

# INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction: Statement of the Problem

The Government of India ushered in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as the year of Women's Empowerment, to focus on "Our vision in the new century of a nation where women are equal partners with men". Women's Empowerment Year was announced with great fanfare but created little or no results. Najma Heptulla, ex. Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairperson summarized the event (in 2002) commenting that except for organising seminars and making speeches, the government had done nothing substantial. As for the programs announced by the government, Heptulla feels that the government should consider normal developmental initiatives instead of one time, period bound special events. Shabana Azmi, an activist and Member of Parliament pointed out, "*Change towards empowerment can only come through drastic changes in mindsets*", and for that, the need is more than seminars and slogans.

Over 7 years later and governments of different political ideologies in power, no logical conclusion has been brought to the decade old Women's Reservation Bill. Reservation for women in Parliament was one of the promises made in the BJP's election manifesto. Even though the Vajpayee Government completed its full tenure, the Bill remained in cold storage. Till now (2008), even the U.P.A government has not been able to garner necessary support for granting political empowerment to women.

India has ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments aiming to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the

Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993. The Mexico Plan of Action (1975), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), the Beijing Declaration as well as the Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome Document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Session on Gender Equality and Development & Peace for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, titled "*Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action*"<sup>2</sup> have been unreservedly endorsed by India for appropriate follow up.

Political empowerment still remains a distant dream for Indian women. The Congress party of India<sup>3</sup> began the "empowerment year" by lowering its quota for women in the AICC (All India Congress Committee) panel, even after announcing its allegiance to 33 per cent representation in parliament. Brinda Karat, the general secretary of the All India Democratic Women's Association observes: "*No amount of legislation will be effective as long as the political will to promote gender equity is absent.*" She also points out: "*the Globalization Policies of Government are pushing women below the poverty line*". Feminist-activist Madhu Kishwar, holds similar views and strongly decries the gimmicks of announcing new programs, which she feels merely mean "*more money spent on seminars, more paper work and more siphoning off of funds*".

On the issue of empowerment of marginalized segment of society, Jain (1996) argued that deep poverty is a social and political phenomenon as much as an economic problem and thus requires political and social change, particularly within the sites of power. The quest for equity cannot come about without wider representation of all groups; especially those currently denied access to power, and the presentation of all points of view in the process of decision-making. Revision of the current administrative and political structures, and their rules, is necessary in order to facilitate this broader representation and its translation into political power for those who are currently marginalized.<sup>4</sup>

Ferguson (2006) points out that although there are political disagreements as to the content and political application of the notion of "*empowerment*" as a goal and strategy for women's liberation, she also contrasted mainstream development institutions co-opted uses of the concept of empowerment with its more radical applications by struggles for national liberation and movements for social justice. She

mentioned that as post-structuralist critics have pointed out, identity politics by itself has not been successful in organizing in heterogeneous communities. Rather, individuals and groups divided by gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and nationality can only be empowered by a participatory democratic culture which strives for solidarity in a coalition of oppressed groups, while working out a democratic procedure to negotiate possible conflicts of interests among its members as one of the ends of a developmental process toward social justice.”<sup>5</sup>

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a Democratic Polity, Laws, Development Policies, Plans and Programs have aimed at women’s advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards there has been a marked shift in the approach to women’s issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels.

However, as the department of Women and Child development (India) points out, there still exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the Constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programs, and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality of the status of women in India, on the other. This has been analyzed extensively in the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, "*Towards Equality*" (1974) and highlighted in the National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000), the Shramshakti Report (1988) and the Platform for Action, Five Years after- An assessment. The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to social and economic structure, which is based on informal and formal norms, and practices.

India was under British colonial rule for nearly two centuries and became independent in 1947. The involvement of Women in politics started in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although British imperialism profoundly influenced the political engagement of both elite and non-elite women during this period, its impact on the character and purpose of their engagement was very different. Non-elite women fought against the British colonialists. Moved by the hunger of their children, the British confiscation of their land (which was their means of livelihood), and oppressive taxes, women participated alongside men in 'famine revolts' in the late 18th and 19th centuries, and other revolts in the 19th century.

Historically, two important movements characterised India's freedom struggle and subsequent developments. One was the political movement of challenge and resistance to British colonialism, and the other, the social movement to reform traditional structures. The national movement against British colonial rule in undivided India was instrumental in bringing women in large numbers into the public space. Mahatma Gandhi played a crucial role in creating a favourable atmosphere for women's participation in the freedom struggle by insisting that the struggle for women's equality was an integral part of the movement of Swaraj. His choice of non-violent satyagraha as the mode of struggle also allowed women to play a far more active and creative role than was possible in more masculine-oriented movements. The Swaraj movement spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi is associated with women in white khadi sarees, playing major roles in anti-colonial movement.

While Gandhi wanted a forerunner role for women in the freedom movement, he did not encourage women to compete for power. Rather, he wanted them to enter public life as selfless, devoted social workers to undertake the crucial task of social reconstruction. In Gandhi's view, "Women are the embodiment of sacrifice, and her advent to public life should, therefore, result in purifying it, in restraining unbridled ambition and accumulation of property." Gandhi, therefore, created a political space for women within the patriarchal system, projecting the concept of women's role being complementary to men's, and embodying virtues of sacrifice and suffering.

Gandhi, however, was very conscious of the power that women could have in a struggle based on the concept of non-cooperation. He stressed the importance of their participation in political and social matters, and exhorted them to join the nationalist struggle. Gandhi, therefore, played a vital role in attempting to feminise the

nationalist movement in India. In the process, the values and views that he espoused influenced and shaped the women's movement in the early phase of independence of the other nations of the region.

Women of India participated in demonstrations such as the all-night dharnas of 1930 against foreign cloth, and in selling 'the salt of freedom' during the salt satyagraha. These campaigns succeeded in breaking the myth of segregation. They also articulated liberal sentiments like suffrage rights. To advocate women's equality and their right to participate in nationalist politics, the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) was formed in 1927 through an amalgamation of various regional women's groups. It also spearheaded constitutional reforms and other provisions for women. Consisting of reformist, revivalist and radical streams, the AIWC played a critical role during the freedom struggle, and helped women systematically articulate their political rights in public forums.

The leading South Asian social and religious reformers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were males, whose principal objective was to cleanse and reinforce family life. For those early pioneers, women were, at first, objects of their emancipatory efforts. But, in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, they became more and more subjects in the political and social spheres as is clear from the examples of women's political struggles around a variety of issues in the countries of the region (Mies, 1980). Yet, the basic understanding of the leaders of the national movement on the issue of women continued to be filtered through the existing patriarchal system.

The vision on women and their development was limited to traditions and religious interpretations. Until into the quarter of twentieth century, 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.

Ambedkar was of the firm opinion that until or unless, the Hindu Dharma-shastras are not discarded completely, no progress could be made in the direction of women's empowerment. In the name of sanskaras, he believed, the Hindu women are tied up with the bondage of superstitions, which they carry till their death. Moreover, the women themselves are responsible for inculcating these wrong notions learnt by them

through baseless traditions and preaching of the Shastras in the budding minds of their offspring, he argued.

It does not mean that no efforts have been made in the past to bring dignity to women. As in Europe, Christianity inaugurated the Era of equality, liberty and fraternity by preaching that a prince and pauper are equal in the eyes of God. There is also a very long tradition of social reforms by our saints and other social reformers. But the proprietors of the orthodoxy thwarted these efforts. In the absence of any legal sanction or authority, these efforts could not sustain.

In this direction Ambedkar had tried to break down the barriers in the way of advancement of women in India. He laid down the foundation of concrete and sincere efforts by codifying the common Civil Code for the Hindu community and the principle is capable of extension to other sections of the Indian society. Prior to these efforts of Ambedkar, the destiny of the Indian women depended upon the wrong notions and perceptions chalked out by the proprietors of orthodoxy.

The chaotic conditions of the Hindu law were reduced in the form of judicial pronouncements and codification was the legislative recognition of the judge made law. Ambedkar himself had explained lucidly the reasons for the consolidation and codification. He tried to change the perspectives of Women Empowerment in Independent India.

Ambedkar as a product of his time responded powerfully to the needs of the downtrodden people of India. The contemporary Indian society provided for his revolutionary thoughts a resourceful setting eliciting his strong reactions to age-old religious and social practices. The status of women like that of the Depressed Classes was no better. The discrimination in both the cases had taken the shapes of religious and social sanctions rendering the changes impossible. The strong hold of religion and the opposition of the oppressors and vested interests in both the cases had to be encountered in all respects. Ambedkar took to the attack of the scriptures and sources of discrimination and evil social practices against women. He traced the genesis of discrimination and degradation of the Indian women to the Laws of Manu and his *Manusmriti*. Ambedkar in his paper on '*Castes in India, their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*'<sup>6</sup> maintained that endogamy is the essence of castes. According to

him a caste is an enclosed class and it existed before Manu, but Manu's codification of caste rules reinforced all these practices.

The philosophy of Ambedkar on women empowerment was based upon several fundamental issues like property right, marriage and adoption, and the liberation of women in the light of religion. The reforms introduced by Ambedkar through "*Hindu Code-bill*" have been adhered to and have been accepted by and large. He, by codifying the Hindu Law in respect of marriage, divorce and succession, rationalized and restored the dignity to women. Prior to the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Hindu Succession Act, 1956, the Hindu Law was un-codified in a large measure, though Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937, Sharda Act etc. could be seen as attempts of legislative intervention. The Hindu Code Bill can be stated as an attempt of social engineering via law. It was a revolutionary measure and was a first step towards the recognition and empowerment of women in India. Under these revolutionary measures, a woman will have property in her own right and be able to dispose of her property. Times of India on 26th December 1950 carried a statement of Ambedkar in which he pointed out that the Bill aimed at removing the legal obstacles in the social advancement of women.

The efforts of Ambedkar in getting the bill enacted were lauded by many. Justice P.B. Gajendragadkar (1951) while congratulating Ambedkar for the role he had played in drafting and piloting the Bill said, "*If Dr. Ambedkar gives us Hindus our Code, his achievement would go down in history as a very eloquent piece of poetic justice indeed.*"<sup>7</sup>

It is significant to note that Jana (1979) categorically stated that of all the reformists aimed at empowerment of Indian women, Ambedkar was most progressive as regards the issues of women are concerned<sup>8</sup>.

Ambedkar's writings and his speeches and address to the women's conferences on many occasions have given vent to very powerful propositions for the rectification of status of women as a whole. It is also relevant to note that the work and contribution relating to women by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Gandhi and also of other personalities have been sufficiently brought forth in the works done so far. But social scientists have so far ignored the contributions of Ambedkar on gender issues.

Thus, there is a scope of in-depth study in regard to approaches of empowerment and emancipation of Indian women as envisaged by Ambedkar.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Present Study**

Based on the preceding discussion, the objectives of the study are formulated as:

- To examine how Dr. Ambedkar's social and political ideas were shaped up through the influence of society and people.
- To identify and analyze the ideas, vision and policy prescriptions of Dr. Ambedkar with respect to Women emancipation and empowerment in the realm of his social and political ideas.
- To study his efforts in institutionalizing his ideas, vision and policy prescription regarding Women emancipation and empowerment.

In the following sections a brief review of available literature is carried out to understand the concepts, finding gaps in the literature and to formulate research questions.

## **1.3 The Conceptual Framework**

Literature survey is carried out to understand the concepts of Women Empowerment and Emancipation and to arrive at a conceptual framework for further research.

Empowerment means individuals acquiring the power to think and act freely, exercise choice and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of the society. Empowerment also means a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights (Boraian, 2008). Empowerment is a construct shared by many disciplines and arenas: community development, psychology, education, economics, and studies of social movements and organizations, among others. Rappoport (1984) has noted that it is easy to define empowerment by its absence but difficult to define in action as it takes on different forms in different people and contexts. Even defining the concept is

subject to debate. Zimmerman (1984) stated that asserting a single definition of empowerment may make attempts to achieve it formulaic or prescription-like, contradicting the very concept of empowerment.

As a general definition, Page (1999) suggested that empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important. It is multi-dimensional as it occurs within sociological, psychological, economic, and other dimensions. Empowerment also occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, and community.

Empowerment, by definition, is a social process, since it occurs in relationship to others. It is a process that is similar to a path or journey, one that develops as we work through it. Other aspects of empowerment may vary according to the specific context and people involved, but these remain constant. In addition, one important implication of this definition of empowerment is that the individual and community are fundamentally connected.

*International Fund for Agricultural Development* report (IFAD, 2000) mentioned that there are four main processes that would lead to women empowerment in society. These are structural changes in women mobility and social interactions; significant changes in women labour pattern; favourable change in women's access and control over resources; and greater participation in decision making process<sup>9</sup>.

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, 2000) defines women empowerment as: "*Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and ways in which these relations may be changed; Developing a sense of self-worth; a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life, Gaining the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power and developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change, to create more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally*"<sup>10</sup>. Thus, women empowerment should be examined in the realm of social and economic justice since it aims to achieve a just social and economic order.

Social justice to women will necessarily mean giving them not only gender equality but also the rightful place in the society (Gupta, 2003). Rewadikar (2003) pointed out that gender equality is the question not just economic equality or more justice to women but also that of social justice at large and therefore, any effort towards women empowerment will have to be accepted in the process of attaining social justice.

The Pacific Institute for Women's Health, a Los Angeles based, nonprofit, non-governmental organization founded in 1993, believes that women's health is a human right, and that access to contraception, reproductive freedom and gender equality are central to women's empowerment and social justice. The Institute has now evolved from a group of feminist researchers concerned with women's health worldwide to an organization that focus on sexuality and reproductive rights from a social justice perspective.

Social philosophy broadly concerns with critical examination of all types of social relationships, social institutions as well as social behaviors. Political philosophy tends to undertake a philosophical scrutiny of political institutions and behavior, that is, those aspects of social life which are concerned with government and politics. However, in a wider sense, political philosophy is concerned with those aspects of social life which involve the use of power or misuse of power. In this sense, Social and political philosophy can be treated as a single discipline which covers the domain that seeks to make human life worth living. It seeks to dispel superstition and fear arising out of ignorance and pave way for human progress (Gaubu, 2006).

Ideas and thought move and make impact only within a certain ontological and epistemological condition of production and their reception. Ideas thus outgrow the sphere of identity and chart out their universal journey independent of the later. Thus, certain thinkers become the part of ideas and then they begin to travel universally across both time and space. In terms of time they continue to engage and attract many generations and in terms of space they transcend several boundaries. They transcend their particular sociologically constituted identity and become the part of universal idea. However, classification and categorization of ideas and their embodiment in to thinkers is not a natural act.

According to Gore (1994), the continuing processes of transactions and interactions that one undergoes in the society are prime and dominating factors for shaping ideas and mental model of an individual. The process of interaction between a student and his teachers, which is called as the process of education, or, the process of interaction between parents and the child, called as upbringing and the social value system which acts a reference point for an individual provides necessary background for formation and maturity of ideas of an individual. In a society, individual is not free and his relationships are mediated through the mode of his family affiliation, relationships between individual and groups and others.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, in an effort to examine social and political ideas of an individual it would be necessary to examine the continuing processes of transactions and interactions that one undergoes in the society during lifetime especially in his formative years.

Thus the preceding discussion can be summarized as leading to the following queries: First, what are the intellectual, cultural conditions that have bearing on the progress and movement of his ideas? Secondly, what are the social and political ideas that Ambedkar historically developed? Third, did Ambedkar have specific ideas and vision on Women Empowerment and Emancipation? If he had such visions, what were his efforts in institutionalizing them so that the effects of the same could be realized in the society?

These are some of the lead questions that need to be addressed in the context of the study.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the conceptual framework discussed in the previous section, the following research questions are formulated:

- *What are the events and social influences that helped Dr. Ambedkar to identify and examine the social issues in the Indian system?*
- *What are the different dimensions of Dr. Ambedkar's social and political ideas?*

- *What are the ideas, vision and policy prescriptions of Dr. Ambedkar on Women emancipation and empowerment in the realm of his social and political ideas?*
- *What are the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar towards institutionalization of his policy prescriptions on Women emancipation and empowerment?*

## **1.5 Overview of the Existing Literature**

Studies on nation builders like Nehru, Gandhi, Ambedkar and others have attracted attention of scholars and researchers. There are good numbers of literatures available on nation builders and Ambedkar is not an exception to it. While many of the literatures followed conventional biographical style of writings, many authors also looked into other aspects of him including his social and political ideas, social justice, effort towards constitution making etc.

However, it is observed that due attention has not been paid towards establishing a conceptual framework of understanding his ideas and vision on women empowerment.

In the domain of bibliographical study Keer (1971), Moon (2007), Ambedkar Mahesh (2005) need special mention. All these authors portrayed a biographical documentary of Ambedkar that includes his writings and speeches. However, these publications are not analytical in nature and do not bring forth his ideas and vision on Women empowerment and emancipation separately.

Many authors have made an attempt to highlight efforts of Ambedkar towards women empowerment. Azmi (2001) mentioned that Ambedkar's pioneering effort in the direction of women empowerment encompasses transpiring a paradigm shift in the philosophy and thinking of society on women, involvement of state for her social welfare and upliftment in society and legal reforms which would help in reforming the society too. Jatava (2001A) pointed out that although Ambedkar gave no slogans about women's liberty yet he always stood for women's progress and development and his support to the Hindu Code Bill shows his firm belief in equality of all sexes.

On the issue of Gender Justice Khan (2001) explained the provision of women in the Constitution and the effort of Ambedkar for the same. Azmi (2001), Jatava (2005) commented that Ambedkar blamed Manu for the downfall of women and discussed about the proposed reformative steps advocated by Ambedkar to elevate the status of women. Chowdhary (1997) pointed out that Ambedkar remarked that the sub-human treatment and inferior position granted to women could be attributed to the very nature of the Hindu social order which does not respect the value of equality among the individuals. Lal (1997) described Ambedkar's view on abortion and also pointed out that Ambedkar held Manu responsible for the downfall of women and that the position of women and the downtrodden was more or less the same. Kamble (2001) mentioned that Ambedkar realized and put emphasis on involving women in liberating women by education and thus he continued the effort of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and his wife, Savitribai Phule for providing access to education for women. Kamble (2001) also mentioned that right from the beginning of his struggle for the eradication of caste prejudices, Ambedkar started involving women in the struggle as he realized that the real progress of the Dalits could not be achieved without liberating and motivating the women themselves. Vidyasagar (2005) stated that Ambedkar was an advocate of women's rights who struggled for women's liberalization from the caste-entrenched patriarchal system and concluded that Ambedkar had an impassioned love for the fallen women as a whole community and his advise to rescue themselves from the despised and disgraceful life were quite meaningful.

Kuber (2001) mentioned that Ambedkar underlined that women should learn to be clean and keep themselves away from all vices, they should educate their children and instill high ambition in them, the children mind should be inculcated with the ideas that they are destined to be great. It is significant to note that Jana (1979) in her 'Women and Social Change in India' has categorically stated that of all the reformists aimed at empowerment of Indian women, Ambedkar was most progressive as regards the issues of women are concerned. This paper deals with the approaches of empowerment of Indian women as envisaged by Ambedkar.

Discussion on Hindu Code Bill has found a significant place in the literature that also dealt with ideas and visions of Ambedkar towards Women Empowerment and

emancipation. Zelliott (2007), Jogdand (2007) discussed Ambedkar's ideas on Women Empowerment and pointed out that a close reading of the debates surrounding the Hindu Code Bill showed that there was a relationship between the caste system and the position of women. Tehrani (2001) dealt the issue of how Ambedkar worked for the upliftment of women for this purpose by quoting the writings and speeches of Ambedkar on Hindu Code Bill and the position of Muslim women. Sreenath(1997) discussed the efforts of Ambedkar in passing of the Hindu Code Bill. Sinha (2007) identified that motherhood constituted the core of the discourse surrounding the controversial Hindu Code Bill during 1941-1956. Som (1994) discussed the heated discussion on the Hindu Code Bill which took place in the Constituent Assembly but she gave credit to Nehru who was the pioneer of the Hindu Code bill by not giving up and getting the various elements of the Hindu Code bill passed even after Ambedkar's resignation. Banningan (1952) pointed out that the proposed Hindu Code Bill backed by Nehru but opposed by Hindu traditionalists would codify and modernize Hindu law giving greater rights to women. Jatava (2001C) quoted the speeches and quotes for describing the efforts of Ambedkar in introducing the Hindu Code Bill. Levy (1969) discussed that lawyers had a profound influence upon the Legislative history of the Hindu Code Bill that intended to modernize, unify, democratic, and secularize Hindu Family Law and Hindu society and especially to emancipate Hindu women. He pointed out how the Bill brought strong opposition within the Congress as well as outside from conservative hardliners and discussed why the bill was allowed to lapse. Ray (1952) discussed how the women would benefit from the Hindu Code Bill and mentioned the efforts of Ambedkar for the same and FitzGerald (1947) discussed the proposals for the codification of Hindu Law in detail.

Another group of authors has made contributions in understanding the social and political ideas of Ambedkar. These analysis encompassed his understanding and normative prescriptions about Hindu Social Order and upliftment of depressed classes including women. Rao (1997) commented that Ambedkar strongly believed that political and economic democracy could be achieved and maintained by constitutional support only and thus, he stressed parliamentary democracy as a backbone of state socialism and as a means for women empowerment. Roy (2005) summarized that Ambedkar's vision of a good social order signifies the need to have a good match

between what is good for one individual and what is good for all individuals and it is this match that constitutes the foundation of social democracy that he visualized as the most preferred social and political system. Bharill (1977) carried an extensive study on various aspects of social and political ideas of Ambedkar and highlighted Ambedkar's idea on necessary social and socio-political reforms. Jaffrelot (2006) focused on three key areas of Ambedkar: Ambedkar as social theorist, as a statesman and politician and as an opponent of caste Hinduism and advocate of Buddhism. Zelliot (2001) dealt with shaping of Ambedkar's political ideas and its use and his concept on religion. Shabbir (2005) discussed various issues related to Ambedkar on Law, Constitution and Social Justice and examined Ambedkar's humanistic philosophy championing the cause of the downtrodden. Rao (2006) examined Ambedkar's struggle to protect the rights of the Untouchables during the British rule, national movement and also in the Constituent Assembly, his role in Politics and brief discussion on the Hindu Code Bill. Bharathi (1956) provided a comprehensive exposition of the Political thought of Ambedkar. Mandal (2004) attempted to cover the thoughts and ideas of Ambedkar on various political and social issues through the compilation of various selected portions from Ambedkar's writings and speeches as well as from his biography. Naik, (2003) stressed the philosophy of equality, liberty and fraternity as expounded by Ambedkar. Quoting Ambedkar's original writings and speeches Thorat S, Kumar Narendra, (2008) discussed Ambedkar's contribution to the development of inclusive policies during the British rule and its culmination into the policy of reservation in the Constituent Assembly. Patil, (1995) (ed.), Thorat S, Aryama (2007) analyzed the social, economic and political ideas of Ambedkar and various dimensions of Ambedkar's significant contribution to Indian society and politics in the realm of his political, social, constitutional, economic, religious ideas. These authors also examined Ambedkar's theory of history, society, polity, his role in the making of the Constitution and his views on Indian Federalism, social justice for the weaker sections, land reforms, religion, human rights, and other issues concerning the Indian society. Khan. H. Nazeer (2001) (ed.) evaluated Ambedkar's contribution to law and politics and dealt with Ambedkar's opinion on three aspects namely, Federalism, Ethnicity, and Gender Justice. Shabbir (1997) (ed.) elaborated Ambedkar's concept on social justice, judicial response and their contemporary relevance. Gautama (2002) examined the Riddles of Hinduism as posed by Ambedkar whereas Kadam (1991) highlighted the significance and the role played by Ambedkar

in improving the conditions of the untouchables. Bharathi (1956), Mandal (2004), Chandra, Mitra (2003) provided a comprehensive exposition of the Political thought of Ambedkar and attempted to cover the thoughts and ideas of Ambedkar on various political and social issues through the compilation of various selected portions from Ambedkar's writings and speeches as well as from his biography. Jatava (2001A) discussed the various aspects of Ambedkar's ideology such as his emphasis on education, freedom, human rights, social justice, as an architect of Indian Constitution etc. and explained their depth and meaning which were inherent in Ambedkar's philosophy of life.

There are some scholarly attempts to understand the effort of Ambedkar towards Constitution making and thus institutionalization of his ideas on empowerment and emancipation of depressed classes including women. Rao (1997) argued that the constitution of India is based on the principles of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity and the conscience of the constitution which may be seen in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles are influenced by the intellect, ideas and vision of Ambedkar, as chairman drafting committee and commented that the Constitution of India reflect Ambedkarism, which is an instrument for bringing about social justice through constitutional remedies. Pal (2000) mentioned that Ambedkar would be remembered for all time to come as the architect of the Indian Constitution, especially for the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles Chapters which aim at eradicating "all injustice and tyranny" and ushering in social democracy and social equality. Sharma (1997) analysed and evaluated Ambedkar's contribution to the Constitutional development in India in pre-independence era with special reference to Government of India Acts, of 1909, 1919 and 1935 and describing the process of his participation and impact on major constitutional events of that period have also been discussed. Austin (2006) analyzed as how past and present, aims and events, ideals and personalities influenced the framing of the Constitution of India. Chanchreek (1991) quoted the minutes of the Drafting Committee from the Constituent Assembly Debates which Ambedkar presided over to scrutinize the draft of the text of the Constitution of India. Nigam (2004) looks at the Constituent Assembly as an event in the hope of understanding how different currents and polyphonic voices came together in the forming of the conjuncture within which the assembly took shape as demanded by the imperatives of a common territory, tradition and history.

Jatava in his series of publications discussed varied thoughts of Ambedkar like democracy, socialism, education, morality, religion, secularism, nationalism, humanism in the light of Ambedkar's writings and speeches. He (2001B) also analyzed the political philosophy, Sociological thoughts of Ambedkar in terms of human situation and its problems and his fight for the cause of depressed classes. He (1998A) presented the economic, political and constitutional issues which are reflected in Ambedkar's ideology and examined Ambedkar's analysis and approach towards human problems. He also provided a comparative examination of some of the philosophies and religion to which Ambedkar applied the test of justice and utility for evaluating their relevance (1998B). The author (1999B) also attempted to present Ambedkar's vision of humanism in various forms such as a social reformer, scholar, politician, constitutionalist, economist and the emancipator of oppressed and dealt with Ambedkar's philosophy of education, organization and agitation (2003A) and the movement that moved the oppressed people, different dreams of Ambedkar for the benefit of the people as a whole (2003B). Jatava (1997) has made an intelligent use of comparative methods in evolving the main trends of Ambedkar's social, ethical, political and religious and thoughts and concluded that Ambedkar's views represent a distinct type of social and democratic humanism.

In his inaugural speech on "Dr Ambedkar and Women Empowerment" at Lucknow on 14th April 2002, Sri Vishnu Kant Shastri, the then Governor of UP pointed out that 'the fact that despite the pioneering work undertaken by Dr Ambedkar for the emancipation of the downtrodden, the lot of countless Indians remained pitiful.' "The very fact that equality for women was thought of as late as 2002," Sri Shastri underlined, "threw enough light on the social mindset on the issue of women's empowerment." In his paper presented in 16th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh, Sri Baburao Mudbi concluded that Ambedkar as a product of his time responded powerfully to the needs of the downtrodden people of India. The contemporary Indian society provided for his revolutionary thoughts a resourceful setting eliciting his strong reactions to age old religious and social practices. The status of women like that of the depressed classes was no better. The discrimination in both the cases had taken the shapes of religious and social sanctions rendering the changes impossible.

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Gopal (2008) mentioned that Ambedkar has been one of these thinkers who have been continuously denied this elevation from sociological identity to abstract ideas. The scholars seem to have reduced him to the level of an identity. He has been ghettoized within the narrow boundaries of sociological origin. It is the context of this casting of Ambedkar into narrow intellectual contours; it is necessary to discuss the following issues. This inquiry becomes important for another reason that this ghettoization of Ambedkar has serious implication for cultural justice, which deals with the question of due recognition and appreciation of a thinker.

Chentharassery (2000) discusses the various original works of Ambedkar on Indian history where he (Ambedkar) assessed the Indian social system that did not foster the spirit of critical inquiry. Ahir (2007), Rodrigues (2002), Jatava (2003C) provided a ready reference book to all the Writings and speeches of Ambedkar. These compilations, the writings and speeches of Ambedkar as compiled by Government of Maharashtra in several volumes and his addresses to the women's conferences on many occasions gave powerful propositions for the rectification of status of women as a whole and progressive viewpoint of Ambedkar regarding changing scenario of the status of women.

### **1.6 Significance of the present study**

From the above review of literatures and on line resources, it can be observed that although many authors and researchers have deliberated on the social and political ideas of Ambedkar, his efforts towards Constitution making process or advocating Hindu Code Bill, social scientists have so far not explored in detail the contributions of Ambedkar on gender issues especially in the context of his social and political ideas. Not enough literature is available as how the social and political ideas of Ambedkar converge on the issue of women's emancipation and empowerment.

This study is a thematic one, taking two key yet interrelated concepts of Women Emancipation and Empowerment with a specific reference to Ambedkar's own construction of both theory and practice. As most of the studies on Ambedkar are

biographical in nature, their coverage is of a holistic nature and take into account all the forces and factors that shaped his ideas in a general way. Such studies are, in that respect, chronological narratives of events and developments. The proposed study is specific, pointed and uni-directed which aims at understanding both the theory and practice of the universal values of women emancipation and empowerment. In that respect, the proposed study, being analytical in nature, seeks to go beyond any kind of historical account and unearth some of the keys that helped Ambedkar's own ideas about universal values. To that extent the proposed study seeks to touch upon Ambedkar's own value preferences and attitudinal inclinations towards the transformation of the society.

Therefore, the study attempts to bridge the gap by concentrating upon the vision and philosophy of Ambedkar on empowerment of women in the realm of his social and political ideas.

### **1.7 Research Methodology**

The current study attempts to understand the basics of Dr Ambedkar's philosophy, vision and effort towards 'Women emancipation and empowerment' in his contemporary Indian society and polity in the realm of his Social and Political Ideas.

Literature survey also pointed out formation of ideas of an individual has a bearing on the upbringing, familial life and the process of education of the individual. Thus, a chapter is included in the beginning to capture the timeline and events in the life of Ambedkar and their impact on the ideas and vision on him.

The study is exploratory in nature with emphasis given on primary and secondary sources. A critical analysis has been made of his writings and speeches, biographical writings on him and scholarly articles related to his social and political ideas both in print and soft copy. Essentially, the methodology as applied is historical- analytical in nature. As per the requirement of exploratory research design, exploration of experience surveys and analysis of insight stimulating cases have been taken care of.

A detailed study of various provisions of the Constitution of India that acts as the legal backbone towards women empowerment is also carried out to analyze the ideas, vision and policy prescription of Ambedkar on women empowerment.

A chapter has been added to elaborate the effort of institutionalization of his ideas about women empowerment and emancipation through legal and constitutional reforms.

Finally, conclusion has been drawn after summarizing the deliberation on his Social and Political Ideas, Women Empowerment and Emancipation and efforts towards institutionalization of these ideas by rational application of insight and reason on those deliberations and efforts.

### **1.8 Plan of the Study**

The study has been organized in the following chapters:

Chapter I Introduction: The Problem- Conceptual framework.

Chapter II The life and time of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and the nature of their impact on the formation of his ideas

Chapter III Social and political ideas of Dr. B R Ambedkar

Chapter IV Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on Women Emancipation and Empowerment: Ideas, Vision and Policy Prescriptions.

Chapter V Women Emancipation and Empowerment: Efforts of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar towards their Institutionalization.

Chapter VI Research findings and concluding observations

## Notes and Reference

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