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Women empowerment and Dr. BR Ambedkar

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Abstract

In society and family the women is having secondary status and is supposed to serve to husband and children. The religious ceremony and rituals are mostly concentrated on male. The status of women in India is seen as inconstant and changing accordingly the ages. In ancient period she enjoyed higher status and dignity whereas, later period she was bounded with restrictions and limitations and remain as puppet in the hands of patriarchy and religion. In modern period a movement against agony of the women is initiated and still the efforts are being made to free from the clutches and enable to enjoy human rights based on social justice.

Keywords: women empowerment, social justice, social behavior, status

Introduction

The word “women” signify for suppression, exploitation and vulnerability before independence. The assumptions and behavior towards the women changed time to time. The evidences from the available resources prove the higher status of women in Vedic period. The continuity of higher status of women is disrupted in post Vedic period to till modern age. However the contribution of social reformer in British and post British period has brought the changes in worsen condition of women. The contribution of Dr. B.R Ambedkar is miles stone in women empowerment. Dr. Ambedkar an educationist, reformers an activist has focused women’s issues and strived to improving the condition of women by participating women in movement, educating them and on the contrary attacking on the orthodoxy mentality towards women.

The rise of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in the field of social justice is a milestone towards liberty of women. The work of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is a ray of hope for the downtrodden and underprivileged section of the society. The main cause for the sorrows of the downtrodden and underprivileged section of society was the religious and caste- based practices and assumptions. Therefore he worked tirelessly throughout his life to challenge the legitimacy of orthodox Hindu social order that upheld iniquitous gender relations in an institutionalized manner (Barnwal-2014) [1].

Objectives of the study: The study intends to focus on the following set of questions

1. To analyses the women’s status prior to rise of Dr. Ambedkar and,
2. To analyses Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s contribution towards women empowerment.

Methodology: This paper is purely based on secondary data. To analyses the contribution of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar towards women empowerment and restoration of human rights the resources such as, the speeches, articles, books published papers, proceedings and speeches delivered by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in parliament, conferences and meetings are used.

Discussions

The Indian women were enjoying high status in the Vedic times. The actual misery of women became started in post Vedic period. The Manusmriti age has strictly restricted women for education and imposed certain binding which lead to a bandit life. In Manusmriti VIII 371, it is mentioned that “if a wife proud of the greatness of her relative or own excellence violates the duty which she owes to her lord; the king shall cause her to be devoured by dogs in a place frequented by many”.

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In Hinduism, women goddesses are found, whereas, a sect believes in avoiding women to reach the god (Gill: 1986) ^[4]. Different opinions and verses in mythology have given opportunity to patriarchist to interpret accordingly. As references indicate the higher status of women in Vedic period also depicts the restrictions on women. In post Vedic period, tremendous changes are seen in women's status, the restrictions on social behaviors and education was important. The traces of deterioration are found in all period in post Vedic period but it became much more marked after the beginning of Christian era and reached its peak after the Mongol invasion in the tenth century (Rao).

To justify the society behavior towards female, the exploiting practices against women were attached to the religion. One who neglect it, commit sin. The condition of women was gradually changing, in post Vedic period the rights of women were snatching and on the other hand, restrictions were being imposed. During this period, the evil practices against women were at apex level. The cruelest practices of widow burning (sati system) were in practice and no widows were allowed for remarriage. The doctrine of Manusmriti put the women in hell, it says wife should strive to fulfill excellent duty towards husband and after death of her husband constantly remain chastity (Das: 1962) ^[2].

In Muslim period the deteriorating condition of Indian women were continue and added the purdah system which again restricted to women. They remained somewhere in between the two portals, with no education, no special privileges (Shridevi: 1965) ^[7]. Till The British period the worst condition of women was continues. Women had no rights in marriage, family, social fields and her identity was lost as a human being (Ghosh: 1989) ^[3]. In such critical condition of Indian women, rise of Dr. Ambedkar in the field of social reform is like a messiah. He brought revolutionary changes in women upliftment. The vision of Dr. Ambedkar about women is seen in Indian constitution and his writings and speeches.

Women Empowerment: women empowerment refers to increase in spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. However, any attempt for empowerment would have to embrace at least the following principles; 1. Equality of rights between men and women must be enshrined as a fundamental principle, 2. Must be regarded as agents and beneficiaries of change, and 3. Gender just we development model aiming at creating opportunities for women and men (Pathak: 2009) ^[5].

Education is key by which a person can develop and change. Dr. Ambedkar put all his efforts to bring the section of society in main stream of education without any discrimination or biases. Dr. Ambedkar saw the women as the most victimized in the society. He pointed out the Manusmriti as architect of bindings, restrictions on women. He opposes the Manusmriti and its teachings. The burning of this book was historical incident which paved path to liberty to women from traditional evil practices. The journal "Muknayak" (1920) and "Bahishkrut Bharat" (1927) were started to focus on gender relation and differences constructed by Hindu order. On another front Dr. B.R. Ambedkar laid down the foundation of concrete efforts by codifying the common civil code for Hindus. On common civil code justice Chandrachud Singh, chief justice of India said "a common civil code will help the cause of national

integration by removing disparity loyalties to law which have conflicting ideologies".

Codifying the common civil code for Hindu was the first step towards recognition and empowerment of women. Hindu law in respect of marriage, divorce and succession rationalized and restored the dignity to women. For women development adequate inclusion of rights in constitution of India indicates the concrete step towards women it includes article, 14, 15, 15 (3), 42, 46, 47, 243D (3) and 243 R (4). The constitution of India made a deliberate radical departure from the inherited social system by granting to women equal social and political status.

Conclusions

Flexibility in the status of women is seen in different ages. In Vedic period she enjoyed the higher status and shared the equal role and responsibilities with men. Whereas, the post Vedic period has witnessed tremendous changes and degradation in the women's status. Manus developed the guidelines to determine the behaviour of women and it imposed restriction on women. Manus snatched the liberty of women and put her in a case by making various verses about how to behave and what are the limitation and punishments for women.

The reform movement in India started in colonial period. Britisher supported the reform and number of practices such as Sati system banned. On the contrary emergence of Dr. Babasaheb on the horizon of Indian political and social system has paved path to women empowerment. Due to The efforts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, number of legislations are enacted and women get legal protection regarding human rights and liberties, it has facilitated socio-economic and political upliftment of women.

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