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DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR TOWARDS THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

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Abstract: Empowerment is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered concept. Women's empowerment is one of the key issues in Indian society. Women's empowerment is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources material, human and intellectual. Dr. Ambedkar's efforts are significant milestone in the development of the women's status in India. He had made his best efforts to liberate them from various social and religious ties. He stated that women should be given all round development. He emphasized that each and every section of Indian women be given their due share and it is a must to maintain and protect dignity and modesty of women.

Ambedkarian philosophy is vast and contains many ideals. There is no doubt that Ambedkar was a man ahead of his times. He foresaw many of the problems that we face today. Ambedkar saw women as the victims of the oppressive, caste-based and rigid hierarchical social system. He believed that socio-cultural forces artificially construct gender relations, especially by Manusmriti and Hindu religion. He worked hard to challenge the iniquitous gender relations under the Hindu social order so that Hindu society could be reconstructed along the modern democratic ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Key-Words: Ambedkarian philosophy, Women's empowerment, injustice

Introduction: Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the father of Indian Constitution was a great freedom fighter, political leader, philosopher, thinker, economist, editor, social reformer, revivalist of Buddhism. He was the first Indian to break down the barriers in the way of advancement of women in India. "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of Hindu society" said the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Dr. Ambedkar insisted that every married woman must participate in her husband's activities as a friend. But she must show the courage to deny the life of slaves. She should insist on the principle of equality. He involved women in his social reform movements against social evils and demanded socio-economic and political rights for the depressed classes and women. Dr Ambedkar believed in the strength of women and their role in the process of social reform. He strongly advocated for family planning measures for women in Bombay Legislative Assembly.

In 1942, being a Labour Minister of Executive Council of Governor General, he introduced a Maternity Benefit Bill. He provided several provisions in the constitution for protecting the welfare and civil rights of women. He introduced the Hindu Code Bill in the Parliament and highlighted the issues about women's property right. The bill received strong opposition from many political leaders. In turn, Dr. Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet expressing his discontent over non-acceptance of woman's right by the parliament.

Dr. Ambedkar and The Empowerment of Women: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar worked as an activist and social reformer at the grass roots level to organize and empower women of depressed classes so that they could fight to reclaim their social rights such as right to drink water from their source and right to enter temple that were traditionally denied to them by the caste Hindus. Ambedkar created awareness among poor, illiterate women and inspired them to fight against the unjust and social practices like child marriages and devdasi system. Dr. Ambedkar spent his life for the betterment of women even involved in bad practices and professionals like prostitutions. He evoked the entire prostitute to give up their profession and lead the life of honour.

Dr. Ambedkar thought to free women from the age old perspectives by reforming the Hindu social laws created by Manu. He, therefore, took initiative to draft and introduce the Hindu Code Bill in the Constituent Assembly. Dr. Ambedkar tried an adequate inclusion of women's right in the political vocabulary and constitution of India-

Article 14 - Equal rights and opportunities in political, economic and social spheres. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex.

Article 15(3) enables affirmative discrimination in favour of women.

Article 39 – Equal means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work.

Article 42 – Human conditions of work and maternity relief.

Article 51 (A) (C) – Fundamental duties to renounce practices, derogatory to the dignity of women.

Article 46 – The state to promote with special care, the educational and economic interests of weaker section of people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Article 47 – The state to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health and so on.

Article 243D (3), 243T (3) & 243R (4) provides for allocation of seats in the Panchayati Raj System.

The Hindu Code Bill, the most formidable legislative measure of modern India, sought among other reforms, to put an end to a variety of marriage systems prevailing in India and legalize only monogamous marriages. The Code also sought to confer on women the right of property and adoption which had been denied by Manu. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; The Hindu Succession Act, 1956; The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956 and The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 are the four enactments which incorporate the ideas and principles of Hindu Code Bill formulated by Dr Ambedkar. They give independent status to women and endow them with the right of adoption, succession and property, so completely denied by Manu.

Dr Ambedkar strived hard efforts for liberation and empowerment of Indian Women. He framed many laws for them as follows:

1. Dearness Allowance
2. Women Labour Welfare Fund
3. ESI
4. Provident Fund Act
5. Women Labour Protection Act
6. Maternity Benefit for Women Labour Bill
7. Divorce Act
8. Right over Parental Property
9. Leave Benefit to Piece Workers
10. Revision of Scale of Pay for Employees
11. Restoration of Ban on Women Working Underground in Mines etc.
12. No Marriage before age of 18 years
13. Maintenance allowance from husband on getting legally separation
14. Widow can adopt a child
15. Mother can change guardian of minor by will
16. Equal pay for equal work irrespective of the sex.

Dr Ambedkar highlighted the issues of Muslim women also. His secular perspective is known through his thoughts on Purdah system, religious conversions and legal rights for Muslim women. In short, along with the depressed class women, his thoughts for emancipation of all the women are expressed with same allegiance. In his famous book 'Pakistan and partition of India'

he expressed his views about Muslim women and their religious traditions, about wearing veil, their marriages and so on. Muslim women were suppressed under various religious traditions.

Conclusions: Towards all the women, irrespective of their religion, castes and class, Babasaheb Ambedkar had a particular humanitarian view. He frequently raised his voice against all sorts of injustice towards women. He believed in the strength of women and their role in the process of social reform. Thus his contribution to the upliftment of the status of women in India through legislative actions is highly appreciable. As a member of Bombay Legislative Council, he raised the problems of Indian women in the discussion within the Council and sought their solutions. His arguments on the Maternity Benefit Bill and on Birth Control were quite relevant to recognize the dignity of women.

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