

ROLE OF DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR IN EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

Ambedkar's perspective on women's oppression, social democracy, caste, and Hindu social order and philoshopy is important to contemporary Indian feminist thinking because of the operations of caste both at the systemic level and at the functioning of patriarchy, as well as the growing caste / class divide in feminist political discourse. Ambedkar's writings and speeches outline the principles India should adopt and the ways in which they will modernise its social and political structures. Ambedkar believed that caste-based, rigidly hierarchical society's sufferers were women.

Dr. Ambedkar has made significant efforts to lead society towards Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. He was the first Indian who advocated and actually tried to remove obstacles to women's growth in India. According to him, social education, women's well-being, and socio-cultural rights should all be prioritised before everything else when it comes to women's overall growth. He addressed the need to maintain and safeguard women's dignity and modesty as well as to ensure that every segment of Indian women get their fair share.

Keywords: *Social, Women, Caste, Structures, India, Growth, Education, Equality*



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Introduction

Since the Vedic era, women have suffered much as a result of our male-dominated culture. Numerous rituals continued to mislead the position of women even after independence. The devdasi system, child marriage, Sati Pratha, Prada Pratha, prohibitions on widow remarriage, exploitation of widows, etc. all of these creates significant obstacles for their personal, social, and economic growth.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar worked for the rights of women in India during British rule and after the country's independence and made such laws requiring equitable treatment of

women in society. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar always supported female-led movements. He said, "I measure the progress of community by the degree of progress which women 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."

But she needs to have the guts to reject the life of a slave. The equality principle should be followed by her. If all women adhere to it, they will get genuine respect and a sense of self.

Purpose, Methods, and Supplements

The goal of the current study is to emphasise Dr. Ambedkar's contributions to women's empowerment in India before and after independence as well as the applicability of his ideas to the country's current socioeconomic context. The internet, the media, academic publications, and books have all been used to gather secondary data.

Movements and Initiatives lead by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar for the amelioration of women in India

His now-oft-quoted 1917 essay, **Castes in India**, illustrates how the caste system's continued existence in India is crucial to governing women's sexuality and other aspects of their lives.

He explains this by demonstrating how the problem of "surplus women" was addressed by strict control of women through sati, child marriage, and restrictions on widow remarriage. Ambedkar called for a distinct electoral system in 1918 and allocate seats for the Depressed Classes in proportion to their numbers. His argument is supported by the Indian women's desire for political reservation and the inferior position of other disadvantaged sectors after seventy two years of the Indian Constitution's operation. He launched a periodical called **Mook Nayak** in 1920 and **Bahishkrit Bharat** in 1927 with the objective of launching intense movement against the Hindu social system.

He highlighted the importance of gender equality, the value of education, and the obstacles that women and depressed people face through its publications.

His experience in the west has shaped the way he views feminist concerns. Ambedkar's understanding of the women's issue, emphasising women's rights to education, equality with men, the right to property, and participation in politics, resembled the demands of the first wave of feminism, which had been coming to an end with the achievement of voting rights for women in Britain in 1918 and America in 1920. His love of reading enabled him to comprehend how feminism has evolved throughout history and in many cultures and nations.

A women's association was formed in Bombay in January 1928 with Ramabai, Ambedkar's wife, serving as its president. When Radhabai Vadale spoke at a press conference in 1931, it was evident that Dr. Ambedkar had encouraged women to stand up for themselves. She said "It is better to die a hundred times than live a life full of humiliation. We will sacrifice our lives but we will win our rights." Ambedkar was a strong supporter of women and their contribution to societal change. . 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".

Women began taking part in satyagrahs and starting organisations for untouchable women to educate and raise their consciousness. Even caste Hindus took part in the **Mahad Satyagraha** for temple admission in 1927. One of these individuals was Shandabai Shinde. The Manusmriti, which degraded women and shudras, was decided to be burned during the Satyagraha.

More than fifty women took part in the action that followed the **Manusmriti bonfire**. Ambedkar spoke to the group thereafter, advising ladies to modify the way they wear saress, wear delicate jewellery, and refrain from consuming animal products. They learned how to wear sarees properly from upper caste ladies like Tipnis.

On February 18, 1927, Dr. Ambedkar took the oath of office as a **member of the Bombay Legislative Council**. In the Bombay Legislative Assembly, he vociferously supported policies that would help women with family planning. Dr. Babasaheb dedicated his life to the welfare of women, even those engaged in unethical activities and professions like prostitution. Ambedkar raised awareness among uneducated, underprivileged women and encouraged them to fight against societal injustices like the devdasi system and child marriage. Dr. Ambedkar made an effort to adequately include women's rights in India's political language and constitution.

At the **Round Table conference**, Ambedkar delivered a number of remarkable addresses. He argued for Dominion Status from the perspective of the downtrodden classes. His speeches have a positive impact on the British people. Thousands of women attended the committee sessions when Ambedkar returned to India in 1932 after attending the round table conference.

Ambedkar contributed to the legal acknowledgment of women as equal citizens by codifying Hindu personal law (Ambedkar was the one to introduce the Hindu Code Bill). In 1948 when the Hindu Code Bill was introduced in parliament and debated on the floor of the house, the opposition was strong against the Bill.

He provided women the right to inherit property, the right to divorce, and to make inter-caste marriages legally recognised. However, Ambedkar submitted his resignation because he had "to be **true** to himself" after the Bill's discussion was repeatedly postponed and eventually withdrawn due to time constraints. His resignation letter dated 27th September 1951.

Ambedkar claims in his resignation address that while being uneasy with the government's and Cabinet's operations for some time, he resisted leaving earlier because he wanted the **Hindu Code Bill** to become law:

“The Hindu Code was the greatest social reform measure ever undertaken by the legislature in this country. No law passed by the Indian legislature in the past or likely to be passed in the future can be compared to it in point of its significance. To leave inequality between class and class, between sex and sex, which is the soul of Hindu society, untouched and to go on passing legislation relating to economic problems is to make a farce of our Constitution and to build a palace on a dung heap. This is the significance I attached to the Hindu Code. It is for its sake that I stayed on, notwithstanding my differences.”

It is beyond debate that he acknowledged women's equality and tried to secure it legally at a time when hardly anybody else did.

Ambedkar said that society should not be built on the terrible caste system but rather on reason. He discovered that endogamy, which maintains caste and patriarchy, may be eliminated by education, inter-caste marriage, and inter-dine.

Hindu women are bound by superstitions in the name of sanskaras, which they uphold till their death. They are also accountable for teaching their children incorrect beliefs that were implanted in their developing minds by the preaching of the Shastras and spurious traditions.

Dr. Ambedkar stressed the importance of women during the **All India Depressed Classes Women's Conference** in Nagpur on July 20, 1940. " I am a great believer in women's organization I know that what they can do to improve the condition of the society if they are convinced. They should educate their children and instill high ambition in them," he said. They ought to educate their kids and develop in them a strong sense of aspiration

His views about **Birth Critical** and the **Maternity Benefit Bill** were very pertinent to recognising the worth of women. He was staunchly in favour of the Maternity Bill.

His argument was –“It is in the interest of the nation that the mother ought to get a certain amount of rest during the pre-natal period and also subsequently, and the principle of the Bill is based entirely on that principle” and it is government's primary duty is to serve the interests of the people, thus it was their duty to help with some of the costs associated with her
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pregnancy. As a direct result, in 1938, laws were created establishing fundamental human rights for mine and factory employees as well as safeguards for women, children, and working women.

He exhorted women to be united. He advised women to be progressive and get rid of traditionalism, ritualism, and conventional behaviours that were impeding their advancement during a conference for women held in Nagpur on July 20, 1942. Empowerment includes growing and constructing capacities of people and groups to integrate them into society at large. Education enables cultures to transition from tyranny to democratic participation and involvement. It is an effective instrument for empowering people. Through the ages, Women and members of underprivileged groups in Indian society were not given access to education. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar worked tirelessly to ensure that everyone had access to educational possibilities without any prejudice.

Ambedkar also argued for the quick legalisation of adult franchise. As the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Ambedkar attempted to adequately include women's rights in the political lexicon and constitution of India since he was firmly persuaded of the status of women. As a result, he inserted particular provisions for women while also ensuring that all other general rules apply to them, just like males are covered by constitutional provisions, by taking into account women's equality in both formal and substantive dimensions.

Influences of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar in Present Context

The Indian Government and several State Governments have adopted numerous programmes for the empowerment of women in India, taking into consideration the guidelines, recommendations, ideas, and legislation provided by Dr. Ambedkar.

He drafted several laws that benefit women in India, including the Women Labour Welfare Fund, Women Labour Protection Act, Maternity Benefit for Women Labour Bill, Leave Benefit to Piece Workers, Revision of Scale of Pay for Employees, Restoration of Ban on Women Working Underground in Mines, Maintenance Allowance from Husband After Legal Separation, Equal Pay for Equal Work Regardless of Sex, Voting Rights for Women, Adoption by a Widow, Right over Parental Property, and Maintenance Allowance from Husband After Legal Separate and no marriage before age 18 years.

Dr. Ambedkar attempted to adequately include women's rights, namely:

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic, and social realms, Discrimination based on sexual orientation is prohibited by Article 15. Affirmative action discrimination in favour of women is permitted

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under Article 15 (3).Article 39: Equal access to means of subsistence and compensation for like labour Human conditions of employment and maternity leave are covered under Article 42.Article 51-(A)(C): Fundamental obligations to reject behaviours that are offensive to people's dignity women. Article 46 - The state shall advance, with due consideration, the economic and educational interests of weaker group of people and shield them against exploitation and social injustice. Article 47: The state must boost the nutrition and living standards of its citizens while also enhancing the general public's health. Allocation of seats in the Panchayati Raj is provided for in Articles 243D (3), 243T (3), and 243R (4).

Conclusion

Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar dedicated his whole life to advancing the welfare, rights, and justice of socially disadvantaged groups.His ideas are crucial for the social reconstruction that supports women's empowerment since his vision of a society based on gender equality has not yet been fulfilled.His contributions have benefited every Indian person. This applies to women and men from lower castes as well as for upper castes women also.His significant contribution to the creation of the Indian Constitution led to its recognition as a New Charter of Human Rights. He considered law as a tool for establishing a rational social order in which a person's personal development should coincide with the advancement of society.He made a mark on the social fabric of the nation after independence and helped to create the socio-political structure of modern-day India. Without him, India very likely would have been a very different place, one that was far more unfair and unjust. He made a concerted effort to create a political system of constitutional democracy that is sympathetic to those who are less fortunate, have been left over from the past, or are the result of current social relations. He also endeavoured to create a new moral and social basis for India.

Even today, Dr. Ambedkar's three-word strategy of "educate, agitate, and organise" is a potent force for social transformation. Even after 75 years of Indian freedom, we were unable to realise Dr. Ambedkar's ambition for the empowerment and equality of Indian women. Indian women are still helpless and defenceless in the twenty-first century. Only a small number of women become well-known in society. Indian Women still continue to fight for their fundamental human rights.

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