

Ambedkar's future vision for women's rights
kavita pradhan

Abstract:

in ancient India, women enjoyed a very high position but gradually their position degenerated into merely objects of pleasure meant to serve certain purpose. They lost their individual identity and even their basic human right. Empowerment is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. Women's empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money - and access to money and control over decision-making in the home, community, society and nation, and to gain 'power'. According to the Country Report of Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one; of power". But, from time immemorial, the women in this land of ours were treated as a sort of thing. Her placing in the society was not at par with other human beings. She has no rights. Ambedkar considered women as the victims of this oppressive, caste-based and rigid hierarchical social system. Throughout his life, Ambedkar worked on liberation of women and tried to give them back their rights. He gave advice on how women could give up bad habits and lead a healthy and decent life. He also worked on creating awareness among poor, illiterate women and inspired them to fight against the unjust social practices. He tried to include women's right in the political vocabulary and The Constitution of India. This present paper tries to highlight Ambedkar's views on women's issues and his approach towards finding solution to those issues which restrain a woman's freedom

Keywords: social, Manusmriti, dignity, education, constitution, issues

INTRODUCTION:

The operations of caste both at the systemic level and at the functioning of patriarchy, the growing caste / class divide in feminist political discourse makes Ambedkar's view on women's oppression, social democracy, caste and Hindu social order and philosophy, significant to modern Indian feminist thinking. Although Ambedkar proved, himself to be a genius and was known as a great thinker, philosopher, revolutionary, jurist – par excellence, prolific writer, social activist and critic and strode like a colossus in the Indian sociopolitical scene unto his death, his thoughts never received adequate attention in the generality of Indian society just because he was born as an untouchable. However, the contemporary social realities warrant close examination of the wide range of his topics, the width of his vision, the depth of his

analysis, and the rationality of his outlook and there essential humanity of his suggestions for practical action. Hence, for Indian women's movement Ambedkar provides a powerful source of inspiration to formulate a feminist political agenda which simultaneously addresses the issues of class, caste and gender in the contemporary sociopolitical set up, which still keeps conservative and reactionary values in many respects, particularly on gender relations. The writings and Speeches of Ambedkar show what values India should develop and how they would modernize its social and political institutions. Ambedkar saw women as the victims of the oppressive, caste-based and rigid hierarchical social system. As History tells, we see that in ancient times women were given esteem position in India. They lived their life freely. They were also treated with dignity. They enjoyed equal rights in all spheres of life. The writings of ancient Indian scholars, such as Patanjali or Katyayan indicate that women were educated in early Vedic Period. The verses of the Rig Veda indicate that women of that time used to get married at an adult age and probably had the privilege of choosing a husband through 'Swayambhara'. Even at that time they had access to read the Vedas. Early texts such as the Rig Veda and the Upanishada mention many meritorious and visionary women most notably Gargi, Maitri, Ghosha and Apola. But gradually with the advancement of 'modernity', the so called 'society' started 'objectifying' them. As a consequence, in the present society they are treated as an object of pleasure meant to serve certain purpose. They have lost their individual identity and even their basic human right.

OBJECTIVES, METHOD AND MATERIALS

Dr. Ambedkar's viewpoint of women problems in India and to aware women of their rights. Information has been collected from the Indian Constitution, internet, published papers and various books. Dr. Ambedkar championed the cause of women as well as the miserable plight of Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes throughout his career. He discussed a number of problems of Indian women and sought for their solutions in Bombay Legislative Council, in the Viceroy's Assembly as the chairman of the Drafting Committee and also in the Parliament as the first Law Minister of Independent India. DISCUSSION He incorporated the values of liberty, equality and fraternity in the Indian Constitution. Based on the belief that any scheme of franchise and constituency that fails to bring about representation of opinions as well representation of persons falls short of

creating a popular government, he submitted the Constitution with a warning. He said in his speech delivered in the Constituent Assembly on 25th November 1949, “Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy.” By social he means a way of life, which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as principal of life. He further said: “On 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principal of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principal of one man one value. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.”

Ambedkar believed primarily in the efficacy of law and legislation, and he struggled to evolve a constitutional mechanism to fashion India of his dreams, where equality, liberty and fraternity would have an unhindered play. In Ambedkar’s vision of India, all citizens would be equal before law; they have equal civic rights, equal access to all institutions, conveniences and amenities maintained by or for the public; they possess equal opportunities to settle or reside in any part of India to hold any public office, or exercise any trade or calling, here all key and basic industries would be owned by the state. He pleaded for special privileges and safeguards for the Dalits as scheduled Castes. In short, he demanded equality, which would not only lead, to the redressal of the part wrongs but also provide sufficient leverage, Though Ambedkar is known for dedicating his entire life for the development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, but he had also talked about women’s issues and their solutions in the Bombay Legislative Assembly, the Viceroy’s Executive Council, the Constituent Assembly or in the Indian legislature after independence for many a times and in different contexts.

He sincerely believed that no one from outside could improve women’s status in society unless and until they themselves come forward. The only way to provide social security to women is to make them self-reliant. Brahmanism subtly deprived women of their right to education, kept them in the darkness of ignorance, deprived them of their rights and enslaved them on the pretext of the Shastra. Ambedkar felt that the main causes behind this deplorable situation of women were their ignorance and illiteracy. Only education can eradicate women’s ignorance and make them aware of their rights. He realized that without education, their social, economic and political emancipation was nearly impossible. So, he emphasized on the education of women. He started two newspapers called Mook Nayak in 1920 and Bahishkrit

Bharat in 1927 and there he propagated on women’s liberation and dire need of women’s education. He used these two newspapers for the upgradation of their social status. It helped him to motivate them to participate in social reform movements against social evils. These printing media worked as a platform for their demand of their socio-economic rights. In 1924 he formed the ‘Bahiskrit Hitakarini Sabha’. It paid special attention to ensure participation of Dalit women in social movements and played an important role towards educating women in real education. In 1928 he formed the Depress class Education Society. The main aim of this society was to provide free education to the underprivileged class boys as well as girls from the hostel. In the year 1927, Dr. Babasaheb launched ‘Mahad Satyagrahas’. Thousands of men and women accompanied him in this historic march to assert their rights to take water from Chawdar tank at Mahad. From time immemorial, Ambedkar wanted to build a movement against the Religious Scriptures, especially the Manusmriti, which bounded women in bondage for the sake of religion. That is why we see that on December 25, 1927, Ambedkar burnt a copy of the Manusmriti in public and a large number of Dalit women including Shantabai Dani, Gita Bai Gaikwad and Meenabhi Shivraj, joined in his initiative. Women started participating in satyagrahs and also launched women’s associations for untouchable women for spreading education and awareness among them. In the Mahad Satyagraha for temple entry in 1927, even caste Hindus participated. Shandabai Shinde was one such participant. In the Satyagraha it was decided to burn the Manusmriti, which humiliated women, and shudras. In the demonstration after the bonfire of the Manusmriti more than fifty Women participated. Ambedkar addressed the meeting thereafter and advised women to change their style of wearing sarees, wear lightweight ornaments, not to eat meat of dead animals. It was upper caste women like Tipnis who taught them proper way of wearing sarees.

At the All India Depressed Classes Women’s Conference held at Nagpur on 20th July, 1940 Dr. Ambedkar emphasized that there could not be any progress without women. He spoke “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. Ambedkar made some memorable speeches in the Round Table conference. He placed the view point of the depressed classes and pleaded for Dominion Status. His speeches created a good impression upon the British public. He served on a number of important sub-committees and prepared scheme of political safeguards for the protections of depressed classes in the future constitution of a self governing India.

Ambedkar also advocated the immediate introduction of adult franchise.

When Ambedkar returned to India after attending the round table conference in 1932, hundreds of women were present for the committee meetings. Since Ambedkar was well convinced about the status of women, as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee he tried and 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's equality both in formal and sustainable senses he included special provisions for women while all other general provisions are applicable to them, as to men constitutional provisions. Hence, there are Articles like 15(3), 51(A), and so on. His key work in the preparation of Indian Constitution made it to be known as a New Charter of Human Rights. He looked upon law as the instrument of creating a sane social order in which the development of individual should be in harmony with the growth of society.

Conclusion

Society is in a continuous process of evolution. It will take several decades for these imbalances to be rectified. Education of both men and women will lead to change in attitudes and perceptions. It is not easy to eradicate deep-seated cultural value, or alter tradition that perpetuate discrimination. Law can only be an instrument of change, that must be effectively used. The absence of effective law enforcement, results in low rates of conviction, which in turn emboldens the feeling that the accused can get away. It is necessary that deterrent punishments are provided in the statute, and are strictly enforced. A beginning has certainly been made in urban areas. Working women continue to remain primarily responsible for taking care of home and child rearing, in addition to their careers. Increased stress has made them more prone to heart and other stress related diseases. Hence, it is necessary to improve the Support System for working women.

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