



DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR'S VISION FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Seema R. Gholap

Research scholar, Department of History, University of Mumbai Kalina, Mumbai.

ABSTRACT

In the history of women's emancipation, the role of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is very prominent and can't be neglected under any circumstances. In Indian history we witness many significant personalities theorized the concept of feminism, women's emancipation movement but Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has practically laid the foundations of women's emancipation movement in India. However, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is yet not recognized as gigantic character in the history of Feminism, by eminent researchers and thinkers in India. The fact which cannot be denied or the fact which can be proved by various references that in the History of Women's Emancipation movement in India, is that Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar occupied a dynamic role in giving the human rights to the women in India.



KEYWORDS: women's emancipation, eminent researchers and thinkers in India.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Role in Emancipation of Women:

- **Opposition to inhuman religious text.**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was an extensive reader and a strong believer of women's rights. He analysed the origin of women's oppression which were imposed on the women by Hindu Religious Text. He further criticised the outdated conservative orthodox customs and the outdated practices given by Hindu Religious Text, which were solely responsible for the deterioration of states of women as human being in the Indian Society.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 Indian.

On 25th December 1927, at Mahad, depressed classes conference pandal he burned Manusmriti at the hands of Mr. Sahastrabuddhe.¹

He confronted the Vedic culture and Manusmriti because the matter mentioned in it was anti human especially women. The matter written in Manusmriti was practiced as it is and that was the main cause of imposing various inhumane restrictions on women in India. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar

burned Manusmriti in a well-planned public programme to deny the inhumane principles and culture propagated by Manusmriti which denied basic Human Civil Right to the backward class & women.

Reasons of burning of Manusmriti:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a well-read person and had referred many books. He provided references to support his submission.

Following are the several boundaries which were set for women for denying their human civil rights by Manusmriti.

Dr. Ambedkar cited some of the commandments made by Manu concerning women and are to be originate in the Manusmriti, 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 woman 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 set Manusmriti on fire with an intention of denying the cold-hearted social customs, over the period of time, which became the law of the Society. These social customs were the major cause of discrimination and manipulation of women. Babasaheb Ambedkar questioned and confronted the malicious social theory of exploitation, promulgated by Manusmriti. His attempt of burning Manusmriti was a symbolic event to contradict the social philosophy and discriminatory law of the then prevailing society.

Ambedkarite Movement and Women's participation:

We witnessed masses of women attending various Civil Rights Movement like the Mahad Water Tank Satyagraha and the Nashik Kalaram Temple Entry Movement. Their participation had the agenda of attaining social justice. Their participation was self-explanatory.

- **Dr. Ambedkar writings concerning women's emancipation: -
The Rise and fall of Hindu Women:**

The theoretical outline laid down by Dr Ambedkar for feminism in India via his numerous writings & speeches. In his well cited research paper titled *"The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women"* which was published on 21st January 1950.³

According to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the Vedic Hindu Religion was the prime reason for the depreciation in the status of the Hindu women. He meticulously viewed the ancient Indian history encircling the women's status in India.

In his view, *"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 he also allowed them to acquire dignity".⁴*

After a deep study of various ancient religious books, he made comprehensive statements of comparative analysis of the Women in Vedic and the Buddhist period. He put forth his perspective of his comparative study of the Vedic and the Buddhist period, which stated that Lord Buddha was the torchbearer of women's liberation in Ancient India, and the Hindu Vedic religious text was consolidating the foundation of women's slavery in India.

In the view of Dr. B.R. 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 led 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 advanced socialist ideology which spread the principle of State Socialism. Dr. Ambedkar has written a book *Buddha and his Dhamma* in which he has explained about, the freedom of thought and equality of all human beings and even the humanitarian principle of Buddhism. Moreover, he speaks about gender parity in Buddhism.

• Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's submission to the Government regarding protection of human rights. Firm believer of Women's Emancipation:

The Indian intelligentsia and academia and society has credited Dr. Ambedkar as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of Indian Constitution and the leader of Backward Caste, but the fact furthermore remains true is that, he was firm supporter of Women's emancipation.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Role as labour member regarding women's empowerment

In the year 1942 Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was honored as a labour member in the governor General Executive Council. He joined as a member of viceroy's Council on 20th July, 1942. (6) He operated as a Labour Member for four years. Even in the short period, he created a mile stone in the history of Labour Legislation, Labour Welfare and Labour Security Measures in India. The contribution of Dr. Ambedkar in amplifying the ideology of gender parity in the field of labour was noteworthy.

In order to consolidate the women's rights, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar furnished Constitutional safeguards for women by passing distinct bills. The credit of providing salaries to women during their pre and post pregnancy leaves and even sanctioning their pregnancy leaves goes to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The noble idea of providing equal wages to both, men and women is also to his credit. The establishment of the Employment Exchange was a creative way of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to provide employment to both skilled and unskilled workers. This was carried out via an Employment Exchange Office. The point to be considered here is that the ideology of gender parity and the boon of opportunities for women in the public employment sector was a noteworthy step. This proved to be an excellent opportunity for women to become self-reliant and be able to self-finance her livelihood, which was harshly denied by the Indian Social system.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's speeches and women's emancipation: -

To ignite the spark in the minds of women for their rights, Dr. B. R Ambedkar used his virtue of oratory skill by delivering inspiring speeches. He addressed women 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's it we want to develop our next generation then there is a need for women's Education*".⁷

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

(A) *The Society can develop only if the women are conscious about their right.*

(B) *The measurement of development of society can be traced by the development of women.*

(C) *There should be separate and independent organization of women's.*

(D) *Women should not consider themselves inferior they should stay at equal footings with men.*⁸

Resolutions regarding women's empowerment in conferences :

To propagated the ideology of fighting for the rights of women's Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar established All India Dalit Mahila Federation. He did not stop here but worked hard to explain and

enlightened women about denying inhumane traditions. In the Bahishkrit Bharat in 1957, some of his resolutions regarding Women's Emancipation were published. The Resolution of opposing to the child marriage was passed by him in various conferences. Through various conferences Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar tried to create consciousness about Women's Emancipation and by-passing various resolutions which were propagating the ideology of gender parity; he was able to create public opinion in favor of women's emancipation.⁹

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

Dr. Ambedkar was a notable Chairman of Drafting Committee of the Constitution of India. It was for him, that there was an inclusion of distinct constitutional safeguards for the women in India. There are numerous articles in the Indian Constitution which play a pivotal role for propagating the idea of gender parity. There has been a special emphasis on the Fundamental Rights of the Indian Constitution. It says "*Laws inconsistent with or in derogating of the fundamental rights*". (10) These rights are referred to as the basic human rights of the citizens. The states are also directed to impose these fundamental rights in their policies.

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 legalized 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.*"¹¹ 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*"¹²

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.¹³
- 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.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶

Article 32 -Right to Constitutional Remedies:

Article 32 Remedies for the enforcement of rights conferred by this Part. The right to move the Supreme Court by appropriate proceedings for the enforcement of the rights conferred by this part is guaranteed.¹⁷

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.¹⁸

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 economic 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.¹⁹

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.²⁰ 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 endeavour to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organization or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial, or otherwise, work a living wage conditions 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 promote cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis in rural areas.²¹

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 word '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"*²²

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.²³

CONCLUSION:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar played a vital role regarding women's emancipation in India.

- 1) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was responsible for including provisions of social inclusion for affirmative progress of women's in Indian society.
- 2) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in order to create social order based on values like liberty, equality, fraternity, launched civil rights movement for women's rights.
- 3) 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.
- 4) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's writings and speeches are responsible for creating awareness regarding women's emancipation and issue of gender equality in India.
- 5) 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.
- 6) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Hindu Code Bill was responsible for creating various Acts in future for protection of women's human rights.
- 7) 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:

- 1) Dr. Wagh Sandesh, *Ambedkari Chalvalicha Itihas*, Sandesh Publications, Mumbai 2012, p-113.
- 2) I.S. Vidyasagar, *Concept of Humanism of Dr. Ambedkar*, ABD Publishers, Jaipur, 2005, pp-99 to 101.
- 3) Dr. Wagh Sandesh, *Ambedkari Chalvalicha Itihas*, op.cit. P-199.
- 4) I.S. Vidyasagar, *Concept of human of Dr. Ambedkar*, op.cit, pp-97-98.
- 5) B.R. Ambedkar, *Rise and fall of Hindu Women*, BheemPatrika publication, Jallandar, 1988, p-467.

- 6) Dr. Wagh Sandesh, *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Political Movement*, op.cit, p-68.
- 7) *ibid*, p-200.
- 8) *ibid*, p-201.
- 9) *ibid*, p-201.
- 10) Dr. Wagh Sandesh, *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar – The Chief Architect of Constitution of India*, Sandesh Publication, Mumbai, 2012, p-43.
- 11) *ibid*, p-46.
- 12) *ibid*, p-47.
- 13) *ibid*, p-52.
- 14) *ibid*, p-52.
- 15) *ibid*, p-52.
- 16) *ibid*, pp-56-57.
- 17) *ibid*, p-62.
- 18) *ibid*, p-66.
- 19) *ibid*, p-67.
- 20) *ibid*, p-67.
- 21) *ibid*, p-67.
- 22) *ibid*, p-73.
- 23) Gandhiji C.M., *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Women's Empowerment*, ABD Publishers, New Delhi, 2011, p-166.