



Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkars Vision for Social Assimilation and Women Empowerment

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Abstract

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar played very important role in the history of women's emancipation movement and history of Feminism in India. It is said that philosophers have interpreted the world but the real task was to change it. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar not only theorized the concept of feminism and women's emancipation movement and but he has practically laid the foundations of women's emancipation movement in India. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is yet not recognized as towering personality in the history of Feminism, by the various scholars in India. But the fact is in the History of Women's Emancipation movement in India. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar played a vital role in giving the human rights to the women in India. The present paper highlights Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Vision for Social Assimilation and Women Empowerment.

Key Words: Women, Dr. Ambedkar, Human Right, Emancipation

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Role in Emancipation of Women : *Opposition to inhuman religious text*

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was staunch protagonist of women's human right. He analysed the genesis of women's slavery and then he criticised the traditional conservative orthodox customs traditional practices given by Hindu Religious Text, which were responsible for the decline of status of women as human being in the Indian Society.

Women's Emancipation Civil Right Movements : *Burning of Manusmriti*

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar started the process of women's emancipation by starting a civil right movement for women's human rights in India. He challenged the Vedic culture and *Manusmriti* because they were the sources of imposing various inhuman restrictions on women in India. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar burned *Manusmriti* in a public programme in order to deny the inhuman principles culture propagated by *Manusmriti* which denied the Human Civil Right to the backward class & women on 25th December 1927, at Mahad, depressed classes conference pandal he burned *Manusmriti* at the hands of Mr. Sahastrabudhe.¹

Reasons of burning of *Manusmruti*

Following are the various restrictions which were imposed on women for denying their human civil rights by *Manusmruti*.

Dr. Ambedkar quoted some of the laws made by *Manu* regarding women and are to be found in the *Manusmruti*, they are :-

Women are not to be free under any circumstances, in the opinion of *Manu*:

IX.2. "Day and Night women must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their (families) and if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments they must be kept under ones control.

IX.3. Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth and her sons protect (her) in old age, a women in never for independence.

V.155. No sacrifice, no vows, no fast must be performed by women apart from their husbands, if a wife obeys her husband she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven.²

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar burned *Manusmruti* in order to deny inhuman social norms, which became the law of the Society, they were meant for discrimination and exploitation of women's under the pretext of the religious text. Babasaheb Ambedkar challenged the evil social theory of exploitation propagated by *Manusmruti*. His attempt of burning *Manusmruti* was a symbolic event to oppose the anti-social philosophy and discriminatory law of the then prevailing society.

Women's Participation in Ambedkarite Movement

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in his various Civil Rights Movement included women's participation like in Mahad Water Tank Satyagraha and in Nashik Kalaram Temple Entry Movement Women participated for the cause of social justice. This was absolute remarkable because depressed classes women were in the process of social Rights Movement and Movement for the women's emancipation.

Dr. Ambedkar Writings regarding Women's Emancipation :-

The Rise and fall of Hindu Women

Dr. Ambedkar has given theoretical frameworks to the women's feminism in India by his various speeches & writings. He has written a research paper titled "*The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women*" which was published on 21st January 1950.³

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar held the Vedic Hindu Religion responsible for the fall of states of Hindu women. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar analyzed the ancient India History regarding the status of women in India. According to him, "*Egalitarian Principle prevailed during the Buddhist period & it was a revolutionary act on the part of Buddha to have allowed women to take Sunyasa or Panivraja (nun-hood) as a member of Sangha Under the Brahmanical theory women & shudras were not eligible for knowledge & thus for Sanyas too. In allowing women to become Bhikkunes (nuns)*

*the Buddha not only opened them way to liberty be also allowed them to acquire dignity”.*⁴

Babasaheb Ambedkar had made comparative analysis of status of Women in Buddhist period and in Vedic period. It put forth's fact that Tathagat Buddha laid the beginning of liberation of women in India. Hindu Vedic religious text laid the foundations slavery of women's in India.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, *“there is nothing new or startling in the laws of Manu about women, they are the views of Brahmanism that existed only as a matter of social theory before Manu-what Manu did was to convert what was a social theory into laws of the state What was the reason which lead Manu to impose the disabilities upon women? Because Manu was the greatest opponent of the Buddhist religion. At that time Shudras and women were the two Chief sections of the Prayan Society which were flocking to join the protestant religion of the Buddha, this would lead to undermining the foundations of the Brahmanic religion, so Manu wanted to stern the tide of Women flowing on the directions of Buddhism”*⁵

Buddha and his Dhamma

Dr. Ambedkar wanted to theorize democratic socialization. He developed socialist ideology which propagated principle of State Socialism. Dr. Ambedkar has written book *Buddha and his Dhamma* in which he has explained about humanitarian principle of Buddhism. It also throw light on gender equality in Buddhism.

States and Minorities

Dr. Ambedkar has written a book *States and Minorities – what are their rights and how to secure them in the constitution of Pre-India*. This book was a memorandum of constitutional safeguards of Depressed Class, it was submitted to Constituent Assembly on behalf of All India Scheduled Caste Federation. This original document was published in the book format. Later on it was published by Thakker & Company Ltd., in March, 1947 in Mumbai.⁶

Dr. Ambedkar Propagated the idea of gender equality, liberty and social Justice through this submission of All India Scheduled Caste Federation. Later on while drafting constitution of India many constitutional safeguards for the welfare of Depressed Classes proposed by Dr. Babasaheb Ambekdar in this submission were included in various articles of Constitution of India. Thus it becomes clear that Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Policy of social inclusion was framed before the drafting of Constitution and Dr. Ambedkar was very much determined to theorise the State Policy on the basis of human franchise which gives respect to the dignity of every human being.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar’s submission to the Government regarding protection of human rights.

A scheme of Political safeguards for protection of depressed classes in future constitution of self-governing India :

Dr. Ambedkar prepared a scheme to great labour and statesmanship and submitted it to the minority sub-committee for basis included in future Constitution. The title of the scheme of *"A scheme of Political safeguards for protection of depressed classes in future constitution of self-governing India."*⁷ He explained the aim of democracy as, *"our aim", he declared is to realize in practice the idea of one man one hood in all walks of like political, economic and social"*.⁸ The declaration of Fundamental Rights put forth the concept of equality for all the depressed classes which is again affirmative policy of social inclusion which is in constitutional development of Human Rights in India which is applicable to the women's also.

Staunch Protagonist of Women's Human Rights :

The Indian intelligentsia and academia and society has identified Dr. Ambedkar as the leader of Backward Caste or the Chairman of drafting Committee of Indian Constitution, but the fact also remains true is he was staunch protagonist of Women's human rights. The United Nations General Assembly declared Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.⁹ The outstanding feature of Universal Declaration of Human Rights was that it has defined and provided content to the term HR and fundamental freedom. The declaration consists of preamble and 30 Articles incorporating civil political, economic, social and cultural rights. The preamble clearly state that *"recognition of the inhere dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom justice and peace in the world"*. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has given important to the human dignity equal rights and freedom of individual.

Dr. Ambedkar has given these ideas even before the universal declaration of Human Rights. His Civil right Movement for realization of human Rights and gender equality, his writings and speeches he has played a decisive role in imparting Human Franchise in India.

Dr. Ambedkar's Concept of Womens Human Right is propagating the Constitutional ways and non-violent methodology for acquiring women's Human Right.

Democratic Socialization and issue of Gender Socialization

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has define democracy as socio-cultural revolution in Human life without blood-shed. His concept of democracy also advocates idea of associated living. The concept of associated living in healthy environment in terms of gender equality was absent in contemporary colonial India. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar did the work of theoretical frame work which propagated the idea of gender equality by ways of constitutional methods. He theorised the Indian Social norms on the basis of human franchise. He straight away denied the ancient inhuman social norms which were influenced by Manusmurti and other religious text which later on became the code of conduct of Indian Society.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Role as Labour Member Regarding Women's Empowerment

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was labour member in the governor General Executive Council. He joined as a member of viceroy's Council on 20th July, 1942.¹⁰ As a Labour Member he worked for four years. Though the period was short, it was mile stone in the history of Labour Legislation, Labour Welfare and Labour Security Measures in India. Dr. Ambedkar did very important work in spreading ideology of gender equality in the field of labour.

On 21st February, 1946, he declared that the workers time period of work hours was fixed for 8 hours in a day and excessive working of labour was prevented by his act.¹¹

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar provided Constitutional safeguards to the women's by passing various bills. He was responsible for giving women's salary in leave period of pre and post pregnancy days and also sanctioning the pregnancy leave for women. He also put forth time concept of legal wages to be given equal to both men and women. He also established Employment Exchange which was responsible for giving employment for skilled and unskilled workers through the Employment Exchange Office. It is important to note here is that the concept of gender equality and giving opportunities to the women in public employment sector was a great step and opportunity to women to be self reliant and earn her own livelihood which was denied by the Indian Social system to them.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Speeches and Women's Emancipation

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar gave inspiring speeches which were responsible for creating awareness regarding women's human rights in Indian Society. At the Mahad Water Tank Satyagraha while addressing to women he said that "*Education and knowledge are not only meant for men but their also useful for women, if we want to develop our next generation then there is a need for women's Education*".¹²

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1942 while addressing to the women in the conference of All India Scheduled Caste Federations, Dalit Women's Federation session said that,

- (1) *The Society can develop only if the women are conscious about their right.*
- (2) *The measurement of development of society can be traced by the development of women.*
- (3) *There should be separate and independent organization of women..*
- (4) *Women should not consider themselves interior they should stay at equal footings with men.*¹³

Resolutions Regarding Women's Empowerment in Conferences

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar established All India Dalit Mahila Federation and propagated the ideology of fighting for the rights of women's by establishing their independent organisations.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has given guidance in various independent conferences of women's regarding denying inhuman customs, traditions. In the Bahishkrit Bharat in 1957 some of his resolution regarding Women's Emancipation are published. The Resolution of opposing to the child marriage was passed by him in various conferences. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar through various conferences tried to create awareness about Women's Emancipation and by passing various resolutions which were propagating the ideology of gender equality; he was able to create public opinion in favour of women's emancipation.¹⁴

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Indian Constitution – Charter of Women's Human Rights :

Dr. Ambedkar was the Chairman of Drafting Committee of Constitution of India. He was responsible for including various constitutional safeguards to women in India. In Indian Constitution various Articles are useful for propagating the idea of gender equality. The fundamental Rights in Indian Constitution has given the basic human Rights to all the Citizens of India Constitution is directing the State to impose fundamental rights in its policy. It says "*Laws inconsistent with or in derogating of the fundamental rights*".¹⁵

Article 14 :

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution states that "*the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India*". This article is absolutely important because it propagates the idea of equal protection before law and it has legalised the term equality before the law which is revolutionary for spreading the gender base equality.

Article 15 :

Article 15 of Indian Constitution states that, "*The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religious, race, caste, sex, place of birth*", "*No citizen shall on the grounds only of religious, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them de-subjected to any disability, liability restriction or condition.*"¹⁶

This article is useful for the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religious caste, sex or place of birth which is radical step in Indian Society.

Article 16 :

Article 16 of Indian Constitution states that, "*There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizen, in matter relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state. No citizen shall on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place any birth residence or any of them, be ineligible for or discriminate against in respect, any employment or office under the State*"¹⁷

Article 20**Protection in respect of conviction for offences :**

- 1) No person shall be convicted of any offences except for violation of a law in force at the time of the commission of the Act charged as an offences, nor be subjected to a penalty greater than that which might have been inflicted under the law in force at the time of the commission of the offence.
- 2) No person shall be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once.
- 3) No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself. ¹⁸

Article 20 has three clauses. Each of these clauses gives protection in respect of conviction for offences.

Article 21**Protection of life and personal liberty :**

No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. This article directs the State regarding protection of life and personal liberty. ¹⁹

Article 22**Protection against arrest and detection in certain cases.**

- 1) No person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be, of the grounds for such arrest nor shall he be denied the right to consult, and to be defended, by a legal practitioner of his choice. ²⁰

Article 25**Freedom of conscience, and free profession practice and propagation of religion :**

Article 25, aims at the establishment of the secular character of the Indian polity. According to this Article all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health. Positively, this right safeguards the free exercise of religion by everybody subject to public order morality and health and negatively, it prohibits the State from compelling by law any person to practice any particular creed or religion. Again, it may be noted that the recognition of the right to freedom of conscience and the free profession, practice and propagation of religion shall not affect the operation of any existing law of prevent the State from making any law regulating or restricting any economic financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice. Nothing in this Article shall affect any provision of social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institution of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus. ²¹

Article 32**Right to Constitutional Remedies :**

Article 32 Remedies for the enforcement of rights conferred by this Part.

- 1) The right to move the Supreme Court by appropriate proceedings for the enforcement of the rights conferred by this part is guaranteed.²²

Article 39 A**Equal justice and free legal aid :**

The State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.²³

An important impact of Article 39 A read with article 21 has been to reinforce the right of a person involved in a criminal proceeding to legal aid.

Article 41**Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases :**

The State shall, within the limits of its economics capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of underserved want.²⁴

This Article directs the State regarding right to work to education and to public assistance in certain cases.

Article 42**Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief :**

The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.²⁵

This Article directs the State regarding provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

Article 43**Living wage, etc, for workers :**

The State shall endeavor to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organization or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial, or otherwise, work a living wage condition of work ensuring of work, ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities and, in particular, the State shall endeavor to promoter cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis in rural areas.²⁶

This Article directs the State regarding Living wages and other suitable legislations for full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities for workers.

The discussion on the Directive Principles began in the Constituent Assembly with an amendment moved by Kamath that in the heading under Part IV, the word 'Fundamental' be substituted for the work 'Directive' He argued that as the Advisory

Committee had treated this chapter as a part of the Fundamental Rights, and designated it as ' Fundamental Principles of Governance' the Drafting Committee has no justification to change it to 'Directive Principles of State Policy'; Dr. Ambedkar rejected the amendment and justified the use of the word 'Directive'.

*"In enacting this part of the Constitution", he explained, "the Assembly is giving certain directions to the future legislature and the future executive to show in what manner they are to exercise the legislative and the executive power they will have. Surely, it is not the intention to introduce in this part these principles as mere pious declarations. It is the intention of the Assembly that in future both the legislature and the executive should not merely pay lip service to these principles but they should be made the basis of all legislative and executive action that they may be taking hereafter in the matter of the governance of the country"*²⁷

The Assembly agreed with Dr. Ambedkar and rejected the plea of Kamath. Directive principles are guiding source to the State for following policy of States Socialism, which propagates the idea of equality before law in the society. Thus, it is strengthening the concept of gender equality and building new social norm and laws which are based on concept of protection of human rights.

Hindu Code Bill :

Babasaheb Ambedkar proposed the Hindu Code Bill in order to codify Hindu Law, which lay scattered in Smritis in regard to the following aspects :

1. The right of property of a deceased Hindu, who has died intestate without making a will, both male and female.
2. The order of succession among the different heirs to the property of a deceased dying intestate.
3. The law of maintenance.
4. Marriage.
5. Divorce.
6. Adoption.
7. Minority and guardianship.²⁸

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's concept of ideal society :

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was of opinion that an ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society there should be many interest consciously communicated and shares... There should be varied and free points of contacts with other modes of association. In other words, there must be social endosmosis. This is fraternity, which is only another name for democracy. Democracy (added) is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially and attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen"²⁹

Dr. Babasaheb Amedkar wanted to create an ideal society in India. It was because only in ideal society every individual could develop and practice human rights and the human dignity and self respect is maintained in ideal society.

Conclusion :

- 1) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar played a vital role regarding women's emancipation in India.
- 2) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was responsible for including provisions of social inclusion for affirmative progress of women in Indian society.
- 3) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in order to create social order based on values like liberty, equality, fraternity, launched civil rights movement for women's rights.
- 4) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar theorised the concept of ideal society where he propagated the idea of equality of status, equality of opportunity, equality before law and the special opportunity for socially deprived.
- 5) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's writings and speeches are responsible for creating awareness regarding women's emancipation and issue of gender equality in India.
- 6) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in his capacity of Chairman Drafting Committee of Constitution of India, had played a decisive role in providing Constitutional safeguards for overall development of women.
- 7) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Hindu Code Bill was responsible for creating various Acts in future for protection of women's human rights.
- 8) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's role in a development of women's human rights in the history of feminism of India is absolutely important.

Foot Notes :

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