

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Women Empowerment

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Abstract

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was not only the father of Indian Constitution; he was a great freedom fighter, political leader, philosopher, thinker, writer, economist, editor, and a revivalist for Buddhism in India .Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar always believed in the movements led 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. 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. He was completely aware of the natural and inner strength of women. Babasaheb insisted on the education of girls and women. He strongly believed that if a boy gets education, he is the only person to get educated in a family. Perhaps, if a girl child is educated in a family, the whole family is benefitted. Women were struggling hard more than men of the backward classes. Babasaheb found the only weapon to fight against all sorts of abuses in society which was educating women along with men. He made an announcement, Learn get together and Fight. Women have the great duty of inspiring men . He believed that every successful person has a woman behind him.. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar exclaimed, .I strongly believe in the movements run by women. If they are truly taken into confidence, they may change the present picture of society which is very miserable.

Research Paper

Ambedkar was not only the father of Indian Constitution; he was a great freedom fighter, political leader, philosopher, thinker, writer, economist, editor, and a revivalist for Buddhism in India . He was also the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of Indian Constitution . Ambedkar was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratan , India's highest civilian award, in 1990. In 2012 he was chosen greatest Indian in a nationwide poll held by History TV and CNN-IBN. The first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru said; “ Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of the Hindu society”. Dr. ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women. He stated that women should be given all round development importantly social education, their well being and socio-cultural right. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar always believed in the movements led 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. 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. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar wore down himself for the upliftment of downtrodden and

untouchables. He taught against untouchability and to get the backwards their rights to live with respect and honour. He worked for liberty, fraternity and equality of all, especially taking the backward classes in the main stream of society and nation. He was completely aware of the natural and inner strength of women. In difficult situations they are not only defensive but also offensive. Therefore, Babasaheb insisted on the education of girls and women. He strongly believed that if a boy gets education, he is the only person to get educated in a family. Perhaps, if a girl child is educated in a family, the whole family is benefitted. In all, he continuously persisted on the education of girls and women for the all-round development and progress of all the suppressed classes. The backward classes were living the life of animals. They were totally neglected in society. Women were struggling hard more than men of the backward classes. Babasaheb found the only weapon to fight against all sorts of abuses in society which was educating women alongwith men.

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. Women have the great duty of inspiring men to keep themselves away from all sorts of addictions. He believed that every successful person has a woman behind him. In an Indian history and culture there are many examples of women who served society and led it in sun and rain with equal patience and courage. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar exclaimed, .I strongly believe in the movements run by women. If they are truly taken into 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 really always honoured women for their work and hardships. His western education and deep understanding of the western philosophies helped him to evolve as a visionary who had developed clear ideas for the emancipation of the dalits and women in India. He could translate many of his ideas and visions into specific policies and institutions during his stint as the architect of Indian constitution and as the law minister of India.

Dr. 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 relation. 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 being. She has no rights. She cannot move nor do anything at her will. In Hindu Shastras, she has been branded just like animals. From the verses of Ramayan as written by Mr. Tulsi Das, " Dhol, ganwar, shudra, pashu, naari- Ye sab tadan ke adhikari," one may easily draw inferences as to what status has been granted to our mothers. 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 grand mothers that the heads of humanity bend upon down with shame .

That is why Dr. Ambedkar was of the firm opinion that until or unless, by applying dynamite, the Hindu Dharma-shastras are not blown up, nothing is going to happen. In the name sanskaras, the Hindu women are tied up with the bondage of superstitions, which they carry till their death. They are also responsible for inculcating these wrong notions learnt by them through baseless traditions and preaching of the Shastras in the budding minds of their offspring. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has tried 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 the Hindus and the principle is capable of extension to other sections of the Indian society. Prior to these efforts of Dr. Ambedkar, the destiny of the Indian women depended upon the wrong notions and perceptions chalked out by the proprietors of orthodoxy. The operation of caste both at the systemic level and at the functioning of patriarchy, the growing caste/class divide in feminist political discourses makes Ambedkar's views on women's oppression, social democracy, caste and Hindu social order and philosophy, significant to modern Indian feminist thinking. Ambedkar saw women as the victims of the oppressive, caste-based and rigid hierarchical social system. He believed that socio-cultural forces artificially construct gender relations, especially by Manusmriti and Hindu religion. 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 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. According to Ambedkar, the society must be based on reason, and not on atrocious traditions of caste system. Since Ambedkar was well convinced about the status of women, as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, he tried an 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 while all other general provisions are applicable to them, as to men. Hence, there are Articles like 15(3), 51(A)(c), 16 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 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 democracy he means a way of life, which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as principles 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 in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle 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 principle of one man one value.

The preamble of the constitution of India proclaims to resolve of 'We, the people of India' to secure to its citizen justice, social, economic, and political as well as liberty and equality of status and opportunity. Article 14, 15, 15(3), 39, 42, 51A(e), 16 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. i.e. 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 - Just and 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 the weaker section of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Article 47 - The state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health and so on.

Ambedkar's defense for women as the Law Minister of free India appeared in the form of the Hindu Code Bill in Parliament on 11th April 1947, the Bill could not withstand the opposition from the Hindu orthodoxy. Their major argument was that the Bill was an attempt at the demolition of the entire structure and fabric of Hindu Society. The very

foundations not only of one pillar but of all the pillars on which the Hindu society rests are shaken. In reality, the Bill was a threat to patriarchy on which traditional family structure, was bounded and that was the major reason behind the opposition. The Bill sought to abolish polygamy among the Hindus. It proposed the right to property and the right to divorce for women. The Bill tried to codify the Hindu Laws which were in a scattered form. He proposed to reform these laws on seven different matters, viz., 1. the right to property of a deceased Hindu dying intestate to both male and female, 2. the order of succession among different heirs to the property of a deceased dying intestate, 3. the law of maintenance, 4. marriage, 5. divorce, 6. adoption, and 7. minority guardianship. Despite the very moderate nature of Bill, Dr. Ambedkar could not get it passed due to its opposition by many conservative caste Hindus. In protest against the failure of the Bill, Dr. Ambedkar resigned his seat in the cabinet. Although, his efforts did not, entirely, go waste. Later, the original Bill was split 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. In recent past, a lot of hue and cry is being made over 'Women's Reservation Bill' by the different sections of the Indian society, different political or apolitical organizations but nobody seems to be honest in its perspectives. The political empowerment is a must for the all round development of the women, but as in the case of dalit politicians and legislators, our efforts may prove futile. The cases of domestic violence, female foeticide, rapes, gang-rapes,

sexual harassment in offices and enterprises etc. galore and there is hardly any day pass when such incidence of victimisation is not reported in print or electronic media.

Like Ambedkar, The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001, also admits, "The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to social and economic structure and practices. Consequently, the access of women, particularly those belonging to weaker sections including Scheduled Castes/ Tribes Other Backward Classes and Minorities to education, health, and productive resources, among others is inadequate. Therefore, they remain largely marginalised, poor and socially excluded". The Policy includes creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential, Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation, strengthening legal systems aimed at limitation of all forms of discrimination against women.

We must concentrate on imparting social education before giving any concrete shape to their political empowerment to the women. Without academic and social education, the political empowerment of women in certain parts of the country had proved futile. In Panchayat Raj set up in U.P., Bihar and elsewhere in the country, the uneducated women are subjected to exploitation at the hands of government machinery. It will not be prudent on our part to restore the rights of the women belonging to the affluent section of the society only. Therefore, our efforts should be directed towards all round development of each and every section of Indian women by giving

their due share. without removing social stigma, no progress or development could be achieved.

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