



Dr. Ambedkar's contribution to Indian women and Gender Equality

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Abstract

Women faced terrible problems since Vedic period due to our man dominated society. Even after independence many rituals misguided the status of women. Child marriage, Sati Pratha, Prada pratha, restriction to widow remarriage, widows exploitation, devdasi system etc. These all makes big hurdle in their social, economic and personal development. During British rule in India and after independence Dr. B.R. Ambedkar fought for the rights of women and made such provisions in Constitutions of India so that women must be treated equally in the society. The provisions of equality to women made for all streams. Today women feel self confident and self dependent only because of work of Dr. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar a freedom fighter and a scholar who made tremendous efforts to lead the society on the path of liberty, equality and fraternity. He was the first who broke down the barriers in the way of advancement of women in India. He laid down the foundation of sincere efforts by codifying the common civil code for the Hindus and the sections of the Indian society. Dr. Ambedkar's first step towards his movement was started during 1920. He launched a journal called Mook Nayak in 1920 and Bahiskrit Bharat in 1927, to eradicate the Hindu social order and laws. He put focused on the upliftment of depressed as well as women. His main target was to spread the importance of gender equality and exposed the problems of the oppressed and women. Dr. Ambedkar spent his whole life for the betterment of women. He created awareness among poor, illiterate women and inspired them to fight against the unjust and social practices like child marriage, devdasi, prada pratha and so on. He always believed in movements laid by women. He also added that if the women from all walks of life are taken into confidence, they may play a significant role in the social reforms. Women can only eradicate the social abuses. He stated that every married women must participate in her husband's activities as a friend. But she must show the courage to deny the lives of slaves. She should insist on the principle of equality.

Introduction:

Dr. Ambedkar was the chief architect of Indian constitution, a profound scholar, a daring leader overall a multifaceted personality, worked for the upliftment of downtrodden section of Indian society. He also worked through his life to challenge the legitimacy of orthodox Hindu social order that upheld iniquitous gender relations in an institutionalized manner. Dr Ambedkar was a scholar leacher lawyer parliament administrator journalist publicist negotiator agitations leader and divole. Dr Ambedkar thought was that the society must be based on reason



and not on the basis of caste system, he said that education, inter caste marriage and by inter-dining only and can eradicate caste system and patriarchy maintained by endogamy. The gender equality genders mainstreaming financial freedom are the essential aspects of women empowerment. Dr Ambedkar realize this at his time and included in the process of social reformers.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Everywhere discrimination against women is noticed. The type, frequency, intensity and control of violence may vary from time to time or place to place but it present everywhere. Discrimination has affected women`s life from birth to death. They are treated as objects. They are beaten, tortured, injured, burned. Female foeticide, abduction, domestic violence, rapes, gang raped, sexual harassment in offices and enterprises etc. The crime against the women remain similar everywhere wheather its urban or rural.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Status of women degraded over the time as in the early vedic period women enjoyed equal status with men. There were several names of women sages and seers notably Gargi and Maitrey during Rigveda and Upanishads. Later on the status of women detoriate approximately from 500 B.C. The situation get worsened with invasion of Mughl`s and later on by European invaders which still keep on deteriorating whether it`s Sati Pratha or dowry or female foeticide or intercaste marriages etc. Women have to face rituals based on gender in every stage of life. She is supposed to suffer all the tortures and discrimination in her life just because she born as .a female. Even after73 years of independence in India we could not achieve that dream which Dr. Ambedkar had dreamed regarding the condition of Indian women. In 21st century also still Indian women are vulnerable and pitiable. Only handful of women earn name in the society. Indian women still struggle for their basic human rights that is right to have proper sanitation. right to have toilets, right not to give dowry, safety, proper education, right to property, burial rights etc. Dr. Ambedkar focus light on the sharp awareness of the discrimination against women.

The problem of discrimination against women in India is of various kind. Due to the norms, apathy or ignorance many cases of violence against women remain unreported. On many occasions women as victimized by all types of discriminations, deprivations and obstructions in goal achieving responses. Foeticide female child killing, bride burning, dowry-murder, wife battering, abduction, eve teasing, verbal abuses and rape are such violence against women are almost in every type of society. These incidents may occur in the family, offices, agriculture, fields, industries orin public places. National Family Health Survey3(2005-06) of the Government of India found that37.2% women have experienced violence in the form of physical abuse by none other than their own husband. The surveys also reveals that spousal violence is more prevalent in rural ares(40.2%) than in urban areas(30.2).



DR.AMBEDKAR'S VIEW

Manusmriti', the ancient Hindu code book is the text illustrates on discrimination against women in which the status of women granted is to the lowest of humanity. She was treated like animals and slaves by the proprietors of Hindu Dharma. That's why Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was confirmed with his opinion that unless and until by applying dynamite, the Hindu Dharma shastra's are blown up, nothing is going to happen. The Hindu woman tied up with the bondage of superstitions, in the name of sanskara's which they carry till their death. Ambedkar's journal, Mooknayak(1920) and Bahiskrit Bharat(1927) he tries to show how the gender relations and differences are constructed by Hindu Brahminical order which make women sure to confirm stereotype feminine behaviour, suited only to a life of domestic and family responsibilities.

ROLE OF DR.AMBEDKAR IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Dr. Ambedkar thought that society must be based on reason and not on the basis of caste system. Dr. Ambedkar realized that the gender equality, gender mainstreaming, financial freedom are essential aspects of women empowerment. The education, intercaste marriage and inter-dining are weapons by which one can eradicate the caste system. He motivated women and addressed them to participate in the struggle against caste prejudices. He started involving women in the struggle, for the eradication of the caste system and upliftment of the underprivileged sections. He came to know that this could not be achieved without liberating the women themselves. A large gathering of women marched in the procession along with men during the Mahad Tank Struggle. He encouraged women to organize themselves. Women's conference held at Nagpur on 20th 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 individuals, communities to make them part of the mainstream society. Education is the only means by which societies grow out of oppression to democratic participation and involvement. It is a powerful tool for empowerment of individuals. Over the generations, marginalized sections and women in Indian society were denied the opportunity to education. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar put all his efforts to guarantee the educational opportunities without any discrimination to all the citizens of India.

As we all know that Dr Ambedkar is an architect of Indian constitution. He provided strong constitutional safeguards to women. The special marriage, i.e. monogamy sound mind marriageable age and the parties should not be too closely related. Under section 313 violent and forceful abortion and without consent of women are crimes. The Hindu Succession Act gives male and female heirs equal rights to inheritance. Dr. Ambedkar introduced the Hindu Code Bill in 1948. It was revolutionary in confinement of proprietary rights to women. He resigned from the ministerial post from cabinet in 1951. Dr. Ambedkar started his movement in 1920. He said, "we shall see better days soon and our progress will be greatly accelerated if male education is persuaded side by side with female education..." Mooknayak in 1920 and Bahiskrit Bharat in



1927 was the journal launched by Ambedkar for his fight against Hindu social order. Gender equality and need for education and exposed the problems of the depressed as well as women in his journal. 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 globe feminists demand. As J. S. Mill expressed in the subjection of woman, the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself and one of the hinderance 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 side, Ambedkar also holds the same views on work for women. Ramabai, as a president of women's association founded in 1928. In 1930."Kalraam Temple Entry satyagraha at Nasik, five hundred women were participated and many of them were arrested along with men and ill-treated in jails. Radhabai Vadale addressed après conference in 1931 where encouragement of Dr. Ambedkar to empower women to speak boldly was seen. She said, it is better to die a hundred times than live a life full of humiliation. She said we will sacrifice our life but we will win our rights. The credit for this self respect and firm determination goes to Ambedkar. Dr Ambedkar believed in the strength of women and their role in the process of social reform. The historic Mahad Satyagraha witnessed participation of three hundred women along with their male counterparts. Addressing 3000 women, he said," I measures the progress of community by the degree of progress which 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 honour and glory to yourselves. He introduced a Maternity Benefit Bill in 1942 when he was a Labour Minister of Executive Council of Governor General.

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 all men and women on an equal level in all legal matters. Dr. Ambedkar was inspired by a 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. The same he wanted to say for the Hindu Code Bill. If we want to maintain the Hindu system, Hindu culture and Hindu society, do not hesitate to repair where repair is necessary. This Bill wants only to repair those parts of the Hindu system which have become dilapidated. He resigned on 27 september, 1951 and wrote to the Prime Minister; he wrote, 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 at least 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 we 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 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)

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

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 sections of people and 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) and 243R(4) provides for allocation of seats in the Panchayati Raj System.

CONCLUSIONS

The Dr. Ambedkar's view on social justice included unity, equality, equal worth to men and women tolerance, human treatment to all classes and castes and right to dignity to all citizens, the education, property should be distributed equally and emphasized on fraternity and emotional integration. He wanted to remove social injustice through law, morality and public conscience. Societal framework which meant to make women inferior or lower should be eradicated in all possible ways. His teachings and thoughts are useful for all the women of different caste, class and religion. In his last speech in Indian Parliament we can know his feelings and respect showed towards women. He quoted the famous thoughts of Irish Patriot Daniel O'Connell 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 liberty.' There are numbers of laws for protection of women. But implementation is not done. Still women are



oppressed and depressed. The judicial reform, police reform and law reform and order are needed for protection of women. Education is the main source to empower women and spread gender equality.

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