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History

DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In the history of Modern India, we observed many freedom fighters, social activists and nationalists who played an important role for the welfare of society with their tireless efforts. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was also well known politician, jurist and eminent personality who worked for the dignity of women and depressed people and is known as champion of human rights. He had a mission toward equality, fraternity and humanity. Being a pioneer of social justice, he always functioned for the empowerment of women. According to him, everybody should be treated equally irrespective of caste, creed, gender and religion. That is why he started work for the liberation of woman and their rights. His aim was to make a society based on social justice. He realized the gender inequality among the Indian society and raised his voice to include them in the modern society. He was one of the greatest intellectual of India who worked for Hindu social order and focused on the situations of women in Indian nation. He expressed his views through his literary works as "The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women", and "The Women and Counter Revolution" about women' welfare. This paper analyzes the contribution of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in the emancipation of social status of women in the society. He had left valuable impression through his precious efforts in the formation of Constitution of India and Hindu Code Bill.

INTRODUCTION -

He was born on 14th April, 1891 in an untouchable 'Mahar' family of village Mhow, near Indore in the present Madhya Pradesh. He was the fourteenth child of Ramji Sakpal and Bhimbai. Bhimrao's family hailed originally from the Ambavade village located in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. He was married with Ramabai in 1907 but "in 1935, she died after a long illness. In 1948, he did his second marriage to Sharda Kabir who adopted the name as Savita Ambedkar. In 1924, He formed the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha for removing difficulties of the lower caste' people and women through raising their issues in front of the government. In 1927, He started the struggle known as Mahad Satyagraha for the welfare of untouchable which was basically related to the collection of water from a tank in the city. Here, he also burnt a copy of Manusmriti on 25th Dec., 1927. In 1930, he addressed the untouchables regarding the entry issue in Kala Ram Mandir temple at Nasik in May, 1930.

Education-

After the retirement of his father in 1897, the family moved to Mumbai where Ambedkar was the only single untouchable enrolled at Elphinstone High School. When he was 15 years old, he married a nine years old girl, Ramabai in 1906. After marriage, In 1907, he enrolled in matriculation examination and joined school. In 1912, he obtained his degree in economics and political science from University of Bombay. In 1913, he was awarded a Baroda State Scholarship that was designed to provide a financial support to him for his further studies at Columbia University. He passed his M.A. in economics in June, 1915 and presented a thesis 'Ancient Indian Commerce. In 1916, he completed his second thesis of M.A. with the title of 'National Dividend of India-A Historical and Analytical Study'. In 1916, he joined London School of Economics where he started his studies on a doctoral thesis. The title of his thesis was "The problem of the rupee: Its origin and its solution". In 1923, he completed his D.Sc degree from University Of London.

"I raise up my voice- not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot succeed when half of us are held back "- Malala Yousafzai ,Nobel Prize laureate.

Meaning Of Women Empowerment-

Woman Empowerment is used to give the power of equal opportunity in all fields to women irrespective of all caste, creeds, and colours. Women empowerment is considered to make them powerful so that they can decide what is right and wrong for them. Women empowerment is an important and

valuable step in order to improve the quality of their life. It is the process of empowering women through which the status of women in each field can be raised for the overall development. It is about positive changes for the welfare of the women and a step to promoting women's access to control over the strategic life choices that affect them. Women empowerment is related to the overall development of women.

" Women should have equal position with the men in the society "- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

Views Of Dr. Ambedkar On Women Empowerment-

Ambedkar's contribution to women's emancipation is reflected in his literary works as Revolution and Counter Revolution in Ancient India and Riddles of Hinduism. He was in favour of overall development of women. In the conference of All India Depressed Classes Women held at Nagpur on 20th July, 1940 Dr. Ambedkar explained that there could not be any progress without women. He spoke " I am a great believer in women's organization I know that what they can do to improve the condition of the society if they are convinced. They should educate their children and instill high ambition in them." He said in his speech delivered in the Constituent Assembly on 25th November 1949, "Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy." By social he means a way of life, which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as principal of life. He further said: "On 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principal of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principal of one man one value.

We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up." Ambedkar argued that the debauched status of women came from the laws of Manusmriti that denied them access to education. His work 'Rise and Fall of Hindu Women,' he quotes the law of Manusmriti (IX.18): "Women have no right to study the Vedas. That is why their sanskaars (rites) are performed without Veda mantras. Women have no knowledge of religion because they have no right to know the Vedas. The uttering of Veda mantras is useful for removing sin. As women cannot utter the Veda mantras; they are as untruth is." The fact that Dr Ambedkar envisioned true gender equality can be understood by his own words

when he said, "A son also would get a share as equal to a girl's share in the mother's property." He was influenced by the views of Mahatma Buddha on women who explained women as the seven Treasure and one thing of supreme value. He had fought for the bill which was related to women's pregnancy issue and named as 'Maternity Benefit Bill'. He criticized the traditional and conservative values related to women. He explains, "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved." As the first Law Minister of India and the Chairman of the Constituent Drafting Committee, he gave space them through legal approaches especially through Hindu Code Bill. He said to women "The paternal duty lies in giving each child a better start than its parents had. Above all, let every girl who marries stand by her husband's friend and equal and refuse to his slave. I am sure if you follow this advice, you will bring honor and glory to yourselves." Hindu Code Bill was the most valuable step taken by him provide special welfare to women of India. His main objective for women's welfare can be observed in the Hindu Code Bill. He has even remarked that his work on that Bill would be as important as his work on the Constitution itself. This Bill was for the reformation of Hindu marriage, family and status of women in Hindu Society. The main laws of that Bill are mentioned below-

1. Laws related to Dowry, Marriage and Divorce-

- (A) Caste Disabilities Act, 1850
- (B) Converts Marriage Act, 1872
- (C) Hindu Marriage Act, 1945, 1955
- (D) The Hindu Widows: Remarriage Act, 1856
- (E) Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

2. Laws related to right to Property Act-

- (A) The Hindu Inheritance (Removal of Disabilities) Act, 1928
- (B) The Hindu Women's Right to property Act, 1937
- (C) The Hindu Gains of Learning Act, 1930
- (D) Hindu Succession Act, 1956

3. Laws related to protection of rights of working women-

- (A) Factories Act, 1948
- (B) Minimum Wages Act, 1948
- (C) The Maternity Benefits Act, 1961
- (D) Equal remuneration Act, 1976

These new laws were introduced by Dr. Ambedkar for provide the equal social status to the women of India. Even Congress leaders such as Sardar Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and many others opposed such reforms but the tireless efforts of Dr. Ambedkar never can be ignored by Indian nation. Moreover, not all reforms could be incorporated because of opposition from the Hindu right but it targeted on the issues related to women. Dr. Ambedkar tried proper efforts to gave them unique identity in the society in modern time through Constitutional provisions as mentioned below-

- (A) Article-14-Equal rights and opportunities on political, economic & social level.
- (B) Article-15-Prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex.
- © Article-15(3)-Enables affirmative discrimination in favour of women. (D) Article-39-Equal meaning of livelihood and equal payment for equal work. (E) Article-42-Human conditions of work and maternity relief.
- (F) Article-47-The state to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health.
- (G) Article-51 (A)(C)-Fundamental duties to valuable practices, derogatory to the dignity of women.
- (H) Article-243D(3), 243T(3) & 243R(4)-provides for allocation of seats in the Panchayati Raj System.

Because of the above said articles, he tried to raise the status of women. Indian constitution gives equal rights to every citizen of India. Through the provisions of constitution, he tried to provide strong safeguards to each and every women of

India. According to the Constitutional's preamble, he advocated social, political and economic justice to women for their welfare. He explained his views about brotherhood, fraternity and did provisions for (a) social, economic and political justice (b) freedom of thought, expression, belief and worship (c) equality of status and opportunity (d) no discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and sex. So, through these provisions, he tried to gave the exact identity to the women in Indian society.

Initiatives Of Modern Indian Govt. For Women Empowerment-

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme-

Introduced by the Ministry of Women and Child Development with joint initiative of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of HRD with the title as "Save the Girl Child" in 2015 to generate awareness and improve the efficiency of girl child welfare with the objectives of -

- (A) Prevent gender biased sex selective elimination.
- (B) Ensure survival and protection of the girl child.
- (C) Ensure education to the girl child.

2. One Stop Centre Scheme-

It is popularly known as 'Sakhi' which was implemented on 1st April, 2015 with the Nirbhaya fund. Its objective is to provide shelters, police help desk, legal, medical counseling services for security to the girl victims of violence under one integrated roof with a 24 hours helpline with toll-free number 181.

3. Swadhar Grah-

It was launched by the Union Ministry of WCD in 2002. Its main objective was related to the rehabilitation of women living in difficult situations. It was introduced for produce shelter, food, cloths, education and medical facilities to the girl child and women. The beneficiaries are widows, prisoner women, women survivors of natural disasters and terrorist violence.

4. Working Women Hostels-

The scheme was introduced in 1972-73 for the safety of those women who leaves their homes in search of employment in big cities. Through the scheme, government is taking necessary decisions in favour of women. Working women who may be single, widowed, divorced, separated can stay here. Under job training women and girls can take benefits of this scheme. Girls up to the age of 18 years and boys up to the age of 05 years, accompanying working mother will be provided accommodation.

5. Ujjawala Scheme-

The scheme is an Initiative of Ministry of Women and Child Development which was introduced in 2016. Its objective is to prevent women and children from trafficking their commercial sexual exploitation. Government provides rehabilitation, medical, counseling and basic need services to the trafficked victims. So all of these schemes are introduced by the Govt. of India for safety, security and empowerment of women. It is the duty of every citizens to follow the schemes and ensure the welfare of each and every girl child.

6. CBSE Udaan Scheme -

The CBSE Udaan scheme for girls is introduced by the Central Board of Secondary Education with the initiative of Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The focus of this scheme is to increase the enrollment of girls in prestigious engineering and technical colleges across India. The scheme includes efforts that are made in order to enrich the learning experience with special focus of girl students who are from the economically backward sections of the society. The objective of the scheme is to provide free course material/online resources such as video study material for girl students in 11th and 12th standard. Virtual contact classes on weekends for girl students in 11th and 12th and peer

learning and mentoring opportunities for meritorious girl students is also the part of the scheme. Study helpline services to clarify the doubts of students and provision to check the performance of the girl students is also included in it.

7. Saksham Portal –

University Grant Commission (UGC) introduced the portal with the initiative to provide safe and healthy platform for women in higher education. Saksham portal is a valuable portal which focus to give strength to women in academic campuses through creating awareness for gave equal opportunity, support and redressal mechanism. The portal brings together information and provides a link on all women-oriented initiatives. The portal provides a platform for registering complaints related to violence and harassment against women in Higher Education Institutions.

CONCLUSION-

Women in India are emerging in all sectors, including politics, business, medicine, sports and agriculture. Women's empowerment is necessary for the development of nation. When women are empowered, they will give positive output to their families and it would also be valuable for nation's growth. Women educational programmes also will make the little girls confident and dedicated to the society. There should be strict laws and orders against women's violence. Govt. should introduce Health programs with the joint initiative of NGOs and Foundations etc. So they can get medical assistance and guidance regarding their health issues. With the formation of Counselling Centres, they can overcome mental depression, sex-abuse and get any advice they need to know. Gender Equality Programs are also good platform for women empowerment. Social reforms can eliminate all practices that suppress females. We should help the women to build up and understand their rights and duties so it would be a good step in favour of them. It is an urgent need for a constant effort at all levels to uproot the issue of gender biases in a focused manner. In modern India, now women are performing their best and holding high positions in each field including Army, Air Force, Navy, Medical, Sports, Engineering, Politics and in Higher Education field etc. Sarojini Naidu, Indira Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, M.C. Mary Kom (Boxing), Indira Nooyi (CEO, PepsiCo), Avanti Chaturvedi (IAF Pilot), Pratibha Singh Patil (Ex. President of India), Gita

Gopinath (Chief Economist, IMF), Sumitra Mahajan (Former Speaker of Lok Sabha) are the famous well known women in India and worldwide. It is ironic that while Ambedkar was a significant feminist leader, he is largely reduced to a 'Dalit icon'. Such a narrow view fails to encapsulate his vision of modern nation-building. As the chief architect of India's Constitution, Ambedkar redesigned the paradigms of citizenship and justice by including people from the margins, particularly women. So it is cleared that Dr. Ambedkar had fought tirelessly for the empowerment of women. The teachings and thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar are useful not only to women but also to all the people of India.

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