

CHAPTERV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

The term empowerment refers to improving the economic, political, social, educational, gender, or spiritual strength of individuals and communities. The term covers a vast range of meanings, interpretations, definitions and disciplines ranging from psychology and philosophy to the highly commercialized self-help industry and motivational sciences.

Sometimes some groups are marginalized by society at a large, these marginalized people who lack self-sufficiency fall to a minimum, dependent on charity, or welfare. The opportunities denied to them also deprive them of the pride of accomplishment, which others, who have those opportunities, can develop for themselves. This in turn leads to psychological, social and even mental health problems. Thus, empowerment is then the process of obtaining these basic opportunities for marginalized people, either directly by those people, or through the help of non-marginalized groups who share their own access to these opportunities. It also includes actively thwarting attempts to deny those opportunities. Empowerment also includes encouraging, and developing the skills for, self-sufficiency, with a focus on eliminating the future

need for charity or welfare in the individuals of the group. This process can be difficult to start and to implement effectively.

Empowerment of women thus means encouraging, and developing the skills for, self-sufficiency, with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare in women. Women are known for multitasking skills and abilities. There were great many leaders in the world that upheld in those values. There have been men with such values in the history of India. Among them a special mention must be made of Basaveshwara, Rajaram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar.

During the early Vedic period, women of India enjoyed equal rights with men, participating in different spheres. Both husband and wife enjoyed the property rights and widow was allowed to re-marry. Women enjoyed a high status before 300 BCE but after this period, there was a sudden shift in their status. By Manu code, woman ceased to be equal to man in her own right and became morally a low creature. She was not fit for independence; she was not entitled to offer prayers, to practice penances, to undertake pilgrimages to recite Vedic mantras to worship gods. Widow was not allowed remarriage, inter-caste marriage, upanayana for a girl, and the right to secure education were also denied. She was also denied the right to study the scriptures child marriage, widow-hood and sati systems became vogue, she was protected by her father in childhood by husband in youth and by her sons in the old age.

Woman was to worship her husband altogether, her position was one of subordination and equivalent to the Sudra. "Women came to be categorized as a weaker sex, inferior in intellect and domestic chattel and property of the master". Gradually women were relegated to the four walls of the kitchen, and they were debarred from spiritual and religious quests. They were subjected to many social evils and were forced to become devadasis and prostitutes and observe Sati, Johar etc., without any scope to contribute to the collective wisdom of the society on par with men.

The status of women was not similar throughout Indian history. It went on changing in a positive way due to the efforts of reformist movements launched by Bhakti saints like Meera bai, Kabir and others, Sharana movement headed by Basaveshwara, social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and host of others. In the 18th and 19th century, the age of reason or enlightenment, there arose what we call liberal feminism during which, the first serious and systematic work in the cause of women was done. Mary Wolstonecraft, in her work "A vindication the rights of women" published in 1792 declared that Women are first and foremost human beings and not sexual, women are rational creatures. They are capable of governing themselves by reason. The present study has thrown light on the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar and their

ideas on the struggle for women empowerment-social equality, democracy, humanism and sarvodaya of women.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, also popularly known as Babasaheb was born in a poor low Mahar caste family in the town and military cantonment of Mhow in the Central Provinces (now in Madhya Pradesh) on **14 April 1891**. As he belonged to the untouchable Mahar caste, he was subjected to socio-economic discrimination. Ambedkar was a prolific student who earned a law degree and various doctorates from Columbia University and the London School of Economics. He gained a great reputation as a scholar for his research in law, economics and political science. In his early career, he was an economist, professor, and lawyer. His later life was marked by his political activities, where he became involved in the negotiations for India's independence campaigning by publishing journals advocating political rights and social freedom for untouchables and contributing significantly to the establishment of the state of India. In 1956, he converted to Buddhism, initiating mass conversions of Dalits.

Dr. Ambedkar tried to uplift the untouchables in order to educate them. His first organised attempt to achieve this was the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha which was intended to promote education and socio-economic improvement, as well as the welfare of “outcastes” and “untouchables” at the time referred to as depressed classes. For the protection of Dalit rights he started many

periodicals like *Mook Nayak*, *Bahishkrit Bharat*, and *Equality Janta*. He began with public movements and marches to open up and share public drinking water resources for untouchables. He also began a struggle for their right to enter Hindu temples. He led a *satyagraha* in Mahad, in 1930, launched Kalaram Temple movement. He was invited to attend Round Table Conference in London in 1932 where he advocated a separate electorate for untouchables. Gandhi fiercely opposed separate electorate for untouchables advocated by Ambedkar, saying he feared that such an arrangement would split Brahmins and Dalits, dividing the Hindu community into two groups. In 1932, when the British had agreed with Ambedkar and announced a Communal Award of a separate electorate, Gandhi protested by fasting while imprisoned in the Yerwada Central Jail of Poona. The fast provoked huge civil unrest across India and orthodox Hindu leaders, Congress politicians and activists such as Madan Mohan Malaviya and Palwankar Baloo organised joint meetings with Ambedkar and his supporters at Yerwada. Fearing a communal reprisal and genocidal acts against untouchables, Ambedkar was forced to agree with Gandhi. This agreement, which saw Gandhi end his fast and Ambedkar drop his demand for a separate electorate, was called the Poona Pact. This act of Ambedkar showed the patriot inside him.

After India's Independence on 15 August 1947, the new Congress led government invited Ambedkar to serve as the nation's first Law Minister, which he accepted. The constitution prepared by Ambedkar provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens, including freedom of religion, the abolition of untouchability and the outlawing of all forms of discrimination. Ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women and also won the Assembly's support for introducing a system of reservations of jobs in the civil services, schools and colleges for members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and Other Backward Class, a system akin to affirmative action. India's lawmakers hoped to eradicate the socio-economic inequalities and lack of opportunities for India's depressed classes through these measures. The Constitution was adopted on 26 November 1949 by the Constituent Assembly. He attained nirvana on 6 Dec 1956. In 1990, Ambedkar was posthumously conferred with the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award. His message to his followers was "Educate! Organize! Agitate!". Ambedkar has left behind large number of writings. Collection of Ambedkar's writings and speeches are published by the Education Department, Government of Maharashtra (Bombay) in different volumes.

Dr. Ambedkar had great love for his fellow beings and also an urge to serve them. Pursuing the path of "Bahujana Hitaya, Bahujana Sukhaya" (gain

of the many, welfare of the many), he worked with full vigor and zeal for the emancipation of the suppressed, though the untouchables received his special attention for obvious reasons. He was keen to improve the condition of women who, also like the Shudras bore wrath of the Hindus. Dr. Ambedkar championed the cause of women as well as the miserable plight of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes throughout his life. He put forth a number of problems of Indian women and sought for their solutions in Bombay Legislative Council, in the Viceroy's Executive Council, as a Labour Member, in the Constituent Assembly as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee and in the Parliament as the first Law Minister of Independent India.

The advent of B.R. Ambedkar on the social and political scene of India did contribute a great deal to the cause of women's emancipation. He respected women's dignity without belittling their roles as mothers and wives. He propagated equality in family and dignity of women's personality in society. Dr. Ambedkar was of the firm belief that unless the women themselves did not come forward to fight for the eradication of the social evils, their position in society would not improve, he was very much conscious of the fact that the religious scriptures, particularly the Manusmriti, contributed a great deal to the deplorable condition of women. As the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of Constituent Assembly, he advocated several measures to free women from age-old subordination and subservience imposed by the Hindu social laws.

He organized a number of processions were organized in which Dalit women took part. When he became the Law Minister and member of the Constitution Drafting Committee, he tried his best to give equal rights to women in society. Women's question for Dr. Ambedkar was related to the system of organized exploitation inherent in the Hindu social order. This social order aimed at establishing dominance of the Brahmanical class through a complex mechanism represented by the institution of caste. Women, along with Shudras, became victims of such an order, which first placed Brahmanical class in a position of dominance; secondly, developed an in-built mechanism of its maintenance, of justification and reproduction and; thirdly, placed women and Shudras at a sub-human level.

Dr. Ambedkar challenged the authenticity of Shastras boldly enough and challenged the very much-accepted Hindu ideals. He felt that educating the society in the principles and values of democracy could bring about a lasting change but this called for the destruction of the belief in the sanctity of the Shastras. The authority of Shastras had to be discarded because traditionally there was no the authenticity of Shastras. He laid special stress on education of women. Right from Mook Nayak and Bahiskrit Bharat, oppression of women remained a major plank of Dr. Ambedkar's movement. He welcomed women in all the social struggles. In Mahad Satyagraha, women participated in large numbers. Dr. Ambedkar aimed at two fold social

reforms; one, the reform of the Hindu family and the other, the reorganization and reconstruction of the Hindu society. The problems of sati, widow remarriage, child marriage, etc., related to the social reform of the Hindu family. When Dr. Ambedkar was nominated as member of the Bombay Legislative Council on 18th February 1927, he vehemently supported the maternity bill. For him social justice meant the taking of collective measures for the uplift of the downtrodden and weaker sections like women. His view was relevant at that time when abortion could arrest population which was needed to be increased and abortion was dangerous for the life of the mother. Moreover, under Indian Penal Code abortion was treated as crime.

At the All India Depressed Classes Women's Conference held at Nagpur on 20th July, 1940, Dr. Ambedkar emphasized that there could not be any progress without participation of women. Dr. Ambedkar was of the opinion that the Hindu women are tied up with bandage of superstitions until their death. They are also responsible for inculcating these wrong notions learnt by them through baseless traditions and preaching of the shastras in the budding mind of their offspring. Otherwise, also the women in India have remained a matter of joy and a source of amusement and a machine for procreation.

At a meeting at the Damodar Thackersey Hall, Bombay in 1936, Dr. Ambedkar made an impassioned appeal to cast off evil practices and customs among certain sections of the depressed classes. The meeting was largely

attended by men and women belonging to the Devadasi, Patraje, Bhute, Aradhi and Jagiti communities. Dr. Ambedkar accorded equal status to women and men in every sphere and he also warned the women against the misuse of their rights. Therefore, it would be appropriate to regard Dr. Ambedkar as one of the saviours of Indian women. His contribution is unique and cherishable by the women of India. Ambedkar was very much pained at the indignities suffered by women, particularly those working in mines in extremely difficult conditions. This is evident from the views expressed by him on the Maternity Benefit Bill. Ambedkar strongly felt that it was necessary to amend the Mines Maternity Benefit Act, 1941. The Mines Maternity Benefit Act, 1941 passed after consideration. Another Bill related to women working underground in the Coal Mines was also initiated by Babasaheb for the benefit of women that was Lifting of Ban on Employment of Women on Underground Work in Coal Mines. He pleaded in the house to consider the lifting of the ban on women working underground has a direct reference to coal. Pregnant women used to work underground in mines until the ninth month and again a fortnight after childbirth. There has been certain number of accidents to women working underground. Under Mines Maternity Benefit Act, employment for a period of four weeks following her confinement was prohibited. Further, a woman was entitled to leave of absence for a period of one month before she expects to deliver a child. That the Bill further to amend

the Mines Maternity Benefit Act, 1941. When the Act of 1941 was passed it was intended to cover cases of maternity benefit for women working on surface.

At the All India Depressed Classes Women's Conference held at Nagapur on 20th July, 1940, Dr. Ambedkar emphasized that there could not be any progress without participation of women. He underlined that women should learn to be lean and keep themselves away from all vices. They should educate their children and instill high ambition in them.

After independence in 1947, Babasaheb became the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar attributed the low status of women in India to the gender discriminatory principles laid down by Manu and in order to improve this he suggested a number of provisions in the constitution. Articles 14, 15, 6, 39(a), 39(d), 39(e), 41, 42 and 44 were basically directed at improving the social status of Indian women. In addition to the above rights, Ambedkar's defense for women as the Law Minister of free India appeared in the form of the Hindu Code Bill in Parliament on 11th April 1947. Babasaheb proposed the Hindu Code Bill in order to codify Hindu Law, the most formidable legislative measure of modern India, sought, among other reforms, to put an end to a variety of marriage systems prevailing in India and legalize only monogamous marriages. The Code also sought to confer on women the right to property and adoption, which were denied, to

them by Manu. It put men and women on an equal footing in all legal matters, he insisted on self-reliance of women by postulating their economic independence. Dr. Ambedkar said that it is our duty to repair those parts of Hindu system, which have become dilapidated. Hindu Code Bill faced stiff opposition both in the Constituent Assembly and the country. His success in overcoming the stiff resistance to the Bill was the first victory for women's struggle for equality gained in the long course of Indian history. Through the Hindu Code Bill, Ambedkar became the pioneer of women's movement in India. Dr. Ambedkar could not get it passed due to its opposition by many conservative caste protest against the failure of the Bill, Dr. Ambedkar resigned his seat in the cabinet. Although, his efforts did not entirely go waste later, the original Bill was split into four different Bills with slight changes. Those were passed as the Hindu Marriage Act 1955; The Hindu Succession Act, 1956; the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956; and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance. Lord Casey said, Ambedkar stands as the "fountainhead of wisdom and knowledge" in modern India.

Today, the position of women in the Indian society is much better as compared to what it was in earlier times. One can see women making their presence felt in almost all the important areas of specialization. One can find women holding high positions both in the Government and private sectors. Credit for all this goes to a considerable extent to the efforts made by Dr. B.R.

Ambedkar in generating a new spirit among millions of women in the Indian subcontinent.

Now women are enabled to leave the confines of their homes in pursuit of education or career, are able to compete in all fields of life shoulder to shoulder with men. They approach the courts for redressal of matrimonial problems from fraud to insanity to option of puberty to cruelty, adoption child of their choice in their own right, hold property as absolute owners with equal rights as their male counterparts, and thus be treated as equals on par with men. The whole credit goes exclusively to the modern Manu, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Hindu women are greatly indebted to this great scholar for their redemption from bondage and complete subjugation under male tyranny sanctioned by pseudo-religious injunctions.

Therefore, it would be appropriate to regard Dr. Ambedkar as the saviour of the Indian women. Their contribution is unique and cherishable by all women of India. It should be the foremost duty of women to integrate themselves, to free their fellow-sisters, who are under the despised and ungraded professions like the flesh trade; devadasis, beggary, etc. Educated women should join social work to educate, organize, and unite all deprived women to make them conscious of their rights and privileges and they should not be busy in the family conflict to get mere self rights. While the women movements need greater integration with the other oppressed

sections, the movements of the oppressed including the Dalit movement have to consciously build values which would protect and defend the honour of all women including the upper caste and upper class. The best tribute to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his cause would be to work for the emancipation of the oppressed including the women for which they stood and fought for throughout their life, in fact sacrificed their lives.

In the condolence message, on Ambedkar's death, in parliament, Prime Minister Jawaharlal *Neharu* said "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was symbol of revolt against all oppressive features of Hindu society". His dream of society based on gender equality is yet to be realized and therefore his thoughts are important for social reconstruction that favors women empowerment.

With the advent of informationage, education has become a potent tool the empowerment of people and country. I believe only when social education enlightens each and every Indian woman, the vision of Dr. Ambedkar will turn into reality. Only when a woman is educated, she can understand the real important of social and political empowerment. It is absolutely essential that society breaks the cast in which women have been molded so far and visualizes the female gender in a new light. A healthy and gender bias free society where every girl child brings as much hope and gets much hope and gets much respect as her male counterpart. Economic development of country like India depends upon women empowerment through education.

Unfortunately, at present still some percentage of Indian women are not exposed to education and thus necessary steps be taken to ensure that education reaches to each and every individual women of India.

In his famous book 'Pakistan and partition of India' he expressed his views about Muslim women and their religious traditions, about wearing veil, their marriages and so on. Muslim women were suppressed under various religious traditions. Towards all the women, irrespective of their religion, cast and class, Babasaheb had a particular humanitarianism view. He frequently raised his voice against all supports of injustice towards women.