

# Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's Contribution to Emancipate Indian Women: Reflections

<sup>1</sup>Neha Jingala, <sup>2</sup>Kishor Kumar

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor

<sup>1</sup>Department of Journalism, <sup>2</sup>Department of Commerce

<sup>1& 2</sup> Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

**Abstract**—Dalit women, in particular, were a priority for Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar as he fought for the autonomy and empowerment of all social strata. Women were among those he fought for. He was also an advocate for women's rights. His humanistic ideals regarding women were not contingent on the women's religion, caste, sect, or other aspects of their social position. The ideas of Dr. Ambedkar made it abundantly evident that it is the responsibility of the state to provide equality for all citizens. The fight for women's emancipation in India was assisted by a variety of constitutional provisions in various forms. Despite the fact that India has been independent for 75 years, it has been a battle for women to completely recognise their rights and achieve equality. In spite of the fact that they continue to be victims of social issues such as sexual harassment, domestic violence, and acid attacks, Indian women have made significant strides forward in a variety of areas of their lives. His beliefs are crucial to the social construction of a society that fosters women's empowerment. Although Dr. Ambedkar's dream of a society concerning gender equality has not yet been realised, his vision of a society that is built on gender equality has. The purpose of this study is to provide light on Dr. Ambedkar's contribution to advance the cause of Indian women's emancipation, both before and after the country's independence.

**Index Terms**—India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Indian Women, Women Empowerment, Dalits, Education

## I. INTRODUCTION

Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar is admirably known as Babasaheb. Ambedkar was an outstanding scholar, political thinker, editor, empowering social reformer, and dynamic leader of all time. He is considered as a key architect of the Indian constitution and messiah of the depressed classes. (Ghosal, 2015) One of the things that many people remember him for is the mobilization of the anti-caste battle against discrimination, exploitation, and inequality. This is one of the things that he worked to end. However, in comparison to his other achievements, the steps he has undertaken for the emancipation and empowerment of Indian women have received far less public recognition and attention. Even though it had a tremendous impact, his contribution to the growth of the contemporary feminist movement is sometimes overlooked, even though it was important. Dr. Ambedkar was an instrumental figure in the struggle that ultimately resulted in the emancipation of India's female population. He contributed towards the cause of expanding rights for women across our nation by working on a variety of fronts to move the cause ahead. He was one of the few reformers who worked tirelessly for the development of women in India together with the eradication of caste and contributed to the Indian feminist movement. He was also one of the few reformers who campaigned for the abolition of caste. The advancement of women's rights in India would not have been possible without his labour. He led a crusade against the antiquated and authoritarian social norms that are prevalent in our society, such as the devadasi system and child marriage. After conducting research on the challenges that Hindu and Muslim women face in society, he came to the conclusion that these women are denied their fundamental and human rights. In his well-known article titled "*Pakistan or The Partition of India*," he explored a variety of issues that Muslim women face, such as marriage, traditions, and other forms of discrimination. These issues included marriage, customs, and traditions. His publications, such as *Mooknayak* (1920) and *Bahishkrut Bharat* (1927), were released around the beginning of the 1920s. In these works, he constantly emphasized the importance of gender equality in society, the significance of women education, and the difficulties that women were experiencing at the time. Dr. Ambedkar, much like other worldwide feminists, placed a strong focus on the rights of women to education, property, and political representation. (Datta, 2019)

In Bombay's Legislative Council (1928), Dr. Ambedkar presented the Maternity Benefit Bill, which provided paid leaves to women working in factories. He argued "It is in the interest of the country that the mother should get certain comfort during and after the prenatal period, and the essence of the bill is entirely based on that principle." He considered that employers have a duty to financially assist female employees at the very least during the time that they are on maternity leave if they are enjoying earnings that were gained with the efforts of female employees. (Dhara, 2022) The Madras Legislative Council and other provinces then approved the same act. 1938, as the member of Legislative Assembly of Bombay, he advocated provision of different family planning measures to women. (Bhadage, 2017) He validated this progressive idea by saying that "If men had to bear the pangs which women undergo during childbirth, none of them would ever consent to bear more than a single child in his life." He added that "Many women become invalid for life and some even lose their lives by the birth of children in their deceased condition or in too rapid succession. Birth control is the only sovereign specific remedy that can do away with such calamities. Whenever a woman is disinclined to bear a child for any reason, whatsoever, she must be in a position to prevent conception and bring forth progeny which should entirely be dependent on the choice of women."

Babasaheb promoted and battled for women's reproductive autonomy, independence, and rights as early as the 1930s. This puts him decades ahead of his contemporaries. He exerted a great deal of effort toward the passage of progressive legislation concerning working women, such as

1. The Women Labour Welfare Fund
2. The Maternity Benefit for Women Labour Bill,
3. The Women Labour Protection Act,
4. The Revision of Scale of Pay for Employees,
5. The Restoration of Ban on Employment of Women on Underground Work Coal Mines,
6. The maintenance allowance after legally separating from husbands,
7. The adoption of children by widows, the provision of earned leaves, casual leaves, privilege leaves, and other types of leaves, and so on. (Datta, 2019)

He consistently encouraged women to defy the pre-set boundaries and conventions of patriarchal culture, which held that women should be subservient and submissive at all levels. He believed that patriarchy was one of the most significant challenges to women's emancipation. He gave the highest priority to men education as well as women education women, for the purpose of the development of society. He said that "We shall see better days soon and our progress will be accelerated if male education is persuaded side by side with female education." Babasaheb gave utmost importance to education and suggested women that "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." Ambedkar was an avid campaigner of women education women because he believed it would be beneficial for the family unit as a whole. Dr. Ambedkar believed married women should support their husbands in the role of a friend and have the strength to refuse living the life of slaves. "The relationship between husband and wife should be one of closest friends." He also remarked that "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." While addressing women of Depressed classes on various pertinent issues in 1927, Babasaheb said that "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." He worked for grassroots women's organizations and was a dedicated leader who supported those organizations. He was steadfast in his support of women-led initiatives and frequently emphasized the requirement and significance of women's equal and active engagement in the process of advancing the status of women in our nation. His views and thoughts encouraged women, and a great involvement of hundreds of women together with men was observed in activities such as the Mahad Satyagraha (1927) and the Kalaram Temple Satyagraha at Nasik. His ideas and thoughts influenced women (1930). In 1928, Ramabai Ambedkar- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's wife, founded a women's association in Bombay. (Singriya, 2014)

In the legislative debates and speeches that Dr. Ambedkar gave, he almost often brought up concerns pertaining to women. As a result, there was a noticeable rise in the number of women who participated in various Satyagraha. This was of tremendous assistance to women in realising their own power and played an important role in women's advancement. Dr. Radhabai Vadale, inspired by Dr. Ambedkar, delivered an address at a conference in 1931 and proclaimed that it is preferable to die than live a life of humiliation. She was determined to work for the rights of women. Tulsibhai Bansole, a female writer, was inspired by Dr. Ambedkar and founded the Chokhamela newspaper. In 1942, The All-India Depressed Classes Women's Conference was held in Nagpur under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar and chaired by Sulochanabai Dongre, a Dalit feminist. The conference attended by more than 25000 women paved way for the established of All India Scheduled Caste Women's Federation. Dr. Ambedkar always insisted that there is no progress without women. In the conference he said, "I am a great believer in women's organization. If they want to improve the prevailing conditions in Indian society, they should educate their children and create high ambitions in them." He had a reformist vision for the upliftment of women and ensured the betterment of women by framing strong legislations. When Dr. Ambedkar was appointed as independent India's first law minister and chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, he played a crucial role in ensuring that his beliefs and thoughts related to women were included into the nation's constitutional framework and other legal provisions. As Chairman of India's Constitution Drafting Committee, ensured that his progressive vision for women is incorporated into India's constitutional framework. It is because of Babasaheb's relentless work, gender equality is laid down in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles, and Fundamental Duties of the Indian Constitution. The Indian constitution guarantees women's equality under Articles 14, 15, and 16.

Dr. Ambedkar's concerns about the status of women in India were conveyed in the Hindu Code Bill, which he presented to the Constituent Assembly on April 11, 1947. It was drafted in order to unite, codify, and otherwise update the laws that regulate women and to grant women more legal rights. By emphasising the importance of ideals like liberty, equality, dignity, and fraternity, the law highlighted Dr. Ambedkar's vision for women's future. The statute fought against the patriarchal social order that was present in our country and promoted equality for women, which ultimately led to the empowerment of women. He emphasised the necessity for a uniform code on a variety of issues, such as equal property rights, marriage, divorce, and the rights of widows, in line with progressive ideas that were necessary for a society to advance at that time.

In the case of an inheritance, the Hindu Code Bill accorded equal treatment to the dead person's widow as well as to his or her daughter and son. The measure acknowledged both civil marriage and marriages that did not comply with the law as valid forms of matrimony (sacramental marriage). From a woman's point of view, the previous one guaranteed more independence and provided for the possibility of divorce. He promoted monogamy over polygamy and opened the door for interracial marriages because of his policies.

However, the bill was not introduced in its original form but was enacted as four different acts: (Rajak, 2021)

1. The Hindu Marriage Act (1955)

2. The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act (1956)
3. The Hindu Succession Act (1956)
4. The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (1956) and others.

The strong opposition of the bill led Dr. Ambedkar to resign from his position. Despite this, his ideas were instrumental in the passage of several laws concerning women, including: (Halli&Mullal, 2016)

1. Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929)
2. Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (1956)
3. Dowry Prohibition Act (1961)
4. Maternity Benefit Act (1961)
5. Medical termination of Pregnancy Act (1971)
6. Equal Remuneration Act (1976)
7. The Family Courts Act (1984)
8. The Sati Prevention Act (1987)
9. National Commission for Women Act (1990)
10. Protection of Human Rights Act (1993)
11. Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act (1994)
12. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005)
13. Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006)
14. Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Protection and) Act (2013) and others.

Several women empowerment schemes have been launched by the current and past government such as

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
2. One Stop Centre Scheme, Women Helpline Scheme
3. UJJAWALA : A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Reuse
4. Working Women Hostel
5. SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)  
(Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2022)
6. Indira Gandhi MatritvaSahyog Yojana
7. Janani Suraksha Yojana  
(Indian National Congress, 2022).

In addition, the Constitution of India has a number of articles that guarantee men and women an equal number of rights and opportunities such as:

Article 14	It guarantees that the State shall not deny equality before the law and equal protection of the laws.
Article 15	It prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the ground of sex.
Article 39 (a) & (d)	It enjoins the State to provide equal ways of livelihood and equal pay for equal work.
Article 42	It enjoins upon the State to make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work, and for maternity relief.
Article 51A (e)	It imposes fundamental duty on citizens to relinquish actions that are derogatory to women's dignity.
Article 243 D (3)	It states that at least one-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in each panchayat must be reserved for women.
Article 243 T (3)	It states that not less than one-third of the seats to be filled by direct election in each municipality must be reserved for women.
Article 243 T (3)	It states that not less than one-third of the seats to be filled by direct election in each municipality must be reserved for women,
Article 243 T (4)	It reserves the role of chairperson in municipalities for women from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. (Solkhe, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

“I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress women have achieved”- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Babasaheb contributed at improving the lives of women of all castes, religions, and social classes throughout his life. He was an asset to the movement for the emancipation of women in India, and the contributions he made are quite significant. He is justifiably regarded as the advocate and defender of the rights of women. Dr. Ambedkar was opposed to incremental change and instead focused his efforts on creating an environment in which women were able to participate fully and effectively in our society. He did not think of women as being weak or submissive but rather as powerful individuals who were capable of molding their own lives. He was certain that the fundamental ideas of unity, education, and agitation held no significance unless and until there is no participation of women in them. To give one's support to the goals and ideals that Dr. Ambedkar fought for is an absolute necessity in this day and age. The establishment of a robust constitutional and legal framework, together with a shift in the mentality of the general population, has the potential to improve the position of women in our society.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Ambedkar, B. R. (1990). *Annihilation of Caste: An Undelivered Speech*. Arnold Publishers.
- [2] Ambedkar, B.R. “Women and Counter Revaluation”. “Riddles of Hindu Women” in Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speech, Vo. 3, Department of Education.
- [3] Bhadarge, S. K., (2016). Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s Approach towards the Family Planning. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 5(1), 220-227.
- [4] Congress Empowering Women. Indian National Congress. (2022, April 7). Retrieved July 4, 2022, from <https://www.inc.in/in-focus/congress-empowering-women>
- [5] Datta, R. (2019). Emancipating and Strengthening Indian Women: An Analysis of B. R. Ambedkar’s Contribution. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, 11(1), 25–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455328X18819901>
- [6] Dhara, L., (2022) In Ranjan, P., (Ed.) *Ambedkar’s Understated Feminism*. Ambedkar and Ambedkarism (pp.143-148). Uttar Pradesh, India: BFC Publications
- [7] Ghosal, D. (2015). Babasaheb Ambedkar (1891–1956): The messiah of the depressed classes and the zealous crusader against caste and untouchability. *Heritage*, 2, 80-88.
- [8] Halli, C. S., Mullan, S.M. (2016). Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Hindu Code Bill, Women Measure Legislation. *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 2(3), 7-10.
- [9] Rajak, K., (2021) In Begari, J., (Ed.). *Women’s Question in Ambedkar’s Social Philosophy*. B.R. Ambedkar and Social Transformation: Revisiting the Philosophy and Reclaiming Social Justice. India: BFC Taylor & Francis.
- [10] Singariya, M. R. (2014). Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Women Empowerment in India. *Quest Journals, Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 2(1), 1–4.
- [11] Solkhe, M. (2018). Role of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar towards Women Empowerment in India: An Assessment. *Journal of Advances and Scholarly Researches in Allied Education*, 5(5), 520-527.
- [12] Women Empowerment Schemes. Ministry of Women & Child Development. (n.d.). Retrieved July 4, 2022 from <https://wcd.nic.in/schemes-listing/2405>.