



DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S IDEOLOGY ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON MODERN INDIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

Dr. B.R Ambedkar, the principal creator of the Indian constitution, was a great reformer, and his vision for the independence of women and gender equality is also relevant today. Ambedkar's ideologies- rooted in education, social justice, and equal rights- set the groundwork for an inclusive society. This paper examines the importance of his feminist philosophy in economic development in modern society, India, especially with a special emphasis on women's involvement in the workforce. With historical analysis, case studies, and policy reviews, this research shows how Ambedkar's thoughts have influenced constitutional safeguards and government programs for women's economic empowerment. His legacy can be seen in policies such as equal pay, maternity benefits, and reservations in education and employment. However, the study also points out the continuous challenges like the gender pay gap, low female participation in the labour force, and socio-cultural hurdles that continue to limit progress. This paper reconsiders Ambedkar's vision and highlights the need to rearrange the social and economic framework to achieve true gender equality. It summarizes the feasible advice for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to bridge the gap between Ambedkar's ideals and the present-day scenario. The paper supports the belief that sustainable development is unachievable without women's full empowerment and involvement.

Keywords: *B.R. Ambedkar, Women's empowerment, Indian economy, gender equality, Workforce participation Social justice.*

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Introduction:

Women's participation in economic growth is important not only for equality but also for shared growth. In India, despite constitutional safeguards and numerous policy initiatives, women's workforce participation remains lower than global averages. Social and cultural barriers continue to limit economic. Independence and advancement. Dr. B.R Ambedkar, a visionary social reformer and founder of the Indian constitution, was a strong advocate for

women's rights. He highlights the significance of education, legal safeguards, and opportunities for women, looking at their empowerment as a key to a progressive society. His contribution laid the groundwork for various constitutional provisions promoting gender parity and women's participation in the labour force. Significance of Ambedkar's principles in a contemporary context, in present-day India, where discussions around gender equality and inclusive growth are eminent, Ambedkar's vision



remains highly relevant. His support for caste demolition, social justice, and women's empowerment concerning education and employment continues to provide valuable insight. Modern economic initiatives like start-up, Make in India, Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, and Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana can benefit from his multi-dimensional approach, which links economic growth with social empowerment. Ambedkar's gender equality perspective, which considers both caste and class, offers a holistic structure. For addressing the challenges faced by women in the Indian workforce today.

Objectives

1. To explore Ambedkar's contribution to women's empowerment.
2. To analyse the impact of his ideology on policies related to employment.
3. To assess the present status of women in the workforce, considering his vision.

Research Questions:

1. What were Ambedkar's key ideas on women's empowerment?
2. How have these influenced Indian policy?
3. What is the current status of women's workforce participation?
4. Where do gaps remain between his ideology and its implementation?

Methods and Materials:

This study employs a qualitative research approach and uses secondary research methods to analyse existing literature. The research draws from a range of sources, including journals, theses, books, relevant sources, and reputable websites.

Ambedkar's Vision on Women's Empowerment:

Philosophies and Writings:

Dr. B.R Ambedkar's support for women's rights was a vital part of his fight for social justice and human dignity. Unlike many reformers of his era, Ambedkar observed women's rights not just through legal or

Social equality, but as deeply tied to economic independence and educational access. He believed that when women get financially self-reliant and educated, only then can they achieve true freedom and equality. His speech at the women's conference in 1936 was a significant moment in Indian feminist history, where he called upon women to "Educate, Agitate, and organise" women. Ambedkar also sought legal reform through the Hindu Code Bill. It aimed to ensure women's rights in Marriage, Divorce, Property, and Inheritance, these are the areas where women's participation was traditionally denied. This bill wasn't passed during his lifetime, but it laid the groundwork for future Advancement.

Legal and Social Reforms for Women:

As chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, Ambedkar made sure the inclusion of provisions for gender equality. Constitutional articles that reflect his commitment are:----

Article 14:- Guarantees equality before the law.

Article 15:- Prohibits discrimination based on sex.

Article 16: Ensures equal opportunity in public employment. Ambedkar's work on the Hindu Code Bill inspired landmark laws such as –Hindu Marriage Act (1955)Hindu Succession Act (1956). These reforms recognise women's legal rights in family and property matters and break patriarchal control.

Emphasis on Education and Economic Independence:

Ambedkar believed that education was mandatory for liberation from caste and gender oppression. He consistently looks for universal access to education, particularly for women. According to him, education was the foundation of self-respect and self-reliance. He also highlights the necessity of economic independence; according to him, women could not get their rights without financial freedom. He promoted policies that facilitated women's inclusion in



employment. And supported initiatives like Maternity benefits and job protection for working women.

One of his most quoted statements –“*I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved.*” It demonstrates his thoughts and belief that gender equality is essential for societal advancement.

Role of Women in Nation-Building:

Ambedkar observed women as equal partners in building a progressive Nation. He regards them as critical agents of change. His efforts to organise women’s conferences and support working women were a step towards incorporating women fully into National life. His progressive and inclusive approach to women’s rights continues to influence India’s struggle for gender justice today.

Status of Women in India’s Economy: Then and Now:

Brief Historical Context :

Indian women contributed significantly to agrarian and informal economies. Yet their contribution remained unrecognized. Social hierarchies, caste restriction’s and patriarchal norms limited their access to education and opportunities. In pre- independence era, women were restricted to unpaid domestic roles. Ambedkar recognized this inequality and advocated for women’s economic participation as a right and requisite for Nation-building.

Present Trends in the Workforce Participation:

India has seen improvement in women’s education in recent years. But female labour force participation (FLFP) remains low (20-25%). Working women are mainly employed in the informal sector with less job security and fewer job benefits. Educated women in urban areas face barriers such as limited flexible work options, safety concerns, and societal expectations. In addition to this, Covid- 19 pandemic further reduced FLFP, pushing many women back into unpaid domestic work.

Challenges Faced By Women in the Economy:

Challenges include the gender pay gap, lack of leadership roles, career interruption due to caregiving, and improper infrastructure at the workplace and safety.

Reflection on Ambedkar's Vision:

Structural and cultural barriers continue even with legal equality. Ambedkar’s vision of empowered Economically independent women remain relevant yet unrealised today.

Ambedkar’s Contribution To Gender Justice And Feminist Thoughts:

Articles 14, 15, and 16 of the Indian Constitution for equal rights of women in law and public life. Dr. B. R Ambedkar ensured that gender equality was constitutionally guaranteed. His endeavour to reform personal law through the Hindu Code Bill. Set the foundation for legislation such as the---Hindu Marriage Act (1955), Hindu Succession Act (1956), Equal Remuneration Act (1976), Maternity Benefit Act (1961) [Amended in 2017] This considers his belief that women should have equal legal status in the family as well as employment.

Government’s Schemes And Reforms Inspired By His Vision:

- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao
- Stand-up India
- Mahila- E Haat
- Skill India\ PMKVY

These modern policies continue to reflect Ambedkar’s emphasis on education and economic independence of women.

Role of Ambedkarite Movements And Civil Society:

Ambedkarite organisations actively promote grassroots empowerment. These groups focus on issues like-

Caste, class, gender. Ambedkar’s initiatives include access to education, micro-finance, and legal aid,

keeping his legacy alive in the social justice movement.

Comparison With Global Feminist Thoughts

Ambedkar's work was inclusive of the most oppressed. His reforms, affirmative action, and state Intervention mirrors universal models that prioritize equity and community-based development.

Case Studies and Examples:

Successful Women Entrepreneurs And Professionals:

Shanti Devi, a woman entrepreneur from Uttar Pradesh, successfully runs a textile business supported by Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Micro-finance. Sakhubai Lokhande, a micro-entrepreneur in Mhaswad, Maharashtra, is known for her rope weaving business. It promotes rural women's economic independence. Additionally, women professionals like Indira Jaising, India's first woman Additional Solicitor General, have broken barriers in male-dominated fields.

Impact Of Government Schemes:

Stand Up India, MUDRA Yojana, empowers women from the scheduled caste, Scheduled Tribes, and minority communities, it offers financial assistance for small-scale ventures. Stand Up India had supported over 70,000 women entrepreneurs by 2020. These initiatives reflect Ambedkar's vision of economic self-independence for marginalised women through resource access.

Legal Aid And Women's Rights Activism:

Legal aid programs ensuring justice and equality continue Ambedkar's legacy. For Example, the Legal Aid Society in Maharashtra assists rural women facing domestic violence and inheritance disputes. These efforts empower women by their constitutional rights.

Challenges and Gaps:

Policy Implementation Issues:

Despite India having numerous laws supporting women's rights, their implementation remains weak.

Especially in rural areas and informal sectors, lack of awareness among marginalised women further limits access to Government Schemes. And Ambedkar's vision of equality thus delayed by administrative inefficiencies' and infrastructure gaps.

Gender Pay Gap And Glass Ceiling:

Despite the legal framework, the gender pay gap of 20-30% continues in many industries. Women face obstacles in achieving leadership roles. With only 10% of board membership in top companies and 14% of women's participation in parliament. These gaps reflect a persistent glass ceiling forced by cultural biases and patriarchal norms.

Lack of Awareness and Access to Opportunities:

Access to economic freedom and education remains limited for Dalit, Tribal, and rural women. The responsible factor includes early marriage, lack of vocational training, and lack of technology in rural areas. Digital illiteracy and a lack of safe childcare options further restrict women's participation in the economy and entrepreneurship.

Rural Vs Urban Thoughts:

Urban women benefit from better education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Whereas rural women engage in unpaid agricultural labour, the lack of economic mobility is constrained by patriarchal family structure.

Structural and Cultural Barriers:

Despite legal equality norms, caste based discrimination persists. Women often lack a voice in decision-making and are excluded from land ownership and inheritance rights. Legal protections are faded by cases of dowry, domestic violence.

Discussion and Analysis:

Bridging the Gap Between Ideals And Realities:

Dr. B.R Ambedkar visioned a society where women's equality mentioned in constitution get actively practiced. While legal frameworks--- Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act, supports



gender equality, real challenges like---Gender pay gaps, glass ceiling and weak policy restrict the progress especially for marginalised rural women.

Intersectionality: Caste, Gender, and Class

Ambedkar highlighted how caste, gender, and class create barriers. Dalit and Tribal women face a dual discrimination scheme, like Stand-up India and MUDRA Yojana exist, but they fail to address the socio-economic challenges of these women. Ambedkar's vision had targeted interventions, including caste- sensitive economic policies and an increase in decision-making.

The Role of Education in Economic Empowerment

In Ambedkar's strategy for upliftment education was in central though female literacy has improved, vocational training and education quality are lacking in rural areas. Girls facing issues like—distance to schools, poor infrastructure and social expectation Ambedkar's vision requires to expand vocational and technical education and promote women in non-traditional careers.

Cultural and Societal Barriers

Legal reforms alone cannot take apart patriarchy, social rules around gender roles and family expectations still limit women's freedom. Ambedkar perceived that legal equality should be accompanied by cultural transformation and connected with education, media, and community action.

Policy Recommendations

1. Strengthen labour law and protect the informal sector
2. Design policies for Dalit, Tribals, and backward class women
3. Improve quality education and vocational training
4. Promote gender- sensitive cultural change through media and community outreach.

Conclusion:

Dr. B.R Ambedkar's Contribution to women's equality and empowerment in India was revolutionary,

established in the vision of equality, economic independence, and education. He promoted the inclusion of legal safeguards and equal rights for women. India's constitution established the groundwork for gender justice. However, regardless of progress, significant challenges like gender pay gaps, limited workforce participation continue to delay the full realization of his vision.

Ambedkar's emphasis on intersectionality—how caste, class, and gender overlap and remain relevant today. Dalits, Tribals, and women from remote areas still face discrimination, and it limits their access to education and employment. Although initiatives have been taken but their implementation lacks focus on those most in need.

To fulfil Ambedkar's vision, India should organise inclusive reforms that address cultural and structural barriers. Gender- sensitive policies are significant to ensure equal pay and social protection for women in the informal sector. Moreover, efforts must be taken to challenge patriarchal norms and promote equal responsibilities at home and in the workplace.

Ambedkar's legacy is not just historical, it's a guiding principle for gender justice. His belief that true progress lies in the empowerment of all, regardless of caste or gender, should continue to inform India's development agenda. While being in progress, efforts needed to be made to ensure that every woman in India has the opportunity to grow. Only then can Ambedkar's vision of an equitable society be fully realized.

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