

A Study of the Discourse of Women's Emancipation in the Writings of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule

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Abstract

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, was influenced by the teachings of the Lord Gautam Buddha and the work of the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. According to Babasaheb, Buddha is the one who offering of women's freedom. According to senior social worker and scholar Rupa Kulakarni-Bodhi, 'The real ideological meeting of Indian femininity stands on the foundation of such an egalitarian philosophy of Lord Buddha, not on a gender-based idea imported from outside! And as much as the law, Babasaheb's important contribution is this pure Indian meeting he has made!'

Introduction

"I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved." -**Dr. B. R. Ambedkar**

Not many people know that Dr. Ambedkar always worked hard to uplift the situation of women in Indian society. Here is few of the less known quote/ideas/thoughts/work from Dr. Ambedkar on women empowerment. To celebrate Women's Day without recognizing the contribution of Dr. Ambedkar, Savitribai Phule, and Mahatma Jotiba Phule is hypocrisy and shameful act.

Newspapers started by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Mooknayak and Bahiskrit Bharat predominantly used to cover issues related to women and their empowerment.

Dr. Ambedkar was always concerned about women empowerment. In a letter to his father's friend, young Dr. Ambedkar, during his studies at New York, said – We shall see better days soon and our progress will be greatly accelerated if male education is persuaded side by side with female education..."

On 18th July 1927, Dr. Ambedkar addressed a meeting of about three thousand women of depressed classes; he said 'I measure the progress of community by the degree of progress which women had achieved.'

Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. Empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is both a highly important end in itself and necessary for the achievement of sustainable human development.

The role played by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, as chairperson of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, has left imprint on the social tapestry of the country after independence, and shaped the socio-political fabric of the India today. It would have been a different India in a probability, a much more inequitable and unjust one without him. He attempted to forge India's moral and social foundations a new and tried hard for a political order of the constitutional democracy that is sensitive to disadvantaged, inherited from the past or engendered by prevailing social relations. Dr. Ambedkar had the highest academic credential for an Indian of his time, and his erudition and scholarship have been widely acknowledged. It is known to all Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is the father of the Indian Constitution. But after reading some books on his works and his vision towards India, it will be clear that he has a versatile genius as he was also a serious scholar, good teacher, efficient lawyer, devoted leader, committed writer, distinguished educationist, social rebel, powerful debater. He was an authoritative constitutionalist, an able administrator, liberal emancipator, master statesman, daring liberator of the downtrodden masses and a fearless fighter for human rights.

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule is a great socialist in the country. Mahatma Gandhi has lauded Jyotirao as the 'real' Mahatma while Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar revered him as his teacher. More than 150 years ago, Mahatma Phule, in this very city of Pune, has made extraordinary contributions to fields like education, annihilation of caste, equality between men and women, holistic development of agriculture and the peasantry, social organization of

women, Dalits, Adivasi, Nomadic and Denotified tribes and other backward castes, need to create awareness to struggle for human rights.

He laid the foundation for the education of all girls and women and of education for the men and boys from the Bahujan community. He was the only visionary in the country. 130 years ago, he demanded that free primary education should be compulsory and universal. He had made this demand in writing to the Hunter Commission, set up by the British Government in 1882.

Jyotirao Phule was the champion of women's education in India. Along with his wife Savitribai Phule, in 1848, he opened the first school for girls at Bhidewada, Pune. The couple dedicated their entire life for the upliftment of down-trodden, untouchables and for the equal rights for all men and women. He campaigned for "widow re-marriage", opposed "child marriages", started a delivery home (Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha) for pregnant Brahmin widows to give birth in a safe and secure place to save them from the social humiliations and stigmatization due to forced and unwanted pregnancy. He along with his follower Narayan Meghaji Lokhande and wife Savitri Phule organized a strike of 500 barbers on 23rd March 1890 against the "Keshwapan" (head shaving ritual of Hindu widows) practice and deemed it as oppressive and unjust. He extensively worked towards several other causes of women liberation from the clutches of inhuman Brahminical patriarchy.

The humiliation meted to him at the occasion of a Brahmin friend's wedding was the turning point of his life. His participation in the marriage procession was not liked by his friend's parents and he was rebuked for this due to his lower caste background. They reminded him of his lower caste status and accordingly insulted him for not having the sense to keep away from that ceremony which was banned for lower castes to attend. Phule was profoundly hurt by this "injustice of the caste system". Deeply impacted by this incident, he started working for the emancipation of the lower castes. In 1873 he established Satyashodhak Samaj for the emancipation of down-trodden sections with an aim to protect them from superstition, exploitation, and atrocities of the priestly classes and other orthodox practitioners of the Indian Society.

Through Thomas Paine's book "Rights of Man" he developed a sense of social justice. "Letter to people of US" by Theodore Parker also made an influential imprint on his mind. His realization that women and lower castes were the disadvantaged and excluded groups in the Indian society and felt that education was the most fundamental tool for their emancipation, led him to agitate for free and compulsory education for all and thereby he is today remembered as a pioneer of Right to Education in India. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the first minister of the law of Indian Republic and the undisputed architect of Constitution of India was deeply inspired by the work, approach and life of Jyotirao Phule who was bestowed the title of "Mahatma" on 11 May 1888 by Vitthalrao Krishnaji Vandekar, a social reformer from Bombay.

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. – Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (While addressing women of Depressed classes on 18th July 1927)

Send your children to schools. Education is as necessary for Females as it is for males. If you know how to read and write, there would be much progress. – Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (While addressing women of Depressed classes on 18th July 1927)

Dr. Ambedkar said to Women "Learn to be clean. Keep from vices. Give education to your children. In still ambition into them. Inculcate in their minds that they are destined to be great. Remove from them all inferiority complexes."

Dr. Ambedkar said to Women – 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 his slave. I am sure if you follow this advice, you will bring honour and glory to yourselves.

Dr. Ambedkar raised the Women's issue as Member of Legislative Council during his debate in Bombay Legislative Assembly on 10th Nov. 1938; he strongly advocated family planning measures and said that besides many other problems giving birth to many children negatively affects Mother's health.

Did you know? Maternity Benefit Bill was introduced by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in 1942, during his tenure as Labour Minister in Governor General's Executive Council.

While drafting the constitution of India, Dr. Ambedkar was the prime movers of the provisions related to the welfare of women. On the question of civil rights, Dr. Ambedkar made provisions in articles 14-16 in the Indian Constitution, which provide equal status to Woman and also banned the sale and purchase of woman prevailing in Hindu India.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar proved, himself to be a prodigy and was known as a great radical, philosopher, theorist, jurist – par excellence, social activist, creative writer and critic. However his opinions never received satisfactory thoughtfulness in the platitude of Indian society just because he was born as an untouchable. His main motive in life

was to recreate society along the contemporary democratic ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. He had made the genuine efforts in laying down the resilient bases for codifying the common Civil Code for Hindus and other sections of the Indian society. He stalwartly believed that women empowerment can be consummate by security and happiness of women. The accomplishments of empowering women globally should follow the idea of Dr. B.R Ambedkar. He battled against unfair and vicious practices like devdasi system, child marriages and strongly promoted family planning. In Bombay Legislative Assembly, he intensely encouraged for family planning measures for women. He left no stones unturned for the development of women that are associated with malicious practices like prostitutions. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar saw women as the sufferers of the stiff hierarchical social system which was despotic and caste driven. Today's women are imprisoned in the loop of diffidence, masculine ascendancy, lack of awareness about her rights and no decision making powers. He contributed in Hindu personal laws and introduced many women welfare provisions in Indian Constitution. He not only tried to include women's right in the political vocabulary but also in the Indian constitution. He generated consciousness among deprived, uneducated women and encouraged them to combat against discrimination and injustice. Dr Ambedkar extricates women from archaic servitudes and conferred upon them equal rights and freedom through legislations. This paper attempts to focus on Dr. Ambedkar's view on women glitches in pre and post independent India, his role in empowering and emancipating not only Dalit women but other sections of the society through various constitutional safeguards, his slogan "Educate, organize and agitate" helped the women to mobilize in the freedom movement and even after seventy years of independence the society had failed to give the due rights to the women.

Rationale and Significance of Research:

The present study proposes to throw light on the philosophy, movements and struggle of Dr. Ambedkar for women empowerment-social equality, democracy, humanism and sarvodaya of women. Since Ambedkar was well convinced about the status of women, as the Chairman of the Drafting committee, he tried for inclusion of women's rights in the political vocabulary and Constitution of India. Therefore, by considering women's equality both in formal and substantial sense, he included special provisions for women, while all other general provisions are applicable to them as to men. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule had done a great work for Women's Emancipation that's way the researcher came to realize that there is a study conducted to excavate these issues.

Hence, an attempt will be made in the present research to review the socio-economic and political thoughts and contributions of Bharat Ratna Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule with special emphasis on emancipation of women and their empowerment.

Scope and Limitations:

The present research is aimed at bringing to light the contributions of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule for emancipation of Indian women and is Biographical in nature; it is limited to the life of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar & Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, his achievements and contributions of for emancipation of Indian women. As this great personalities and philosophers belonged to 19-20th century CE it has no chronological limitation. Geographically it is related to empowerment of women in whole India.

Objectives of the Research:

The present research was undertaken with the following objectives -

1. To study Position of Indian women and gender justice in India in general,
2. To identify and analyze the ideas, vision and policy prescriptions of Dr. Ambedkar with respect to Women emancipation and empowerment in the realm of his social and political ideas,
3. To analyse the contributions of Dr. Ambedkar for the emancipation of Indian women as a reformer as well as the father of Indian Constitution.
4. To study the Mahatma Jyotirao Phule's conceptualization of Brahminical patriarchy and Understanding of the Situation of Women
5. To study the Mahtama Jyotirao Phule's struggle for women's emancipation.
6. To evaluate the Relevance and Significance of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Dr. Ambedkar's thought in Contemporary Indian Society especially for women empowerment and its relevance to modern India.

Research Methodology:

There has to be certain methodology for any research. Therefore, the present research proposes the definite methodology and techniques to be used while doing the present research. Both primary and secondary data will be used in the present research. In the first place, the primary sources are tapped which include the careful and close reading of the selected autobiographies. While descriptive and analytical methods will be adopted while picturizing the life and contributions of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. Therefore taking into consideration

the importance of theoretical framework, the issue undertaken is studied in the light of the socio-cultural theory proposed by Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

These sources are collected from various libraries and Parliamentary debates from Indian Parliament Library etc. The primary data consist of original published and unpublished work of on Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule in his writings and speeches. The secondary data used here are in the form of published material articles in journals, reports, reviews and books by researchers. As the present research is empirical and historical in nature no scale, interview schedule or questionnaire was found necessary.

Conclusions

Maternity leave to woman the working in coal mines, female workers working in coal mines are as much wages as men, polygamy, 21 days of casual leave for labour and hard working women, one month's right leave, Important decisions should be mentioned, such as compensation in the event of injury and provision of pension after 20 years of service. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who gives maternity leave to a worker or a working woman. Babasaheb Ambedkar is the first person in the world, and women in other countries have been granted maternity leave many years after India.

Babasaheb proposed a Hindu Code Bill, in the Lok Sabha, when he was Minister of Law in 1947. These Bills included the elimination of untouchability, gender equality in marriage, the right to women to receive divorce, the provision for women to benefit from inheritance.

Babasaheb took women to his movement. The Mahad satyagrah in 1 march 1927 , in 1930 was the entry of the Kalaram temple Nashik and the women attended the women's conference in the Nagpur of 1942. Marriage is a problem in the progress of the girl and should not be imposed on the girl, " After the marriage wife should be the new girlfriend and co-worker with equal rights. She should not be a slave to the newcomer. " That's what he said. The man's opinion on how the wife should be, Theoretically the woman should be asked for a new opinion.

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