

## DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S SIDE AS ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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### ABSTRACT

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was a champion of human rights and advocated for the dignity of women and the oppressed. He was a social justice pioneer who worked tirelessly to empower women. According to him, everyone should be treated equally, regardless of caste, creed, gender, or religion. He began advocating for women's liberation and rights. His goal was to create a society built on social justice. He recognized gender inequality in Indian society and advocated for their inclusion in modern society. Dr. Ambedkar provided many provisions in the Indian constitution to strengthen and elevate women's positions, giving them equal status with men.

The ideas and perspectives of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar regarding women's empowerment are the main subject of this paper. It will teach us about Dr. Ambedkar's efforts to improve the lives of Indian women. It examines Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's role as a thinker and social reformer in advancing women's social status.

**KEYWORDS:** *Women empowerment, Women education, Awareness and Rights.*

### INTRODUCTION

“What are we having this liberty for? We are having this liberty to reform our social system, which is full of inequality, discrimination and other things, which conflict with our fundamental rights.” – Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

**Life & Background:** April 14, 1891, marked the birth of Dr. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar in Mhow, a military cantonment city in Central Province, India. His father, Ramji Sakpal Maloji, was a Subedar in the army, while his mother, Bhima bai Sakpal, was a house wife. Babasaheb belonged to the Mahar, a lower caste who were considered untouchables. However, his father, a Junior Commissioned Officer in the army, was able to provide education for their children despite societal opposition. Ambedkar was treated as 'untouchable' at school alongside other Dalit children. They were not permitted to sit with other so-called upper-caste children, but they were permitted to drink from communal water vessels. Ambedkar received his early education in Bombay before moving to the United States for graduate studies and research. He earned his doctorate from Columbia University in New York. He also studied at the London School of Economics and completed master's and doctoral degrees there. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's role as chairperson of the Constitution Drafting Committee left an imprint on the country's social tapestry after independence, shaping India's socio-political fabric to this day. Without him, India would most likely have been a much more unequal and unjust place. He attempted to forge a new moral and social foundation for India, as well as a political order based on constitutional democracy that is sensitive to the disadvantaged, whether inherited from the past or created by prevailing social relations. Dr. Ambedkar possessed the highest academic credentials for an Indian of his time, and his erudition and scholarship were widely recognized.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is widely recognized as the 'Father of the Indian Constitution'. However, after reading some books about his works and his vision for India, it will be clear that he was a versatile genius who was also a serious scholar, good teacher, efficient lawyer, devoted leader, committed writer, distinguished educationist, social rebel and strong debater. He was a constitutionalist, administrator, emancipator, statesman and champion of human rights.

### OBJECTIVES, METHODS AND MATERIALS

This paper aims to showcase Dr. Ambedkar's perspectives and contributions towards women's empowerment in India, as well as the current social context. Secondary data was gathered from the internet, newspapers, published papers and books.

## ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Dr. Ambedkar examined women's status in the religion and other faiths in great detail, shedding light on the denial of women's rights and, ultimately, on the status of the individual. According to him, the purdah system harms Muslim women by denying them mental and moral nourishment. Dr. Ambedkar advocated for Buddhism to grant women the same status as men and to recognise women's ability to achieve spirituality. Dr. Ambedkar's adoption of Buddhism promoted equality for underprivileged groups, including women. Dr. Ambedkar's refusal to worship Hindu deities helped liberate women from oppressive customs, rituals, and superstitions.

### DR. AMBEDKAR'S PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION

*"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

Empowerment encompasses the development and building of individual and community capacities in order to integrate them into main stream society. Education is the only means by which societies transition from oppression to democratic participation and involvement. It is a powerful tool for empowering individuals.

Ambedkar a futuristic, modern, educated and revolutionary humanitarian, identified two purposes for knowledge: *first*, to acquire it for the benefit of others, and *second*, to apply it for one's own benefit. Ambedkar has also argued against professional learning (The British Educational System), which seeks to instill a clerical nature in workers. Ambedkar emphasised secular education for social emancipation and freedom. Education exists solely to enlighten the oppressed classes in order to advance their cause for social, economic and political upliftment. Ambedkar's social and ethical philosophy aimed to make depressed people aware of the need to change their thoughts and old behavior patterns in order to move forward towards unity and freedom through education. His education philosophy aimed to instill values such as liberty, equality, fraternity, justice and moral character in students from all religions, regions, classes and castes.

Ambedkar listed these three components as goals for policymakers:

1. Redefining education's goals and purposes.
2. Using education to promote substantive equality.
3. Women's Education (Velaskar, 2012).

Dr. Ambedkar believed that education was an important tool for women's emancipation. They were not permitted to pursue education along side lower castes. His speeches demonstrate strong concern for women's empowerment. Speaking at the Second All-India Depressed Classes Women's Conference in Nagpur on July 20, 1942, he stated:

*"I measure the progress of community by the degree of progress which women have achieved. I shall tell you a few things which I think you should be in mind. Learn to be clean; keep free from all vices. Give education to your children. Instill ambition in them. Inculcate on their minds that they are destined to be great. Remove from them all inferiority complexes."*

Dr. Ambedkar emphasized education as a means of advancing women and our country. Ambedkar believed in their emancipation and advised them to educate their children. He emphasizes the importance of cultivating the mind and spirit of self-help in both men and women. He wants them to realize that they bear a great responsibility for properly educating their children. But at the same time, he advised them to send their children to school. To him, education is the most important factor in shaping the lives of all men, women, and children.

Ambedkar observes, *"Education is as necessary for females as it is for males. If you know how to read and write, there would be much progress. As you are, so your children will mould their lives in a virtuous way, for*

*sons should be such as would make a mark in this world."* He wished to free women from their suffering and economic dependency. Ambedkar advocated for women's educational rights, equality and the right to property in order to provide them with economic freedom and rights. To educate women, he proposed coeducation with men. He believed that education would enable women to think independently, resulting in intellectual and mental development.

### **AMBEDKAR'S CONCEPT OF QUALITY**

He incorporated the values of liberty, equality and fraternity into the Indian constitution. He submitted the Constitution with a warning because he believed that any scheme of franchise and constituency that fails to represent both opinions and people falls short of creating a popular government. In his speech to the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949, he stated that *"political democracy cannot last unless it is based on social democracy."* By social, he means a way of life that values liberty, equality and fraternity as fundamental principles. He went on to say: *"On January 26, 1950, we will enter a life of contradictions. There will be equality in politics, as well as inequality in social and economic life. In politics, we will uphold the principles of one man, one vote and one value. Because of our social and economic structures, we will continue to deny the principle of one man, one value. We must resolve this contradiction as soon as possible, or those who suffer from inequality will destabilize the political democracy structure that this Assembly has worked so hard to establish."*

Ambedkar worked to create the constitutional framework of his dreams—an India where equality, liberty, and fraternity would play out unhindered—because he primarily believed in the effective power of law and legislation. In Ambedkar's vision of India, all citizens are equal before the law; they have equal civic rights; they have equal access to all institutions, conveniences, and amenities maintained by or for the public; and they have equal opportunities to settle or reside in any part of India in order to hold any public office or exercise any trade or calling; and the state owns all key and basic industries. He advocated for special rights and protections for Dalits as scheduled castes. To put it briefly, he called for equality, which would guarantee their levelling up and provide enough leverage—possibly in the form of compensation—to ensure that the wrongs of the past were righted. - B.R. Ambedkar: His Life, Work and Relevance.

### **AMBEDKAR AND WOMEN RIGHTS AND JUSTICE**

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's approach to women's rights differs from other social reformers such as Jyotiba Phule, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Mahatma Gandhi, who aimed to change outdated customs and practices in Hindu society without challenging the hierarchical social order. However, Ambedkar developed his own view of women's rights, which is reflected in the Indian constitution. His goal was to create a society founded on social justice. To achieve this goal, Ambedkar included many provisions in the Indian constitution that grant women equal rights as men. According to him, sexual discrimination should be eliminated from society and everyone should have equal opportunities.

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution guarantees social and economic justice to women, thanks to Ambedkar's contributions. The preamble mentions:

- (i) Social, economic and political justice;
- (ii) Freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
- (iii) Equality of status and opportunity; and
- (iv) Fraternity, which ensures the dignity of the individual and national unity to all Indian citizens without regard for caste, creed, or gender.

He had worked hard not only for the untouchables, but also for women's rights and advancement. Dr. Ambedkar

criticized traditional, conservative values. He strongly condemned the treatment of women in Indian society. He believed that women should be treated equally with men and have the right to an education. He lamented that the Hindu religion has denied women the right to property.

Dr. Ambedkar introduced the Hindu Code Bill in Parliament to promote women's rights, including establishing monogamy as the sole legal system, granting women the right to property and adoption, restitution of conjugal rights, and judicial separation. The bill aimed to unify the Hindu code with progressive and modern ideas. His concerns were not limited to Hindu women alone. He observed that Muslim women were not receiving their due under Islamic Shariah because they were influenced by the Indian environment. He also criticized the denial of Muslim women's divorce rights<sup>41</sup>. He lamented the tragic plight of Indian Muslim women, saying:

"No Muslim girl has the courage to repudiate her marriage, although it may be open to her on the ground that she was a child and that it was brought about by persons other than her parents. No Muslim wife will think it proper to have a clause entered in to her marriage, contract reserving her right to divorce. In that even her fate is, 'once married always married' she cannot escape the marriage-tie however irksome it may be. While she cannot repudiate her marriage, the husband can always do it without having to show any cause."

Ambedkar even opposed the Indian Muslim purdah system, which he believed was incompatible with the true purdah system of Islam. He believed that the purdah system causes a form of segregation in Muslim women, which has a negative impact on their physical constitution and deprives them of a healthy social life. Isolating males and females will undoubtedly have a negative impact on men's morality. He believed that a system based on worth could not justify the permanent denial of women's educational and religious rights.

## **CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND WOMEN**

The Indian Constitution contains several provisions that ensure equal rights and opportunities for men and women.

Article 14 ensures equality before the law and equal protection under the law. Article 15 prohibits discrimination based on gender.

Article 15(3) empowers the State to discriminate against women and children. Article 16 ensures equality of opportunity in public employment.

Article 23 prohibits human trafficking and forced labor.

Article 39(a) and (d) require the State to provide equal means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work.

Article 42 requires the State to provide just and humane working conditions and maternity leave. Article 51 A (e) requires citizens to renounce practices that degrade women's dignity.

Article 243 D (3) mandates that at least one-third of Panchayat seats be reserved for women and rotated among constituencies.

Article 243 T (3) mandates that at least one - third of Municipality seats be reserved for women and rotated among constituencies.

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.

Various legislative enactments have been drafted in accordance with the aforementioned Constitutional provisions to protect, safeguard and promote women's interests. Many of these legislative enactments have been in the area of labor laws, aimed at improving the working conditions of women workers.

As the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar prioritized educational rights for the depressed

class and women in the Indian Constitution. He viewed law as a tool for creating a just social order and embedded values of liberty, equality, and fraternity in the constitution. To ensure equal education rights for the depressed class, specific provisions were included. Article 30(1) grants linguistic or religious minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions. Article 30(2) prohibits discrimination by the state against educational institutions managed by linguistic or religious minorities when granting aid. Article 29(2) safeguards the interests of minorities, ensuring that no citizen is denied admission to state-funded educational institutions based on religion, race, caste, language, or other such grounds. Additionally, Article 46 instructs the state to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections, protecting them from social injustice and exploitation. These constitutional provisions under score Dr. Ambedkar's commitment to ensuring inclusive and equitable educational opportunities.

### **PRESENT STATUS OF WOMEN**

Literate but not educated, women in India face challenges due to stagnant social reforms, perpetuation of ancient gender norms, and a failure to embrace equality. Despite globalization and modernization, the Indian mindset resists women's development, leading to increased incidents of harassment and violence. Barriers to progress include a flawed education system, limited employment opportunities, population challenges, inflation and resource scarcity. Mere adoption of modern lifestyle and technology does not guarantee individual or societal improvement.

To dismantle the societal frame work that subjugates women, active participation from all strata is essential. Despite not able women activists addressing issues like environment and health, support for social reforms, including the women's reservation bill, remains insufficient. Women today grapple with insecurity, male dominance, lack of awareness about their rights, and limited decision-making power.

While discussions on women empowerment focus on economic, political, and health aspects, the critical need for social empowerment is often over looked. Dr. Ambedkar's vision emphasized the welfare of women as a key to empowerment, urging global efforts to align with his principles for a just and equal society.

### **FEW STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**

*It is the education which is the right weapon to cut the socials lavery and it is the education which will enlighten the down trodden masses to come up and gain social status, economic betterment and political freedom – Dr. B.R. Ambedkar*

### **NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN**

The National Commission for Women was established in January 1992 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 existing legislation, suggest amendments where necessary, and protect women's rights and entitlements. The Commission provides financial assistance to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational institutions to conduct legal awareness campaigns to help women become aware of their rights.

### **EDUCATION OF WOMEN**

My final words of advice to you are educate, agitate and organize, have faith in yourself. With justice on our side I do not see how we can loose our battle to me is a matter of joy. You must abolish your slavery yourselves. Do not depend for its abolition upon god or a superman.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING AND SKILL FORMATION**

To improve women's entrepreneurial ability and skill, the government has provided various types of training aimed at promoting self and wage employment.

### **THE SKILL UPGRADATION TRAINING PROGRAMME**

It recognises the importance of providing skill training to women in SHGs, empowering them to start their own income-generating activities. The duration and cost of the training are determined by the nature of the trade selected by the members.

### **WOMEN'S AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

Women's empowerment is a key goal in development efforts. The district administration has made a significant shift in its approach to the development of women, particularly the poor and illiterate.

### **SELF HELP GROUPS**

Self Help Groups are voluntary, small, homogeneous groups of 12–20 women from below-the-poverty families that are formed to encourage saving. They are self-managed groups of poor women who formed primarily to mobilise financial resources from their own savings and lend them amongst themselves in order to meet their members' credit needs.

### **WORKING WOMEN'S HOSTEL**

Founded in Angul and operating since 1996, the Working Women's Hostel offers safe housing to working women. State Old Age Pension (SOAP) or National Old Age Pension (NOAP).

### **EMPLOYMENT AND WORK PARTICIPATION RATES**

The work participation rate is a strong indicator of women's economic empowerment in society. Women's status is inextricably linked to their economic position, which is determined by their ability to participate in economic activities. Education, along with women's participation in the workforce, has been universally recognised as an important factor in the adoption of small family norms, which are necessary for family planning. Women's employment opportunities in all sectors of the country have improved significantly.

### **WOMEN & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

Political equality for all children, regardless of birth, gender, or race, is one of the fundamental tenets of democracy. Political equality encompasses not only the equal right to vote, but also, more importantly, the right to access institutionalised centres of power. Thus, women's political participation entails not only exercising their right to vote, but also sharing power, making decisions, and implementing policies at all levels. Women's active participation in politics is essential to their empowerment and contributes to the creation of a gender-equal society while also speeding up the process of national development.

### **CONCLUSION**

In some ways, Ambedkar's perception of the Indian social order, Hindu or Muslim, suggests a system in which women were denied their social rights in a variety of ways. He was desperately looking for a solution to their evil systems and hoped to usher in a society founded on equality, justice, and fraternity. Though the goal of women's empowerment has yet to be achieved, Dr. Ambedkar's ideas about women's rights and development remain relevant today, not only in India but also globally.

Dr. Ambedkar's three-word formula 'educate, agitate and organize' remains a powerful tool for social change today. Ambedkar made the oppressed members of the lower classes aware of their rights, which had been denied to them for centuries. He believed that educating the oppressed was the most effective way to instill in them a sense of consciousness, self-respect, and dignity. He wanted people to cultivate the values of freedom and equality among themselves, which could only be accomplished through education. This, in turn, would provide the cultural foundation for their gradual integration into the mainstream of an enlightened national life.

Dr. Ambedkar was a symbol of both knowledge and character. He saw education as a way to overcome darkness and ignorance. He used his educational philosophy to raise awareness of the state of social degeneration in Hindu society among the lower strata and to change the social order for the betterment of all humanity. He works to improve everyone's education through his educational institutes. He was a true 'organic intellectual'. Dr. Ambedkar's contributions to education, combined with his independent thinking, established him as a world-class intellectual. He advocated his own educational philosophy and had a significant impact on the perspectives of the oppressed. To honor his brilliant academic career.

His magnificent academic career is honored with a statue at the entrance to the London School of Economics, with the words "Symbol of Knowledge" written beneath it. It demonstrates how he was regarded as a great student and educator of distinction. Even in the twenty-first century, Dr. Ambedkar's ideas and educational philosophy remain important for the political and socioeconomic advancement of our nation.

*"So long as you do not achieve social liberty, whatever freedom is provided by the law is of no avail to you."* – Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, India's first Law Minister.

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