

# DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR'S CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

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## **\*ABSRTACT:**

"Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Women Empowerment" is a monument to Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar's luminary position in Indian history, particularly his advocacy for women's rights and upliftment, as well as his fundamental work for neglected people. His ambitious approach, which encompassed education, economic liberty, and legislative reforms, cemented his status as a pioneering feminist thinker. With modern India negotiating a complicated environment of gender difficulties, Ambedkar's doctrines provide lasting inspiration, influencing the country's feminist narrative. This article investigates his contributions to women's rights and their tremendous impact and relevance today. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a staunch supporter of women's empowerment, focusing on equality, education, and social justice for Indian women. He advocated for their rights through legislation, social reform, and encouraging their involvement in all parts of society. His mission was to liberate women from social and religious restraints and ensure equal access to opportunities and resources. His primary contributions are as follows: Social Justice, Political Participation, Economic Empowerment, and Personal Autonomy. The Hindu Code Bill and Mines Maternity Benefit Act are two examples of legislative reforms. Critique of Manusmriti, Promotion of Education, and Combating Discrimination are all examples of challenging social norms. Equal partnership, dignity, and respect are the three pillars of a modern India. Essentially, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's contribution to women's rights included legal reforms, social action, and a vision for a society that valued gender equality and justice.

**Key Words:** Women Empowerment, Legislative Reforms, Social Justice, Political Participation, Equal Partnership, Promoting Education and Hindu Code Bill etc.

## **I – INTRODUCTION:**

Women held a very high standing in ancient India, but with time, their status deteriorated to become nothing more than objects of pleasure with specific functions. Both their distinct identity and even their fundamental human rights were taken away from them. The idea of empowerment is complex, multifaceted, and multilayered. The process of empowering women involves giving them more authority over material, human, and intellectual resources such as knowledge, information, and ideas as well as financial resources

like money. It also involves giving them access to money, allowing them to make decisions in their homes, communities, societies, and countries, and giving them "power."<sup>1</sup>

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, she cannot move nor does 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.

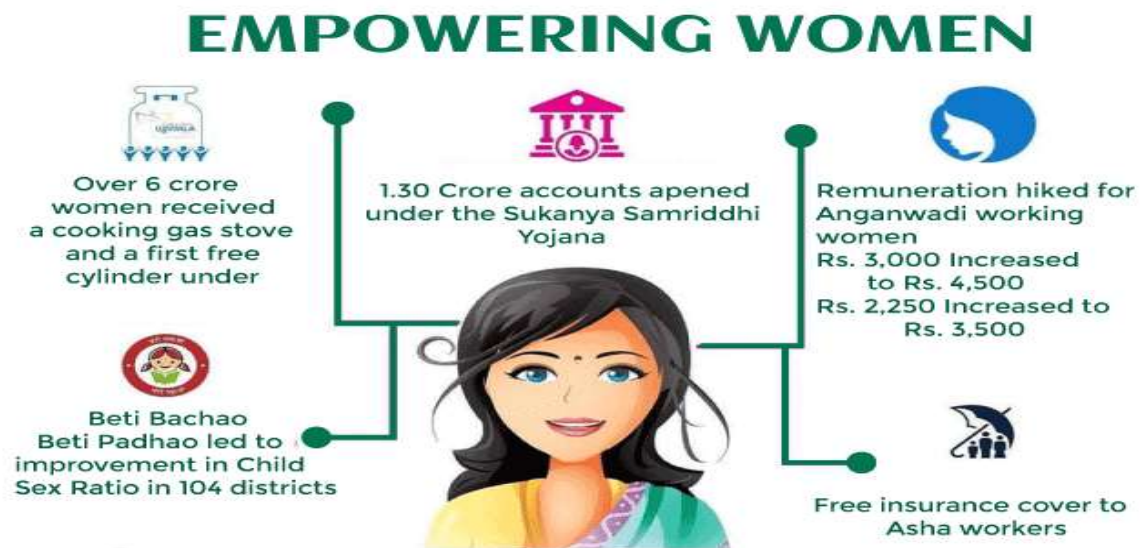
Humanity was ashamed of the situation in which our mothers, sisters, and even great-grandmothers were placed. Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar, the father and creator of the Indian Constitution, was adamant that not much could be changed until and until we disobeyed the Hindu Dharma-Shastras. Hindu women are enslaved to superstitions in the name of sanskaras, and they remain bound by them until the day they die.<sup>2</sup> Instilling certain incorrect beliefs in their children's developing minds through flimsy customs and Shastra teachings is another duty they bear.

## **II - WHAT IS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT?**

Women's empowerment is the process of women gaining the power to make their own choices, have a say in their communities, and influence social change. It's a fundamental human rights that's key to a more peaceful and prosperous world. Women Empowerment implies the capacity in Women to take decision close to their lifestyles and paintings and giving identical rights to them in all sphere like: private, social, monetary, political, right and so forth. We are residing in an age of ladies empowerment wherein girls are working shoulder to shoulder with guys. A woman additionally manages to balance between their commitment to their professionals properly as their domestic and circle of relatives. They are playing more than one roles as a mom, daughter, sister and wife and at running locations as specialists with superb simplicity and complexity.<sup>3</sup>

## **III - WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT INCLUDES:**

1. Awareness: Women becoming aware of gender-based power imbalances.
2. Self- worth: Women having a sense of their own self- worth.
3. Decision making: Women having the right to make their own choices.
4. Access: Women having access to opportunities and resources.
5. Influence: Women having the power to influence social change.<sup>4</sup>



## IV - DR. B.R AMBEDKAR TOWARDS THE EMPOWERMENT OF INDIAN WOMEN:

The operations of caste both at the systemic level and at the functioning of patriarchy, the growing caste / class divide in feminist political discourse makes 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, jurist – par excellence, 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> The writings and Speeches of Ambedkar show what values India should develop and how they would modernize its social and political institutions. Ambedkar saw women as the victims of the oppressive, caste- based and rigid hierarchical social system.

## VI - THE HINDU CODE BILL, 1948:

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 in a legal frame system and the oppression 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.<sup>7</sup>

However, the Bill could not withstand 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 liberty, equality and justice to all Indian citizens. However, the Hindu code Bill helped the resurgence of feminist movement in India. This crusade of Ambedkar to emancipate women from injustice inspires the women leader in parliament to keep the issue alive until its enactment. This was the starting point for women to recognize their position and pursue rights movement by acquiring strength from second wave feminism started in the early 1960s. Women are still fighting issues such as rape, dowry death, communalism, fundamentalism, sexual harassment and violence - domestic and social, poverty and so on.

The parinirvan of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar who was recognized internationally as a crusader against caste system, a vigilant fighter for the human rights of all the oppressed and enslaved and the emancipator of humanity from social and economic injustice, occurred on 6th December 1956. In the condolence message, on Ambedkar death in Parliament, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said: "Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of the Hindu society." His dream of society based on gender equality is yet to be realized and therefore his thoughts are important for the social reconstruction that favours women's empowerment.

The Nation honoured Baba Saheb Ambedkar by offering Bharat Ratna posthumously to him which was received by his widow Savita Ambedkar in 1990. Dr. Ambedkar foundation was set up under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on 24th March 1992 for the purpose of promoting and propagating his ideology of social justice so as to reach the common masses. The foundation implemented Schemes such as Dr. Ambedkar National Memorial, Dr. Ambedkar National Public Library and Dr. Ambedkar Chairs in Universities / Institutions, Dr. Ambedkar Award for Social Understanding and upliftment of Weaker Sections and the Dr. Ambedkar International Award for Social Change.<sup>8</sup>

## VII - CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS:

The Constitution of India contains various provisions, which provide for equal rights and opportunities for both men and women. The salient features are:

- Article 14 guarantees that the State shall not deny equality before the law and equal protection of the laws;
- Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the ground of sex;
- Article 15 (3) empowers the State to make positive discrimination in favour of women and children;
- Article 16 provides for Equality of Opportunity in matters of public employment;
- Article 23 prohibits trafficking in human beings and forced labour;
- Article 39 (a) and (d) enjoins the State to provide equal means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work;
- Article 42 enjoins upon the State to make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work, and for maternity relief;
- Article 51A(e) imposes a Fundamental Duty on every citizen to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- Article 243D (3) provides that not less than 1/3rd of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women, and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat;
- Article 243T(3) provides that not less than 1/3rd of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality;
- Article 243T(4) provides reservation of offices of Chairperson in Municipalities for Sc, ST, Women in such manner as the legislature of a State, may by law provide;

In pursuance of the above Constitutional provisions, various legislative enactments have been framed to protect, safeguard and promote the interests of women.<sup>9</sup> Many of these legislative enactments have been in the sphere of labour laws to ameliorate the working conditions of women labour.

## VIII - CONCLUSION:

Women empowerment is that it is for creating a better world for everyone. Here are some points to consider: Benefits of women empowerment, importance of women empowerment, strategies for women empowerment includes: education, economic opportunities, political participation, and role of women in society. "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society including participation in the decision making process and access to power are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace". The Indian Constitution's provisions for women's

empowerment includes: Equality, opportunity, positive discrimination, reservations, human conditions at work, fundamental duty, free legal aid, and intended to help women take part in the country's administration. Women's empowerment is considered fundamental for the country's progress. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's contributions to women's empowerment were pivotal in shaping a more just and equitable India. His vision extended beyond mere legal rights, advocating for the social, economic and political emancipation of women, particularly those from marginalized communities, property rights and an end to discriminatory social practices, laying the foundation for women's agency and equality in various aspects of life.

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