

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

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### 6.1 Research Findings

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The current study is an attempt to understand and analyse the ideas, vision and policy prescriptions of Ambedkar towards '*Women Emancipation and Empowerment*'. The study has been carried out in the realm of his '*Social and Political Ideas*' hypothesising the issue that ideas about '*Women Emancipation and Empowerment*' are only a sub-set of his ideas about the society as an overall domain.

The cognitive process of thinking and shaping ideas on Ambedkar's mind can be considered a long drawn process that had its beginning much ahead of his time. The social and cultural context in which his immediate blood-relations and people who dented impression in his mind and thought-making processes, were born and grew up has a significant influence. It is those people who influenced him culturally and helped him to develop his mind and personality. His experiences of humiliation and alienation during his childhood, schooling age, youth and the various problems and hurdles he faced in his early life helped him to mature as a revolutionary against the contemporary social order and to fight against the prevailing caste rigidity in order to secure social justice and equality. His own personal experience inspired him to pursue changes in the Indian social structure that was governed by the caste system and its rigid code of behaviour like endogamy and servitude of shudras and untouchables.

In his formative years two influences played vital roles and impacted greatly on the mind of young Ambedkar in the formation of his ideas and shaping his personality. The first being his Father and the other was his education at Columbia University. His father had profound influence for admiration for 'Rationality' and 'Rule of Law and Justice' in the mind of young Ambedkar.

His education at the Columbia University and his contact with academicians like John Dewey, James Shotwell, Edwin Seligman, James Harvey Robinson, Franklin Giddings and Alexander Goldenweiser changed his thinking pattern significantly. However, it was Dewey (1859-1952) which influenced him most and inspired in the young student, Ambedkar many of his ideas about equality and social justice. Dewey's ideas, his pragmatic approach, and his method of inquiry influenced Ambedkar most and provided the foundation for a systematic analysis of problems relating to politics economics, society, religion, and history. Ambedkar endorsed Dewey's emphasis on education as a means to change the world and he preferred 'self-respect, self-help' movement and the revolt against the philosophy of helplessness which later became the cornerstone of his ideas and visions and egalitarian values.

On his return to India he applied his acquired knowledge and tools of 'sociological analysis' to fight for the betterment of the untouchables. His experiences of inequalities during his childhood days and in colleges made him to introspect and examine the socio-political, economic conditions of Indian society particularly the Hindu society.

To Ambedkar society is an organization based on some human attitudes. It has certain essentials which contribute to form a real society. He holds, men do not become a society by living in physical proximity any more than a man ceases to be a member of a society by living so many miles away from other men. To Ambedkar, men constitute a society because they have things they possess in common. The soul of his ideal society is social conscience. His social ideas were shaped during his formative years and matured in his later stages of life but it remained focused on the desire for the upliftment of the down-trodden, which found expression in all his social ideas. The political ideas of Ambedkar were formulated in the light of his social ideas. His writings and speeches revealed that although he was primarily concerned with upliftment of down-trodden but he was also aware of issues related to nation building and socio-economic reconstruction of modern India. Thus, whenever he got the opportunity in policy making, he intervened in shaping the social, economic and political development of India during its formative stage.

Ambedkar's vision of a just society was based upon three universal principles: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, The united name for this trinity principle he used was 'justice'. He argued that on the social plane, the Indian society was based on the principle of graded inequality and on the economic plane, the wealth was inequitably distributed. Thus, he felt, while in politics, Indian people might get equality through legal means, but in social and economic life, the inequality would continue and would endanger the structure of political democracy as well.

In his efforts to dissolve the system of graded inequality through assimilation and integration therefore he pleaded for inter-dinning, inter-caste marriages in order to achieve unity, fraternity, social solidarity and national integration. He not only sought to solve the problem of social disharmony through socio-economic upliftment of Depressed Class, but also wanted to incorporate legal safeguards in the Constitution of India and to bring regulatory reforms to bring equalities and to pave way for positive discrimination towards Depressed Classes including women.

The greater emphasis on law and legal measures for bringing just social order was a prominent feature of Ambedkar's social and political idea. However, he did not forget the fact that unless the affected people engage themselves in the same war, the desired outcome could never be realised. Thus, he did not only assume the role of their political leader; he was a leader in their social life as well. He tried to infuse in the men and women a new sense of self-respect to lead a dignified life instead of being reconciled with the social norms.

He attempted to bring forth the modern philosophical thought to solve the political ills of men as he believed that political ideal can have a strong bearing on social ideal as well. His political philosophy had a deep faith in the fundamentals of human rights, in the equal rights of men and women, in the dignity of the individual, in the social and economic justice, in the promotion of social progress and better standards of life with peace and security in all spheres of human life. His political ideas are the synthesis of idealism and realism, empiricism and rationalism, naturalism and humanism, materialism and spiritualism, individualism and socialism.

To sum up it can be stated that Ambedkar was a synthesizer of many Indian trends of social and political ideas: Justice, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and a casteless-classless society. His life and struggle can be seen as the protest against the caste ridden, highly regimented Hindu society and to him this was the source of all injustices, discrimination and social exclusion.

Ambedkar stood for equality and justice in the realm of social, economic and political arena. He remarked that justice had always evoked ideas of equality, of proportion, of compensation. Equity signifies equality. Rules and regulations, right and righteousness are concerned with equality in value. If all men are equal, then all men are of the same essence, and the common essence entitles them of the same fundamental rights and equal liberty. It is in this spirit, he wanted rights for women.

Ambedkar while discussing the meaning of liberty said that it should include social equality, economic equality and there must be knowledge (education) made available to all. All these social conditions were restricted to a particular class in the old social order but form an important part in the new social order. This can be considered as the cornerstone of his ideas on women emancipation and empowering them for better future. Here, also he prescribed the same measures for the upliftment of women what he recommended for the upliftment of untouchables.

Ambedkar examined in great detail the norms, values and the state of 'Hindu Social Order' affecting the Hindu society and then attempted to identify the root causes for the social discrimination of dalits and untouchables. Subsequently, he tried to prescribe solutions for rectifying the problems associated with the social issues. He adopted a similar causal approach for identifying the problems of women in the contemporary society. In the beginning he tried to find out the historic reasons for the decline in the status of women and finally he recommended social and political measures for their emancipation and empowerment in the society.

Ambedkar wanted to go to the root of the problems of women. He knew that without the proper understanding of the basic of prevailing Hindu social order, it would be difficult to address the issue of women empowerment. Thus, he made an in depth study of the Hindu scriptures, smritis and shastras which are the fundamentals of

Hindu faith that predetermined graded socio, religious, economic and cultural status to the chaturvarnas (four classes) where women were equated with the shudra category. He blamed Manu for treating women in more or less the similar way as the shudra and argued about the illogicality, atrocity and the pointlessness of Manusmriti.

Ambedkar explained that the inferior position and the subhuman treatment given to Hindu women was deeply embedded in the very nature of social order which does not respect the value of equality among the individuals and does not recognise the worth of human dignity. However, his concern was not limited to Hindu women only. He observed that even the Muslim women were not getting their due which was provided to them under the Islamic Shariah and also criticized the denial of rights to Muslim women for divorce and opposed the Indian Muslim purdah system which he believed was contrary to the real purdah system of Islam.

Since, he believed that the inhuman and subservient position of Hindu women was as a result of the inequalities ordained in the religious texts, he urged for a common code for the Hindu Community that would do away with the rules of Hindu law and would enable inter-caste marriage, monogamy, and ensure economic rights to women through property rights. Through this common code, Ambedkar aimed at raising the status of Hindu women and preventing injustices inflicted on her. He also emphasized that in a secular state religion should not be allowed to govern all human activities and that personal laws should be divorced from religion.

He placed a direct role of State in the process of empowerment; the state should have a direct role. He knew that the position of women could not be improved without proper education and economic well being. Thus he advocated for equal economic rights for women, to be granted by the State, through an adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work for women and equal right to work for women. His arguments on maternity benefit bill, abortion and on the birth control were quite relevant to recognize the dignity of women.

Self esteem and self dependence, insistence on humane feelings, life unburdened by obligations, insistence on rights in every sphere as an Indian, choosing one's own path, finding way of personal progress, fighting for all social, educational and

financial equality, are the special facets of Ambedkar's self confident movement. Thus, in an effort to include women in their effort to achieve self-confidence, he insisted and succeeded in including women in various civil movements and conferences. Participation in an organisation, he believed, to be the first step towards 'capacity -building' for the women. One can relate this position with Ambedkar's idea that women needed adequate exposure to social-morality-reality marked by injustice, discrimination and inhuman treatment. He believed that more there would be the level and extent of this realisation by the womenfolk, more accelerated would be their march towards emancipation. He made a multi-dimensional contribution to the empowerment of women by advocating girl's education, removal of adverse social attitudes towards women. He considered education for women to be as essential as for men because children usually emulate both their parents. He advised women to mould their children that they led a life of virtue and wanted them to be bold and fearless like men. He argued that history proved that Indian women could fight on the warfront, if the situation demands so.

He wanted to position women as not only a member of the family, also of society. His aim was to re-engineer the society from grass-root level and he involved state for this purpose through Hindu Code Bill which sought to confer on women the right to property and adoption. Ambedkar while admitting the limitations of the bill, acknowledged it to be the basic foundation of empowerment of women.

Thus, Ambedkar's vision of empowerment of women through legal reforms was intertwined with raising social conscience through social re-engineering and through education. Social awareness and social responsiveness appeared to him to be the basic ingredient of women empowerment.

To sum up, it can be stated that his policy prescription for women emancipation and empowerment encompasses two domains: 'Social' and 'Political'. In the social domain, he prescribed 'Educate, Organise and Agitate' as the motto for emancipation and empowerment of women which he had also prescribed for the depressed classes. Since the position of women in Ambedkar's era was not much different from that of the down-trodden; their mental and physical inhibitions being alike, their symptoms being the same, their analysis and handling could not be different.

In the political domain, he wanted multi-pronged interventions in terms of 'legal safeguard against exploitation', 'economic rights', 'positive discrimination for underprivileged' and 'legal sanction of new social order based on the trinity principles' of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. He felt it would be necessary to bring about changes through the help of law and thus he preferred interventions at legal and public policy level.

However, he not only stopped at prescribing the policy measures for women empowerment and emancipation but when he got the opportunity he also attempted to institutionalise those policy prescriptions.

The Preamble represents the quintessence of Ambedkar's social and political thought. There is a close relation thematically and ideologically between the Preamble and Ambedkar's perception of justice. While it is true that the ideals contained in the Preamble had been drawn mostly from the Objective Resolution; it is important to note the extent of the role played and support given by Ambedkar towards their adoption in the Constitution. It can not be denied that he played a key role as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee in getting these ideas accepted in the Constituent Assembly and embedded in the Preamble those ideals that he had been striving so long.

His arguments in the Constituent Assembly in support of provisions for women empowerment vividly express his conviction and willingness to see his policy prescriptions finding legal sanction. He also found this opportunity suitable to carry out 'social re-engineering' through law which was one of his principles in upliftment of the downtrodden in Hindu society.

Ambedkar played a pivotal role in piloting 'Hindu Code bill'. Although, he could not be considered as the architect of this crucial legal framework towards empowerment and emancipation of Indian women, he shouldered the responsibility to give it a final shape. Though, Ambedkar could not see the Hindu Code Bill find its place in statute book while in Cabinet, his contribution towards institutionalising of measures towards women empowerment is widely acknowledged. His attempt was honest,

emotional and forceful but it unfortunately ended in unceremonious surrender through resignation.

## **6.2 Critical evaluation of his ideas and vision on Women Empowerment and Emancipation**

Ambedkar's ideas and vision about women emancipation and empowerment are not as clear as his ideas and vision about the emancipation and empowerment of the untouchables. Many a times, Ambedkar pointed out the same underlying causes for inhuman treatment and sufferings of both untouchables and women. Studies of relevant literature bring out clearly the fact that Ambedkar blamed the Hindu Social Order and its principle of graded inequality as the prime reasons for sufferings of women and untouchables. Reasonably he blamed Manu, the author of Manusmriti, for granting inferior status to both women and untouchables.

Similarly, he believed in human emancipation as a whole and he adopted a general framework of 'educate, organize, agitate,' for both women and untouchables. On the broader context, his ideal of empowerment remained 'equality in social, political and economic spheres' and his policy prescriptions for women empowerment are in unison with that of untouchables and other depressed classes.

However, his effort towards institutionalization of his policy prescriptions became more explicit in the domain related to untouchables. He fought single handedly for reservation, separate electorates, special provisions etc. for untouchables in various forums, however, in the case of women, he can not be credited for initiating legal reforms.

The Hindu Code Bill, which was regarded as the milestone attempt for social re-engineering through law that aimed at emancipation and empowerment of women, was a vision of Pandit Nehru. Ambedkar, by virtue of his position as Law Minister, was entrusted with the responsibility to pilot the bill. Even though, when he was to shoulder this prime responsibility, he could not succeed to force a logical conclusion to the bill. The bill saw significant changes and subsequent implementation in parts



after Ambedkar resigned from the Cabinet. Therefore, while acknowledging the effort put forward by Ambedkar for passing the Bill is commendable, it can be argued that he failed to bring forth the social re-engineering that he aimed for women empowerment and emancipation through Hindu Code Bill. However due to his efforts the various elements of the Hindu Code bill were enacted smoothly between 1955 and 1961, such as Special Marriage Act, 1954, The Hindu Marriage act, 1955, The Hindu Succession Act, 1956, The Hindu Minority & Guardianship Act, 1956, The Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956.

Many authors (Nazeer, 2001; Shabbir, 2005) have credited Ambedkar for bringing social justice and empowerment to women through constitutional provisions. However, Ambedkar himself acknowledged that he came into the Constituent Assembly with no greater aspiration than to safeguard the interests of the Scheduled Castes. A critical review of the process of constitution making reveals that Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad and M. Azad which constituted the 'oligarchy' were the source of influence in the constitution making process. The ideology of the Congress Party was another dominant factor in the process of decision making in the Constituent Assembly. As the chairman of Drafting Committee, the role of Ambedkar was reduced to a highly skilled technocrat who would transcript the ideas and visions of Nehru and other members of Congress party.

Many authors argued that Preamble of the Constitution of India represents the quintessence of Ambedkar's social and political thought. However, the resemblance of the underlying philosophy of Preamble and Ambedkar's perception of justice is purely incidental. Ambedkar had no decisive role to play in shaping and piloting the Preamble. It was the handiwork of Nehru who through his historical resolution on the Aims and Objectives moved at the assembly's first session during December, 1946 that subsequently paved the way for the adoption of the Preamble that adorns the Constitution of India. Moreover, besides Article 39, there are no specific provisions for women and even that provision cannot be categorised as 'positive discriminatory' towards women as has been so gracefully put forward by Ambedkar in the case of the untouchables.

In the views of Austin (2006) Ambedkar created the kind of Constitution which the Congress wanted him to create. Before he got involved in the task of Constitution making, his politics had an uncompromising realism about it, which, in retrospect, is totally at variance with the provisions that actually exist in the Constitution of India. However, the inability of Ambedkar to inscribe into the Constitution of India the principles and structure of the economic life of people can be understood realising that neither the Drafting Committee nor its chairman was free to write the provisions of the Constitution according to their own philosophy. They were the agents of the Constituent Assembly, as such were bound by the advice and guidance of its various sub-committees. The Drafting Committee had to take note of the various discussions and comments and give them a legal shape for incorporation into the final draft. Thus, Ambedkar had to play mostly the role of a technocrat applying his legal skills and acumen in drafting the Constitution.

### **6.3 Limitations of the Present Study**

The current study attempts to capture the ideas and visions of Ambedkar through exploratory research of primary and secondary resources. The writings and speeches of Ambedkar as made available through various publications are relied upon as primary sources. Secondary sources comprise of biographies, books, journal articles and online resources on relevant topics. However, in many cases it is noted that these secondary sources also relied upon the same primary sources. Thus, the study can be said as primarily based upon writings and speeches of Ambedkar himself, which however, are mainly in form of compilation and translation from various sources.

The study does not attempt to gather empirical data on the focussed area through structured or unstructured interviews or questionnaire and thus it does not generate any new empirical data or information. The analysis is solely based on published resources.

The study is contextually based on the period encompassing the life and time of Ambedkar and thus it does not consider the contemporary Indian Society and issues related to it. The ideas, vision and policy prescriptions envisaged by Ambedkar are

discussed in relation to pre-independent Indian society only and thus their relevance in current Indian society can be debated.

#### **6.4 Scope of Future Research and Directions**

Future research can build upon the limitations as highlighted in the previous section. A future study can focus on the relevance of ideas; vision and policy prescriptions of Ambedkar in contemporary Indian Society or it can examine the changes in the Indian Social and Political Order in the context of Women Empowerment putting this study as a reference point.