Ambedkar laid down a strategy for India's economic development. The strategy placed "an obligation on the State to plan the economic life of the people on lines which would lead to highest point of productivity without closing every avenue to private enterprise and also provide for the equitable distribution of wealth". In his views on crucial issues pertaining to economic development, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar comes across as a radical economist who would have staunchly opposed the neoliberal reforms being carried out in India since the 1990s. Dr. Ambedkar was a strongly proponent of land reforms and of a prominent role for the state in economic development. Dr. Ambedkar stresses the need for thoroughgoing land reforms, noting that smallness or largeness of an agricultural holding is not determined by its physical extent alone but by the intensity of cultivation as reflected in the amounts of productive investment made on the land and the amounts of all other inputs used, including labour. He also stresses the need for industrialization so as to move surplus labour from agriculture to other productive occupations, accompanied by large capital investments in agriculture to raise yields. He sees an extremely important role for the state in such transformation of agriculture and advocates the nationalization of land and the leasing out of land to groups of cultivators, who are to be encouraged to form cooperatives in order to promote agriculture. Intervening in a discussion in the Bombay Legislative Council on October 10, 1927, Dr. Ambedkar argued that the solution to the agrarian question "lies not in increasing the size of farms, but in having intensive cultivation that is employing more capital and more labour on the farms such as we have". Further on, he says: "The better method is to introduce cooperative agriculture and to compel owners of small strips to joint in cultivation." The government and its economists, instead of recognizing that the crisis is the product in large part of the policies of

liberalization, privatization and globalization, propose a set of so-called second-generation reforms. At the centre of these reforms is the complete elimination of employment security. The war cry of the liberalizers is: “Away with all controls and the state, and let the market rule” .In this context, one cannot but recall Dr. Ambedkar’s words that liberty from state control is another name for the dictatorship of the private employer.

Approaches towards land reform: In a paper titled ‘Small holdings in India and their Remedies published in Journal of Indian Economic Society, Ambedkar opined that consolidation may prevent the evils of scatter holdings but nor the evils of small holdings under the consolidated holdings was an economic holding. The traditional definition of an economic holding is “a holding which allows a man a chance of producing sufficient to keep herself and his family in reasonable comfort after paying his necessary expenses” – was criticized by him. He pointed out that this definition of economic holding was from standpoint of consumption rather than from the viewpoint of production. Because consumption is worth correct standard by which economic character of holding can belong. It would be perverse accounting to condemn a farm as not paying because its total output does not support the family of a farmer through as a pro-rate return for each of his constituents it is the highest. He remarked, “Any definition, therefore, that leans on consumption returns the nature of an economic holding which is essentially an enterprise in production what is important for the purpose of production is the process of combining the factor of production.”. ⁽¹⁾ It is true that the absolute size of land (which was small) was not the only decisive factor responsible for efficient production.

It can not be the language of economics to say that a large holding is economic while a small holding is uneconomic. It is the right or wrong proportion of other factors of production to a unit of land that renders the latter economic or uneconomic. A small term may be economic or uneconomic because economic or uneconomic does not depend upon the size of land but upon the appropriate proportion among all factors including land.

An economic holding consists of land and labour in a proportion such that the pro-rate contribution of each in conjunction with the rest is the highest to create an economic holding, a farmer must have the other instruments of production required for the efficient alteration of his holding and must maintain a due proportion of all the factors. Therefore, an economic holding is not a matter of the size of land alone but is a matter of the adjustment of a piece of land to the necessary equipment for its efficient cultivation.

“The existing holding are uneconomic, not, however, in the sense that they are too small but that they are too large..... . Consequently, the remedy for the ills of agriculture in India does not lie primarily in the matter of enlarging holdings but in the matter of increasing capital and capital goods”.⁽²⁾

In view of Ambedkar, capital arises from savings and that saving is possible where there is surplus. In fact, no surplus is possible in Indian agriculture because in spite of the vastness of land under tillage, a large agricultural population with the lowest proportion of land in actual cultivation meant that a large part of agricultural population remained idle instead of performing any sort of productive labour. The economic effort of this idle labour is that it creates tremendous amount of pressure on land. This enormous pressure is the main reason of the sub-division of land resulting in the increasing ruralisation of the country. He opined “It is the failure to grasp the working of this pressure on land that makes the law of inheritance such a great grievance”.⁽³⁾

According to Ambedkar, the evils of small holding in India was not fundamental but was derived from the parent evil of the mal-adjustment in her social economy. The remedy for preventing sub-division & fragmentation was consolidation of holdings but under the existing social economy, it will not be expected to bring relief, he said “Instead it will serve to be a legal eyewash”.⁽⁴⁾

After the adoption of the one-man rule of succession, a survey number would be made to cover a piece of land which will be of the size fixed for an ideal economic holding. A piece of land with a separate a distinct survey number must not be below the economic limit. This survey number covering a piece of land large enough to be styled

economic will be registered in name of one person. The one-man rule of succession to a consolidated holding means refusal to recognize legally a piece of land if it were below a certain size. This refusal to recognize smaller piece of land will prevent the sub-division of a consolidated holding. Such was the idea of an economic unit profounded by Ambedkar. According to him consolidation and its conservation were so intimately connected that one could not be thought of without the other.

Ambedkar in his paper describes how agriculture improves by the reflex effects of industrialization. He summed up “Industrialization of India is the soundest remedy for the agricultural problems of India. Industrialization facilitates consolidation. It lessens the premium on land. It must precede consolidation. It is an effective barrier against future sub-division and fragmentation of a consolidated holding”.

Achievements of Ambedkar from the politics of land reform : Achievements from the politics of land reform can be viewed from two perspectives :1) Introduction of a bill to abolish Khoti system 2) Introduction of bill to amend the hereditary office Act in order to abolish Mahar watan.

I

The Khoti system is one of the minor land tenures in the former Bombay Presidency. It was found mostly in the Ratnagiri district and in sum parts of *Kolaba* and Thana districts. The exploitation of the peasantry was a burning problem in those parts. The Khoti tenure differed from the ordinary Rayatwari tenure. In the Rayatwari system, the Govt. collects revenue directly from those who are in the occupation of land but in the Khoti tenure the Govt. is required to employ the services of Khot for the purpose of collecting revenue.

The system of Khoti tenure binds the Khot to pay revenue to the Govt. On the other hand, it leaves him free to do what he likes to the inferior holders and this freedom has

been so grossly abused by the Khot that the inferior holders are not only subjected to all kinds of ex-actions but they have reduced to a state of abject slavery.

In the depressed classes conference (In April 1929) in Ratnagiri, Ambedkar first raised his voice against this system and made an effort for the abolition of the Khoti system. He introduced a bill in the Bombay Legislative Council on September 7, 1937 with the object of abolishing the *Khoti* system. By this bill, he wanted to secure the occupancy rights to the tenants and substitute it by Rayatwari system. He explained the aim of the bill as follows “The bill aims I) To abolish the Khoti system and to establish direct relationship between Govt. and those who are in possession or occupation of the land which is under the Management or beneficial enjoyment of the Khot. II) To make provision for the payment of reasonable compensation to the Khot for the loss of his right and. III) To give those inferior holders who are in actual occupation of land the status of occupants within the meaning of the land revenue land.”⁽⁵⁾ The Khoti system does not come under the land revenue code, it is a separate item.

II

According to hereditary office Act, the Mahars, the inferior hereditary officers, were required to work all day & night and in the absence of Mahar servants, his father, his grandfather or any member of his family, even female members of his family were impressed into the Govt. service. For their hard labour, they got each a piece of land as Watan, some corn from the villagers and a pittance varying from two *annas* to a rupee and a half per men sum. The result of the Watan was that the Mahar lost self-respect, their ambition and their ability were tied down to this trifling menial job. Such a system which enslaved the whole Mahar population will not be justified. Ambedkar saw that the practice deteriorated the Mahar community and he resolved to liberate it.

He introduced a bill in the Bombay legislative council to amend the Bombay hereditary office Act. 1874 on 19th March 1928. In several meetings and conferences, he made clear the objects of this bill “the first object is to permit commutation of the Watan at the option of the holder. The second to provide better security for the payment of the

remuneration of certain classes of Watandars and the third purpose is to provide for specification by rules of the duties to be performed by the Watandars”.⁽⁶⁾

III.

Ambedkar made a vigorous speech while moving the bill in the Bombay Legislative Council on 3rd August, 1928. He argued in the house that the lands was given to the Mahars by the ancient emperors of the country and the present British Govt. had neither increased the extent of lands nor paid any attention to the remuneration of these people. With the increase in Mahar population lands assigned to the Mahars are sub-divided in such a way that the income of these people from *inam* land is not worthy. He proposed that the Watan lands should be given to the holders of those posts at the full rate of assessment and they should be relieved from the obligation to serve. They should be paid from the revenue derived from the assessment levied on the lands of the Mahars and from the Baluta (collection of grain made by the Watandar Mahar from the villagers).

He said “I can assure the house that the Mahar people are absolutely determined to have the bill and ---- if the Govt. refuses to liberate on ground of finance, on ground of inconvenience or any other grounds that it will be a war between the revenue department and the Mahars. If this bill does pass ----- I am going to spend rest of my time in seeing that the Mahars organized a general strike”.⁽⁷⁾

He concluded that the Watans are the greatest obstacles in the advancement of the Mahar Community.

The bill was referred to the select committee of 23 members but the select committee changed it beyond recognition. Ambedkar proposed to convert *Baluta* into a money cess and collection of money cess should be made along with the land revenue. But the committee was of opinion that the Watan lands should not be given over to the Watandars on payment of the full assessment on their lands but should be given on half the proceeds of the lands. The representatives of the vested interests opposed the very essence of the bill. At last on 24th July, 1929, Ambedkar withdrew the bill.

The Mahars were excluded from land revenue because those lands were given to them as Watan lands but the Govt. raising the ground of financial burden was of the opinion that if Mahars were allowed to retain their Watan land on payment of land revenue, Govt. needs to employ paid – agency which evolves additional cost and therefore assessment on a small scale was recovered from the Mahars. This revenue from Watandar Mahar known as *Judi* was not recovered in cash but in the form corn. The Mahar leaders wanted to change Judi into full assessment and desired to be paid monthly wages for services rendered to the Govt. and villagers. But the first Congress Ministry (1937-39) in Bombay opposed this scheme. The struggle against *Judi system* was started at a conference on 16th December 1939 and Hari gaon under the leadership of Ambedkar to transform the Watan land of Mahar into Rayatwari lands, to pay monthly wages to Mahar and to make them do only Govt. Jobs.

Ambedkar was the “first legislator in India to introduce a bill for the abolition of the serfdom of agricultural tenants”.⁽⁸⁾ He wanted to solve the problem of Mahar Watan by all legislative and constitutional means. He introduced a bill in Poona session of Bombay Legislative Council in 1937 (17th September) to abolish the Mahar Watan for which he had been agitating since 1927. To agitate against the Watan system he established the Bombay State Inferior Village Watandar Association on 16th June, 1956 under his own chairmanship. Clarifying the objectives of the Association, he stated that if the Govt. did not solve the problem amicably, then expressed his desire to prosecute the Govt. When the question of giving land to Watandar came up, the villagers opposed it. They thought the problem of their cattle more important than the problem of Mahar Watandar. Ambedkar said that Govt. accepted the principle of “land to tiller” but was not ready to include Govt. lands under the jurisdiction of the Act.⁽⁹⁾ He believed that the Watan Act. and the Watan system were contrary to the provision of the constitution of India. He opined that a writ petition should be filed in the High Court in this matter and if it was unsuccessful, it must be taken to the Supreme Court. In a letter to Gaekwad, he wrote clearly that he did not want to turn the agitation against Watan system into Satyagraha due to war emergency. When Ambedkar became the member of Viceroy’s Executive Council, he promised to withdraw the movement because he thought that he might be

able to serve the cause better as a member of Viceroy's Executive Council than to conduct a struggle. Subsequently, Mahar Watan was abolished under the Bombay Inferior Village Watan Abolition Act 1959.

IV.

Intervening in a discussion in the Bombay Legislative Council on October 10, 1927, Dr. Ambedkar argued that the solution to the agrarian question "lies not in increasing the size of farms, but in having intensive cultivation that is employing more capital and more labour on the farms such as we have." (These and all subsequent quotations are taken from the collection of Dr. Ambedkar's writings, published by the Government of Maharashtra in 1979). Further on, he says: "The better method is to introduce cooperative agriculture and to compel owners of small strips to join in cultivation."

During the process of framing the Constitution of the Republic of India, Dr. Ambedkar proposed to include certain provisions on fundamental rights, specifically a clause to the effect that the state shall provide protection against economic exploitation. Among other things, this clause proposed that:

1. Key industries shall be owned and run by the state;
2. Basic but non-key industries shall be owned by the state and run by the state or by corporations established by it;
3. Agriculture shall be a state industry, and be organized by the state taking over all land and letting it out for cultivation in suitable standard sizes to residents of villages; these shall be cultivated as collective farms by groups of families.

As part of his proposals, Dr. Ambedkar provided detailed explanatory notes on the measures to protect the citizen against economic exploitation. He stated: "The main purpose behind the clause is to put an obligation on the state to plan the economic life of

the people on lines which would lead to highest point of productivity without closing every avenue to private enterprise, and also provide for the equitable distribution of wealth. The plan set out in the clause proposes state ownership in agriculture with a collectivised method of cultivation and a modified form of state socialism in the field of industry. It places squarely on the shoulders of the state the obligation to supply the capital necessary for agriculture as well as for industry."

Dr. Ambedkar recognizes the importance of insurance in providing the state with "the resources necessary for financing its economic planning, in the absence of which it would have to resort to borrowing from the money market at high rates of interest" and proposes the nationalization of insurance. He categorically stated: "State socialism is essential for the rapid industrialization of India. Private enterprise cannot do it and if it did, it would produce those inequalities of wealth which private capitalism has produced in Europe and which should be a warning to Indians."

Anticipating criticism against his proposals that they went too far, Dr.. Ambedkar argues that political democracy implied that "the individual should not be required to relinquish any of his constitutional rights as a condition precedent to the receipt of a privilege" and that "the state shall not delegate powers to private persons to govern others". He points out that "the system of social economy based on private enterprise and pursuit of personal gain violates these requirements".

Responding to the libertarian argument that where the state refrains from intervention in private affairs - economic and social - the residue is liberty, Dr. Ambedkar says: "It is true that where the state refrains from intervention what remains is liberty. To whom and for whom is this liberty? Obviously this liberty is liberty to the landlords to increase rents, for capitalists to increase hours of work and reduce rate of wages." Further, he says: "In an economic system employing armies of workers, producing goods en masse at regular intervals, someone must make rules so that workers will work and the wheels of industry run on. If the state does not do it, the private employer will. In other

words, what is called liberty from the control of the state is another name for the dictatorship of the private employer."

V.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, the socio-economic development of an economy depends primarily upon the availability of adequate finances and their proper utilization. Dr. Ambedkar vehemently criticized the revenue system of British Government. His main criticism of the revenue pattern of British government of India was on the ground that it was against the interests of the poor people of India. Further, there was no justice or equity in tax policy. According to him, land revenue was highly oppressive. Therefore he argued that the government should undertake legislation to make the tax policy more equitable and elastic. According to him, the first and most essential requirement of good tax system is that it should be reliable. It does not matter whether that revenue system brings in large revenue or small revenue but whatever it brings it ought to be certain in its yield. The main features of taxation policy as advocated by Dr. Ambedkar were as follows.

1) Tax must be levied on taxable capacity or income. 2) It must be progressive ie the rich must be taxed more and the poor less. 3) Exemptions to tax payers should be allowed to those who have income below a certain limit.4) Land revenue item must not be rigid but elastic and subject to variations.5) There should be equity in taxation.6) No taxation system should be manipulated to lower the standard of living of the people. 7) There should be efficiency in taxation.

Dr Ambedkar emphasized the necessity of changing the attitude towards the taxes. Therefore, he suggested taking immediate efforts to rectify the inequalities in the general system of taxation. Particularly he had the great objections to the then prevailing system of levying land revenue. While participating in the debate in the Bombay legislative council, he said that, the tax system of the Bombay presidency was inequitable and hence

indefensible. According to him the land revenue, whatever may be the play of words whether it was tax or whether it is rent, there was no doubt that, land revenue was a tax on the profits of the businessman and therefore, there should not be difference in the methods of levying the tax on the income from agriculture and business. But in the case of land revenue every farmer, whatever may be his income was brought under the levy of land tax, while under income tax no person is called upon to pay the tax, if he had not earned income during the year. Such system was not made applicable to the land revenue. Whether there is a failure of crops or abundance of crops the poor agriculturist was called upon to pay the revenue. Further, the income tax is levied on the recognized principle of ability to pay. Under the income tax, the holders of income below a certain minimum level are exempted from tax payment. But under the land revenue system the tax was remorselessly collected from every one farmer whether he is rich, holding more than hundreds acres of land or a poor farmer holding one acre of land. Therefore, he sought the redemption from oppression and exploitation of land revenue system immediately.

VI.

Ambedkar was a believer in state socialism. According to him, the immediate problem of landless labourers must be solved by taking over the uncultivated lands for agriculture and giving them to the landless labourers. The tenancy legislation which aimed at the satisfaction of land hungers could not solved the problem of landless labourers. “The consolidation of holdings and tenancy legislation are worse than useless. They can not bring about prosperity in agriculture. Neither consolidation nor tenancy legislation can be of any help to the untouchables who are just landless labourers. Only collective farms can help them.”⁽¹⁰⁾ Ambedkar urged the abolition of landlordism as it was untenable. He said “I , too, agree that after abolishing landlordism, the state must be the owner of the land and not the proprietor or the peasant. The natural consequence of the abolition of landlordism must be collective farming or co-operative farming. But, we are too much individualists. The co-operative farming, though useful and improving in production, is regarded by the peasants as an aggression on our system this is due to the individualist tendencies of our farmers. Though we abolished landlordism we would not

be able to build our economy on social basis by such methods. The whole outlook of our peasants must be changed and then only we would be able to reap the fruits of our revolutionary attempt to throw off the yoke of landlords.”⁽¹¹⁾

The land revenue did not depend upon the agricultural income and there was a controversy whether land revenue was a rent or a tax. Once land revenue was collected on income. It was emphasized land revenue must be assessed on the agricultural income. In an article, Ambedkar emphasized the point that it was unjust to assess the land revenue on the income. The rate of assessment did not depend on the capacity to pay the tax. The taxable capacity was enhanced with the growth in the income. Under these circumstances, it was held that the present system of assessment was unjust. So it was not just to receive equal taxes from all. Those who are below a certain income must be exempted. In case of land revenue, the rich and the poor were equally taxed. He remarked that article 107 of the land revenue code must be abolished and land revenue must be brought under the income tax provision.⁽¹²⁾

Ambedkar had prepared a memorandum on the safeguard for the scheduled castes for submitting to the constituent assembly of India on behalf of the All India Scheduled Caste Federation. The brochure was published under the titled “State and Minorities” in 1947. In it, he regarded untouchables as really economically dependent on touchable. He regarded the contest between the Hindus who were economically and socially strong and untouchables who were economically poor and numerically small as the war between the caste Hindus and the untouchables.”⁽¹³⁾ He proposed state ownership in agriculture with a collectivized method of cultivation and a modified form of state socialism in the field of industry. “Land will belong to the state and shall be let out to villagers without distinction of caste or creed and in such a manner that there will be no landlord, no tenant and landless labourer.” He wanted the state to supply capital necessary for agriculture as well as for industry. He said that state socialism was essential for the rapid industrialization of India.

The ILP suggested the commencement of land mortgage Banks, agricultural producers' co-operative societies and marketing societies to improve productivity. The pressure of population of land resulted in fragmentation of holdings which caused poverty of agriculturists. Protection of an agricultural tenant was urgent, and the benefits that an industrial worker gets must be advanced to the agricultural workers also. In respect of land problems the schemes of land settlements to unemployed and landless must be adopted. Though industrialization progressed, agriculture was bound to remain the foundation of India's economy. For increased agricultural production, mechanized agriculture large farms introduction of co-operative and collective farms must be devised. The principle of minimum wage must be introduced for agricultural labour. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Conclusion:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was among the most outstanding intellectuals of India in the 20th century . Dr. Ambedkar was a strong advocate of land reforms and of a prominent role for the state in economic development. He recognised the inequities in an unfettered capitalist economy. Dr. Ambedkar stresses the need for thoroughgoing land reforms, noting that smallness or largeness of an agricultural holding is not determined by its physical extent alone but by the intensity of cultivation as reflected in the amounts of productive investment made on the land and the amounts of all other inputs used, including labour. He also stresses the need for industrialization so as to move surplus labour from agriculture to other productive occupations, accompanied by large capital investments in agriculture to raise yields. He sees an extremely important role for the state in such transformation of agriculture and advocates the nationalization of land and the leasing out of land to groups of cultivators, who are to be encouraged to form cooperatives in order to promote agriculture. The focal point of Ambedkar's philosophy is to uplift the oppressed and the depressed people in an unjust society. The brief synthesis of Ambedkar's idea towards land reforms and allied matters provides an insight into his thought on economic development, planning, role of the state etc. The philosophy aims at giving life to those who are disowned, in uplifting those who are suppressed and

downtrodden and providing liberty, equality and integrity to all irrespective of their castes, creed and races.

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