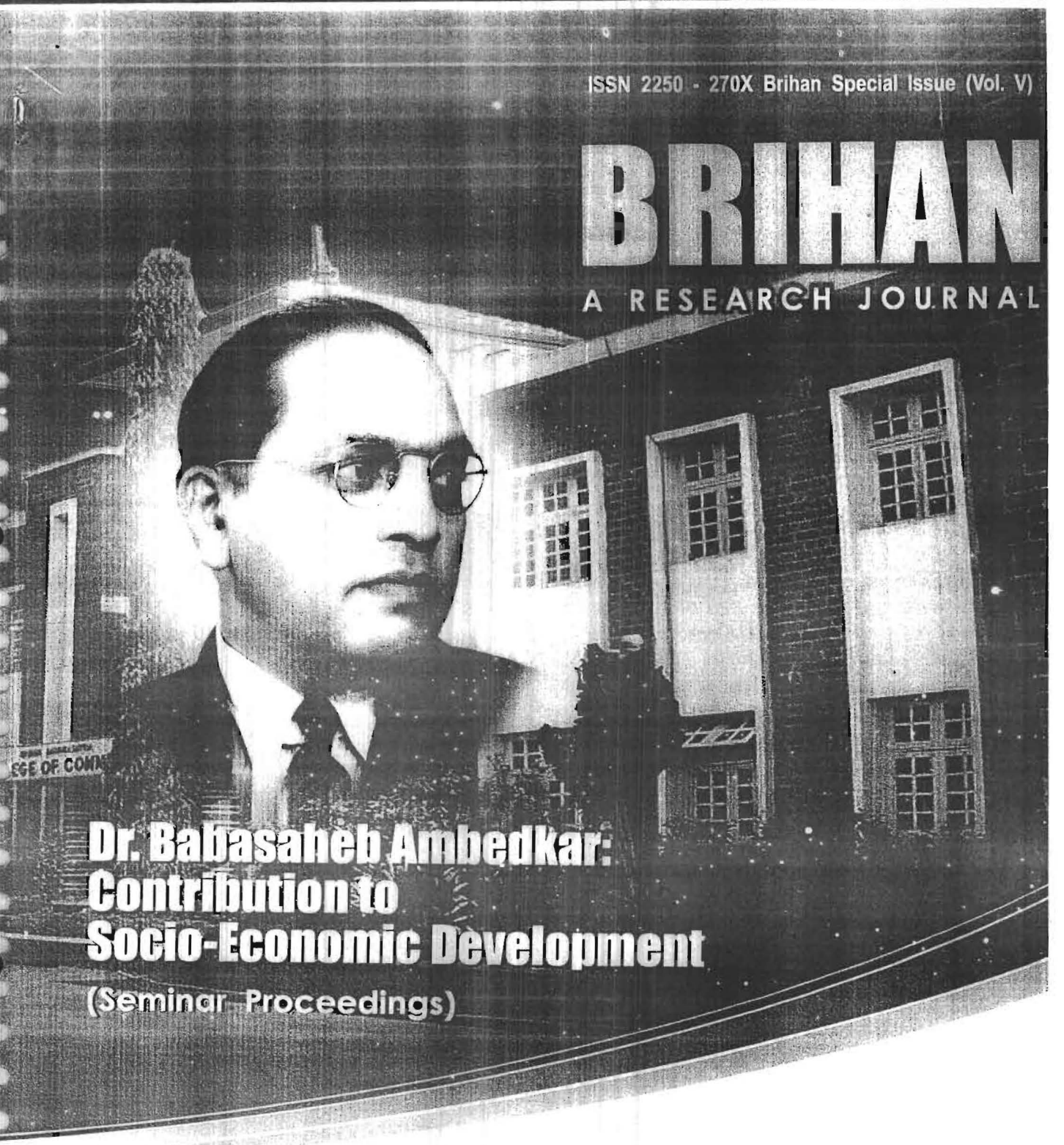


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**Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar:
Contribution to
Socio-Economic Development**
(Seminar Proceedings)



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Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as a Social Reformer

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Introduction :

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was the greatest leader of the down-trodden masses. He has been known to the Indians as a great scholar having extraordinary intellect and always involved in study; as a revolutionary, rebelling leader who prepared the untouchable masses to struggle against injustice being done to them; as a leader of the depressed people who made them conscious about their self-pride; as a sculptor of the Constitution of India; as a well known law expert etc. Dr. Ambedkar has been recognized as an epoch maker leader in the history of modern India. He had the tenacity to hold the banner of rebellion against the Indian social order which had been carried on for thousands of years.

Abolition of Caste System: Dr. Ambedkar himself a Mahar, the untouchable caste in this part of the country, Dr. Ambedkar devoted his life to the abolition of caste system, to removing the stigma of untouchability from the society and to infusing a powerful breath of self-respect and self-help in the so-called untouchable castes of the country. As a scholar Dr. Ambedkar went to the roots of caste problem and the Chaturvarnya system in India and made an original sociological contribution in analyzing the mind-boggling phenomenon.¹

Dr. Ambedkar has focused his attention on the problem of caste in the Indian society, and also contributed to the sociological literature of modern India. Ambedkar's works on Caste in India, Annihilation of Caste, Who Were the Sudras, and the Untouchables have shown the way for anthropological think-

ing in India. These works have a historical orientation and throw a critical light on the problem of the caste as the inhibitory and controlling element in the social organization and structure. Ambedkar has critically examined the problem of caste in our society in the light of historical evidence and explained how it became the fundamental criterion of social action.²

In order to be very clear about Ambedkar's perspective of abolition of the caste system, it is necessary to acquaint ourselves with the ideas of Ambedkar on abolition of caste and the Varna system. In his prescription he differs from Marx, Gandhi and social reformers. However, he lauded the efforts of Buddha and Kabir in integrating the people of India. To him they appeared to be guided by reason and right kind of thinking about the improvement of the deprived section of the society. He was convinced over the fact that the new social order and progress cannot be achieved unless we destroy the caste system.³

Pointed out the futile exercise of social reformers working for the removal of untouchability Ambedkar maintained to agitate for and to organize inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriages is like forced feeding brought about by artificial means. Make every man and woman free from the thralldom to the Shastras, cleanse their minds of the pernicious notions founded on the Shastras, and he or she will inter-dine and inter marry, without your telling him or her to do so.

After convincing himself about the difficulties in destroying the caste system, he resorted to constitutional means. He saw that the human rights, Principle of one man one value, promulgation of Preven-

tive Detention Act, Emergency powers of the President, Abolition of Untouchability, Equality before Law, Equality of opportunity, Directive Principles of State Policy, etc., have been incorporated into the Indian Constitution only to see that the down-trodden and weaker sections could protect their interests in this caste-ridden society.

Eradication of Untouchability: Dr. Ambedkar, one of the illustrious sons of India, did yeoman service for the upliftment of Dalits by carrying out a life-long struggle to safeguard effectively the rights of the Dalits and to lead his people to life of dignity, meaning and self-respect. His mission aimed at bringing about a radical transformation in the living conditions of millions of his community condemned for many a century to live degraded and dehumanized lives, performing the most defiling, dirty, impure and menial tasks such as carrying the night soil on their head, skinning carcasses, removing the dead cattle, grave-digging and graveyard-keeping etc. He also willed to guarantee the Dalits protection from the atrocities of upper castes. His life is the story of a man whose name shines like a pole star in the sky of Dalit history.⁴

The most important work, done by Dr. Ambedkar for the Untouchables was that he taught his untouchable brothers to resist against the injustice being done to them and to struggle for their legal rights, he emphatically and sharply stated that the untouchables are citizens of this country and they have equal rights as any other citizen of this country can enjoy in this country.⁵

Dr. Ambedkar single handedly lifted the dalits of the country from the morass of poverty, injustice, social rejection, inferiority complex, helplessness and ignorance and gave them, dignity, self-respect as well as the will to fight for their own human rights. Dr. Ambedkar attacked the caste system, struggled to open the temples and water resources for the dalits, tried to banish the concept of pollution by touch, experiment with political and social movements only to demonstrate that the problem has no solution within the fold. Finally he, along with millions of his followers, renounced Hinduism and embraced Buddhism; the only religion, as he believed, that was rational and compatible with modern science, a religion that would

regulate the moral and ethical conduct of the man the world of science.

Emancipation of Women: Dr. Ambedkar criticized the traditional and conservative values and mantras of Manu, the Hindu lawgiver, responsible for the decline of the status and dignity of women in India. The Women 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 which firstly, placed Brahmanical class at a position of dominance; secondly, developed an intricate mechanism of its maintenance, justification and production and, thirdly, placed women and Shudras at a sub-human level.⁷

Ambedkar assumes that it was the endogamous nature of caste system which led to subordination and degradation of women. But this feature of male controlling women, their sexuality, procreancy and labour known as patriarchy –prevails even in societies where there is no caste. Elsewhere too women's sexual subordination was institutionalized in the early law codes and enforced by the full power of the state.

Right from the days of Mook Nayak and Bahis Bharat oppression of women remained a major plank of Dr. Ambedkar's movement. The Bahiskriti Hitakar Sabha focus was social, cultural and economic advancement of the untouchables. He involved women in all the social struggles. In Mahad Satyagrah 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 in-depth analysis of the Smritis and Shastras, the basics of Hindu faith. Manu Smriti, an obnoxious concoction that ordained graded social, religious, economic and cultural status to the four Varnas, put women in the Shudra category.⁸

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.

Dr. Ambedkar as an Educationist: Dr. Ambedkar always advised and firmly told to our downtrodden people that it is the education which is the right weapon to cut the social slavery and it is the education which will enlighten the down-trodden masses to come up and gain social status, economic betterment, and political freedom. If the untouchability to be abolished it is only the education which will help in solving this problem and education is the only savior for the downtrodden people without which there will be no salvation for these unfortunate section of people of India. With this view in mind, he rightly started number of Arts, Science, Commerce, Engineering, Medical and Law colleges through the Peoples Education Society. Education, Organization and Agitation were the key words of his movement to secure the basic rights of the under-privileged sections of the society.

The sculptor of the Constitution of India: Dr. Ambedkar was a member of the Constituent Assembly. He was also elected as the President of the Draft Committee of the Constitution Committee. As he had drafted the Constitution of India very carefully, he is admired as the Sculptor of the Constitution of India.

In sum the achievements of Dr. Ambedkar extended the entire gamut of evolution of India from slavery to freedom. His life is a constant reminder to us of how much we owe to society to get world of its evils born out of prejudices and customs. Let us stand

committed to build up a society where there is no distinction between man and man, since human beings are not bound by any barriers. Let us endeavour and aim to create congenial conditions and work hard for evolving a homogeneous society, by which alone real progress can be achieved. 10

Conclusion: Prominent among his services to the country and the humanity in general are the emancipation of the untouchables, drafting of the Constitution of India, and the revival of Buddhism in the land of its origin. Equality, liberty and fraternity were the ideals that Dr. Ambedkar propagated for unifying the nation and also for building a genuine and ensuring democratic system in our country. We all salute in unison this great son of India whose 125 th birth century is being observed this year.

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- (Foot notes)**
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 - 2 See for detail K.S.Chalam (ed), *Relevance of Ambedkar in India*, Rawat publications, Jaipur, pp. 139-144.
 - 3 A.K.Majumdar & Bhanwer Singh (ed), *Ambedkar and Social Justice*, Radha Publication, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 134-135.
 - 4 Ibid, p.149-150.
 - 5 V.S.Kshirsagar, *Maharashtratil Samajsudhar Va Thor Bharatiya Vicharawant*, Aniruddha Publishing House, Pune, 2006, p.307.
 - 6 See for detail Verinder Grover(ed), *Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar A Biography of His Vision and Ideas*, Deep and Deep publications, New Delhi, 1998, pp.466-467.
 - 7 K.L.Bhatia, Hariom and Rekhachowdhary, *Social Justice of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar*, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1995, pp181-182.
 - 8 For detail Ramesh Chandra and Sangh Mitra, *The Ambedkar Era*, Commonwealth publishers, New Delhi, 2003, pp.155-156.
 - 9 Verinder Grover, *Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar A Biography of His Vision and Ideas*, Deep & Deep publication, New Delhi, 1998, pp.204-205. 10 Ibid, pp.640-650.

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