

Chapter-IV

DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR ON WOMEN EMANCIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT: IDEAS, VISION AND POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter a review has been done with regard to social and political ideas of Dr. B R Ambedkar. It is noted, during the discussion of his ideas, that he favoured analyzing the root causes of the social evils and he had strong convictions about the ideal nature of the Indian society. He also prescribed measures both at policy level and at social levels to eliminate the evils of the society.

In this chapter, attention has been drawn on the issue of 'Women Emancipation and Empowerment' and an analysis has been carried out in the context of 'Social and Political Ideas' of Ambedkar. The chapter concludes with a summary of discussion about his ideas, vision and policy prescription about 'Women Emancipation and Empowerment'.

4.2 Empowerment and Emancipation: Conceptual Foundations

Empowerment can be defined as a person's capacity to make effective choices and to transform choices into desired actions and outcomes. The extent to which a person is empowered is influenced by the capacity of the person to make a choice and the degree of opportunities that exist in the context of making choice. Thus, empowerment can be measured by indicators that indicate asset endowments like psychological, informational, organizational, material, social, financial or human; and the degree of opportunity like the presence and operation of formal and informal institutions, including the laws, regulatory frameworks, and norms governing behaviour¹.

Empowerment can also be referred to a process by which those who have been denied power gain power, in particular the ability to make strategic life choices. For women, these could be the capacity to choose a marriage partner, a livelihood, or whether or not to have children. For this power to come about, three interrelated dimensions are needed: access to and control of resources; agency (the ability to use these resources to bring about new opportunities) and achievements (the attainment of new social outcomes). Empowerment, therefore, is both a process and an end result. This understanding differs greatly from instrumentalist interpretations which view empowerment purely in terms of measurable outcomes. Instrumentalist interpretations are problematic because they convey the belief that social change can be predicted and prescribed in a cause and effect way and undermine the notion that women's empowerment should be about the ability of women to make self-determined choices².

The scope of empowerment can be broadened as a multi-dimensional process of civil, political, social, economic, and cultural participation and rights. Thus to analyze this process several key domains can be considered. The domains can be socio-demographic indicators, bodily integrity and health, literacy and educational attainment, economic participation and rights, political participation and rights, cultural participation and rights etc. These can then be used to assess women's participation (referring to an active social condition), rights (referring to a formal, legal condition) and capabilities (preconditions for the enjoyment of rights and enhancement of participation)³.

The empowerment of women requires the challenging of patriarchal power relations that result in women having less control over material assets and intellectual resources. Women participate in their own oppression so that they must first become aware of the ideology that legitimizes male domination. The empowerment process starts from within but access to new ideas and information will come from external agents. With new consciousness and the strength of solidarity, women can assert their right to control resources and to participate equally in decision making. Ultimately, women's empowerment must become a force that is an organized mass movement which challenges and transforms existing power relations in society⁴.

However, there exists no common understanding regarding the measurement of women's empowerment. There are debates over basic concepts, lack of disaggregated data for analysis, and limited information on household dynamics. Measurements and indicators have focused more on civil and political rights, what are known as 'first generation' human rights, than on 'second generation' economic, social and cultural rights⁵.

The need to 'empower' women responds to the growing recognition that women lack control over resources and the self-confidence and /or opportunity to participate in decision making processes. At the same time, the realization that women have an increasingly important role to play in social and economic development has become widely accepted. Unless women are 'empowered' to participate alongside men in the development process, development efforts will only have partial effect. Thus empowerment strategies should attempt 'empowerment' through mainstream programs rather than attempted separately⁶.

Empowerment is the ability of people to make strategic choices in areas that affect their lives. Two key factors in the process of empowerment are identified: control over resources (the conditions for empowerment) and agency (the ability to formulate choices)⁷. Thus, in order to say being empowered women must have equal capabilities such as education and health, and equal access to resources and opportunities such as land and employment. However they must also have the agency to use these capabilities and resources to make strategic choices⁸.

Education is often seen as the key to women's empowerment. Girls' access to schooling is often correlated to women's participation in the formal social, political and legal system. However, this assumes that the experience and knowledge attained in schooling automatically prepares girls to assess their worth and envisage new possibilities⁹.

Cambridge dictionary defines 'emancipated' as '*not limited socially or politically*'¹⁰, and thus the emancipation of women can be defined as their liberation from religious, legal, economic, and sexual oppression, their access to higher education, and their escape from narrow gender roles. In traditionally patriarchal societies any

improvement in the status of women has far-reaching consequences and produces fundamental political changes. Therefore it is always resisted by the established powers.¹¹

Emancipation is a term used to describe various efforts to obtain political rights or equality, often for a specifically disenfranchised group, or more generally in discussion of such matters. The word emancipation was in common use in political affairs of 18th and 19th century political discourse, as in Catholic or Jewish emancipation movements, while female suffrage was a major goal of women's emancipation movements.

Among others, Karl Marx (1818-1883) discussed political emancipation in his 1844 essay "On the Jewish Question", although often in addition to (or in contrast with) the term human emancipation. Marx's views of political emancipation in this work were summarized as entailing "equal status of individual citizens in relation to the state, equality before the law, regardless of religion, property, or other "private" characteristics of individual persons."

In a civil society, that is in modern social realm of individual self-interest, economic competition, etc. individuals are liberated from determination of their lives and identities by social position. Social mobility becomes possible; rags-to-riches through pursuit individual self-interest. Modern Individuals should be able to choose for themselves occupation, consumption, and lifestyle. These choices are understood to be "private" matters, separate from public or political life. In modern society the political identities of persons are no longer determined by fixed social positions as in feudal social hierarchy.

With *political emancipation* in a modern democratic republic, a person's property, religion, etc., are understood as "private" matters which do not determine their public lives as citizens. Rich and poor, so called upper and lower caste citizens all are to be treated as *equal as citizens*.

In modern society, social life and identity of persons are bifurcated: private life of individuals as lived in *civil society*; public life of citizens as lived in *state*. The political life of a citizen does not depend upon these characteristics of private life¹².

Human emancipation can lead toward freedom in fullest sense of social self-determination. It entails integration of productive lives of individuals with their communal lives as citizens -- realization of species being. Karl Marx in his 1844 essay "On the Jewish Question" commented that "the actual individual man must take the abstract citizen back into himself and, as an individual man in his empirical life, in his individual work and individual relationships become a species-being; man must recognize his own forces as social forces, organize them, and thus no longer separate social forces from himself in the form of political forces, only when this has been achieved will human emancipation be completed" (p. 64).

The earliest drive towards emancipating women was advocated first by Plato ((428/427 BC-347/8 BC) in his work *Republic* that is why he was regarded as the first feminist in the history of political thought. He is of the view that men and women differ in degree and not in kind, that is why he condemned seclusion of women to the households. According to him, women like men have the three elements of reasons, courage and appetite, though in different degree, women can also become rulers and soldiers by receiving the right type of education¹³¹⁴.

The liberal feminism of the 18th century is known as the age of reason or enlightenment where the first serious and systematic work for the cause of women was done. Mary Wollstone Craft (1759-1797) in her work "A vindication of the rights of women" published in 1792 declared that women are first and foremost human beings and not sexual beings, women are rational creatures, and they are capable of governing themselves by reasons¹⁵. She argued for granting full rights to women, advocating the recognition of an essentially genderless essence.

4.3 Status of Women in Ambedkar's era: Need for Women Empowerment

As has been discussed in the preceding chapter, during Ambedkar's era, on the social plane Indian society was based on the principle of graded inequality which meant elevation for some and degradation for others. Existence of social and legal inequalities gave rise to social reform movements and the Indian society began to demonstrate signs of changes since early 19th century¹⁶. The common thread that ran

across the presence of these diverse social reform movements was primarily re-examination of social customs and institutions from a rational perspective. The British followed a policy of non-interference in customary practices and thus realization of women's right in private sphere remained a difficult task. Legal enactments during British Raj were limited to those customs that were grossly unacceptable from the view-points of western rationality¹⁷.

The position of women in their private spheres, that is the core issues with respect to gender relations within family and society, generated voices of protest against customary practices like 'Sati', "Widow remarriages", "Female education" etc. The use of English language as a medium of instruction significantly affected the education system. The newly emerging middle class made use of English language as a gateway to the ideology of liberalism which enshrined the values of liberty, equality, respect for individual, secularism etc¹⁸.

The educational development during the late 18th century and early 19th century led to a number of socio-religious movements in 19th century. The social reform movement has been regarded as a key to the intellectual process that went into the making of modern India. The issues which attracted the attention of the 19th century social reformers were sati, the ill treatment of widows, the ban on widow marriage, polygamy, child marriage, denial of property rights and education to women¹⁹. The social reformers felt that these social evils should be eradicated by raising consciousness and making people sensitive to the injustice perpetrated on women. The interventions in both public and private spheres were sought through enacting progressive legislations and by granting women access to education.

The Brahma Samaj, founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1825 emphasized the need to remove deep-rooted gender inequality in religious traditions. The movement led by Brahma Samaj was to abolish gender inequalities and to provide women's rights well inside private sphere of society. The Samaj fought for abolition of child marriages, removal of polygamy and promoting education for women. The Prarthana Samaj, established in 1867 by M G Ranada, K T Telang and Bhandarkar championed the cause of women.

The Arya Samaj, established in 1875 by Dayanand Saraswati, attempted reforms of the caste system and status of women. The ideal of reviving Vedic social consciousness was meant to remove many gender inequalities that developed post-Vedic era. This approach was also propelled by Annie Besant, Swami Vivekananda who believed that ideal society for women can be created by reviving old Vedic society.

The 19th century India marked the beginning of awareness of suffering of women due to oppressive social customs. During this period, a favourable climate was created to improve the status of women in both public and private spheres through legal reforms.

The onset of 20th century saw women performing an expanded role in the society. The necessities of nationalist struggle brought women into the public sphere. The process of involvement of women was initiated during the partition of Bengal in 1905²⁰. The position and attitude towards women were changed substantially as a fall out of women participation in Nationalist Movement during Gandhian era. Indian women took active part in non-cooperation movement (1921), civil disobedience movement (1930) through picketing, boycotting of foreign goods, non-violence protest etc²¹. Women also contributed in the Nationalist movement by editing and distributing banned publications, coordinating mass agitations, carrying out constructive works among depressed class of people etc²². This process not only drew women out of their private spheres but also it helped them to organize and fight for their own cause rather than depend upon 'benevolent' men in society to promote their cause²³.

The period between 1903 and 1926 saw several women organizations surfacing in different parts of the country and an effective all India platform was created with the formation of Women's Indian Association in 1917 and All India Women's Conference in 1926²⁴.

4.4 Women Emancipation and Empowerment: Ambedkar's Ideas and Vision

In the preceding chapter, the social and political ideas of Ambedkar was analysed in detail. It was discussed that Ambedkar examined in great detail the norms, values and

the state of 'Hindu Social Order' affecting the Hindu society. He 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 existent contemporary society, the historic reasons for decline in the status of women and finally he recommended social and political measures for their emancipation and empowerment in the Indian society.

As a scholar, Ambedkar wanted to go to the root of the problems of women. He knew that without understanding the root cause of the 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 ordained graded socio, religious, economic and cultural status to the chaturvarnas (four classes) where women was equated with the shudra category. He realised the irrationality, inhumanity and hollowness of Manusmriti (200 BC), where women had no power and they were not equal partners in life with men²⁵.

Ambedkar explained that the inferior position and the subhuman treatment given to women is deeply embedded in the very nature of Hindu social order which does not respect the value of the equality among the individuals and does not recognise the worth of human dignity as according to the Hindu social order even though men are the children of Prajapati, the creator of the universe still they are created from different parts of the body of Prajapati. Thereby refusing to recognise that men no matter how profoundly they differ as individuals in capacity and character they are equally entitled as human beings²⁶.

As against the principle of equality and fraternity the Hindu social order is based on the three different principles of which Ambedkar finds the first principle of graded inequality as most significant as there is no sphere of life which is not regulated by the principle of graded inequality, women as part of their sex must suffer from this principle and remain as victims of such inequality²⁷. Thus, the inferior position as granted to women and the sub-human treatment given to them, can be explained,

according to Ambedkar, in terms of very nature of social order which does not respect the value of equality among individuals and which does not recognise the worth of human dignity²⁸.

The social order, as fallout of Manusmiriti, aimed at establishing dominance of Brahmans through a system of graded inequality. While this system of graded inequality gave rise differences in class, Ambedkar was of the firm opinion that Manu was also responsible for the fall of Hindu women during post-Vedic era. Criticizing Manu he said "*A women in the eyes of Manu was a thing of no value..... All the responsibility for the decline and fall of women in India must be fastened upon Manu*"²⁹.

In his book '*The Rise and fall of Hindu Women*' (1988),³⁰ he quoted verses of Manusmiriti to explain the social understanding of the position of women such as women should be looked upon as objects for seducing men (II.213) because they were able to lead astray in this world not only a fool but even a learned man, and were capable of making man a slave of desire and anger (II.214). Thus it would be necessary for men to exert themselves to guard women (IX.16). He also pointed that Manusmiriti painted a picture of women as creatures known for their disposition-love for ornaments, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice and bad conduct (IX.17), which the Lord of creature laid in them at the creation to be such (IX.16). Thus, Manusmiriti pointed out that day and night they must be kept in dependence by the males of their family and if they attach themselves to sexual enjoyments they must be kept under ones control (IX.2). They needed to be controlled vigilantly by their guardians. Manusmiriti did not offer the right to divorce to women (IX.45). A wife did not enjoy right over property, women were reduced to the level of a slave in the matter of property by Manu (IX.416). The husband had the right to beat his wife (VIII.299). She had no right in selecting a spouse of her own choice and she had to worship her husband faithfully (V.154).

Manu made a new rule that killing a woman was only an upapataka that is only a minor offence. A woman had no right to knowledge, the study of Vedas was forbidden to her. She should not perform the daily sacrifices prescribed by the Vedas

or else she will go to hell. He also prohibited inter-marriage, women from being nuns to strengthen the roots of Brahmanism.³¹

Thus, Ambedkar argued that the social principles put forward by Manu resulted in degrading the status of women in Hindu society. Ambedkar vehemently criticised the way Manu positioned the status of women. He commented:

“Can anybody doubt that it was Manu who was responsible for the degradation of women in India? Most people are perhaps aware of this. But they do not seem to know two facts. The first thing they do not know: what is peculiar to Manu? There is nothing new and startling in the laws of Manu about women. These are the views of Brahmins ever since Brahminism was born in India. Before Manu they existed only as a matter of social theory. What Manu did was to convert what was a social theory into the laws of the state. The second thing they do not know is the reason which led Manu to impose these disabilities upon women. Shudras and women were the two chief sections of the Aryan society which were flocking to join the religion of the Buddha and thereby undermining the foundation of Brahmin religion. Manu wanted to stem the tide of women flowing in the direction of Buddhism.”³²

In his written reply to an article in the Eve's weekly where the writer had charged Buddha (563 BC- 483 BC) responsible for the downfall of women in India, Ambedkar commented that Buddha did not shun women and express any disdain for them. Before the advent of Buddha, the right to acquire knowledge was denied to women which was supposed to be the birth right of all human beings. Women were denied the right to realize her spiritual potentiality. Buddha by admitting woman to the life of parivrajaka (an ascetic) removed both these wrongs in one stroke. He gave them the right to acquire knowledge as well as to realize their spiritual potentialities along with men. This revolutionary effort of his brought in India liberation of women which allowed them liberty and dignity. Ambedkar further criticized Manu who was the greatest opponent of Buddhism who put women under restraint. Therefore it was Manu not Buddha he concluded who was responsible for the decline and fall of women in India³³. He again observed:

“Manu was the greatest opponent of the Buddhist religion. This is the secret of the many inequities which he heaped upon women. For he knew that if the home is to

be protected against the invasion of Buddhism, it is the women who must be protected against the invasion of Buddhism, it is the women who must be put under restraint. And he did it. All the responsibility for the decline and the fall of women in India must be fastened to Manu."³⁴

Thus, Ambedkar's frame of mind put Buddha above Manu in placing women in the social hierarchy in a constructed hierarchy which could provide sufficient protection to women in their social position. He was of the firm opinion that the reasons for inferior position and the subhuman treatment given to women were deeply embedded in the very nature of prevailing social order which did not respect the value of the equality among the individuals and did not recognise the worth of human dignity.³⁵

Being a liberal in his approach, he believed that individual is the ultimate goal of the society and thus growth of the individual is the most important pre-requisite of a free social order that can ensure rights for women. He, therefore, took the risk of challenging the established traditions of Hindu society because he had firm conviction that the society could not be changed unless it was challenged. However, the underlying rationale of changing prevailing society was the betterment of down-trodden sections including women.

As a student "Castes in India"³⁶ was the first attempt of Ambedkar to understand and analyse the nature of Indian society and its systematization through the caste structure from the Anthropological point of view. He points out in his paper that the caste system was responsible for women's subordination and exploitation. In order to maintain caste Ambedkar points out that it is essential to prevent marriage from outside the group which shows that a group desirous of making itself into a caste must have the maintenance of numerical equality between marriageable units of the two sexes as the ultimate goal as without it endogamy can no longer be kept intact. The death of one of the partners creates a surplus man or a woman. "Thus both the surplus man and woman constitute a menace to the caste if not taken care of. For not finding suitable partners inside their prescribed circle very likely they will transgress the boundary, marry outside and import offsprings that is foreign to the caste."³⁷

Ambedkar finds out the four means by which the numerical disparity between the two sexes is conveniently maintained are:

“Burning the widow with her deceased husband, compulsory widowhood- a milder form of burning, imposing celibacy on the widower, and wedding him to a girl not yet marriageable.”..... burning the widow and imposing celibacy on the widower are of doubtful service to the group in its endeavour to preserve its endogamy, all of them operate as means. But means, as forces when liberated or set in motion create an end.....They create and perpetuate endogamy, while caste and endogamy, according to our analysis of the various definitions of caste, are one and the same thing. Thus the existence of these means is identical with caste and caste involves these means.”³⁸

Thus while going into the deep analysis of the mechanism of caste Ambedkar tried to find out the root cause of the sati pratha, early marriage of girls and the prohibition of widow remarriage in India. He attributed the downfall of women due to the caste system.³⁹

Ambedkar points out that the Hindu society presents the above stated three singular uxorial customs that were ‘primarily intended to solve the problem of the surplus man and woman in a caste to maintain its endogamy. Strict endogamy could not be preserved without these customs, while caste without endogamy is a fake.’ but he was unable to find out the scientific explanation of the causes of the origin of caste. Even though he could find out plenty of philosophy to tell why these customs were honoured.⁴⁰

However, his concern was not limited to Hindu women only. He observed that even the Muslim women were also not getting their due which was provided to them under the Islamic Shariah as they were influenced by the Indian environment. He also criticized the denial of rights to Muslim women for divorce⁴¹. He lamented the sad plight of the Indian Muslim women and said:

“No Muslim girl has the courage to repudiate her marriage, although it may be open to her on the ground that she was a child and that it was brought about by persons other than her parents. No Muslim wife will think it proper to have a clause entered into her marriage, contract reserving her right to divorce. In that even her

fate is, 'once married always married.' She cannot escape the marriage –tie however irksome it may be. While she cannot repudiate her marriage, the husband can always do it without having to show any cause “ 42.

Ambedkar even opposed the Indian Muslim purdah system which he believed was contrary to the real purdah system of Islam. He was of the opinion that as a consequence of the purdah system a kind of segregation is brought about in the Muslim women which has deteriorating effect upon the physical constitution of the Muslim women thereby depriving her of a healthy social life. The isolation of males and females is sure to produce bad effects on the morals of men⁴³. He believed that a system, if based on worth, can not justify the permanent denial of education and religious right to women⁴⁴.

In a way, what appears from Ambedkar's own perception of the Indian social order, Hindu or Muslim was one of a system where women were denied in various ways, their dues in the society. He was frantically in search of a solution to their evil systems and sought to usher a society based on equality, justice and fraternity.

Ambedkar realised that there was no other way to reform the society except challenging the foundation, Manusmiriti and the principle of graded inequality, the society was built upon. He also argued that all problems related to women were manifestation of the system of caste and thus nothing short of a revolutionary step aimed at annihilation of caste could only prove beneficial for women. Here, we find the difference in philosophical foundations of Ambedkar with other contemporary social reformers. Instead of bringing superficial changes and addressing secondary issues like child marriage, sati system, he wanted to attack and destroy the backbone of the menace, the caste system. He wanted to attack the caste and thus bring about change not only for downtrodden but also for women⁴⁵.

He classified social reforms into various categories. Of which he felt that religious reforms are difficult to bring forth. He stated:

“Social reforms fall into different species. There is a species of reform, which does not relate to the religious notion of people but is purely secular in character. There

is also a species of reform, which relates to the religious notions of people. Of such a species of reform, there are two varieties. In one, the reform accords with the principles of the religion and merely invites people, who have departed from it, to revert to them and to follow them. The second is a reform which not only touches the religious principles but is diametrically opposed to those principles and invites people to depart from and to discard their authority and to act contrary to those principles."⁴⁶

Ambedkar was conscious of the social, economic and political inequalities among men and women in Indian society. Though, he attempted to find the root cause of decline in the status of women in social order, his idea of women empowerment was not confined to social arena.

Broadly viewed, Women Empowerment can be taken as a tool for social, economic and political equality between men and women and developing capability of women by assigning rights that were not available earlier. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, Ambedkar believed that individual is the ultimate goal of the society and growth of every individual is the most important pre-requisite of a free social order. That was the motivation behind his taking the risk of challenging the established traditions of Hindu Society. Having the wider purpose of changing society for the betterment of the down-trodden society including women, Ambedkar found no other way except changing the very mechanism of the social order. He wanted to attack caste and thus bring about change not only for low caste people but also for women⁴⁷.

The contents of Ambedkar's concept of social justice include unity and equality of all human beings, equal worth and respect for men and women. His social idea was to remove man made inequalities of all shape through law, morality and public conscience⁴⁸. A Critical examination of his writings reveal that he wanted to establish an '*ideal society*'⁴⁹, a '*casteless society*'⁵⁰ or a society based on the '*principle of justice*'⁵¹. Ambedkar tried to find out the evils of the existing social order and then offered his own alternative model of an '*ideal society*' or a '*just society*' which could bring complete change in society⁵². This ideal society would be based on '*liberty, equality and fraternity*'⁵³.

He was convinced that there was not genuine possibility to change Hindu Society from within. He felt it would be necessary to bring about changes through the help of law. Thus, he wanted the involvement of state for social welfare and upliftment of women in society⁵⁴. Through, his submission before Simon Commission (1928), he wanted that Government be made responsible to ensure the spread of the education among the masses without any discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, sex and creed⁵⁵.

The greater emphasis on law and legal measures for bringing about a just social order was a prominent feature of Ambedkar's social and political idea.

However, in accordance to his framework for social and political thought, the vision of Ambedkar in regard to women's emancipation and empowerment is not limited to provision of adequate legal safeguards, he felt that though law is one of the most effective measures of bringing social change, there are constraints in applying the same. He was concerned about educating people towards favouring the desired changes in the society that would empower women and emancipate them. Law according to Ambedkar, unless backed by social morality would not be sufficient to change the plight of women. He argued that rights are not protected by laws but by social and moral conscience of society. The people who were mentally enslaved for generations together by deep rooted social values would not accept radical changes in laws that challenge the very nature of social and customary values⁵⁶. Thus, Ambedkar's vision of equality of women through legal reforms was intertwined with raising social conscience through social re-engineering and through education.

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 order⁵⁷. This can be considered as the cornerstone of his ideas of women emancipation and empowering them for better future. Here, it can be noticed that he prescribed the same measures for upliftment of women what he recommended for upliftment of untouchables.

However, his ideas about women empowerment were not restricted to social and political arena. He put due emphasis on economic rationale also.

He postulated two superstructures upon the structure of society namely the economy and the polity but he gave more weight to the economy than to the polity. This is why eventhough he had obvious differences with Marxism he found himself so close to Marxism. He conceded the need to modify the liberal ideals to suit the developmental stage of a society⁵⁸. 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 women⁵⁹.

Ambedkar laid stress on the concept of capacity building of women as the first step towards women empowerment. 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. He wanted women to be bold and fearless like men. He argued that history proved that Indian women could fight on the warfront, if the situation demands so⁶⁰. To him, in this process of empowerment, the state should have a direct role.

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 the grass-root level⁶¹. He involved state for this purpose through Hindu Code Bill which sought to confer on women the right to property and adoption. These are enabling rights to women, not granted previously in the domain of economy, which was to be conferred through legal means. Although, he attempted, through this bill to put men and women on an equal level in all legal matters, he remarked that "this is in no sense a revolutionary measure; this is not even a radical measure"⁶². In an attempt to formalise and institutionalise his efforts, such a legislative move was taken by him. It is equally interesting to note that Ambedkar while admitting the limitations of the step accepted this to be the basic foundation of empowerment of women.

Ambedkar's idea on women empowerment was not confined to political or economic domain. He not only wanted to ensure social equality between man and man, but also equal status and dignity between man and woman. He also believed in equal status of husband and wife. He advised that women should be on friendly terms with their husbands. He did not agree that there should be a master slave relation between the husband and the wife⁶³. In this context, he advocated active participation of women in political activities. He involved women in all his social struggles.

His arguments on maternity benefit bill, abortion and on the birth control were quite relevant to recognize the dignity of women. He supported the maternity bill and in its support he said:

*"It is in the interest of the nation that the mother ought to get a certain amount of rest during the pre-natal period and also subsequently, and the principle of the bill is based entirely on that principle.....That being so Sir, I am bound to admit that the burden of this ought to be largely borne by the government, I am prepared to admit this fact because the conservation of the people's welfare is the primary concern of the government and in every country, therefore, where maternity benefit has been introduced that you will find that the government has been subjected to a certain amount of charge with regard to maternity benefit."*⁶⁴

He was also of the firm opinion that,

*"the employer should not be free from the liability, it is absolutely reasonable that to certain extent at least the employer will be liable for the kind of benefit when he gets a special benefit by employing women instead of men"*⁶⁵.

Ambedkar believed that this bill should not be confined to the Bombay Presidency instead it should extend to the whole of India.

On the issue of abortion he opined that attempts at abortion resorted to for the prevention of unwanted progeny, exacted a heavy toll of female lives. Therefore abortion was dangerous for the life of women.⁶⁶

Thus, it implies that the vision of Ambedkar in regard to women's emancipation and empowerment is not limited to provision of adequate legal safeguards, he felt that though law is one of the most effective measures of bringing social change, there are constraints in applying the same. He was concerned about educating people towards favouring the desired changes in the society that would empower women and emancipate them. Law according to Ambedkar, unless backed by social morality would not be sufficient to change the plight of women. The people who were mentally enslaved for generations together by deep rooted social values would not accept radical changes in laws that challenge the very nature of social and customary values. His vision of equality 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.

Thus conceived, the emancipation of women would mean their liberation from religious, legal, economic oppression and their escape from narrow gender roles. The principle of equality and positive discriminations are key towards attaining women emancipation. Ambedkar posited his idea of equality for women based on the premises that the society should inculcate a sense of moral equality which would deny people possessing superior physical, financial strengths etc. to oppress people who are inferior in these respects. While defining the reasons for inequality, he admitted that there are inherent causes for inequality among people and inequality can never be eliminated on these grounds. However, he believed that no body should be denied equal rights on virtue of his/her possession by birth. The society should not create barriers to people as such who can achieve on their own merit and will. Being born into a family of untouchables and underprivileged, he felt bitterly when he was barred from advancement even though he possessed talent and capabilities to achieve his goals in his life. He found the roots of inequality in the social order itself and thus he felt that mere declaration of equality would not suffice the purpose. He preferred *positive discrimination* in his definition of equality in respect to duties and responsibilities of state.

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process of social, moral and civil rights.

Emancipation aims at throwing off the narrow roles defined by symbols and notions. The process of empowerment, Ambedkar believed, is not provisioning of mere legal rights through reforms but a multi-dimensional process involving social, moral and civil rights. He stated that:

*"...the prevalent view is that once rights are enacted in a law then they are safeguarded. This again is an unwarranted assumption. As experience proves, rights are protected not by law but by the social and moral conscience of society. If social conscience is such that it is prepared to recognize the rights which law chooses to enact rights will be safe and secure. But if the fundamental rights are opposed by the community, no Law, no Parliament, no judiciary can guarantee them in the real sense of the word."*⁶⁷

On 20th July 1942, at a conference of equality brigade, he guided the volunteers saying that *"Power dominated by moral values is our ideal. I expect your involvement in controlling the atrocities on Dalits and Women"*⁶⁸.

Thus, in order to complete the process the empowerment, changing the mental models or notions of people, that constitute the society, is necessary. He felt that:

*"All reform consists in a change in the notions, sentiment and mental attitudes of the people towards men and things. It is common experience that certain names become associated with certain notions and sentiments, which determine a person's attitude towards men and things."*⁶⁹

Ambedkar believed that people are pre-occupied with notions and ideas that are attached to symbols and names. Following this idea, Ambedkar wanted to initiate the process of empowerment of women by changing icons or symbols of women of Kamathipura. While addressing a meeting at Damodar Thakersey Hall, Bombay on 16th June 1936, he made a fervent appeal to depressed women, most of whom had come from Kamathipura. He said:

".. I insist that if you want to be with the rest of us you must give up your disgraceful life." He continued, " There are only two ways open to you: either you

remain where you are and continue to be despised and shunned, or you give up your disgraceful profession and come with us." He also advised them that they should not continue to live in conditions which inevitably drag them into prostitution⁷⁰.

The women of Kamathipura were symbolized as being into the profession of prostitution and this pre-occupied notion forced women to drag themselves into this profession. Ambedkar wanted to emancipate women of Kamathipura by challenging age old notions and by advising them to organize and stand against them.

When Ambedkar went back to Delhi after the All India Depressed Classes' conference at Nagpur (1942), he wrote to Sri J.T. Meshram thanking all the volunteers who made the conference a great success:

"I am proud of the conference as a special historic event. I was very happy with the progress of the equality brigade, and more with the women who participated in the conference. I was thrilled to see their proper dresses, their discipline, their cleanliness and their confidence. Gods in heaven must have been jealous of such a sight."⁷¹

He was impressed that the women (Dalits) were able to shed the icons or symbols (dirty, in tatters, helplessness etc.) and ready to participate equally in a political arena. No doubt he termed the conference as a 'Special Historic Event'.

Empowerment is a process of self-belief and assertion of Individuals. Emancipation also implies recognition of self and position of oneself in society. The scope of empowerment, as per Ambedkar is a process that starts from individuals and their relative position in groups. He noted that:

"The assertion by the individual of his own opinions and beliefs, his own independence and interest as over against group standards, group authority and group interests, is the beginning of all reform. But whether the reform will continue depends upon what scope the group affords for such individual assertion. If the group is tolerant and fair-minded in dealing with such individuals they will continue to assert and in the end succeed in converting their

fellows. On the other hand if the group is intolerant and does not bother about the means it adopts to stifle such individuals they will perish and the reform will die out."⁷²

Although not said strictly in respect to women, these lines are also strong evidences of Ambedkar's ideas about human emancipation. He believed in assertion by the individual of his own opinions and beliefs, own independence and interest over group standard and norms. Human emancipation, as already been stated should lead towards freedom in fullest sense of social self-determination. Human emancipation can be said to be completed when an individual recognizes own forces as social forces.

Ambedkar never missed an opportunity of expressing his mind in front of a women audience. He was an ardent believer that active participations in public arena brings self-confidence which was a prime necessity for human emancipation. Ambedkar as a representative of the untouchable class was to attend the second session of Round Table Conference. He was to leave for London on 15th August 1931. On the eve of this occasion a farewell function was organized at Sir. Cawasji Jahangir Hall on 14th August 1931. P G Solanki was on the chair. Ambedkar addressed two separate meetings one of women at 8pm and one of men at 10pm at night (Janata, 17th August 1931).

He made a very stirring speech before the Depressed Class Women. He said:

*"If you stand by your resolve to extirpate your slavery root and branch and undergo all trial and tribulations for it, the credit and success of my being able to discharge the onerous task will be yours."*⁷³

Immediately he addressed in the same hall another meeting which was attended by Depressed Class men. As regards to Round Table Conference, he said:

"In a conference of one hundred and twenty five members we are two; but rest assured that we will move heaven and earth for the sake of your welfare. At present Gandhi cannot do anything to promote your interests. We must stand on our own

*feet and fight as best we can for our rights. So carry on your agitation and organise your forces. Power and prestige will come to you through struggle”.*⁷⁴

Thus, one can get a glimpse of his ideas about human emancipation expressed in respect to women. He strongly advocated that women should recognise their worth as social forces, organize themselves so that they could participate in social and political agitations.

Empowerment strengthens women’s capacity to make effective choices and transform choices into desired actions and outcomes. The concept of women’s empowerment, as per Ambedkar, is to build capacity in them so that they can make effective choices in areas that affect their lives. He applied this concept while arguing in favour of birth-control. He wanted certain measures to be introduced for birth control as an effective process towards women empowerment. Women empowerment as an outcome of being able to make effective choices (to bear a child or not in this case) and to bring forth the choice into desired outcome can be seen in his approach.

He moved a non-official resolution in the Bombay Legislative Assembly on 10th November, 1938 where he remarked:

*“.....many women become invalid for life and some even loose their lives by the birth of children in their diseased condition or in too rapid succession. Birth control is the only sovereign specific remedy that can do away with all these calamities, wherever a women is disinclined to bear a child for any reason, what so ever, she must be in a position to prevent conception and bringing forth progeny which should be entirely dependent on the choice of women, society in no way will profit by the addition of unwanted progeny”*⁷⁵.

In his last sentence one can see the positive steps towards women empowerment in terms of a process by which those who have been denied power gain power, in particular the ability to make strategic life choices like whether or not to have children.

Participation in public sphere and developing self-confidence is a process of emancipation and empowerment of women. The processes adopted by Ambedkar to emancipate and empower women were primarily founded upon two premises: educate women and encourage them to participate in public events, this would subsequently create sense of self-respect in them and to reform the social order of Indian society such that the root causes of degradation and oppression of women were taken care of. The above is also supported by the understanding of Eleanor Zelliot⁷⁶.

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 every way of personal progress, fighting for every social, educational and financial equality, are the special facets of Ambedkar's self confident movement⁷⁷. Thus, in an effort to include women in their effort to achieve self-confidence, he insisted and succeeded in including women in his various civil movements and conferences.

At the Mahad Satyagraha of 1927, an historic effort to get water from a public pond after the Bombay Legislative Council had declared all public places open to untouchables, women not only participated in the procession from the conference site to the pond, they also participated in the deliberations of the subject committee meetings in passing resolutions about the claim for equal human rights. Participation of women in civil movements continued when they participated actively in five years long "Nasik Satyagraha" to enter the Kalaram temple (1930-1935)⁷⁸.

The women's conference, during the Scheduled Caste Federation meetings of 1942, is an important landmark in this course. The conference was presided over by Mrs. Sulochanabai Dongree of Amraoti (Nagpur, July 18 to July 20, 1942). In this conference, Ambedkar advised women to educate their children and remove from them any inferiority complex, not to have too many children; and let every girl who married claimed to be her husband's friend and equal and to refuse to be his slave. He also commented that their dress, their cleanliness and the confidence with which they behaved in the conference brought delight to his heart⁷⁹.

Addressing the first session, he said:

"the greatest progress that we have made is to be found among our women folk. Here you see in this conference these 20,000 to 25,000 women present. See their dress, observe their manners, and mark their speech. Can anyone say that they are untouchable women, the progress made by our women is most astonishing and encouraging factor of our movement and it is of the most gratifying feature"⁸⁰.

The conference was remarkable; it had record attendance of men and women. It served the purpose to strengthen the lives of women both in social and political matters. Addressing the women's conference Ambedkar said:

"I am very happy to have to have this occasion of addressing you. There cannot be an occasion of greater happiness to any one interested in the advancement of the depressed classes than to witness this gathering of women. That you would assemble in such vast number almost 20000 to 25000 strong would have been unthinkable 10 years ago. I am a great believer in Women's organization. I know what they can do to improve the condition of society if they are convinced. In the eradication of social evils they have rendered great services. I will testify to that from my own experience. Ever since I begin to work among the depressed classes, I made it a point to carry women along with men. That is why you will see that our conferences are always mixed conferences. I measure the progress of the community by the degree of progress which women have achieved, and when I see the assembly, I feel both convinced and happy that we have progressed. I shall tell you a few things which I think you should bear in mind. Learn to be clean; keep free from all vices. Give education to your children, instil ambition in them, inculcate on your minds that they are destined to be great. Remove from them all inferiority complexes. Don't be in a hurry to marry: marriage is a liability. You should not impose upon your children unless financially they are able to meet the liabilities arising from marriage. Those who will marry will bear in mind that to have too many children is a crime. The parental duty lies in giving each child a better start than its parent had. Above all, let each girl who marries stand upto her husband, claim to be her husband's friend and equal, and refuse

to be his slave. I am sure if you follow this advice you will bring honour and glory to yourself and depressed classes."⁸¹

Participation of women at his various conferences remained a distinguished feature of his effort towards women's empowerment. At the scheduled caste conference held at Kanpur on Jan 31, 1944, stressing the values of women's contribution Ambedkar observed that their movement could not succeed unless their women helped actively the work of intensification⁸². 5000 women attended the 3rd all India Scheduled Caste Federation which was held on 5th and 6th may 1945. On this occasion women conference under the chairmanship of Mrs. Meenabai Shivraj, Mumbai municipal workers federation was also organized. A gathering of 70,000 men and women loudly cheered at Nare Park, Bombay, on 17 Feb 1946 when Ambedkar rose to inaugurate the election campaign. More than 2000 dalit men and women participated in an agitation launched by scheduled caste federation at Lucknow, 24th and 25th April 1948, to establish political rights as well as equality of all human beings.

The expectation of Ambedkar that women in India would gather moral courage and strength of character suffered a blow when he felt that women were also responsible for not passing the Hindu Code Bill. While addressing a rally of Belgaon district branch of Schedule caste federation, on December 26, 1950, Ambedkar stated:

*"The lack of moral courage and strength of character of the women in India had come in the way of the bill (Hindu Code) that had been drafted by him. None of the prominent women leaders were really interested in the social progress of our women."*⁸³

In his address to a meeting on Scheduled Class Mahila Mandal in Bombay on June 23, 1953, Dr Ambedkar advised them to carry on the program of emancipation in spite of adverse criticism⁸⁴. He said that there was much criticism on his speech made on the "Buddha Jayanti" day and advised them not to be misled by the criticism.

4.5 Women Emancipation and Empowerment: Dr. Ambedkar's Policy Prescriptions

Ambedkar delved into the historicity of the problem in order to analyze the inferior status assigned to women in the Indian society. He discussed the dogma of the infallibility of the Vedas. He appealed that this dogma must be destroyed from root and branch if India is to progress as the Vedas have made the Brahmins the Lord of the earth. He further said that for this purpose he was not afraid of the consequences and would be happy if he succeeded in stirring up the masses.⁸⁵ In his paper, "Castes in India"⁸⁶ he linked the subordination of women to caste exploitation as well as upholding the purity of caste at the cost of women.

An analysis of his ideas reveal that Ambedkar held '*equality- social, economic and political*' as the basic or fundamental norm for bringing about empowerment of women. His justification of *legal reforms* and *social re-engineering* appeared to rest on the ground of bringing social, economic and political equality in the society which would lead to emancipation of women and empowering them⁸⁷.

Educationally backward, socially and economically dependent, women had lived through suppression, exploitation and ill-treatments at the hands of man. The prescription of Ambedkar- education, organization and agitation was well suited to women as it was to down-trodden. 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 similar, their symptoms being the same, their diagnosis and treatment could not be different⁸⁸. He advocated active participation of women in political arena. He involved women in all his social struggles. The impassioned love for the fallen women as a community and his effort to rescue them from the despised and disgraceful life continued till his demise.

On the psychological front Ambedkar sought to vitalise the social order in two ways: by creating a sense of equality among the women and by removing the sense of inferiority from the minds of women. He knew it very well that there should be two pronged attack on the vices of social equality of which the women were victim. In the first instance a line of demarcation is to be drawn between the sphere of men and

women and secondly each should be given equal sphere for work. In other words, no segment of the society would be allowed to interfere with the freedom of the other. He considered it to be the greatest safeguard of women liberty in a general way.

The processes envisaged by Ambedkar towards women's emancipation and empowerment can be divided into two major categories. First, through his associations and organizations he encouraged women to become educated, to be active in public life and especially to gain that all important quality of self-respect. Self-respect, education and activities in public sphere would help women to their way towards demanding rights and freedom by women.⁸⁹

Secondly, in the broader context of empowerment, he wanted to *legitimise a paradigm shift in the social order*, which he argued to be the root cause for the decline in status of women in India.

He therefore took the help of law to resolve the gender issues. He wanted the involvement of state for the social welfare and upliftment of women in society. His emphasis on law and legal measures for bringing about a just social order was his priority. In his opinion the difference between ancient society and modern society is that in the former case law making was not the function of people it was made by God or by the Law-giver. The function of the society was just to obey it. To him "*the true function of law consists in repairing the faults of the society.*"⁹⁰

Ambedkar was sworn in as a nominated Member of the Bombay Legislative Council on 18th February 1927. He was renominated in 1932. In 1937; he was returned to the Bombay Legislative Assembly in the General Elections. The Assembly was prorogued in 1939 when the Second World War broke out. During these twelve years whenever he got the opportunity he tried to transform his ideas and vision on women empowerment. Ambedkar's speech on the Maternity Benefit Bill for women employees is a vivid example of his vision of law acting as a weapon for women empowerment.

Supporting the Bill he said:

“...the bill is not altogether wrong if it seeks to impose the liability under the present circumstances on the employer”. His faith in the legislature is reflected when he says that “the benefits contemplated by this bill ought to be given by this Legislature to the poor women who toil in our factories in this Presidency.”⁹¹

His arguments on the measures for birth-control is another example that shows that he recommended the government to take the initiative to carry on an intensive propaganda in favour of birth control among the masses as well as to provide adequate facilities for the practice of birth-control. For this purpose his advice was to promote Vasectomy. Therefore in his opinion ‘the Government and municipalities must provide facilities in this respect in their hospitals’.⁹² In the Bombay Legislature he moved the birth control bill and told the Assembly that he recommended the government that it should make necessary arrangements to educate people. (10 November 1938). This reflects his firm belief in the positive role of the government in eradicating this evil.

He wanted involvement of state for social welfare and upliftment of women in society through, his submission before Simon Commission (1928); he wanted that Government be made responsible to ensure the spread of the education among the masses without any discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, sex and creed.

Thus, he was of the view that since Hindu society could not reform itself therefore law was needed to improve the status of women. But at the same time he was also aware that even though law is one of the most effective measures of bringing social change, there are constraints in applying the same. Law according to Ambedkar, unless backed by social morality would not be sufficient to change the plight of women.

He opined that “*Law may guarantee various rights, but only those can be called real rights which you are permitted by the society to exercise.....In short what is permitted by the society to be exercised can alone be called a right. The right which is guaranteed by law but is opposed by the society is of no use at all.*”⁹³

Ambedkar tried to link between the Hindu social order and the position of women in the Indian society. Thus, in his view, the issue of women's empowerment could not be addressed in isolation. Rights and special privileges of castes can be translated into rights and special privileges enjoyed by a particular gender. The hegemony of caste can be translated into hegemony of gender codes of pride, privileges and self-image. Ambedkar stood for annihilation of caste and demolition of patriarchal society because he felt unless the drive engine is destroyed the oppression would continue forever.⁹⁴

To him '*Social Liberty*' is very important and the freedom of mind is the real freedom. The freedom of mind, who with an awakened consciousness realizes his rights, responsibilities and duties and is not a slave of circumstances and wants to change them in favour. One who is not afraid of public criticism and has enough self-respect and intellect so that he doesn't become the tool in the hands of others.⁹⁵ Though he said this in the context of depressed classes but this is also applicable for his concern on Women's emancipation and empowerment.

However, his ideas about women empowerment were not restricted to social and political arena. He put due emphasis on economic rationale also. 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.

Ambedkar laid stress on the concept of capacity building of women as the first step towards women empowerment. 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. In the Bombay Legislative Council debates⁹⁶ his concern for slow progress of education not only for the boys but also for the girls is also seen. His request for increase in the expenditure of education from the Education Minister shows his believe in the Law which only can bring progress in the society.

He not only wanted to ensure social equality between man and man, but also equal status and dignity between man and woman. He also believed in equal status of husband and wife. He wanted to position women as not only a member of the family, also of society. This ardent belief of his is reflected when he asked not only men but also women on the day of voting should leave their work and go to polls.

His arguments on maternity benefit bill, abortion and on the birth control were quite relevant to recognize the dignity of women. His aim was to re-engineer the society from grass-root level and through legal means. He involved state for this purpose through Hindu Code Bill which sought to confer on women the right to property and adoption. These are enabling rights to women, not granted previously in the domain of economy, which was to be conferred through legal means.

In the words of Ambedkar:

*"I drafted the bill in conformity with the dictates of the Smritis which allow several rights to women. The bill was aimed at removing the obstruction of Law in the social advancement of women. On wealth depends independence and a woman must be very particular to retain her wealth and rights, to help retain her freedom."*⁹⁷

Ambedkar while addressing a meeting of women in Bombay⁹⁸ (November 24 1951) declared that the Hindu Code Bill would improve the condition of women and give them more rights and requested them to support the bill and vote for the candidates who would bring real Democracy in the country.⁹⁹

Ambedkar realised that there was no other way to reform the society except challenging the foundation, Manusmriti and the principle of graded inequality, the society was built upon. He also argued that all problems related to women were manifestation of the system of caste and thus nothing short of a revolutionary step aimed at annihilation of caste could only prove beneficial for women.

Instead of bringing superficial changes and addressing secondary issues like child marriage, sati system, he wanted to attack and destroy the backbone of the menace,

the caste system. He wanted to attack the caste and thus bring about change not only for downtrodden but also for women.

He felt it would be necessary to bring about changes through help of law and thus he preferred interventions at legal and public policy level. Ambedkar's vision of equality 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. However, one can notice the seed of *positive discrimination* is present in his definition of equality in respect to duties and responsibilities of state.

4.6 Summary and Conclusion

The foregoing discussion proves that Ambedkar, as a social activist, sought to highlight the fact that only through the organised and collective effort, a change of qualitative nature could be brought about in the Indian society. He was of the view that women should be encouraged to take active part in organised social mobilisation activities which, in a long run, would enable them to assess their own position vis-à-vis the position enjoyed by the privileged section of the society. 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.

Ambedkar adopted a comprehensive view on the social structure in India. To him, the Hindu social order which was marked by highly hegemonised caste stratification could not be altered if one takes a piecemeal attitude. The problem was complex and demanded a multi-prolonged attack. To him, the task of women empowerment in such a society would call for a multiple set of solutions. Rights of women could be achieved only when the monolithic nature of caste structure would be demolished. He

was aware of the fact that it was a very difficult task and for this purpose, some sort of unbroken continuity in the social reform measures was needed.

He strongly advocated that women should recognise their worth as social forces, organize themselves so that they could participate in social and political agitations. The processes adopted by Ambedkar to emancipate and empower women were primarily founded upon two premises: educate women and encourage them to participate in public events, this would subsequently create sense of self-respect in them and to reform the social order of Indian society such that the root causes of degradation and oppression of women were taken care of.

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.

His policy prescription for women emancipation and empowerment encompasses two domains: 'Social' and 'Political'. In social domain, he prescribed 'Educate, Organise and Agitate' as the motto for emancipation and empowerment of women. 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.

In the next chapter, deliberation has been made about Ambedkar's effort in institutionalizing his policy prescriptions with specific reference in political domain.

Notes and Reference

¹ Alsop, R., Heinsohn, N. 2005. Measuring Empowerment in Practice: Structuring Analysis and Framing Indicators. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*. 3510. Available at http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2005/03/06/000090341_20050306094734/Rendered/PDF/wps3510.pdf, accessed on 20.07.2007.

² Kabeer, N. 1999. Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. *Development and Change*. Blackwell Publishing, Vol. 30, Number 3, July 1999, pp.435-464.

³ Moghadam, V.M., Senftova, L. 2005. Measuring Women's Empowerment: Participation And Rights In Civil, Political, Social, Economic, And Cultural Domains. *International Social Science Journal*, 57, 2, pp. 389-412.

⁴ Batliwala, S. 1994. The Meaning of Women's Empowerment: New Concepts from Action, In G. Sen, A. Germain and L. C. Chen (eds.). *Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment and Rights*. Boston: Harvard University Press, pp. 127-38.

⁵ Moghadam, V.M. and Senftova, L. 2005. Measuring Women's Empowerment: Participation And Rights In Civil, Political, Social, Economic, And Cultural Domains. op.cit., pp. 389-412.

⁶ Oxaal, Z. and Baden. S. 1997. Gender and Empowerment: Definitions, Approaches and Implications for Policy. *Bridge Report* No.40. Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. available at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/Reports/re40c.pdf>, accessed on 20.07.2007.

⁷ Malhotra, Anju, et al. 2002. *Measuring Women's Empowerment as a Variable in International Development*. Background Paper presented for the World Bank Workshop on Poverty and Gender: New Perspectives. Final Version: June 28, 2002. World Bank, Gender and Development Group, Washington DC.

⁸ Grown, C., Rao Gupta, G. and Kes, A. 2005. *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*. UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, London: Earthscan.

⁹ Stromquist, N. P. 2002. Education as a Means for Empowering Women, In J. Parpart, S. Rai & K. Staudt (eds.) *Rethinking Empowerment: Gender and Development in a Global/Local World*. London: Routledge, pp. 22-38.

¹⁰ Cambridge On line dictionary, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/> accessed on 20.12.2007.

¹¹ Erwin, J. Haeberle. 1983. *The Sex Atlas*. The Continuum Publishing Company, 575 Lexington Avenue, New York, 10022.

-
- ¹² Mark Rupert , Notes on Political and Human Emancipation: A Simplified Reconstruction of Marx's Reasoning In "On the Jewish Question", Syracuse University in http://faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/merupert/political_and_human_emancipation.htm, accessed on 21.12.2007.
- ¹³ Vidyasagar, I S. 2005. *Concept of Humanism of Ambedkar*. Jaipur: ABD publishers, pp.102-103.
- ¹⁴ Jatava, D R. 2005. *Ambedkar Code of Conduct*. Jaipur: ABD publishers, p.122.
- ¹⁵ Ibid. p.123.
- ¹⁶ Sinha, Chitra. 2007. Images of Motherhood: The Hindu Code bill Discourse. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. XLII, No.43, pp.49-57.
- ¹⁷ Ibid. p.49-57.
- ¹⁸ Desai Neera, Krishnraj Maithreyi. 2004. An overview of the status of women in India. In Manoranjan, Mohanty (ed.) *Readings in Indian Government and Politics: Class, Caste, Gender*. New Delhi: Sage Publication, p.310.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. p.310.
- ²⁰ for details please see, Chatterjee Partha. 1989. The nationalist resolution of women's question. In Kumkum, Sangari and Sudesh, Vaid. (eds.) *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*. New Delhi: Kali for women.
- ²¹ Desai, Neera. 1957. *Women in Modern India*. Bombay: Vora and Co., pp.136-137.
- ²² Basu, Aparna. 1976. The role of women in the Indian freedom struggle. In Nanda, B R. (ed.) *Indian Women: from Purdah to Modernity*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, p.39.
- ²³ Desai Neera, Krishnraj Maithreyi. 2004. An overview of the status of women in India. In Manoranjan, Mohanty. (ed.) *Readings in Indian Government and Politics: Class, Caste, Gender*. New Delhi: Sage Publication, p.311.
- ²⁴ Sinha, Chitra. 2007. Images of Motherhood: The Hindu Code bill Discourse. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. XLII, No-43, p.50.
- ²⁵ Tehrani, Shamsi, M Z. 2001. Ambedkar's perspective on upliftment of women. In Khan, H. Nazeer (ed.) *B.R Ambedkar on Federalism, Ethnicity and Gender Justice*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, p.201.
- ²⁶ Chowdhary, Rekha. 1997. Hindu Social Order and Women: Understanding Ambedkar's viewpoint. In Shabbir, Mohd. (ed.) *B R Ambedkar study in law and society*.(ed.) Jaipur: Rawat Publication, pp. 292-293.
- ²⁷ Ibid. p.293.
- ²⁸ Ibid. p.293.
- ²⁹ Ambedkar, B R. 1988. *Rise and Fall of Hindu Women*. Jullunder: Bhim Patrika Publication, pp.26-28.

³⁰ Ibid. pp.22-468.

³¹ Ambedkar, B R. 2003. *Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*. (hereafter referred as *B.A.W.S*) Vol. 17. Section-2. Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, p.127.

³² Ambedkar, B R. 1988. *Rise and Fall of Hindu Women*. op.cit., p.468.

³³ The Maha Bodhi, May and June 1951, cited in Keer, Dhananjay. 1971. *Dr Ambedkar-Life and Mission*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, pp.427-428.

³⁴ Ambedkar, B R. 1988. *Rise and Fall of Hindu Women*. op.cit., p.26.

³⁵ Chowdhary, Rekha. 1997. Hindu Social Order and Women: Understanding Ambedkar's viewpoint. In Shabbir, Mohd. (ed.) *B R Ambedkar study in law and society*. op.cit, pp. 292-293.

³⁶ The Indian Antiquary. 1917. Vol. XLVI, pp. 81-95, (now published in *B.A.W.S.*, Vol. I. compiled by Vasant Moon, Government of Maharashtra: Education Department.)

³⁷ Ambedkar, B.R. 2006. Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development. In M. Manoranjan (ed.) *Class, Caste, Gender*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, p.138.

³⁸ Ibid. p.140.

³⁹ Bharill, Chandra. 1977. *Social and Political Ideas of B R Ambedkar*. Jaipur: Aalekh Publishers, p.150.

⁴⁰ Ambedkar, B.R. 2006. Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development. In M. Manoranjan (ed.) *Class, Caste, Gender*. op.cit., pp.141-142.

⁴¹ Ambedkar, B. R. 1990. *Pakistan or the partition of India*. In B.A.W.S. Vol.8. Government of Maharashtra: Education Department. p.230.

⁴² Ibid. p.227.

⁴³ Ibid. p.231.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p.204.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.295.

⁴⁶ Ambedkar, B. R. Writings and Speeches. Vol. I. Section- III Annihilation of Caste. Cited in <http://ambedkarquotes.wordpress.com> accessed on 2007/06/06.

⁴⁷ Chowdhary, Rekha. 1997. Hindu Social Order and Women: Understanding Ambedkar's viewpoint. In Shabbir, Mohd. (ed.) *B R Ambedkar study in law and society*. op.cit., p.291-294.

⁴⁸ Verma. D.K., Sohrot. A. 2003. The Concept of Social Justice in Post-Modern Society: Some Reflections on Sustainable Development. In Purohit, B.R, Joshi, Sandeep. (ed.) *Social Justice in India*. Jaipur & N. Delhi: Rawat Publications, p.189.

- ⁴⁹Ambedkar, B.R. 1989. *Annihilation of Caste with a reply to Mahatma Gandhi*. In Babasahab Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches. Vol.1, compiled by Vasant Moon, Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, p.57.
- ⁵⁰Ibid. p.80.
- ⁵¹Ambedkar, B.R. 1987. *Philosophy of Hinduism*. In Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches. Vol. 3, compiled by Vasant Moon, Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, p.25.
- ⁵²Massey, James. 2003. *B.R Ambedkar A Study in just society*. New Delhi: Manohar publishers and Distributors, N.Delhi, p.102..
- ⁵³ Ambedkar, B.R. 1989. *Annihilation of Caste*. op.cit., p.57.
- ⁵⁴Chowdhary, Rekha. 1997. Hindu Social Order and Women: Understanding Ambedkar's viewpoint. In Shabbir, Mohd. (ed.) *B R Ambedkar study in law and society*. op.cit., p.291.
- ⁵⁵ Asraf, Mohd. 2001. Ambedkar and his concept of social justice: An analysis. In Khan, Nazeer H. (ed.) *B R Ambedkar on federalism, ethnicity and gender justice*. op.cit., p.155.
- ⁵⁶Khan, Nazeer H. 2001. Ambedkar on Gender Equality: Myth and Reality In Khan ,Nazeer H. (ed.) *B R Ambedkar on federalism, ethnicity and gender justice*. op.cit., p.179.
- ⁵⁷ Ambedkar, B.R. 1987. *Philosophy of Hinduism*. op.cit., pp. 38-39.
- ⁵⁸ Patil.V.T. (ed.) 1995. *Studies in Ambedkar*. Delhi: Devika publications, p.10.
- ⁵⁹ *Constituent Assembly Debate*. Vol.VII. p.504.
- ⁶⁰ Singh, Surendra. 1997. Ambedkar's contribution to social justice. in Shabbir, Mohd. (ed.) *B R Ambedkar study in law and society*. Jaipur: Rawat Publication, pp.86-88.
- ⁶¹ Azmi, S S H. 2001. Ambedkar as pioneer for the upliftment of status of women. In Khan, Nazeer, H. (ed.) *B R Ambedkar on federalism, ethnicity and gender justice*. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publication, p.194.
- ⁶² *Constituent Assembly (Legislative) Debate*. 17 Nov 1947.
- ⁶³ Vidyasagar, I.S. 2005. *Concept of Humanism of Dr Ambedkar*. Jaipur: ABD Publishers, p.106.
- ⁶⁴ *B.A.W.S.* 2005. Vol.II. pp.166-167.
- ⁶⁵ Ambedkar, B.R. 1988. *Rise and Fall of Hindu Women*. op.cit., p.468.
- ⁶⁶ *Bombay Legislative Assembly Debates*. 1938. Vol. IV (Part.3) , pp.4024-38.
- ⁶⁷ Ambedkar, B. R. Writings and Speeches. Vol.1, Section VI, Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah. Cited in <http://ambedkarquotes.wordpress.com> accessed on 2007/06/06.
- ⁶⁸ Moon, Vasant. 2007. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*. New Delhi : National Book Trust, India, (Report of Depressed Class Conference: Nagpur Session, p.79.) p.145.
- ⁶⁹Ambedkar, B. R. Writings and Speeches. Vol. I. Section- III. Annihilation of Caste. Cited in <http://ambedkarquotes.wordpress.com> accessed on 2007/06/06.

⁷⁰ B.A.W.S. 2003. Vol.17. (Part-3). p.150.

⁷¹ Moon, Vasant. 2007. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar*. (Kosare, pp.477-78. letter dated 3.08.1942.) p.145.

⁷² Ambedkar, B. R. Writings and Speeches. Vol.1. Section XII. Annihilation of Caste. available in <http://ambedkarquotes.wordpress.com> accessed on 2007/06/06.

⁷³ B.A.W.S. 2003. Vol.17. (Part-3). p.65.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.65.

⁷⁵ Ambedkar, B R. 1988. *Rise and Fall of Hindu Women*. op.cit., p.469.

⁷⁶ Zelliott, Eleanor. 2007. Empowerment of women. In Thorat S, Aryama (ed.) *Ambedkar in Retrospect: Essays on economics, politics and society*. New Delhi: Rawat Publication, pp.317-331.

⁷⁷ Moon, Vasant. 2007. *Babasaheb Ambedkar*. op.cit., p.222.

⁷⁸ Zelliott Eleanor. 2007. In Thorat S, Aryama (ed.) *Ambedkar in Retrospect: Essays on economics, politics and society*. op.cit., p.318.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p.319.

⁸⁰ B.A.W.S. 2003. Vol.17. (Part-III). p. 251.

⁸¹ Ibid. p.282-283.

⁸² Ibid. p.306-307.

⁸³ Ibid. p.411.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p.496.

⁸⁵ B.A.W.S. 1987. Vol.4, p. 9.

⁸⁶ The Indian Antiquary, Vol. XLVI, 1917, pp. 81-95.

⁸⁷ Sreenath, L, Sreenath, M. 1997. Ambedkar, Women and the weaker section of society. In Shabbir Mohd (ed.) *B R Ambedkar study in law and society*. op.cit., p.293.

⁸⁸ Pathania, Neelam. 1994 . Ambedkar's vision of social justice with special reference to women. In B R Ambedkar, *Social Justice and the Indian Constitution*. cited In Shabbir, Md. (ed.) *B.R Ambedkar study in law and society*. op.cit., p.336.

⁸⁹ Zelliott Eleanor. 2007. Empowerment of Women. In Thorat S, Aryama (ed.) *Ambedkar in Retrospect: Essays on economics, politics and society*. op.cit., p.317.

⁹⁰ B.A.W.S. 2003. Vol. 17. (part-3). p.386.

⁹¹ *Bombay Legislative Council Debates*, Vol. XXIII, pp.381-382, dated 28-07-1928.

⁹² B.A.W.S. 2005. Vol.2. pp.263-270.

⁹³ B.A.W.S. 2003. Vol. 17. (part-3) p.127.

⁹⁴ Zelliott Eleanor. 2007. Empowerment of Women. In Thorat S, Aryama. (ed.) *Ambedkar in Retrospect: Essays on economics, politics and society*. op.cit., p.329.

⁹⁵ B.A.W.S. 2003. Vol .17. (part-3) p.128.

⁹⁶ Bombay Legislative Council Debates, Vol. XIX, pp.971-976, dated 12th March 1927.

⁹⁷ The Times of India, December 26, 1950, Opposition to Hindu Code Dr. Ambedkar's criticism. (also found in *B.A.W.S.* 2003. Vol. 17, (Part-3), p.411.)

⁹⁸ The Bombay Secret Abstract, dated 1st December 1951.

⁹⁹ *B.A.W.S.* 2003. Vol. 17. (Part-3). p.420.