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Dr B R Ambedkar's Contribution on Women Empowerment in Independent India

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Abstract

Dr. B .R. Ambedkar's the principal architect of the Indian constitution and as an emancipator of the poor and deprived. And first law minister of India. He was not only crusader against the caste system and a valiant fighter for the cause of the down trodden but also an elder statesman and a National Leader. Dr. B .R. Ambedkar's was the beacon of light for the millions of depressed, oppressed and exploited people of India. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar's mission in his life was to challenge the ideological foundation of graded system of caste hierarchy that denied equality, freedom and human dignity to woman in Hindu Society, but his drown documents as the living documents i.e. Indian constitution brings the equality by the rule of law in this nation. The paper gives closer and analytical insights into the thoughts of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar's so as to appreciate his ideological basis of political, economic and social justice towards empowerment of the women in Indian Society.

Keywords: Social justice, Hindu Social order, Women problems, Mahad Satyagraha, Hindi code Bill, Manu Smriti and Indian Constitution. Nationalists, Fraternity, Contribution, Assembly.

I. INTRODUCTION

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

Dr. Ambedkar – the determined fighter and a deep scholar, secured the highest academic honors from some of the most prestigious universities of the world. He made significant efforts to lead the society on the path of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. It is proved by a recently conducted survey by „History TV 18 and CNN IBN“ in June 2012. „Who is the greatest Indian after Mahatma Gandhi?“ is the question asked from the people of India. The contestants include, First PM Jawahar Lal Nehru, Singer Lata Mangeshkar, Industrialist J.R.D.Tata, A.P.J.Abdul Kalam, Indira Gandhi and Vallbhbhai Patel etc. The final cumulative ranking was conducted following the three ways poll; ranking by jury (online and on ground), ranking by popular votes and ranking by market research. Finally, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar declared as winner. Historian Ramchandra Guha stated on the declaration of results

“Dr.Ambedkar“s legacy has been distorted to suit particular interests. He was a great scholar, institution builder and economic theorist”
Prof. A. K. Sen has also said, “Ambedkar is my Father in Economics. He is true celebrated champion of the underprivileged. He deserves more than what he has achieved today. However, he was highly controversial figure in his home country, though it was not the reality. His contribution in the field of economics is marvelous and will be remembered forever..!” 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 brake 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 well being 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 (Shukla 2011). 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.

They have played very massive and active role to eradicate the social abuses. He insisted that every married woman must participate in her husband's activities as a friend. But she must show the courage to deny the life of slaves. She should insist on the principle of equality. If all the women follow it, they will get the real respect and their own identity (Gunjal 2012).

Objectives, Methods and Materials

The present paper is an endeavour to highlight Dr. Ambedkar's views and works for women empowerment in pre and post independent India and the relevancy of his ideas in present social scenario of India. Secondary data have been collected from internet, news papers, published papers and books.

The Hindu Code Bill

The most formidable legislative measure of modern India, sought among other reforms, to put an end to a variety of marriage systems prevailing in India and legalise only monogamous marriages. The Code also sought to confer on women the right of property and adoption which had been denied by Manu. It put men and women on an equal level in all legal matters. Dr. Ambedkar said, "I should like draw attention of the house to one important fact. The great political philosopher Burke who wrote his great book against the French Revolution said that those who want to conserve must be ready to repair. And all I am asking this House is: If you want to maintain the Hindu system, Hindu culture and Hindu society, do not hesitate to repair where repair is necessary.

This Bill asks for nothing more than to repair those parts of the Hindu system which have become dilapidated". In his letter of resignation dated the 27 September, 1951 to the Prime Minister, he wrote¹ "For a long time I have been thinking of resigning my seat from the Cabinet. The only thing that had held me back from giving effect to my intention was the hope that it would be possible to give effect to the Hindu Code Bill before the life of present Parliament came to an end. I even agreed to break up the bill and restricted it to Marriage and Divorce in the fond hope that atleast this much of our labour may bear fruit. But even that part of Bill had been killed. I see no purpose in my continuing to be a Member of your Cabinet". The Hindu Code Bill was later split in to four Bills, and the same were put on the Statue Book by Parliament.

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 are the four enactments which incorporate the ideas and principles of Hindu Code Bill formulated by Dr Ambedkar. They give independent status to women and endow them with the right of adoption, succession and property, so completely denied by Manu. Therefore, it is truism to say that it is due to Dr. Ambedkar that a large part of the Hindu social law is now on par with the legal system prevailing in advanced western countries (Ahir D.C. 1990).

The Education for Women: Ambedkar's View

“The object of primary education is to see that every child that enters the portals of a primary school does leave it only at a stage when it becomes literate and continues to be literate throughout the rest of his life.” – Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Ambedkar identified two purposes of knowledge: first, to acquire it for betterment of others and secondly to use it for one's own betterment. Ambedkar has also argued against professional learning (The British Educational System) which aims at creating a clerical nature of workers. Ambedkar emphasized on secular education for social emancipation and freedom. Education has the sole purpose to enlighten the depressed classes so as to enhance their cause of social, economic and political upliftment. The social and ethical philosophy of Ambedkar aimed at making the depressed people aware to change their thoughts and old behaviour-patterns and to move forward in the direction of unity and freedom through education. The basic theme of his philosophy of education was to inculcate the values of liberty, equality, fraternity, justice and moral character among the boys and girls of all religion, region, class and caste.

Ambedkar listed these three components as objectives for policy makers: 1. Recasting the aims and purposes of education, 2. Education as an instrument of substantive equality, 3. Women's education (Velaskar, 2012).

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

The present paper is an attempt to highlight Dr. Ambedkar's view on women problems in pre and post independent India and the relevancy of his ideas in present political and social scenario of India. Secondary data collected from internet, Government documents, newspapers, published papers, books and speeches delivered by Dr. Ambedkar in Parliament, various conferences and meetings in pre and post independent India.

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. Although Ambedkar proved, himself to be a genius and was known as a great thinker, philosopher, revolutionary, jurist – par excellence, prolific writer, social activist and critic and strode like a colossus in the Indian sociopolitical scene unto his death, his thoughts never received adequate attention in the generality of Indian society just because he was born as an untouchable. However, the contemporary social realities warrant close examination of the wide range of his topics, the width of his vision, the depth of his analysis, and the rationality of his outlook and there essential humanity of his suggestions for practical action. 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 socio political 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.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar The Champion of Women's Rights:

Dr. Ambedkar championed the cause of women as well as the miserable plight of Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes throughout his career. He discussed a number of problems of Indian women and sought for their solutions in Bombay Legislative Council, in the Viceroy's Assembly as the chairman of the Drafting Committee and also in the Parliament as the first Law Minister of Independent India.

Dr. Ambedkar was sworn in as nominated members of the Bombay Legislative Council on 18th Feb., 1927. He advised Indians to participate in the world war on behalf of the British Government. His arguments on the Maternity Benefit Bill and on Birth Critical were quite relevant to recognize the dignity of women. He vehemently supported the Maternity Bill. Women started participating in satyagrahs and also launched women's associations for untouchable women for spreading education and awareness among them. In the Mahad Satyagraha for temple entry in 1927, even caste Hindus participated. Shandabai Shinde was one such participant. In the Satyagraha it was decided to burn the Manusmriti, which humiliated women, and shudras. In the demonstration after the bonfire of the Manusmriti more than fifty Women participated. Ambedkar addressed the meeting thereafter and advised women to change their style of wearing saress, wear lightweight ornaments, not to eat meat of dead animals. It was upper caste women like Tipnis who taught them proper way of wearing sarees. At the All India Depressed Classes Women's Conference held at Nagpur on 20th July, 1940 Dr. Ambedkar emphasized 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. Ambedkar made some memorable speeches in the Round Table conference. He placed the view point of the depressed classes and pleaded for Dominion Status. His speeches created a good impression upon the British public. He served on a number of important subcommittees and prepared scheme of political safeguards for the protections of depressed classes in the future constitution of a self governing India. Ambedkar also advocated the immediate introduction of adult franchise. When Ambedkar returned to India after attending the round table conference in 1932, hundreds of women were present for the committee meetings. Since Amhedkar was well convinced about the status of women, as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee he tried and adequate inclusion of women's rights in the political vocabulary and constitution of India. Therefore, by considering women's equality both in formal and substantial senses he included special provisions for women's equality both in formal and sustainable senses he included special provisions for women while all other general provisions are applicable to them, as to men constitutional provisions.

Hence, there are Articles like 15(3), 51(A), and so on. His key work in the preparation of Indian Constitution made it to be known as a New Charter of Human Rights. He looked upon law as the instrument of creating a sane social order in which the development of individual should be in harmony with the growth of society.

Ambedkar Idea of Equality:

He incorporated the values of liberty, equality and fraternity in the Indian Constitution. Based on the belief that any scheme of franchise and constituency that fails to bring about representation of opinions as well representation of persons falls short of creating a popular government, he submitted the Constitution with a warning. 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 believed primarily in the efficacy of law and legislation, and he struggled to evolve a constitutional mechanism to fashion India of his dreams, where equality, liberty and fraternity would have an unhindered play.

In Ambedkar's vision of India, all citizens would be equal before law; they have equal civic rights, equal access to all institutions, conveniences and amenities maintained by or for the public; they possess equal opportunities to settle or reside in any part of India to hold any public office, or exercise any trade or calling, here all key and basic industries would be owned by the state.

He pleaded for special privileges and safeguards for the Dalits as scheduled Castes. In short, he demanded equality, which would not only lead, to the redressal of the part wrongs but also provide sufficient leverage, may be by way of compensation, as siabid to ensure their leveling up.-B.R. Ambedkar, his life, work and relevance.

Constitutional Provisions Support

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

Laws related to dowry, marriage and divorce

- ✓ Caste Disabilities Act,1850
 - ✓ Converts Marriage Act,1872
 - ✓ Hindu Marriage Act,1945,1955
 - ✓ The Hindu Widows-Remarriage Act,1856
 - ✓ Dowry Prohibition Act,1961
- 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
 - 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
 - Article 14 guarantees that the State shall not deny equality before the law and equal protection of the laws;
 - Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the ground of sex
 - Article 15 (3) empowers the State to make positive discrimination in favour of women and children;
 - Article 16 provides for Equality of Opportunity in matters of public employment;
 - Article 23 prohibits trafficking in human beings and forced labour;
 - Article 39 (a) and (d) enjoins the State to provide equal means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work;
 - Article 42 enjoins upon the State to make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work, and for 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) imposes a Fundamental Duty on every citizen to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- Article 243D (3) provides that not less than 1/3rd of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women, and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat;
- Article 243T (3) provides that not less than 1/3rd of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality;
- Article 243T (4) provides reservation of offices of Chairperson in Municipalities for Sc, ST, Women in such manner as the legislature of a State, may by law provide; In pursuance of the above Constitutional provisions, various legislative enactments have been framed to protect, Safeguard and promote the interests of women. Many of these legislative enactments have been in the sphere of labour laws to ameliorate the working conditions of women labour.

**Steps taken by the Government of India for Women’s Empowerment:
National Commission for Women:**

In January 1992, the National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament with the specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation, to suggest amendments wherever necessary, and safeguard the rights and entitlements of women. The Commission extends financial support to NGOs and educational institutions to conduct legal awareness programme to enable women to become aware of their rights.

Women and Political Participation:

Political equality to all children regardless of birth, sex, colour, etc is one of the basic premises of democracy. Political equality includes not only equal right to franchise but also more importantly, the right to access to the institutionalized canthers of power. Thus, political participation of women means not only using the right to vote but also power sharing, co decision making and co policy making at all levels. The active participation of women in political sphere is integral to empowerment of women and helps to build a gender equal society as well as to speed up the process of national development.

Education of Women:

Education to women is the most powerful instrument of changing their position in the society. Education also brings about reduction in inequalities and also acts as a means to improve their status within the family. In order to encourage education of women at all levels and to dilute gender bias in the provision and acquaintance of education, schools, colleges and even universities were established exclusively for women in the country. To bring more girl children, especially from marginalised BPL families, into the mainstream of education, Government has been providing a package of concessions in the form of free supply of books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for hostilities, midday meals, scholarships, free bicycles and so on. Many universities such as Mother Teresa Women University have been established for the development of Women Studies and to encourage higher education among women and their social mobility.

Self Help Groups:

Self Help Groups are small homogenous groups consisting of 1220 women from BPL families voluntarily organized to promote savings. They are self managed groups of poor women which primarily came into existence to mobilize financial resources through their own savings and lend the same amongst themselves to meet the credit needs of their members.

Women & Child Development:

Women's empowerment is an important agenda in the development efforts. There has been significant shift in approach of the district administration towards the development of women, especially the poor & the illiterate.

Working Women's Hostel:

To provide secured accommodation to the working women, Working Women's Hostel has been established at Angul & functioning since 1996. State Old Age Pension (SOAP) / National Old Age Pension (NOAP).

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Apart from the Constitutional Initiatives and Support for Women by Dr. Ambedkar.

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 –

- Prevent gender biased sex selective elimination.
- Ensure survival and protection of the girl child.
- Ensure education to the girl child.

2. One Stop Centre Scheme

It is popularly known as 'Sakhi' which was implemented on 1 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 rehabilitating women living in difficult situations. It was introduced to provide 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 leave 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 and 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 citizen 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 thth girl students in 11 and 12 standard. Virtual contact classes thth on weekends for girl students in 11 and 12 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 womenoriented initiatives. The portal provides a platform for registering complaints related to violence and harassment against women in Higher Education Institutions.

II. CONCLUSION

Dr. Ambedkar is a powerful mantra in Indian constitution that mantra changed this nation Successfully. Dr. Ambedkar's three-word formula – 'educate, agitate and organize' is a powerful tool of social change even today. Ambedkar made the oppressed lot of the depressed classes conscious of their rights, which was denied to them for centuries. Educating the downtrodden people, he thought, was a sure way to instil in them a sense of consciousness, self-respect and dignity. He wanted the people to cultivate the values of freedom and equality among themselves; it was possible only through education. This is turn would provide the necessary cultural basis for their progressive assimilation into the mainstream of an enlightened national life. Ambedkar wanted the people to cultivate the values of freedom and equality among themselves; it is possible only through education. He regarded education as a means to reach the doors of light and perception to remove the regions of darkness and ignorance. Ambedkar emphasized on secular education for social emancipation. The basic theme of his philosophy of education is:

inculcating the values of liberty, equality, fraternity, justice and moral character among the boys and girls of all shades.

By the way of his educational philosophy, I shall view that by experiencing full freedom of education without the barriers of any caste, creed and race; it is the best way for the enlightenment of human beings from ignorance.

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