

# Dr amdebkar and women empowerment



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“ When women move forward, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves. Those, who will understand, will lay foundation of a great nation. ” Indeed, History suggest this as well that western societies which promoted women’s rights, freedom, self-reliance and fraternity among its citizens have progressed ahead of their time leaving behind the rest of the world drowned in prejudices. In India, Dr. B.

R. Ambedkar was one of the men who came forward to save Indian women from the ages old barriers of religious custom and tradition which have blocked their minds and souls in such a long time of their unchallenged acceptance by our society. His western education and deep understanding of western philosophy of equality led him to evolve as a visionary who had developed clear ideas for the emancipation of the women and understood the importance of empowerment of women for development of society as a whole. Although Dr. Ambedkar is widely known for his relentless struggle launched for abolition of untouchability and annihilation of caste system and for giving constitutional right of freedom, equality and justice to all Indians regardless of their religion, caste, and sex, working as the Chairman of Drafting Committee of Constitution and first Minister of Law of independent India, his views on emancipation and empowerment of women had been significant for development of modern Indian feminist thinking 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. Dr.

Ambedkar not only closely examined the roots and evils within Indian society which were responsible for degradation of women status, but also acted in

direction to liberate them and make them self-reliant. He once said, “ I measure progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved. ” This statement shows his firm belief in women’s power and her role in development of a healthy and progressing society. Dr.

B. R. Ambedkar life sketch and struggle for women’s right “ Ambedkar was a victim of oppression and discrimination in all its severity, so his views about women’s oppression and equal rights are more useful than anybody else’s theory. To understand Ambedkar’s arguments and the ideals for which he stood, it is necessary to know some of his bitter and better life experiences that he underwent at the outset of the socio-political awakening from the time of his birth. “( More, Vijay, 2011). The apostle of women’s rights, indeed human rights, Dr.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born at Mhow, in the erstwhile Central Province then of British India on 14th April 1891 in untouchable Mahar caste. His father Ramji Sakpal was a soldier in British Army. Being son of a serving army personnel, Ambedkar was fortunate to get early education which otherwise would have been denied to him. Despite an opportunity to early education, Bhim began to taste bitter reality of his birth in an untouchable community in form of oppression and humiliation which compelled him later to act to blow up the oppressive social order.

At the school he was often insulted as he had born in an inferior caste considered as an untouchable. He was compelled to sit in a corner of the classroom and was not allowed to play and talk to other student as they fear he will pollute them. Even the teachers seldom touch his notebook. He was

not allowed to study certain subjects especially Sanskrit as Sanskrit teacher refused to teach him. He was given Persian as second language when the Sanskrit teacher refused to teach him.

His experience of insults took the form of refusal of local conveyance, drinking water and the refusal of even a barber to cut his hair, caused to humiliation and anger against the cruel system of untouchability. In the midst of humiliations, he concentrated on his studies due to the encouragement from his father and passed matriculation exam in 1907. This was a great achievement as far as untouchables were concerned. Soon after matriculation he married nine years old Ramabai, at the age of fourteen. He joined Elphinstone College for further education. He obtained his B.

A. degree from Bombay University. When he got a scholarship from the Maharaja of Baroda, again he joined Colombia University for M. A.

egree in Economics with Political Science, History, Anthropology and Sociology as other subjects of study. He passed M. A. in Economics in 1915 and presented a thesis in the university on Ancient Indian Commerce. In 1916 he offered another M.

A. thesis, National Dividend of India-A Historic and Analytical Study. In October 1916 he started his study for the Bar examination at Gray's Inn, and enrolled at the London School of Economics where he started work on a doctoral thesis. In June 1917 he was obliged to go back to India as the term of his scholarship from Baroda ended. As Ambedkar was educated by the Princely State of Baroda, he was bound to serve that State.

He was appointed as Military Secretary to the Maharaja but had to quit within a short time due to humiliating experience. Thereafter he worked at many places to feed his family. In January 1920, he began the publication of the weekly Mooknayak (Leader of the Silent) in Mumbai with the help of Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Maharaja of Kolhapur to start propaganda against Hindu social order. Through its issues he put due stress on the gender and social equality, and the need for education, and exposed the problems of the depressed classes as well as women. In September 1920, after accumulating sufficient funds, he returned to London to complete his studies. He became a barrister and got a Doctorate in science degree.

Now he considered himself fully equipped to fight the evils within Indian society such as women's oppression, untouchability, caste system etc. During 1922-23, he got the opportunity for post-doctoral research at the University of Bonn in Germany. His exposure to the West has influenced his perception on feminist issues. It was a time when first wave feminism had been coming to an end with the achievements of franchise rights for women in Britain in 1918, and America in 1920.

His perception of the women question, emphasizing their right to education, equal treatment with men, right to property and involvement in the political process resembled the global feminist demands. After returning to India Ambedkar decided to devote his whole life to fight for the rights of depressed class as well as women who were being treated as slaves in Hindu social order from centuries. In July 1924, he started 'Bahiskrit Hitkarani Sabha' for this purpose. The Sabha started to work to uplift poor and downtrodden by starting schools, hostels and making them aware to fight for their rights.

From this time Ambedkar launched many movement against untouchability in which all sections of society including huge number of women participated and acquired the confidence to voice their issues on various platforms. He helped women in launching many women's association which started spreading education and awareness especially in Dalit women. In 1927, a satyagrah conference was organized at Mahad in which Ambedkar openly attacked on 'Manusmriti' which, according to him, humiliate women and shudras. In this event thousands of men and women participated.

The Manusmriti was burned in public. He led another satyagraha in Mahad to fight for the right of the untouchable community to draw water from Chowdar tank in which women took part enthusiastically. In 1927, he started another periodical 'Bahishkrit Bharat' which was intend to speak for socially backward men and women. In the Kalram Temple Entry Satyagraha at Nasik in 1930, hundreds of depressed class women participated and crowd forcibly took entry in Hindu temple across the country. In 1930, Ambedkar was called in Round Table Conference to represent untouchable community.

There he demanded a separate electorate for depressed classes. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and constitutional provisions for women Dr. Ambedkar worked with great responsibility and dedication for betterment of women as well as socially depressed who were victim of decade long enslavement by society in name of traditions and social order as a member of Constituent Assembly and Chairman of Drafting Committee of Constitution.

He drafted a constitution which enshrines in it all those conditions which are necessary to promote fraternity among all citizens of free India. In his own

words, “ I came into the Constituent Assembly with no greater aspiration than to safeguard the interest of Scheduled Castes. ” This statement is significant for determining the Ambedkar’s interest in making constitutional safeguards for those who have been denied their every single right. Since Ambedkar was well convinced that not only scheduled caste but also women share the same fate, 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. Discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, sex, creed, place of birth was codified as illegal acts under the Statute Book.

The Indian Constitution provides for Equality before Law( Art. 14 ), the State shall not discriminate any citizen on the grounds of religion, caste, race, sex , place of birth or any of them ( Art. 15 ), equal opportunities to all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment under the State ( Art. 16 ), equal pay to all for equal work for both men & women( Art.

39d ) right to work , to education and public assistance in certain cases ( Art. 41 ), Provision of just and human conditions of work and maternity relief (Art. 2) , Provision of uniform Civil Code to all the citizens throughout the Indian Territory (Art. 44). Dr. Ambedkar by his scholarly arguments in framing/ debating Indian Constitution get put his seal of equality for women by getting them right of vote to equalize her position in running the State affairs.

On 25th November, 1949 while addressing Constituent Assemble he said, " Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. " By this statement he argued that there is no benefit of one man one vote concept if all men and women are not equal, free and independent. He emphasized on concept of social equality over political equality.