



## **DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S THOUGHTS AND INDIAN GOVERNMENT POLICIES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA**

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### **Abstract:**

This article provides an overview of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's thoughts and how these thoughts are important in present government policies for women empowerment. This is the qualitative type of research and inductive approach has adopted for the conclusion. In the rising India where seemingly more and more women enter various fields to work alongside men there are many struggles that they put up to achieve where they are and there are many more glass ceilings that they need to break open and move up before they achieve a position of complete equality. Dr. Ambedkar's exposure the western education and his deep understanding western philosophy and ideals made him appreciate the climate equality that prevailed and aspire for the same to the disadvantaged sections of the society which included women of India. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar expressed his views on the state of life of all women. He stated that women must be treated equally and given equal prestige. He insisted on Hindu Code bill suggesting the basic improvements and amendments in assembly. He also insisted and evoked all the parliamentary members to help to pass the bill in parliament. Eventually, he resigned for the same. The teachings and thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar are useful not only women but also all the Indian even today. His deep concern and feelings for all round development of women is expressed from his each sentence and word.

### **Introduction:**

In the rising India where seemingly more and more women enter various fields to work alongside men there are many struggles that they put up to achieve where they are and there are many more glass ceilings that they need to break open and move up before they achieve a position of complete equality. While the world is talking about the resurgent India, it is apparent that its women play a significant role in shaping its destiny. At the same time there is another dimension to

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the spectrum where women still need to come out of their confines and take that bold step towards economic and gender equality. Anyone, who is not recognising both the scenarios which are inherent in India are giving only a selective picture of what is happening in the country, it is under such circumstances it is necessary to understand the importance of the role played by one of the greatest champions of social reforms the twentieth century ever produced.

Dr. Ambedkar's exposure the western education and his deep understanding western philosophy and ideals made him appreciate the climate equality that prevailed and aspire for the same to the disadvantaged sections of the society which included women of India. Through his speeches and writings and later through Hindu Code Bill he encouraged women to make their own destiny. His articles such as *The Riddle of the Woman*, *The Woman And the Counter Revolution*, *The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women*, *Castes in India: Their Mechanism Genesis and Development* brought out clearly the condition of Indian women and what they needed to do bring about their own freedom.

### **Objectives:**

1. To understand the thoughts of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on women's emancipation
2. To understand how these thoughts were translated into government policies during and after Dr. Ambedkar's life time
3. To assess the level of progress women have made in the last 68 years
4. Find out the relevance of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's views on women empowerment in presence context.

### **Methodology:**

This is the qualitative type of research and inductive approach has adopted for the conclusion. Secondary sources which included Dr. Ambedkar's speeches, writings and contemporary writing on him, books on Dr. Ambedkar, women's empowerment and analysis of various laws passed by the government of India will be used for the data collection.

### **Significance of the study:**

While some articles have been written on Dr. Ambedkar championing women's empowerment there has not been a comprehensive study on how his thoughts shaped the government of India's policy on empowerment of Indian Women and what its outcome in the context of present day Maharashtra. In that sense, this would a pioneering study which is much needed to understand the importance his contribution to the cause women's economic empowerment.

### **Status of women:**

Status of women is one of the most important markers of any civilised society. It is said that the position of women in any society is an indicator of the level of culture of the society. There is male dominance culture in India. A progressive trend in society would result in the improvement of her position, elevation of her status and extending her right, but when there is reactionary trend the position of women deteriorates. Dr. Ambedkar had done remarkable of work on social justice, gender equality, women rights and economic empowerment of Indian women. His views on economic empowerment of women are applicable in present context. If we consider rural India called "BHARAT" also, there is need to empower women on a large scale and today more than ever there is an urgent need to implement Dr. Ambedkar's thought. His main focus was on education and

awareness. He observed that an educated woman would educate her children and through her not only the family the entire immediate society would prosper. The status of women is intimately connected with their economic position which depends on opportunities for participation in economic activities. The educational and economic status of women is an indicator of social development. Education along with participation of women in workforce has been universally recognized as an important element in the adoption of small family norms which is essential for family planning enhancing female participation in the economic activities will reduce birth rate regardless of its demographic consequences.

Gender equality is a constituent as well as an instrument of development. No country can be deemed developed if half of its population is severely disadvantaged in terms of basic needs, livelihood options, access to knowledge, and political voice. Gender equality is an instrument of development because without it national goals of development will be difficult to achieve as, for example, poverty alleviation, population planning, family welfare and environmental sustainability.

Over the years, efforts have been made to empower women socially, economically and politically. However, due to lack of synergy and coordination the outcomes are not satisfactory. It is imperative that an integrated policy and strategy be formulated that addresses economic, social and political empowerment of women along with the requisite programmes and schemes. Though the constitutional commitments to women have been translated through the planning process, legislation policies and programmes over the last six decades yet the economic status women reflects less than satisfactory achievements in almost all important human development indicators.

Gender equality, gender mainstreaming, leaderships, financial freedom are the essential aspects of women empowerment or economic empowerment of woman. Dr. Ambedkar realized this at his time and included in the process of social reforms. Dr. Ambedkar started involving women in the struggle, for eradication of caste systems and empowerment of the underprivileged sections. He realized that this could not be achieved without liberating the women themselves. He motivated women and addressed them to participate in struggle against caste prejudices. Empowerment envelops developing and building capacities of individuals, communities to make them part of the mainstream society.

Education is the only mean by which societies grow out of oppression to democratic participation and involvement. It is a powerful tool for empowerment of individual. Over the generations, marginalized sections and women in Indian society were denied the opportunity to education. Dr. Ambedkar put all his efforts to guarantee the educational opportunities without any discrimination to all the citizens of India. Dr. Ambedkar is an architect of Indian Constitution; He provided strong constitutional safeguards to women. Dr. Ambedkar introduced Hindu Code Bill in 1948 which was revolutionary in confinement of proprietary rights to women but when not accepted by the parliament, he resigned from the ministerial post from the cabinet in 195 Women empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives; both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction and social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationality and

internationally. Dr. Ambedkar strongly believed that women empowerment can be achieved by welfare of women. The activities of empowering women worldwide should follow the vision of Dr. Ambedkar.

**Dr. Ambedkar's observation on Indian Women:**

“I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved”

“I like the religion that teaches liberty, equality and fraternity”

“Equality may be a fiction but nonetheless one must accept it as a governing principle.”

“Cultivation of mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence”

**Origin of the research problem:**

The Medieval India saw the deterioration of the women's position and it was due to various reasons: these included the general instability that prevailed in the country due to constant wars the kings waged and the consequent insecurity that people felt to their life, property, and to their honour. This made the society deny opportunities to women and made it confine women within the walls of their home or within the safety of their community network. Prolonged period of women's subordinate position to men in the society created a situation in which men could easily manure circumstances to become the arbiters of women's destiny. They could easily decide what was best for women and if they did not comply could make their life miserable by casting aspersions on their character. Amongst the nobility multiple marriages were common and their women were pushed to the position of many women competing for the same man's affection. The Constant wars ensured the frequent occurrence of Sati and the belief became widespread in India that many women believed in quicker but crueller way of dying was much better than lifelong suffering of ignominy. In such an atmosphere formal education for women was hardly the norm. Their participation in public life happened if and when the genial family members did not deny the women the opportunity function in a man's world or when extraordinary circumstances demanded that they donned the role of a protector of family honour and fortune. Towards the end of the Mughal rule, the sons of the medieval aristocracy lost their intellectual vigour and moral stamina. They easily acquired all vices and the society which looked up to the ruling class for both protection and for emulation of values got attracted to these vices and during the transition between medieval to modern times the society held these values as badges of privilege and of honour. The 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century landed gentry throughout rural India indulged in debauchery and Harlem. Women who were part of such households could hardly expect happiness much less respect. Added to these were the social menaces like old men marrying young girls. The parents looking for bride money were willing to marry off their minor daughters to men who were their age. This resulted in many young widows who led a life of misery and ignominy as some entered into illicit relationships to fulfil basic human desires. Such women, if got pregnant were thrown out of their homes and they had to fend for themselves and for their children. Maharashtra did not witness many cases of sati as did Bengal or Tamilnadu during the same period but the treatment of widows was very bad in the state.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a few women tried to educate themselves and they even tried become a workforce which was till then essentially men's forte. Men in cities such as Poona or Bombay asked for educated bride only to get an intelligent progeny.

By 1911 the number of women who could read and write was only 1.1 % whereas at the same time the men who could read and write were about 11.3 %. In 1921 it went up to 1.8% for women as against 13% for men. By 1937-38 there were only 30,12,212 women who could read and write, in 1941-42 their population went up to 37,26,876 and at the time of independence there were 42,97,785 women who were enrolled still the numbers that earned a livelihood was very less. It is these women who were educated gradually grew the tendency to demand equality and fairness in treatment. But 1911 to 1947 were crucial years in which the mind-set of the people changed and more women progressed towards education. The shift happened through efforts of social reformers and especially so due to the efforts Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

### **Relevance to the area of social justice and equity:**

According to nature both men and women are same, there is no dominance of male or female but in present time women's are giving low status because of their social and economic backwardness. So that empowerment of women socially and economically is very important for gender equality as well as social justice and equity. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, being a complaisant, kind and generous social reformer was much moved with the pitiful and pathetic condition and low status of women in society and he was a torch bearer in the direction of social uplift of women generally and Hindu women specially. Dr. Ambedkar was of the opinion that the Hindu women are tied up with bandage of superstitions which they can till their death. The reforms introduced by Dr. Ambedkar through 'Hindu code Bill' have been adhered to and have been accepted by and large. He by codifying Hindu law in respect of marriage, divorce and succession, rationalized and restored the dignity to women. He was the one who just not talked on things; but really worked on them. His concern for women is unquestionable. It is not wrong to say he was a great feminist of his day. Because women's rights form a part of human rights and Babasaheb can rightly be termed as the champion of it. According to Ambedkar, women were treated as mere tools to bear the burdens of the family, restricted to the role of bearing children and fulfilling duties of a wife or mother any. Division of labour is not in their favour; as a result Indian women have lost their identity. They have to face discrimination on gender basis and because of this availability of equal opportunity for remains a dream of them. Poverty, illiteracy lack of health and inequality of class of status and powerlessness, degrades are associated with them. Weights of traditional attitudes that regard them as physically, intellectually and socially, inferior to man subject them to male exploitation and unjustified division of labour. A society where women, i.e., the half of the population, enjoy a low status of women in Indian society is primarily due to the fact that they have no control over material and social resources. Ambedkar had a great visionary, he always thought far ahead his contemporaries, he rightly identified that the progress of the community is measured by progress of women.

**Review of research and development in the subject: International status: National status**

There are many books written on empowerment of Indian Women by various authors. A sample of these books are given below but none of these books talk about Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's thoughts and brings out a comprehensive study on how his pioneering movement helped women to cross the barrier of social resistance to achieve education and through which make an effort to join the workforce

“Women Entrepreneurs in India: A Socio-economic Study of Delhi” by Vinze Medha Dubhashi (1987), “Women and Empowerment: Approaches and Strategies” of Sahay Sushama (1998)

“Women and the changing development scenario” Leela P. (2000)

“Modernity, Feminism and Women Empowerment” Avasthi Abha and Srivastava A.K. (2001)

“Education and Socio-Economic Perspectives of Women Development and Empowerment” by Aruna Goel (2004)

“Women Workers”.Siddiqui M. Idris (2004)

“Women's Empowerment, Issues, Challenges, and Strategies: A Source Book” by Kumar Hajira, Jaimon Varghese (2005)

**Conclusion:**

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar expressed his views on the state of life of all women. He stated that women must be treated equally and given equal prestige. He insisted on Hindu Code bill suggesting the basic improvements and amendments in assembly. He also insisted and evoked all the parliamentary members to help to pass the bill in parliament. Eventually, he resigned for the same. The teachings and thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar are useful not only women but also all the Indian even today. His deep concern and feelings for all round development of women is expressed from his each sentence and word. In his last speech in Indian Parliament we can know his feelings and respect showed towards women. He quoted the famous thoughts of an Irish Patriot Daniel O Connal as, “No man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity. And no nation can be grateful at the cost of his liberty.”

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