

Dr. B R Ambedkar Role in Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

In January 1923 a women's association was founded in Bombay with Ramabai, Ambedkar's wife as its president. In the Kalaram Temple entry satyagrahat Nashik many women participated and many of them were arrested along with men and ill-treated in jails. To face torture along with their men women also organized their Samatasainik Dal. In the round table conference hundreds of women were present for the committee meeting. At various places depressed classes women's conferences were held and they began to present their demands assertively. The encouragement of Ambedkar empowered women to speak out boldly their feelings. Dr. Ambedkar was well known about status of women, as the chairman of drafting committee, he tried to adequate inclusion of women's rights in the Indian constitution. Dr. Ambedkar believed in the strength of women's and their role in the process reform. The historic Mahadsatyagrah witnessed participation of three hundred women's with their man counterparts addressing another meeting of about 300 women. He said that "The progress of a community is measured by degree of progress which women had achieved. He gave slogan. "The Educate, Unite and Fight." Let every girl who marries stand by her husband, claim to be her husband's friend and equal, and refuse to be his slave. I am sure if you follow this advice you will bring honour and glory to your selves."

Dr. Ambedkar – the determined fighter and a deep scholar has made significant efforts to lead the society on the path of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. He was first Indian to break down the barriers in the way of advancement of women in India. He laid down the foundation of concrete and sincere efforts by codifying the common Civil Code for Hindus and other sections of the Indian society. The present paper is an attempt to highlight Dr. Ambedkar's view on women problems in pre and post independent India and its relevancy in present scenario.

Keywords: -women empowerment, Hindu code bill, perfect equality, India.

INTRODUCTION

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 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 time immemorial, the women in this land of ours were treated as a sort of thing. Her placing in the society was not at par with other human beings. She has no rights. She cannot move nor do anything at her will. In Hindu Shastras, she has been branded just like animals or some Objects of enjoyment. From the verses of 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 rung of humanity as she was treated at par with the 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

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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.

In the Women and Counter Revolution and The Riddle of Women, Ambedkar portrays the way in which Manu treated women. He pointed out that the laws of Manu on the status of women are very important in moulding the Hindu attitude and perspective (Indian perspective) towards women, perpetuated and maintained through Hindu personal laws based on shastras, caste and endogamy, i.e. the base of Indian patriarchy. He attacked Manusmriti as a major source, which legitimizes the denial of freedom, self-respect, right to education, property, divorce etc., to women by attributing a very lofty ideal to them. He observes in the law book of Manu that the killing of a woman is like the drinking of liquor, a minor offence. It was equated with killing of Sudra. Manu even advises a man not to sit in a lonely place with his own sister, daughter or even mother. Some of the other laws Manu prescribed are we already discussed about woman freedom.

It does not mean that no efforts have been made in the past to bring dignity to women. As in Europe, Christianity inaugurated the Era of equality, liberty and fraternity by preaching. That a prince and pauper, man and women, are equal in the eyes of God. There is also a very long tradition of social reforms by our saints and other social reformers but the Proprietors of the orthodox failure these efforts. In the absence of legal sanction or authority, these efforts could not sustain.

Dr. Baba Saheb spent his life for the betterment of women even involved in bad practices and professionals like prostitutions. Ambedkar created awareness among poor, illiterate women and inspired them to fight against the unjust and social practices like child marriages and devdasi system. Dr. Ambedkar tried an adequate inclusion of women's right in the political vocabulary and constitution of India. He insisted on Hindu Code bill suggesting the basic improvements and amendments in assembly. He also insisted and evoked all the parliamentary members to help to pass the bill in parliament. Eventually, he resigned for the same. Thus his deep concern and feelings for all round development of women is expressed from his each sentence and word.

Dr. B R Ambedkar and Women Rights:

Ambedkar was not only the father of Indian Constitution; he was a great freedom fighter, political leader, philosopher, thinker, economist, editor, social reformer, revivalist of Buddhism and was first Indian to break down the barriers in the way of advancement of women in India. He laid down the foundation of concrete and sincere efforts by codifying the common Civil Code for Hindus and other sections of the Indian society. He stated that women should be given all round development more importantly social education, their wellbeing and socio-cultural rights. He emphasized that each and every section of Indian women be given their due share and it is a must to maintain and protect dignity and modesty of women. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar always believed in movements led by women. He also added that if the women from all walks of life are taken in to confidence, they may play a significant role in the social reforms.

The Preamble of the Constitution of India proclaims to resolve of **WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA**, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC** and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

And to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation; **IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY** this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

Article 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39, 42, 51 A (e), of the Constitution give enough scope of the protection of women from any sort of discrimination. In the year 1976, Article 39A was inserted to remind the state to ensure that the operation of legal system promotes justice on the basis of equal opportunity and to provide for free legal aid.

Dr. Ambedkar tried an adequate inclusion of women's rights in the political vocabulary and constitution of India.

Article 14 - Equal rights and opportunities in political, economic and social spheres.

Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex.

Article 15(3) enables affirmative discrimination in favour of women.

Article 39 – Equal means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work.

Article 42 – Human conditions of work and maternity relief.

Article 51 (A) (C) – Fundamental duties to renounce practices, derogatory to the dignity of women.

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 243D (3), 243T (3) & 243R (4) provides for allocation of seats in the Panchayati Raj System.

On the direction and guidance of the constitution of India various revolutionary laws giving equal status to women with men have been enacted in order to remove all disparities, dissimilarities against women. The equal remuneration Act, 1976 and Nation Commission for Women Act, 1990.

Ambedkar's defence for women as the law minister of free India appeared in the form of **Hindu Code Bill in parliament on 11th April 1947**. He, by codifying Hindu Law in respect of marriage, divorce and succession, rationalized and restored the dignity to women. Prior to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the Hindu Law was uncodified in a large measure, though Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937 was the subject of legislative intervention. The Sharda Act is also worth mentioning. It has set the seal of authority upon that piece of social reforms, which the heads of orthodoxy were, imposing and impending.

In Hindu Code Bill, the principles of codification covered:

- (i) Right to property,
- (ii) Order of succession to property,
- (iii) Maintenance, marriage, divorce, adoption, minority and guardianship.

The Bill was a part of social engineering. It was really a first step towards the recognition and empowerment of women in India. Under these revolutionary measures, a woman will have property in her own right and be able to dispose of her property. A debate on this bill continued for more than four years and still remains inconclusive. In the words of Dr. Ambedkar, "It was killed and died unset and unsung". Here once again, the orthodoxy prevailed upon the reforms. He felt that the government led by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru was not eager to clear the Hindu Code Bill. He, therefore, tendered his resignation but continued to participate in the Parliamentary debates on the request of the Prime Minister. Later, the original Bill spilt into four different Bills with slight changes. Those were passed as The Hindu

Marriage Act, 1955; The Hindu Succession Act, 1956; The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956; and The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956.

CONCLUSION:

In the condolence message, on Ambedkar's death, in parliament, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of Hindu society". His dream of society based on gender equality is yet to be realized and therefore his thoughts are important for social reconstruction that favours women empowerment.

Much is talked about women empowerment today but it is more economic, political and health related. The issue of social empowerment of women need to be raised higher and given utmost importance then only it could complete phenomena. Dr. Ambedkar strongly believed that women empowerment can be achieved by welfare of women. The teachings and thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar are useful not only women but also all the Indian even today. His deep concern and feelings for all round development of women is expressed from his each sentence and word. In his last speech in Indian Parliament we can know his feelings and respect showed towards women. He quoted the famous thoughts of an Irish Patriot Daniel O Connal as, "No man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity. And no nation can be grateful at the cost of his liberty."

Dr Ambedkar believed in the strength of women and their role in the process of social reform. In his famous book 'Pakistan and partition of India' he expressed his views about Muslim women and their religious traditions, about wearing veil, their marriages and so on. Muslim women were suppressed under various religious traditions. Towards all the women, irrespective of their religion, casts and class, Babasaheb had a particular humanitarianism view. He frequently raised his voice against all sorts of injustice towards women.

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