



Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision for Women Empowerment in India

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Abstract- *Women in the rural areas are wholly oblivious of their rights. It will require a much greater and concerted effort for the various measures to become a living reality for women in the rural areas. This can happen only through the collective effort of the State and Center Govt. policies. 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. 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. Such was the placement earmarked to our mothers, sisters and even great grandmothers that humanity was ashamed of. That is why Dr.Ambedker, the father and architect of Indian Constitution, was of the firm opinion that until and unless, we defy the Hindu Dharma-Shastras, nothing much can be changed. In the name of sanskaras, the Hindu women are tied to bondages of superstitions, which they carry till their death.*

Dr. 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, 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.

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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 end nation, and to gain 'power'.

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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. She cannot move nor do anything at her will. In Hindu Shastras, she has been branded just like animals or some Objects of enjoyment. From the verses of Ramayana as written by Tulsi Das, Dhol, ganwar, shudra, pashu, naari - Ye sab tadan ke adhikari", In 'Manusmriti' the ancient Hindu Code-book, the status granted to Women is quite visible and she was put to the lowest rung of humanity as she was treated at par with the animals and slave by the proprietors of Hindu Dharma.

Such was the placement earmarked to our mothers, sisters and even great grandmothers that humanity was ashamed of. That is why Dr. Ambedker, the father and architect of Indian Constitution, was of the firm opinion that until and unless, we defy the Hindu Dharma-Shastras, nothing much can be changed. In the name of sanskaras, the Hindu women are tied to bondages of superstitions, which they carry till their death. Dr. Ambedkar's vision for the Empowerment of Indian Women

Dr. 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, 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.

Dr. Ambedkar's vision of Hinduism-

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. Ambedkar tried his level best to defend the Bill by pointing out the Constitutional principles of equality, liberty and fraternity and that in the Indian society characterized by the caste system and the necessary for a social change in which women have equality Indian in a legal frame system and the opposition of women since women are deprived of equality, a legal frame work is necessary for a social change in which women have equal right with men. However, the Bill could not with stand the opposition from the Hindu orthodoxy. In reality, the Bill was a threat to patriarchy on which traditional family structure, was bounded and that was the major reasons behind the opposition. Therefore, on the eve of the first elections in 1951 Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru dropped the Bill by saying that there was

too much opposition. On this issue the then Law Minister Dr. Ambedkar resigned. His explanations for resignation show how the parliament of independent India deprived its women citizens of even basic rights. His resignation letter dated 27th September 1951. Although most of the provisions proposed by Ambedkar were later passed during 1955-56 in four bills on Hindu 'marriage' succession, minority and guardianship and maintenances and later in 1976 some changes were made in Hindu law it still remains true that the basic rights of women have yet to be restored to them even after fifty years of the working of the Indian Constitution based on the principle of equality, liberty and justice to all Indian citizens. However, the Hindu code Bill helped the resurgence of feminist movement in India.

It is true that great men do not demand rights they do their duties. But for Ambedkar, this is hardly true in respect of the general masses. The rights of the upper castes are automatically protected, but not of the poor classes. The poor masses must have specific rights; otherwise they would be exploited and opposed by the clever and shrewd persons. The Hindu ideal of duties under the Varna-Vyavastha has developed only as a means of exploitation. It is a system which deadens paralyes and crippled the people from which useful activity, and also prevents them from creativity. 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 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. He was elected on the Drafting Committee and later appointed its chairman. He also suggests strategies for emancipation from oppression. He found their emancipation in Buddhist values, which promotes equality, self-respect and education. Ambedkar believes that Buddha treated women with respect and love and never tried to degrade them like Manu did. He taught women Buddha Dharma and religious philosophy. Ambedkar cites women like Vishakha, Amrapali of Visali, Gautami, Rani Mallika, Queen of Prasenajith who approached Buddha, as evidences of Buddha's treatment of women as equals. It was mainly the Hindu culture and social customs, which stood in the headway of Women's Empowerment

Like Ambedkar, the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001, also admits, "The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to social and economic structure and practices, Consequently, the access of women, particularly those belonging to weaker section including Scheduled Caste/Tribes Other Backward classes and Minorities. To education, health, and productive resources, political reservation among others is inadequate. Therefore, they remain largely marginalized, poor and socially excluded." Since Ambedkar himself was a victim of oppression and discrimination in all its severity, his views about women's oppression and equal rights are more useful than anybody else's theory based on mere observation for the feminist movement to strengthen its strategy for approaching the systemic challenges and contradictions in a more pragmatic way to bring women to the mainstream. After returning to India he devoted his life fully to work for the depressed classes

including women. He was firmly committed to the ideals of equality, liberty and fraternity. In Ambedkar's movement launched from 1920 onward, women actively participated and acquired the confidence to voice their issues on various platforms. Venbai Bhatkar and Renubai work for the socio-political equality of depressed people and promoting their economic interests. Dr. Ambedkar's vision of Equality

He incorporated the values of equality, liberty 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 equality, liberty 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 laboriously built up."

Government Schemes for Women Empowerment- Education to women is the most powerful instrument of changing their position

in the society. Education also brings about reduction in inequalities and also acts as a means to improve their status within the family. In order to encourage Education of women at all levels and to dilute gender bias in the provision and acquaintance of Education, schools, colleges and even universities were established exclusively for women in the country. To bring more girl children, especially from marginalized BPL families, into the mainstream of Education, Government has been providing a package of concessions in the form of free supply of books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for hostilities, mid-day meals, scholarships, free bicycles and so on. Many universities such as Mother Teresa Women University have been established for the development of women Studies and to encourage higher education among women and their social mobility. My final words of advice to you are educate, agitate and organize, have faith in yourself. With justice on our side. I do not see how we can lose our battle to me is a matter of joy. You must abolish your slavery yourselves.

Provision of up-gradation of skill training to women in Self Help Groups has been given recognition so as to enable them to start their own income-generating activities. The duration of the training and the cost depends on the nature of the trade selected by the members. Self Help Groups are small homogenous groups consisting of 12-20 women from BPL families voluntarily organised to promote savings. They are self-managed groups of poor women which primarily came into existence to mobilise financial resources through their own savings and lend the same amongst themselves to meet the credit needs of their members.

Women's empowerment is an

important agenda in the development efforts. There has been significant shift in approach of the district administration towards the development of women, especially the poor & the illiterate. To provide secured accommodation to the working Women's, Working Women's Hostel has been established at Angul & functioning since 1996.

Political equality to all children regardless of birth, sex, colour, etc is one of the basic premises of democracy. Political equality includes not only equal right to franchise but also more importantly, the right to access to the institutionalised centres of power. Thus, political participation of women means not only using the right to vote but also power sharing, co-decision making and co-policy making at all levels. The active participation of women in political sphere is integral to empowerment of women and helps to build a gender equal society as well as to speed up the process of National development.

In January 1992, the national commission for women was set up by an Act of Parliament with the specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the Constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation, to suggest amendments wherever necessary, and safeguard the rights and entitlements of women. The Commission extend financial support to NGOs and educational institutions to conduct legal awareness programme to enable women to become aware of their rights.

The Government programmes for women development began as early as 1954 in India but the actual participation began only in 1974. At present, the Government of India has over 34 schemes for women operated by different

department and ministries. Considering various article in the constitution, many schemes for the empowerment have been launched by the part and current government. Like-Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, One Stop Centre Scheme, Women Helpline Scheme, UJJAWALA : A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Reuse, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation, Working Women Hostel, Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme For the Children of Working Mothers, Ministry approves new projects under Ujjawala Scheme and continues existing projects, SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances), Revision under IGMSY in Accordance with National Food Security Act, 2013 in XIIth Plan, Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR, Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar, Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman, Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) - A Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme, Mahila police Volunteers etc. The efforts of government and its different agencies are ably supplemented by nongovernmental organizations that are playing an equally important role in facilitating women empowerment. Despite concerted efforts of governments and NGOs there are certain gaps. Of course we have come a long way in empowering women yet the future journey is difficult and demanding.

Conclusion- Women in the rural areas are wholly oblivious of their rights. It will require a much greater and concerted effort for the various measures to become a living reality for

women in the rural areas . This can happen only through the collective effort of the State, NGOs, imparting of formal and informal education, through the media, etc. Empowerment of women so as to enable them to become equal partners with their male counterparts so that they have mutual respect for each other and share the responsibilities of the home and finances should be the ultimate goal that we must aspire to achieve. Enforcement of basic human rights of gender equality must take place, without undermining the institution and sanctity of marriage, and family 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 . The march towards elimination of gender bias has to go on, so as to make it meaningful for the vast majority of women in this country. There is a greater representation now in the legislature, executive and judiciary. India is one of the few countries in the world, which has had a woman

Prime Minister. Various States have from time to time, had women Chief Ministers. A woman Judge in the Supreme Court, and in the High courts, has today become the norm. Women have crossed many barriers, and head various departments in large multinationals today. A beginning has been made in the Army also, when women are being commissioned as SSC Officers. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution were brought about in 1993, which served as a break-through towards ensuring equal access and increased participation in the Political power structure. The proposed Women's Reservation Bill to provide 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislature is now under consideration. The empowerment of women in urban areas and the metropolises cannot be the indicator of growth in the country. In a country, where eighty percent of the population is in rural areas, until the lot of women in these areas is also not improved simultaneously, development will remain an illusion to them. The status of women cannot be raised without opening up opportunities of independent income and employment. In the rural areas employment of women is concentrated mainly in labour-intensive, unskilled jobs where simple or traditional skills are required. There is lack of access to vocational institution.

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