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60. AMBEDKAR'S VIEWS ON EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

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Abstract

Babasaheb Ambedkar's contribution for the betterment and progress of women is unique. Women's question, for Ambedkar, was related to the system of organized exploitation inherent in the Hindu social order. He not only wanted to ensure social equality between man and man, but also equal status and dignity between man and woman. He has dealt with the issue in detail in his works. He involved women in all the social struggles. Wherever he went his message to the women of his community was that they should be educated, neat and tidy in dress and work, eschew bad habits, shed their inferiority complex, get rid of the slavish mentality, be rational and, besides living a life with self-respect, should live with their men on an equal footing. He thinks that, if the women are educated, their children will be educated women would inculcate in their children courage, and inspire them with high aspirations and that they would contribute to the development of the nation as a whole by shaping the destiny of their children. Educated women should join social work to educate, organize and unite all deprived women to make conscious of their rights and privileges. Because of his works for empowerment of women, many women participated equal with various fields.

Introduction: Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was one of the very few Indians, who struggled to restructure Indian society with the most egalitarian and humanitarian principles. He advocated social and economic democracy and insisted that without them, there would be no peace, happiness and prosperity in India. An ardent supporter of the cherished values of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, Babasaheb Ambedkar's contribution for the betterment and progress of women is unique. He not only wanted to ensure social equality between man and man, but also equal status and dignity between man and woman. Ambedkar evinced a keen interest in women's problems. His views and efforts to improve the condition of women, in the various capacities that he served as a member of the Bombay Legislature, as the law and labour member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, as the chairman of the drafting committee of the Constituent Assembly of India and as the Union Cabinet Minister for Law in the first ministry of independent India are noted and well-known. Particular mention is due to the Hindu Code Bill which he had drafted and was persistently anxious to be enacted into law for it would revolutionize women's socio-economic conditions. But on being hampered and disallowed to enact it into law, he even resigned from his cabinet position. Yet, his contribution to the analysis of the position of women in India is not known widely. He has dealt with the issue in detail in specific works like "The Rise and Fall of Hindu Woman", and in his unpublished writings under "Revolution and Counter Revolution in Ancient India: Women and the Counter Revolution". Further, he has touched on the subject of women's status in his work "Caste in India" and "Annihilation of Caste" and also under "Riddles in Hinduism". His analysis of the history of the rise and fall in the status of the Hindu women is thought-provoking. Ambedkar made social reform divisible into two parts, one, the reform of the Hindu family and the other, the reorganization and reconstruction of the Hindu society. The problem of sati, widow remarriage, child marriage, etc. relate to the social reform of the Hindu family. The abolition of caste system, abolition of untouchability, changes in the laws of marriage, adoption, and succession relate to the social reform in the larger sense of the reorganization and reconstruction of the Hindu society. Women were denied the right to education and the right to property. They were

treated as objects to seduce men and they were said to be created to please man. Viewing them in this light, Manu had prescribed that they must not be free in any respect. They required to be controlled vigilantly by their guardians. They did not have a right to divorce. A wife was reduced by Manu to the level of a slave in the matter of property. She was also subject to corporal punishment as the husband had the right to beat his wife. Women did not have a choice in selecting a spouse; he father had the right to settle the marriage of his daughter. She had to worship a husband faithfully even if he be a debaucher or a man devoid of virtues and other human qualities. Manu made another rule, which stated that killing a woman was only a Upapataka, i.e. it was a minor offence". Dr. Ambedkar criticized the traditional and conservative values and made Manu, the Hindu lawgiver, responsible for the decline of the status and dignity of women in India. Women's question, for Ambedkar, was related to the system of organized exploitation inherent in the Hindu social order. This social order aimed at establishing the dominance of the Brahmanical class through a complex mechanism represented by the institution of caste.

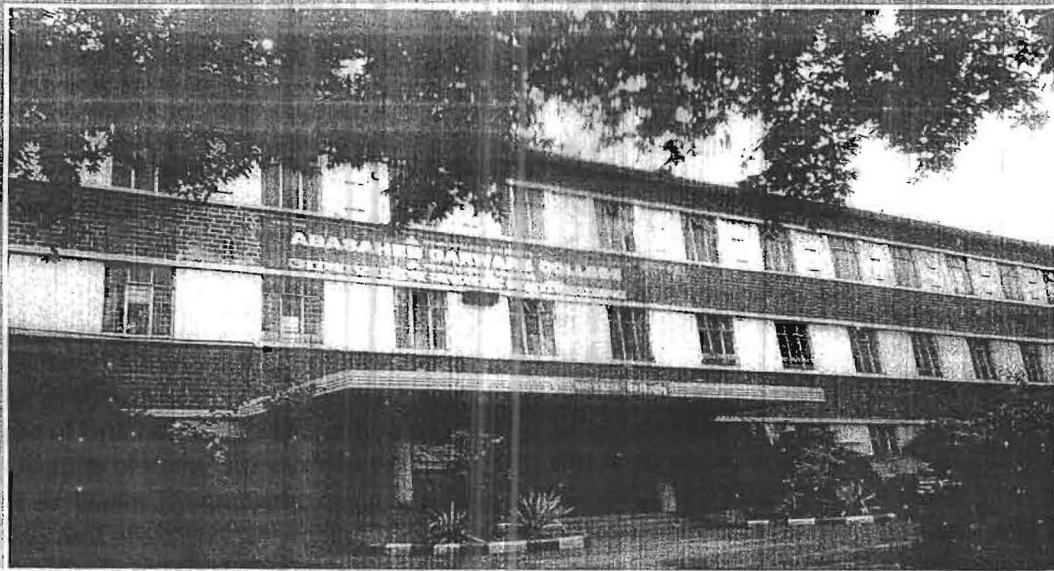
Women along with Shudras became victims of such an order. Right from the days of Mook Nayak and Bahiskrit Bharat oppression of women remained a major plank of Dr. Ambedkar's movement. The Bahiskriti Hitakarni Sabha focus was social, cultural and economic advancement of the untouchables. He involved women in all the social struggles. In Mahad Satyagraha, women participated in large numbers. About 500 women marched at the head of that historical procession to assert the Untouchables right to drink water from the public tank. As the movement gained momentum and experience, Dr. Ambedkar developed the understanding of the Hindu social order. The Temple entry movement which continued for a long time was a social process of action and retrospection through which his views on Hindu philosophy and society crystallized. In this process, Dr. Ambedkar made an indepth analysis of the Smritis and Shastras, the basics of Hindu faith. Manu Smriti, the obnoxious concoction that ordained graded socio-religious, economic and cultural status to the Chatur Varnas, put women in the Shudra category. Ambedkar firmly believed that a radical change in the structure of Hinduism and in the outlook of the Hindu was necessary. Without it there could be no real reform in the Hindu social system. The other social evils like enforced widowhood, sati, and girl marriage etc. were part and parcel of the preposterous Hindu social customs. He like all other social reformers was keenly concerned with the rights of the Hindu Civil Code. His proposal is an excellent blending of reason and sacred tradition. Defending the proposal of civil code, Ambedkar explained that the modifications in the existing Hindu Law were based on the Shastras and Smritis. Hindu Code Bill and Ambedkar's speech: on December 26, 1950, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar while addressing a rally of 50,000 people under the auspices of the Belgaum District branch of the Scheduled Castes Federation stated: The lack of moral courage and strength of character of the women in India had come in the way of the Bill (Hindu Code) that had been drafted by him. None of the prominent women leaders were really interested in the social progress of our women, Dr. Ambedkar declared. Most of the provisions proposed by Dr. Ambedkar in the Hindu Code Bill was later incorporated in the four Bills on Hindu Marriage, succession, minority and guardianship and maintenance passed in 1955-56. But it remains to be seen as to whether the basic rights have been restored to women. Despite the provisions on judicial separation and divorce, the rights are not effective. Women's right to property has become more precarious. Bourgeois value system based on commercialization of life has converted women into a commodity and the number of them being suffocated and crushed between the parental home and in-laws, for dowry disputes and claims are on steady increase, particularly in the urban centers. Illiteracy and backwardness are more current among women. They still have the Shudra status. Babasaheb's dream of a society based on equality of men and women remains unfulfilled. His arguments on the Maternity Benefit Bill and on birth control were quite relevant to recognize the dignity of women. Dr. Ambedkar was excessively worried for the overgrowth of the population in India and he wanted certain measures should be introduced for the birth control. Dr.

Ambedkar who publicly burnt the Manusmriti in 1927 was himself the chief instrument in giving to the Hindu Community another Smirit or the law of living in conformity with requirements and needs of modern times. But it was unfortunate that the time did not favour the ardent advocacy of Dr. Ambedkar to change the order of the life from social ostracism to a path of progress. He accorded equal status to woman and man in every sphere and he also warned the women against the misuse of their rights. Therefore, it would be appropriate to regard Dr. Ambedkar as one of the saviours of Indian women. His contribution is unique and cherishable by all women of India. It should be the foremost duty of Indian women to integrate themselves, to free their fellow-sisters, who are under the despised and undegraded professions like the flesh-trade; Devadasis, beggary, etc. Educated women should join social work to educate, organize and unite all deprived women to make conscious of their rights and privileges and they should not be busy in the family conflicts to get mere self-rights.

Conclusion: India has been burning for many centuries due to her Varnashrama and caste system and this was the main fountain source of all evils in which all human being are not treated equal. But according to the scientific and social humanism of Dr. Ambedkar all men are equal, neither caste system nor four kinds of ethics is needed for them. They should be treated as ends, not means and equal opportunities should be provided in the field of education, religion, business, social status, in short, in every sphere of life to develop their personalities. So that they will be able to become human being and can achieve the highest value of their lives. Dr. Ambedkar fought for the women's rights. Wherever he went his message to the women of his community was that they should be educated, neat and tidy in dress and work, eschew bad habits, shed their inferiority complex, get rid of the slavish mentality, be rational and, besides living a life with self-respect, should live with their men on an equal footing. He thinks that, if the women are educated, their children will be educated women would inculcate in their children courage, and inspire them with high aspirations and that they would contribute to the development of the nation as a whole by shaping the destiny of their children. Now, after seven decades of independence when the state through its legal-constitutional apparatus and through its welfare machinery, has taken a number of steps to elevate the status of the Shudras and women. We find that Ambedkar's anxieties were not baseless. The law has failed to bring about social justice and the constitutional equality does not serve much purpose. Social inequalities have in fact, been widened, caste still remains the central mechanism of the social order and has even infiltrated the political order. The Harijans are the victims not only of social discrimination but also of organized violence. Women are not only suffering from social deprivation but are also being killed in large numbers.

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About the institution & College

The Maharashtra Education Society holds an important share. In 1860 Maharashtra Education Society (MES) formerly called as Poona Native Institutions was founded by Vaman Prabhakar Bhawe, Vasudev Balvant Phadke, and Laxman Narhar Indapurkar. The great revolutionary freedom fighter Vasudev Balvant Phadke was the first Secretary and treasurer of Maharashtra Education Society.

It was formed with the aim of planting nationalistic thoughts and creating a generation of strong character and ideals. The last Hundred and Fifty two years stands testimony to the fact that the aims of the society have been achieved. MES has given several gems in various fields, not just to Maharashtra but also to the nation. What started as a simple, single seed is now an enormous tree. MES is the leading entity that provides complete education from K.G. to P.G.

Abasaheb Garware College is the only Science and Arts College of the Maharashtra Education Society. It was established in 1945, and then named as M.E.S. College of Arts and Science, it imparted primary education in languages and social sciences, and a few subjects in science. Maharashtra Education Society's Abasaheb Garware College is a college of repute nationally. Keeping in line with its motto "facta non verba",



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