

PREFACE

The Government of India ushered in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as the year of Women's Empowerment, however, over seven years later and two governments of different political party in session, Political empowerment still remains a distant dream for Indian women.

Until into the quarter of the twentieth century, the vision on women and their development was limited to traditions and religious interpretations. Political and social leaders did not deviate from age-old understanding that women were nothing but shadows of their men. It was prevailing until Dr. B R Ambedkar argued logically about the redundant domain of perceptions about women. His writings, speeches and address to the women's conferences on many occasions have given very powerful propositions for the rectification of status of women as a whole.

However, it is worth noting that the work and contribution relating to women by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Gandhi and other personalities have been sufficiently brought forth in the published literature so far, but social scientists have so far ignored the contributions of Ambedkar on gender issues.

The current study is an attempt to fill the gap by understanding and analyzing the ideas, vision and policy prescriptions of Dr. B R Ambedkar towards '*Women Empowerment and Emancipation*'. The study is carried out in the realm of his '*Social and Political Ideas*' hypothesizing the issue that ideas about '*Women Empowerment and Emancipation*' are only a sub-set of his ideas about the society as an overall domain.

In order to capture the whole spectrum of the social and political ideas of Dr. B R Ambedkar and to analyse his ideas and vision on Women Empowerment and Emancipation, the current study is organised into six chapters.

Chapter-I begins with an introduction to the problem statement and derivation of broad objective of the study. It then proceeds to develop a theoretical framework for concepts like Women Empowerment and Emancipation. Based on the framework the research questions are formed and a brief literature survey is carried out to examine the extent of available literature and gaps in the context of the research objectives. Finally the chapter concludes with significance of the study, research methodology and plan of study.

Chapter-II examines the life and time of Dr. Ambedkar and the influence of various events and people in forming his social and political ideas. Special emphasis has been given to capture the various influences in the process of his education both in India and abroad.

Chapter-III deals in detail various concepts of Social and Political Ideas of Dr. Ambedkar. The chapter also analyses his various normative prescriptions for a just society.

Chapter-IV focuses on the research objective that is the ideas and vision of Dr. Ambedkar on Women Emancipation and Empowerment that was derived from the domain of his Social and Political Ideas. The chapter concludes with an analysis of his Policy Prescriptions towards empowerment and emancipation of women.

The discussion on policy prescription is forwarded to Chapter-V where the discussion focuses on Dr. Ambedkar's effort towards institutionalisation of his policy prescriptions in the context of women emancipation and empowerment. Emphasis is given on analysing two major events: Constitution making and presentation of the Hindu Code Bill where in both cases Dr. Ambedkar played a major role.

Chapter-VI analyses the research findings and presents and critical evaluation of his ideas and vision on Women Empowerment and Emancipation. The chapter concludes by stating the limitations of the current study and directions for future research.

The finding of the study indicates that Ambedkar can be viewed as a synthesizer of many Indian trends of social and political ideas: Justice, Liberty, Equality and

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.

His policy prescription for women emancipation and empowerment encompasses two domains: 'Social' and 'Political'. In social domain, he prescribed '*Educate, Organize and Agitate*' as the motto for emancipation and empowerment of women which he had also prescribed for the Depressed Classes. He also favoured moral conscience among the people, necessary to build a just social order. 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 trinity principles' of *Liberty, Equality and Fraternity*.