



Contribution of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in Women Empowerment

KEYWORDS

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1. Introduction:

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was one of the greatest builders of modern India. He was Saviour of the down-trodden, Chief Architect of India's Constitution and greatest Pioneer of Buddhist revival in India. He was born on 14 April 1891. He was popularly known as Babasaheb an economist, jurist, politician and social reformist of India who inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and campaigned against social discrimination against untouchables. He was independent India's first law minister and the principal architect of the Constitution of India. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a prolific student, earning doctorates in economics from both Columbia University and the London School of Economics and gained a reputation as a scholar for his research in law, economics and political science. In his early career he was an economist, professor and lawyer. His later life was marked by his political activities, he became involved in campaigning and negotiations for India's independence, publishing journals advocating political rights and social freedom for Dalits and contributing significantly to the establishment of the state of India. He was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honor in 1990. He was also supporting the rights of women and labour. In ancient India, women enjoyed a very high position but gradually their position degenerated into merely objects of pleasure meant to serve certain purpose. They lost their individual identity and even their basic human right. Empowerment is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. Women's empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources. These are material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money and access to money and control over decision-making in the home, community, society, and nation and to gain 'power'. According to the Country Report of Government of India, 'Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power'. But from the time immemorial the women in this land were treated as a sort of thing.

2. Dr. B.R Ambedkar towards the Empowerment of Indian Women:

The position of women during that period was very worse. She has no rights. She cannot move nor do anything at her will Ramayana as written by Tulsi Das, Dhol, Ganwar, Shudra, Pashu, Naari - Ye sab tadan ke adhikari, In 'Manusmriti' the ancient Hindu Code-book, the status granted to women is quite visible and she was put to the lowest place of humanity as she was treated like animals and slave by the proprietors of Hindu Dharma. Such was the placement earmarked to our mothers, sisters and even great grandmothers that humanity was ashamed of. That is why Dr. Ambedkar, the father and architect of Indian Constitution, was of the firm opinion that until and unless, we defy the Hindu Dharma-Shastras, nothing much can be changed. In the name of sanskaras, the Hindu women are tied to bondages of superstitions, which they carry till their death. They are also responsible for inculcating certain wrong notions learnt through baseless traditions and preaching of the Shastras, in the budding minds of their offspring. The operations of caste both at the systemic level and at the functioning of patriarchy, the growing caste / class divide in feminist political discourse makes Ambedkar's view on women's oppression, social democracy, caste and Hindu social order

and philosophy, significant to modern Indian feminist thinking. Hence, for Indian women's movement Ambedkar provides a powerful source of inspiration to formulate a feminist political agenda which simultaneously addresses the issues of class, caste and gender in the contemporary sociopolitical set up, which still keeps conservative and reactionary values in many respects, particularly on gender relations. The writings and Speeches of Ambedkar show what values India should develop and how they would modernize its social and political institutions. Ambedkar saw women as the victims of the oppressive, caste-based and rigid hierarchical social system. That's why the so many provisions added in our Indian constitution for the empowerment of the women

3. Constitution of India and Women Empowerment:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was not only a dalit hero but also the saviour of the Indian women. He was of a view that the basic root cause of social and women injustice was gender discrimination and caste system. For Social transformation the gender and caste discriminations are hurdles. His words and deeds inspired billions of women even today to strive and struggle against injustice and inequality. His work is an inspiration of today's women to live dignified life with self esteem. Through the constitution of India, as the chairman of the constitution drafting committee, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was instrumental in granting equal status to all the citizens irrespective of sex, religion etc. Thus the women, contrary to their low status as per Hindu law books, were for the first time got equal status lawfully. Dr. Ambedkar tried an adequate inclusion of women's right in the Constitution of India these are as follows.

- Article 14- State shall not deny to any person equality before law and the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India i.e. equal rights and opportunities in political, economic and social spheres.
- Article 15- No discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, etc. It also prohibits the discrimination on the ground of sex.
- Article 15(3)- Special provision for women and children. This clause empowers the state to make special provisions for women and children.
- Article 16(1)- Guarantees equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters of employment or appointment to any post under the state.
- Article 39 – Principles of policy to be followed by the state for securing economic justice.
 - 39(a) Equal right of men and women to adequate means of livelihood.
 - 39(d) Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- Article 42- Women workers can be given special maternity relief i.e. Human conditions of work and maternity relief.
- Article 46- The state to promote with special care, the educational and economic interests of weaker section of people

and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

- Article 47- The state to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health and so on.
- Article 51A (e)- Fundamental duties to renounce practices, derogatory to the dignity of women.
- Article 243D (3), 243T (3) & 243R (4) provides for allocation of seats in the Panchayat Raj System.

4. The Hindu Code Bill and Women Empowerment:

In 1948 when the Hindu Code Bill was introduced in parliament and debated on the floor of the house, the opposition was strong against the Bill. The Hindu code bill is the first document to give rights to women. These rights not only for Dalit women but to other Hindu women also the Manu followers opposed this bill. The objectives of bill are codification of the Hindu Law and the possible amendment in it. There are seven subjects of codification of the Hindu law these are Right to Property, Order of Succession to property, Maintenance, Marriage, Divorce and Adoption, Minority and Guardianship but it was withdrawn. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar tried his level best to defend the Bill by pointing out the Constitutional principles of equality, liberty and fraternity and that in the Indian society characterized by the caste system and the necessary for a social change in which women have equality in a legal system. The women are deprived of equality and to bring equality a legal frame work is necessary for a social change in which women have equal right with men. In reality, the Bill was a threat to patriarchy on which traditional family structure, was bounded and that was the major reasons behind the opposition. Therefore, on the eve of the first elections in 1951 Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru dropped the Bill by saying that there was too much opposition. On this issue the then Law Minister Dr. Ambedkar resigned. His explanations for resignation dated 27th September 1951 show how the parliament of independent India deprived its women citizens of even basic rights. Although most of the provisions proposed by Ambedkar were later passed during 1955-56 in four bills on Hindu 'marriage' succession, minority and guardianship and maintenances and later in 1976 some changes were made in Hindu law it still remains true that the basic rights of women have yet to be restored to them even after fifty years of the working of the Indian Constitution based on the principle of liberty, equality and justice to all Indian citizens. However, the Hindu code Bill helped the resurgence of feminist movement in India. This crusade of Ambedkar to emancipate women from injustice inspires the women leader in parliament to keep the issue alive until its enactment. This was the starting point for women to recognize their position and pursue rights movement by acquiring strength from second wave feminism started in the early 1960s. Women are still fighting issues such as rape, dowry death, communalism, fundamentalism, sexual harassment, poverty, fundamentalism, sexual harassment and domestic violence.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions:

The issue of women empowerment has given almost importance at the International and National level. Before that it is mentioned here B. R. Ambedkar was a path-maker of all the women irrespective of religion, caste, creed, gender etc. He brought a new trend for uprising the women through his thoughts and beliefs. Not only women all the people of India should thankful to him because of his tremendous and everlasting steps for the development disadvantaged people. He also talked about the Muslim women about wearing veil, their religious traditions and marriages. Keeping in mind the importance of Ambedkar's views towards Indian society, the then prime minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Neheru said, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of Hindu society. In present day context, Ambedkar and his thoughts on society based on equality are yet to be realized for reconstructing

Indian society and making the life of women better. B. R. Ambedkar was a fighter for women emancipation. He fought against all kinds of discrimination against women throughout his whole life. But still discrimination against women in Indian society is overlooked. So it is our duty to fulfill the dreams of Ambedkar for a better life world of women. It may also be mentioned here that the term Social Justice will not be exercised properly if the people of India should not change their attitudes especially towards women, SCs, STs and other weaker section of the society. There are so many laws passed by the legislature for the protection of the women but there is need to change the mind set which bring the social change and social transformation in the society. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has taken the great efforts for the development of the women and other weaker section of the society.

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