



Concept Note

Day 1

Dr. Ambedkar's Legacy and Contemporary Relevance

Dr. Ambedkar's vast writings also contain a wide range of economic issues, especially concerning the Indian economy. Much of his economic writings are lesser known and therefore not discussed nor debated as would be appropriate. Dr. Ambedkar had two doctorates in economics from Columbia University of USA and the London School of Economics. After this for a brief time, he taught Political Economy at the Sydenham College at Mumbai. Dr. Ambedkar's contribution to the monetary policy was an important one which was reflected in his doctoral work "The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and its Solution". Dr. Ambedkar's ideas echoed with the famous economist John Maynard Keynes who argued for the gold exchange standard for India. Dr. Ambedkar had argued that the government under the gold exchange standard had an unregulated scope to manipulate the currency. Hence he argued for minting coins which could stabilise currency rates and prices.

His other doctoral work in economics was in Public Finance. In his doctoral thesis at Columbia University "The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India," he analysed the colonial financial system and the Centre-State financial relations. His emphasis was on the centralization of government finance and unproductive expenditure by the government. This exposition is also on the diarchy of centre state financial roles and duties. Ambedkar's ideas on Public Expenditure are of great significance as he advocated for qualitative analysis of 'public expenditure' as public money can be spent on unproductive expenditure. He opined that 'public expenditure' should be based on the principles of faithfulness, wisdom, and economy.

Besides his monetary writings, his ideas on the agriculture sector are also important in which he argued for collectivisation/consolidation of land holdings and mechanisation as the key to agriculture production.

All of his economic ideas need to be explored, discussed, and debated as he had a wide canvas and range of ideas, across ideologies such as state socialism to private enterprise. The conference proposed to be hosted at Gokhale Institute aims to discuss and debate his works and economic thinking and welcomes the submission of papers on the following themes.

1. Dr. Ambedkar's ideas on monetary policy: its relevance today
2. Dr. Ambedkar's ideas on Public Finance: contemporary issues and challenges
3. Dr. Ambedkar's writings on the agricultural economy and its remedies
4. Locating Dr. Ambedkar's ideas in the development paradigm

On the occasion of the centenary of Dr. Ambedkar's work "The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and its Solution" the conference also addresses the importance of it in contemporary times. A special session—panel discussion is proposed. The panel discussion will be conducted/chaired by Dr. Shankar Das, Interim-VC, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune. We expect noted economists to participate in the panel discussion.

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Day 2

Development of Scheduled Castes: Issues, Challenges and the Way Forward

The development of scheduled castes has been one of the mandates (within the framework) of our constitution. The 'state' since independence has taken to the agenda of social and economic development of scheduled castes. Protection of 'human rights' is also essential so that 'scheduled castes' can claim dignity to participate in the competition for accessing economic opportunities. This meant for creating a discrimination-free environment, especially in the 'public sphere' (i.e. institutions) so that scheduled castes are treated on par with others. In order to ensure this the 'state' has passed the 'civil rights act' and the 'prevention of atrocities act' to punish the offences of caste-based discrimination in our society. Hence, the "Annihilation of Caste" an important agenda of Dr. Ambedkar becomes crucial.

Given the above background, the development of scheduled castes has not been satisfactory. The scheduled castes lag behind several development indicators when compared with the general category. While comparing with the general category the scheduled castes development is disparate. The disparities between the general category and scheduled castes are seen in terms of land, assets, capital, enterprise, private sector employment, education—higher and professional education particularly, labour market, housing, etc. The reasons for the disparities are due to the cultural lag, lack of competence and also the element of caste discrimination that persists in the 'public sphere' and institutions. It is important to note that the cultural lag and lack of competence are also due to the historical exclusion from the avenues to access social and cultural capital. Whether the persistence of discrimination and cultural lag or a combination of both is the cause for the lack of development of scheduled castes is a matter of in-depth research. Further, sociologists have pointed out the intra-group disparities i.e. disparities within the scheduled castes. There have

been various reasons for the intra-group disparities which need in-depth probing and discussions.

The conference aims to address some of these issues and welcomes submissions on the following themes.

1. Disparities within Scheduled Castes—intra-group and along gender,
2. Educational Inequalities—especially higher and technical education,
3. Inequalities in Employment: Public, Private and Corporate Sector,
4. Inequalities in Enterprises and access to capital,
5. Towards a future of a casteless society

The conference is not limited to the above themes but submissions are welcome regarding Dr. Ambedkar's ideas and thoughts that are relevant in contemporary context.