

## ROLE OF AMBEDKAR IN EMANCIPATING WOMEN

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Ambedkar was not only the father of Indian Constitution; he was a great freedom fighter, political leader, philosopher, thinker, writer, economist, editor, and a revivalist for Buddhism in India. The first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru said; "Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of the Hindu society". Dr. Ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women. He stated that women should be given all round development importantly social education, their well being and socio-cultural right. 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.

Since Vedic era, 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 being. She has no rights. She cannot move nor do anything at her will. In Hindu Shastras, she has been branded just like animals. From the verses of Ramayan as written by Mr. Tulsi Das, " Dhol, ganwar, shudra, pashu, naari- Ye sab tadan ke adhikari," one may easily draw inferences as to what status has been granted to our mothers. Similarly, we can understand that of Dropadi of Mahabharata was reduced to the status of a bitch, as she was the wife of five husbands (Pandwas). She was not only, the wife of five husbands; she put at stake in gambling by none else than the so called Dharmraj Yudhishtar! In 'Manusmriti' the ancient Hindu Code-book, the status granted to women is quite visible and she was put to the lowest rug 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 grand mothers that the heads of humanity bend upon down with shame!

"We shall see better days soon and our progress will be greatly accelerate if male education is persuaded side by side with female education..." were the words of young Ambedkar during his studies at New York which come out while writing a letter to his father's friend. Dr. Ambedkar's First academic paper "Caste in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development" also begins with this concern towards women, where he located the linkages between caste and gender by observing that "Superimposition of endogamy and exogamy means creation of caste" and concluded that there is divine or natural cause of origin of caste but Brahmin of ancient India craftily designed it by enclosing their do through means of controlling and subjugating their woman.

Ambedkar further opined that in order to maintain endogamy, the only ideal situation is constant sex ratio with in a class, i.e., one man for one woman, As he observed, "The problem of caste then, ultimately resolves itself into one of repairing the disparity between marriageable units of two sexes with in it. Left to nature the much needed parity between the units can be realized only when a couple dies simultaneously. But this is a contingency. The Husband may die before the wife and create a surplus woman, who must be disposed of , else through intermarriage she will violate the endogamy of man.

Ambedkar, thus viewed that in the maintenance of strict endogamy the main challenge is surplus men and surplus women. Men being powerful and upper hand in society can be forcibly controlled thus the society let him untouched but the women being inferior to men were earn prey of

its victimization. That is why as a protected measure sati system a surplus women (widow) was forced to burn along with her deceased husband. But to observe sati was not always possible so as a second remedy to control surplus women widowhood was observed in which a widow was forced to follow a compulsory widowhood for rest of her life, and in order to guard her morals and also the moral of the group the widows were forced to follow many restrictions such as shaven head, restriction on diets, wearing of white saree and no intermix with any one and in this way she is no longer source of allurements.

But both these measures were not possible in case of surplus men. Therefore surplus men was allowed to remarry to recruit another bride, but here there is every possibility of increase in competition in consumption of woman in caste, therefore as a corrected measure, a man was allowed to recruit his wife lower marriageable rank, this resulted in the begin of Girl marriage. So that , circumstances led the beginning of the inhuman practices of (a) Sati system (b) Enforced widowhood and child marriage. Thus much before the Indian feminist movement, Dr. Ambedkar pointed out the real causes of downfall in the status of women and also began his movement to restore glory of women hood.

Dr. Ambedkar was of the firm opinion that until or unless, by applying dynamite, the Hindu Dharma Shastras are not blown up, nothing is going to happen. In the name of Sanskaras, the Hindu women are tied up with the bondage of superstitions, which they carry till their death. They are also responsible for inculcating these wrong notions learnt by them through baseless traditions and preaching of the shastras in the budding minds of their off -springs.

Besides this, the woman in India also remained a matter of Joy and a source of amusement as such she was used and misused by men just to serve their evil ends. She has been used just like a machine for procreation. It has been also mentioned in the Hindus Dharmshastras that the women is bond slave of her father when she is young, to her husband when she is middle aged and

to son when she is mother. Of course all the epigrams aphorisms, proverbs, platitudes and truisms bear necked truth about the stature of women in India.

When Ambedkar started his struggle for the equality of women and Dalit, There were two prevailing schools of Hindu law viz- "Mitakshara" and "Dayabhag" which is responsible for the creation and sustainment of inequality. According to "Mitakshara" the property of a Hindu is not his individual property. It belongs to what is called coparcenary, which consists of father, son, grandsons and great grandsons by the mere reasons of birth. The property passed under Mitakshara by survivorship to the member of coparcenary who remains behind and does not passed to the heirs of the deceased. Whereas Dayabhag recognized the property held by the heir as his personal property with an absolute right to dispose it of either by gift-or-by will or any other manner that he choose. The Chaotic conditions of Hindu law were reduced to eat propositions in form of judicial pronouncements and codification was legislative reorganization of the judge made law.

Dr. Ambedkar's main concern was women. Women's issue was also main plank in his fortnightly Mooknayak and Bahiskrit Bhart. In Historic Mahad Satyagrah there were about 500 women took active part in this procession. On 18<sup>th</sup> July 1927, Dr. Ambedkar addressed a meeting of about three thousand women of depressed classes, where he said that "I measure the progress of community by the degree of progress which women had achieved and said to the women, "Never regard yourself as untouchables, live a clean life. Dress yourselves as touchable ladies. Never mind if your dress is full of patches, but see that it is clean. None can restrict your freedom in the choice of your garments. Attend more to the cultivation of the mind and spirit of self Help."

Then with a little fall in voice he said "But do not feed in any case your spouse and sons if they are drunkard .Send your children to schools. Education is necessary for both males and females. If you know how to read and write there would be much progress. As you are, so your

children will be". Dalit women too responded very positively to Dr. Ambedkar's advice and to the surprise all the women left early in the morning with wonderful changes in the fashion of their sarees as ordained by Babasaheb.

Further, Dr. Ambedkar said to the women "Learn to be clean keep from vices, Give education to your children. Instill ambition into them Inculcate in their mind that they are destined to be great Remove from them all inferiority complexes" On marriage he remarked "Do not be in hurry to marry Marriage is liability. You should impose upon your children unless they are financially above to meet the liabilities arising from marriage. Those who will marry will have to keep in mind that to have too many children is a crime. The paternal duty lies in giving each child a better start than its parents had. Above all, 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 honor and glory to yourselves.

Dr. Ambedkar also raised the women's issue as member of legislative council during his debate in Bombay Legislative Assembly. In this debate he strongly advocated family planning measures and said that beside many problems giving birth to too many children negatively affects mother's health. In the year 1942 Dr. Ambedkar also introduced Maternity benefit Bill during his tenure as labour Minister in Governor Generals Executive council.

Dr. Ambedkar, while drafting constitution was prime mover of the provisions related to the welfare of women. Article 14-16 of Indian Constitution gives equal status to women and also banned the sale and purchase of women which prevailed in Hindu India. His moves didn't ended with these provision only. He further introduced an women emancipatory bill (The Hindu Code Bill) in parliament which intended mainly (1) To abolish different marriage system prevalent among Hindus and to establish monogamy as the only legal system

(2) Conferment of right to property and adoption of on women (3) Restitution of conjugal rights and judicial separation, attempt to unify the Hindu code in tune with progressive and modern thought. This Hindu code Bill was introduced by Dr. Ambedkar in constituent assembly on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1947. A debate on this bill continued for more than 4 years. It was opposed both inside and outside the house, where not only leading members of Hindu Mahasabha but also large number of Cast Hindu women protested against this. In vigorous defense to this Bill, Dr. Ambedkar alleged that the ideals enshrined in this bill are derived from constitution of India, which is based on liberty, equality and fraternity. He observed that, the sacramental marriage does not satisfy the ideal of liberty or equality. And described 'sacramental marriages as polygamy for the men and perpetual slavery for the women because under no circumstances with in that system women got liberty from her husband how bad he may be, however undesirable he may be. But unfortunately this revolutionary bill could not see day of light as in face of growing opposition pt. Nehru, then Prime Minister decided to drop the bill.

Dr. Ambedkar was so disgusted with this that he resigned from Nehru's cabinet. He said "it (the Hindu code bill) was killed and buried, unwept and unsung.

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