

The Role Of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar For Women Upliftment

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ABSTRACT:- 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 among the most outstanding intellectual of India in the 20th century in the world. He was a scholar as much as a man of action- was in any case before becoming one. He was a great scholar, institution builder and economic theorist. He was first Indian to break down the barrier in the way of advancement of women in India. He spent his whole life for the betterment of Indian society as well as women and other under privileged sections. He builds up awareness among poor, illiterate women and inspired them to fight against the unjust and social practices like child marriages and devdasi system. 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 respect, 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's approach to women's right is exclusively different from other social reformers like Jyotiba Phule, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Mahatma Gandhi who tried to reform the Hindu society of certain outdated customs and practices without questioning the hierarchical social order. However, Ambedkar made his own view for the women rights and that has been reflected in Indian constitution. He introduced the Hindu Code Bill in the parliament and highlighted the issues about women's property right. Besides, he expressed his views about Muslim women especially about wearing veils, their religious traditions and marriages.

Keynotes : *Liberty, Equality, Privilege, social Justice*

I. INTRODUCTION

Dr. Ambedkar's life was a great saga of suffering, sacrifice and struggle. His birth as an untouchable gave him a bitter taste of caste tyranny, oppressive and unbearable agony. He was a fighter for the dignity of human and deprived people... his life were a struggle of a champion of human rights. Therefore, obviously he was a great thinker of woman and their rights. Being a pioneer of social justice, he always worked for the woman emancipation. His principle aim was to build up a society based on social justice. To secure and fulfill his dreams he thought everybody should be equal irrespective of caste, creed, gender and religion. For that reason, he works for the upliftment of woman and their rights. It is a fact that 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 instinctual 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. According to the country Report of Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one; of power." Her placing in the society was not at par with the human beings. She has no right. She cannot move nor does anything at her will. In Hindu Shastra, she has been branded just like animals or some objects of enjoyment. From the verses of Ramayana as written by Tulsi Das; Dholganwar, shudra, pasu naari- ye sab tadan ke adhikari". In Manusmiriti, the ancient Hindu Codebook, 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. 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 be changed. In the name of sanskaras, the Hindu women are tried to bondages of superstitions, which they carry until 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's. Dr. Babasaheb 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. He 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 amendment in assembly. He also insisted and evoked all the parliamentary members to help to pass the bill in parliament. Thus, his deep concern and feelings for all round development of women is expressed from his each sentence and word. Dr. Ambedkar made significant efforts on the path of liberty. He was the first Indian reformer who roots out the barriers in the way of advancement of Indian society in general and of women in particular. Above all, he was a pioneer of social justice. To secure all these goals he laid down the foundation of social justice by incorporating many factors or issues into Indian constitution through its various articles for the Hindus and other sections of the society; specially for backward communities and for under privileged classes.

He started his movement in 1920. He raised his voice against the Hindu social order and social system through his renowned journal 'Mook Nayak' in 1920 and Bahiskrit Bharat in 1927. Almost through its all issues, he spoke on the gender equality, women education and exposed the problems related to women and other depressed class. He was also a strong advocate of family planning measures for women in Bombay Legislative Assembly. Hence, for Indian women's empowerment 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 reaction 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.

II. ANALYSIS

Ambedkar was an example of inspiration of many classes of society. He spent his whole life for the betterment of Indian society as well as women and other unprivileged sections. He was also involved to root out the evil practices like prostitutions. He builds up awareness among the poor, illiterate women and inspired them to fight against the unjust and social practices like child marriages and devdasi system. Because of that, finally he added and incorporated many rights of women in the constitution of India. It is to be noted here that Ambedkar was not only the father of Indian constitution, he was a freedom fighter, political leader, philosopher, thinker, economist, editor, social reformer, revivalist of Buddhism and above all, he was the pioneer of backward classes. He stated women of Indian society should be given equal opportunity and equal share with their male counterpart.

He stated, "We shall see better days soon and our progress will be accelerated if male education is persuaded side by side with female education." Through his journal, he put due stress on the gender equality and the need for education and exposed the problems of the depressed as well as women. Ambedkar's perception of women question, emphasizing their right to education, equal treatment with men, right to property and involvement in the political process resembled the global feminists demand. As J. S. Mill expressed in the subjection of women, the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself and one of the chief hindrance to human development, and ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no privilege or power on the one side, nor disability on the other, Ambedkar also holds the same views on work for women. In January 1928, a women association was founded in Bombay with Ramabai, Ambedkar's wife, as its president. In the Klaram Temple entry satyagrah at Nasik in 1930, five hundred women participated and many of them were arrested along with men and ill-treated in jail. The encouragement of Dr. Ambedkar to empower women to speak boldly was seen when Radhabai Vadale addressed a press conference in 1931. She said, "It is better to die a hundred times than live a life full of humiliation. We will sacrifice our lives but we will win our rights." "The credit for this self-respect and firm determination of women goes to Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar believed in the strength of women and their role in the process of social reform. The historic 'Mahad Satyagrah' witnessed participation of three hundred women along with their male counterparts. Addressing another meeting of about 3000 women, he said, "I measure the progress of community by the degree of progress, which women had achieved. 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 honor and glory to yourselves." He strongly advocated for family planning measures for women in Bombay Legislative Assembly. In 1942, being a Labor Minister of Executive Council of Governor-general, he introduced a Maternity Benefit Bill. He provided several provisions in the constitution for protecting the welfare and civil rights of women. He introduced the Hindu Code Bill in the Parliament and highlighted the issues about women's property right. The Bill received strong opposition from many political leaders, in turns; Dr. Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet expressing his discontent over no acceptance of women's right by the parliament. Besides, he highlighted the issues of Muslim women. His secular perspective is known through his thoughts on Purdah (veil) system, religious conversions and legal rights for Muslim women. In short, along with the depressed class women, his thought for emancipation of all the women is expressed with same allegiance.

Gaining inspiration from Ambedkar, many women wrote on various topics. Tulsibai Bansode started a newspaper "Chokhamela". This shows how 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. Babasaheb Ambedkar exclaimed, "I strongly believe in the movements run by women. If they are truly taken in to confidence, they may change the present picture of society, which is very miserable. In past, they have played a significant role in improving the condition of weaker section and classes." He always honored women for their work and hardships. While addressing in conferences to women he could easily communicate with them as a homely person and conversation. He evoked women in the following words, "Never wear such clothes which will degrade our personality and character. Avoid wearing the jewellery on your body everywhere. It is not fare to make whole on nose and wear 'nath'. In this, he condemned all the bad traditions, habits, and ways of life, which made life difficult and complex. Moreover, even the illiterate women followed his advice sincerely. Dr. Ambedkar spent his life for the betterment of women even involved in bad practices and professions like prostitutions. The greatest example of it was seen in Kamathipura. There was a person named David who was the mediator working in brothel. He left his profession persuaded by the thoughts and teaching of Dr. Ambedkar. He evoked the entire prostitute to give up their profession and lead the life of honor. In the Manu Smriti, Manu not only shows contempt for women but also goes on to degrade them as slaves, devoid of intellect; denies them the right of education and the right to property and forbids hem from performing sacrifices.

Being India's first Law Minister and chairman of drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Ambedkar thought it appropriate, rather his duty, to free women from the age old thralldom by reforming the Hindu social laws created by Manu. He, therefore, took initiative to draft and introduce the Hindu Code Bill in the Constituent Assembly. Dr. Ambedkar tried an adequate inclusion of women's right in the political vocabulary and constitution of India. Few examples are as below

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

Article 15- prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex.

Article 15(3) – Empower the state to make positive discrimination in favor of women and children

Article 16- provides for equality of opportunity in matter of public employment

Article 23- prohibits trafficking in human beings and forced labor

Article 39(a) and (d) – enjoins the state to provide equal means of livelihood and equal pay 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 promote them from social injustice and all forms of exploitations.

Article 47- The state to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health

Article 51 A (e) – imposes a Fundamental Duty on every citizen to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women

Article 243 D(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 seat to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat;

Article 243 T(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 seat to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality;

Article 243 T(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 sphere of labor laws to ameliorate the working conditions of women labor.

Dr. Ambedkar introduced Hindu Code Bill in 1948 which was revolutionary in confinement of proprietary rights to women but when not accepted by the parliament, he resigned from the ministerial post from the cabinet in 1951. In parliament Dr. Ambedkar had 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 Hindu system which have become dilapidated."

The Hindu Code Bill was later split into 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. 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 legalize only monogamous marriage. 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. 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 a 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)

Gender equality, gender mainstreaming, networking, leaderships, financial freedom is the essential aspects of women empowerment. Dr. Ambedkar realized this at his time and included in the process of social reforms. He started involving women in the struggle, for eradication of caste systems and upliftment of the unprivileged sections. He realized that this could not be achieved without liberating the women themselves. He motivated women and addressed them to participate in struggle against caste prejudices. During the Mahad Tank struggle, women marched in the procession along with men. He encouraged women to organize themselves. Impressed by the large gathering of women at women's conference held at Nagpur on 20 July 1942, he told women to be progressive and abolish traditionalism, ritualism and customary habits, which were detrimental to their progress. Empowerment envelops developing and building capacities of individual, communities to make them part of the mainstream society. Education is the only mean by which societies grow up from oppression to democratic participation and involvement. It is a powerful tool for empowerment of individual. Over the generation, marginalized sections and women in Indian society were denied the opportunities without any discrimination to all the citizens of India.

The British rule abolished de stable practices like sati but passed several laws to protect customs and traditions of Hindus. Dr. Ambedkar is an architect of India Constitution. He provided strong constitutional safeguards to women. The Special Marriage Act sets four essential conditions for a valid marriage's. Monogamy, sound mind, marriageable age and parties should not be too closely related. There are some grounds available to the wife only, both in Hindu and the Civil marriages provided to the women. Violent and forceful abortions and abortions without consent of women are crime under section 313.

Dr. Ambedkar's approach to women's right is exclusively different from other social reformers like Jyotba Phule, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Mahatma Gandhi who tried to reform the Hindu society of certain outdated customs and practices without questioning the hierarchical social order. However, Ambedkar made his own view for the women rights and that has been reflected in Indian constitution. His goal was to make a society based on social justice. To secure this goal, Ambedkar has given equal status to women on par with men by providing many provisions in the Indian Constitution. To him, sexual discrimination should be root out from the society and everybody should get equal opportunity in the society. The Preamble of Indian constitution guarantees social and economic justice to women and that is because of Ambedkar contribution. In the preamble, it is mentioned: (i) social, economic and political justice, (ii) freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, (iii) equality of status and opportunity and (iv) fraternity assuring dignity of the individual and national unity to all the citizens of India without any discrimination of caste, creed or sex.

Besides, Dr. Ambedkar expressed his views on the state of life of all women. He stated that women must be treated equally and given equal prestige. 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. 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 thought of an Irish Patriot Daniel O Connal, as, "No man can be grateful at the cost of his honor, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity. And no nation can be grateful at the cost of his liberty." In his famous book 'Pakistan and partition of India' he expressed his views about Muslims 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, caste, and class, Ambedkar had a particular humanitarianism view. He frequently raised his voice against all sorts of injustice towards women. Keeping in mind the importance of Ambedkar's view towards Indian society, the then prime minister of India Pandit Jawarlal Nehru said, "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of Hindu society."

III. CONCLUSION

It may be mentioned here that B. R. Ambedkar was a path-finder of all the women irrespective of religion, caste, creed et. He brought a new trend for uprising the women through his thought and belief. Not only women but also all the people of India should thankful to him because of his tremendous and everlasting steps of development works. He also talked about the Muslim women about wearing veil, their religious traditions and marriages. He was a fighter for women emancipation. He fought against all kinds of discrimination against women throughout his whole life. Still discrimination against women in Indian society is

overlooked. Therefore, 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 specially towards women and other weaker sections, In that context, to prevail social justice in the society, everyone should work within the constitutional framework and the concerned state government or centre government should make rules, regulations for the engagement and involvement of people from different categories so as to ensure social justice. In this way, the dreams of Ambedkar would be fulfilled.

I am also to be narrated here that, at present the Indian women have progressed a lot in various parts of their life although they are still suffering from various social evils and discrimination. It is a fact that the glorious development of Indian society, the Indian women have march forward to the development process and somewhere treated equally with their male counterparts but it is yet to be realized by the people of India that women should have given the e equal rights and opportunities with men so as to establish a shining India where women can live freely and equally irrespective of religion, caste, creed etc. In present day context, Ambedkar and his thoughts on society based on equality are yet too realized for reconstructing Indian society and making the life of women better. At last, I would like to conclude here by quoting Dr. B.R.Ambedkar's slogan on Unity, Education and Agitation

Unity is meaningless without the accompaniment of women. Education is fruitless without educated Women and Agitation is incomplete without the strength of women.”

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