

PREFACE

The present study analyses two very important components of the thought processes of three great Indian leaders, namely Nehru, Ambedkar and Jayaprakash Narain. These components, rather, the philosophical foundations are social justice and economic equality – the goals for which all these three nation – builders had to struggle throughout their entire lives.

All the three thinkers appeared at a period of national life which was very fateful for more than one reason. They had taken active part in India's freedom struggle movement and witnessed the nature and course of its development and culmination in the achievement of independence, the leadership that was provided by Mahatma Gandhi was, in one sense, unchallengeable. Nehru had been very close to Mahatma and was under the influence of Mahatma's charismatic leadership. His involvement in the freedom struggle movement and later on, as the country's first prime minister convinced him that the Indian society needed some reforms from within. He did not like the social evils as manifested through casteism, religious fundamentalism and other issues. His preference for socialism inspired him to devise ways and means through which the country could proceed towards an egalitarian society. That is why, his ideas on social justice and economic equality formed the very basis of his ideas and actions.

Ambedkar's position was slightly different. He did not agree with Mahatma and also Nehru on many socio-political and economic issues. Born in a family which was socially backward and economically poor, Ambedkar tried to explain social justice

and economic equality in a different way. His primary aim was to create a social order which would be free from all the views of deprivation, discrimination and denigration. In fact, he was more a man of action than a man of philosophy. He was a social activist and his entire life was a record of carrying on a mission for the reconstruction of the social order. Quite obviously, his ideas of justice or equality, be it social or economic, were guided by this consideration. He did not accept the nature of social regimentation the orthodox Hindu society had imposed and the issue of 'untouchability' became the point of attack in his theoretical as well as operational construction.

Like Ambedkar, Jayaprakash also sought to bring about radical changes in the society, starting with Socialism, he embraced, Sarvodaya and ultimately accepted 'Total Revolution' – as the methodological tool for bringing about desired changes in the society. He had always been a 'looker' for a new method although his goal remained the same – establishment of justice and equality in the society. Jayaprakash, though a close disciple of Mahatma, had to seek for new avenues to achieve his ultimate goal not because he disliked Gandhian principle but he had in mind to find out newer means to supplement what he had borrowed from Mahatma. That was perhaps the reason to see so many 'shifts' in Jayaprakash's political life. But whatever might be the reason, it goes without any doubt that he was out and out an Indian nationalist thinker whose primary aim was to reach a point from where the society would be able to eradicate the evils from all levels.

Thus viewed, there are similarities in the core areas of thought and action of Nehru, Ambedkar and Jayaprakash. There had been wide dissimilarities in other spheres – in the family background, social status, economic position, educational and cultural background, so on and so forth. But the nature of over-all impact of the then socio-political and economic environment on them was tremendous.

The entire discussion has been made in this backdrop, keeping in mind the nature of colonial condition in India. For a better understanding of their views on social justice and economic equality, their individual views, leadership, value preferences and their ideas about means and ends have been discussed at length. The study is designed on a comparative basis; as such, in stead of mere narration of chronological events, emphasis has been given on nature of their ideas and actions, conditioned, of course, by the force of circumstances. As a result, many issues, though not directly related with the focus of the present study, have been discussed, analysed and incorporated in the discussion.

A study of this nature has some uniqueness of its own. It is not a biographical sketch and hence attempts have been made to frame a theoretical/conceptual frame relating to justice and equality in general terms to see how far the ideas (as well as actions) of these three epoch-making thinkers can be fitted into this frame. The purpose has been to identify the areas of agreement and disagreement or uniformity or otherwise with the frame so developed. One particular problem that has been faced while working on this theme is that these national leaders took part in the freedom struggle movement and later on, they had taken active

role in the twin tasks of 'state-building' and 'nation-building'. So a clear line of distinction can be seen in their political life-role in the pre-independent state (colonial phase) and role in the post-independent state (post-colonial phase) in India. This is something unique and demands greater investigation. After all, there are different views about the role of the colonial and post-colonial state. Of late, there has appeared a good number of works on the nature of post-colonial state and society. The post-colonial discourse put emphasis, among other issues, on the nature and extent of 'hang-over' of the foreign role and its impact on the process of nation-building. Much depends upon the manner in which the nation-builders marginalize or empower the newly-born state to overcome the effect of this 'hang-over'. Fortunately enough, the three leaders under the present study had the far sight and tried their best to raise the level of people's perception about the course to be followed in free country – that is India.

Efforts have been made to get ideas from all the available primary sources and these have been supplemented by the secondary sources. Analysis has been made in an objective manner, placing each one of them in the backdrop of social, political and economic milieu-both in the pre and post independent phases. In spite of this effort, if there remains any shortcoming that is essentially mine.

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