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**Women Empowerment: Efforts made by Dr. B.R Ambedkar toward Upliftment of Women**

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**Abstract:-**

Dr. Ambedkar is considered as one of the great scholar and social worker who did many land mark things for the upliftment of society as well as individual by following the path of Liberty and Equality. He was one of those people who went against the society to shatter down the obstacles which were coming in the way of progress of Indian women. He did this by laying foundation of solid and genuine common Civil Code for Hindus and other segments of the society of India.

The paper which is present here is an effort to show Dr. Ambedkar's vision on upliftment of women and empowerment of women at the time of India's independence and its relevance with the current situation. He started protests against the Hindu social order and launched a journal "Mook Nayak" in 1920 and "Bahiskrit Bharat" in 1927 for this purpose. By this he highlighted the issue of gender based parity and the need & value of education in women's life, at the same time he also focused on the condition of women in depressed classes. Radhabai Vadale, a social worker addressed a press conference in 1931, where a women spoke boldly and their Dr. Ambedkar's efforts were seen that how he encouraged women. Dr. Ambedkar also presented his views on family planning for women at Legislative assembly of Bombay.

Dr. Ambedkar was did many works for the upliftment of women, he also tried to support women who were engaged in professions like prostitutions. He also worked for the betterment of poor, illiterate women and encouraged them to stand against the unfair social practices like "Devdasi Pratha" and child marriage. Dr. Ambedkar also tried to put women's right in political dictionary of constitution of India. His main concern was Hindu Code Bill; he tried to convince the parliamentary members to pass the bill in Parliament. Eventually, he resigned for the same. At the end his sentiments and concern for the growth and development of women was seen in his every statement.

**Keywords:** - women empowerment, Hindu code bill, equality.

**Introduction:-**

Dr. B.R Ambedkar was recognized as one of the greatest political thinker of India in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ambedkar was also a great scholar and had a high academic performance was also honored by some of most prestigious world institutions. His great efforts led India to follow the path of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

Dr. B.R Ambedkar raised vice for the prestige of women and depressed section of people that's

why he was considered as “champion of human rights”. As he believed in the procedure by law and social justice he always believed in the empowerment of women. In his view everyone should be treated equally no matter what his/her caste, religion, creed or gender is. This is the reason why he started working for liberation of women and equal rights for women. He focused on establishing society that believed in social justice and want to make Indian society a modern one.

Ambedkar was considered as great social worker, a genuine philosopher, political representative, economist, reformer and a great follower of Buddha. He was also one of the great Indian thinkers who thought about the upliftment of women and did much work for their progress. He did this by codifying the Civil Code for Hindus and different segments of Indian society. He always focused on the development and growth of women in every field such as education field, socio-cultural field and economic field. Dr. Ambedkar focused on women belonging to each and every segment of society and he thought that it is very precious to maintain the dignity and decorum of women of Indian society.

On June 2012, History TV 18 and CNN IB organized a contest in which they asked who is the great political thinker in India after Mahatma Gandhi? Which included First Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, J.R.D Tata, B.R Ambedkar, Vallabh Bhai Patel, etc.? Ranking was organized by three-ways polls i.e. 1. Ranked by jury, 2. Rank on ground of market research, 3. Rank by popular voting. Ambedkar topped the list. The great historian Ram Chandra Guha said “Dr. Ambedkar’s legacy has been distorted to suit particular interests. He was a great scholar, institution builder and economic theorist.”

Dr. Ambedkar always believed in women empowerment and protests & movements which were guided by women. He always believed that women should lead in every walk of life and should be confident about what they are doing; he thought women will play a great role in social reforms and independence movements. He played a very important role in eradicating the social evils from the society. Dr. Ambedkar always said that every woman is the pillar of their own family and always guide their family what is wrong and right for their family and should help their husband in every walk of life. Women should not accept the life of slave and should oppose that and should follow the path of equality.

This paper will mainly look after Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s thoughts and opinions regarding betterment of woman. The paper also analyzes the contribution of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as a thinker and social reformer in the emancipation of social status of women in the society.

#### **Objectives:-**

This paper is here to present the efforts and steps taken by Dr. Ambedkar for the upliftment of women at the time of independence, his views on women empowerment and role of women at that time & political scenario of India.

#### **Analysis and discussion:-**

Ambedkar’s vision on women empowerment was based on some of the major pillars like right to property in context of gender, marriage, women liberation and right to practice religion. The

changes occurred due to the bills like "*Hindu Code-bill*" have been obeyed to and was followed by a large group of people. He changed the laws in context of marriage, divorce and also talked about the dignity of women. The Hindu Code Bill was considered as an effort to improvise the social evils through laws. This is the first revolutionary step for the empowerment of women in India. Under this law a woman would have property rights and would be able to do anything with her property. For Hindu Code Bill Ambedkar said "The Hindu Code was the greatest social reform measure ever undertaken by the legislature in this country. No law passed by the Indian legislature in the past or likely to be passed in the future can be compared to it in point of its significance. To leave inequality between class and class, between sex and sex, which is the soul of Hindu society, untouched and to go on passing legislation relating to economic problems is to make a farce of our Constitution and to build a palace on a dung heap. This is the significance I attached to the Hindu Code. It is for its sake that I stayed on, notwithstanding my differences."

Justice P.B.Gajendragadkar (1951) at the time of wishing Ambedkar, the role played by him in drafting the bill he said, "*If Dr. Ambedkar gives us Hindus our Code, his achievement would go down in history as a very eloquent piece of poetic justice indeed.*" Work of Ambedkar, his sayings and speeches and addressed conferences held for women and talked about strong status of women and always demanded for strong position of women.

Ambedkar's always focused on education rights of women, equal rights for women, gender biasness, property rights for women and role of women in politics on national & global level. As J. S. Mill expressed in the Subjection of Women "the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself and one of the chief hindrance to human development; and ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no privilege or power on the one side, nor disability on the other." Ambedkar also had the same view for women and believed in empowering women.

Women's association which was founded on January of 1928 in Bombay under the leadership of Ramabai wife of Dr. Ambedkar and she was also the president of that association. As we have already discussed during the press conference called by Radhabai Vadale in 1931 where she spoke boldly and said "It is better to die a hundred times than live a life full of humiliation. We will sacrifice our lives but we will win our rights", this happened due to the encouragement which was given by Dr. Ambedkar to women.

Dr. Ambedkar always thought about strengthening women and how can they improvise society by improving their own condition. Mahad Satyagraha, which was one of the greatest movement in history of India, in that satyagraha more than three hundred women along with male. There was another movement in which he addressed around 3000 women where Ambedkar said, "I measure the progress of community by the degree of progress which women had achieved. 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, was very considerate about planning family for women in legislative assembly of Bombay. In 1942, Ambedkar introduced "Maternity Benefit Bill" as he was the labor minister in

the executive council of Governor General. He also added some of the provisions in the constitution for civil rights of women and protecting rights of women.

In Parliament Ambedkar introduced Hindu Code Bill and gave light on the property rights of women, but the bill was opposed by many of the then leaders. As a result of that Ambedkar left the cabinet as he was in favor of women's right due to which he faced a lot of disagreement. Ambedkar also focused on the condition of Muslim women and depressed classes and asked them to grant legal rights. He became more crystal clear when he started studying about Hindu Dharma and Hindu Philosophy and depth during the movements like ban of schedule caste and tribes in temple and prioritizing upper class in every step of society.

Ambedkar encouraged and motivated many women to write about them and about society that what they are facing, the ups and downs faced by them in society. A newspaper named "Chokhamela", which was started by Tulsibai Bansode, in which it was, highlighted that how Dr. Ambedkar, because of this Ambedkar was able to create awareness among women belonging to poor class and motivated them to fight back against wrong happening with them and evil social practices like he "devdasi pratha" and child marriage. Dr. Ambedkar once said, "I strongly believe in the movements run by women. If they are truly taken in to confidence, they may change the present picture of society which is very miserable. In past, they have played a significant role in improving the condition of weaker section and classes."

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar worked a lot for the betterment and development of women, he also worked for the betterment of women who were involved in bad practices like prostitution, Kamathipura was one of the great examples among them all. A person named David, who was working as the mediator in Brothel. He left his profession persuaded by the thoughts and teachings of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. He evoked the entire prostitute to give up their profession and lead the life of honor.

In the text of Manu Smriti, Manu degraded women as and treated them as slaves, he opposed the right to education and property rights of women and always forced them to make sacrifices. As Dr. Ambedkar were the law minister and chairman of drafting committee of the Constituent Assembly. Dr. Ambedkar included many provisions which tried to grant equal rights to women in constitution of India. i.e.

- 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.

Dr. Ambedkar gave resign on September, 27, 1951 to the Prime Minister of India and wrote “For a long time I have been thinking of resigning my seat from the Cabinet. The only thing that had held me back from giving effect to my intention was the hope that it would be possible to give effect to the Hindu Code Bill before the life of present Parliament came to an end. I even agreed to break up the bill and restricted it to Marriage and Divorce in the fond hope that at least this much of our labour may bear fruit. But even that part of Bill had been killed. I see no purpose in my continuing to be a Member of your Cabinet”.

The Hindu Code Bill was later split in to four Bills, and the same were put on the Statue Book by Parliament.

- 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.

### **Critical Analysis:-**

Many people critically analyses the views of Ambeddkar as people the then have different notion and people who were sitting in Parliament also opposed the Ambedkar’s view on women and opposed the work he did for the upliftment of women. Ambedkar believed in the misdiagnosis of symptoms like as the absence of mixing with other castes as causes.

Moreover, his concept of intermarriage was also opposed by many Parliamentarians and other people, as Ambedkar believed that by intercaste marriage he is in a way empowering women to choose who and what is good for them but he was also criticized for this. In other words, endogamy (absence of intermarriage) was the spirit of the caste system. Ambedkar did comparison with America where racial endogamy happened but, unlike India where racially mixed, culturally homogenous peoples were artificially divided into fixed units of castes.

Ambedkar was also criticized for his views on gender defining role of women in Hindu spiritual text and in Manusmriti as once he opposed role of Rama in context of Sita and for manusmriti he said that according to Manusmriti women main motive of life should be to please men and this was the reason why Ambedkar always opposed these text, because of these views of Ambedkar sentiment of some people and Hindus also got hurt so Ambedkar was also opposed for this.

### **Relevance of Ambedkar’s Contribution**

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar claimed for the rebuilding of Hindu society on the foundation of equality. As the law minister and chairman of the Drafting Committee, he conferred upon himself the obligation to free women from the ‘age old thralldom by reforming the social laws created by Manu’. His reforms through his writings and his belief made a path for empowerment of women.

The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001, which talked about social and economic equality of women was visualized by Ambedkar at that time only.

The governments till date have taken many steps for the strengthening of women such as providing education, self-help groups, training to develop their skill, focusing on development of women and child, political awareness among them and setting up of National Commission for Women. Many crucial steps has been taken by the five year plans for the development of women and many paradigm changes has taken place towards the empowerment of women. Nowadays women in India got representation in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, Panchayats. But what we consider good and ideal status of women in Indian society is only mentioned in constitution and only up to constitution. Many Laws were made for the upliftment and betterment of women in Indian society such as Sexual Harassment at Work Place, Nirbhaya Law, etc. Constitutional provision is important but with that change in view and attitude of society also matters to strengthen women and to cherish the goal of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. A joint venture on part of women themselves and government can remove all hindrances on the way to their development.

#### **Conclusion:-**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was always concerned about the status of women in society. He always thought that women should be given equal rights as men, and a society should set up which does not discriminate on basis of gender. He worked on the Hindu Code Bill and suggested some of the basic amendments in the bill. Not only this he also tried to convince the leaders in the parliament to pass the bill for the betterment of women in Indian society and eventually he resigned for the same reason.

The lessons given by Dr. Ambedkar are useful for women of the society not inlt at that time but it is relevant today also, his feelings for the betterment and upliftment of women can be seen from his each and every statement and the works done by him. In the condolence message, on Ambedkar's death in parliament, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was'a symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of Hindu society".

His dream of society, based on gender-equality has not come true till date, but his thoughts are important for building up the society and social-reconstruction has to be done for betterment of women, which will truly be considered as empowerment of women. Towards all the women, irrespective of their religion, casts and class, Babasaheb had a particular humanitarianism view. He frequently raised his voice against all sorts of injustice towards women.

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