
Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar And Political Empowerment Of Women In India

Pinki kumari¹, Prof. Vinny Jain²

¹Research Scholar

²Head of Political Science dept., St. Johns college, Agra, U.P. India

Received: 15 July 2024 Accepted & Reviewed: 25 July 2024, Published : 31 July 2024

Abstract

As India sets a vision of being a developed nation by 2047, empowerment of women plays an important role in it. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar the principle architect of the Indian constitution, was a staunch advocate for women's rights. He believed that political empowerment of women can drive economic growth. When women participate in politics, they can influence economic policies that promote female entrepreneurship, labor force participation, and economic inclusion.

Keywords: Discrimination, Patriarchy, Empowerment, Constitution, Women's Rights, Representation,

Introduction

Political empowerment of women is critical for achieving gender equality, fostering inclusive governance, promoting social economic progress and helps in reducing violence and corruption. But at the time of India's independence women participation in politics was minimal. As a visionary leader Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar viewed the upliftment of women as integral to the broader struggle for social justice. He consistently advocated for women's rights both in his writings and political actions. Ambedkar's contributions to the political empowerment of women are equally significant and deserving of recognition.

Ambedkar's vision for an inclusive and egalitarian society extended beyond the abolition of caste hierarchies to encompass the eradication of gender inequality. He firmly believed that the empowerment of women was essential for the progress and modernization of Indian society. In a period when women's rights were severely restricted, Ambedkar emerged as a pioneering advocate for gender equality, advocating for women's education, legal rights, and political participation.

Key aspects of Ambedkar's advocacy included his emphasis on the importance of education for women's empowerment, his role in drafting progressive legal reforms like the Hindu Code Bill, and his efforts to ensure that the Indian Constitution included robust provisions for gender equality. Ambedkar viewed the political empowerment of women as a fundamental aspect of democratic governance. He believed that women must have equal opportunities to participate in the political process, both as voters and as elected representatives.

Ambedkar's commitment to women's rights was not merely theoretical. He actively worked to implement practical measures that would facilitate women's entry into politics. His support for universal adult suffrage, which granted women the right to vote, and his advocacy for reserved seats for women in local governance structures are testaments to his forward-thinking approach. Ambedkar's efforts laid a solid foundation for subsequent policies aimed at increasing women's political representation and participation.

Importance of political empowerment of women in India:

1) **Gender equality**- women in political positions can advocate for laws and policies that specifically address gender disparities.

2) **Inclusive governance**- Ensuring women representation in legislative bodies leads to a more comprehensive policy making that considers the needs and perspectives of all demographics.

3) **social development**- women leaders often prioritize social sectors like health, education, and welfare.

4) **Economic growth**- Women in politics can influence economic policies that promote gender equity in the workforce, such as equal pay for equal work.

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar and women's political empowerment:

Dr. Ambedkar social movements for the upliftment of dalits and the marginalized sections of Indian society significantly involved and empowered women. Ambedkar's efforts towards social justice and equality recognized the critical role of women. He always believed in the women led movements in the society and sought to address their specific issues within the broader struggle against caste oppression.

Women actively participated in Ambedkar's organizations, such as the scheduled caste federation in 1942 and the All India Depressed Classes Women Conference. They played significant roles in mobilizing support, organizing events, and spreading awareness about the movement's objectives. Several women emerged as leaders within the movement such as Radhabai Vadale and Ramabai Ambedkar. Women participated in public campaigns and protests against social injustices, They were involved in Mahad Satyagraha(1927) gathering of over 3000 women at this moment, and Kalaram temple entry satyagrah(1930).

Dr. Ambedkar also worked for laborers as a labor leader and as a labor member of the viceroy's executive council between 1942 and 1946. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar framed many laws for women labors in India:

He drafted legislation such as the Mines Maternity Benefit Act which demanded equal pay and equal rights, established the Women Labor Welfare Fund and also played an important role in the Women and Child Labor Protection Act. Maternity Benefit Act for women, it was the first maternity bill passed in India by the Bombay legislature in 1929.

Women's Political Condition from 1947 to 2024:

1947-1970: Post-Independence Struggles

Constitutional Provisions:

The Indian Constitution, influenced by Ambedkar, provided for equal rights for women. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, and Article 14 guarantees equality before the law.

Political Participation:

Despite constitutional guarantees, women's representation in politics remained low. In the first Lok Sabha (1952), only 22 women were elected, constituting about 4.4% of the total membership.

Social Reform Laws:

The Hindu Code Bill, initially rejected, was eventually passed in parts as the Hindu Marriage Act (1955), Hindu Succession Act (1956), Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act (1956), and Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act (1956). These laws granted women greater rights in marriage, inheritance, and adoption.

1970-1990: Growing Awareness and Movements

Emergency and Aftermath:

The Emergency period (1975-1977) saw increased political activity among women. The post-Emergency era witnessed the emergence of various women's organizations demanding political and social rights.

Increased Representation:

Women's representation in the Lok Sabha rose to around 7-8% by the 1980s, indicating gradual improvement.

Significant Legislation:

The Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) was strengthened in the 1980s, and the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act (1987) was enacted following the horrific incident of Roop Kanwar in Rajasthan.

1990-2010: Legislative Milestones

73rd and 74th Amendments (1992):

These amendments mandated the reservation of one-third of the seats in Panchayats and Municipalities for women, significantly enhancing women's participation at the grassroots level.

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001):

This policy aimed at the advancement, development, and empowerment of women in all spheres of life, laying a comprehensive framework for women's rights.

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005)

This act provided protection to women from domestic violence, a significant step towards ensuring women's safety and dignity.

2010-2020: Progress and Challenges

Women's Reservation Bill:

The Women's Reservation Bill, seeking to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies for women, was passed in the Rajya Sabha in 2010 but this bill could not be passed in the Lok Sabha.

Increased Political Participation:

In the 2019 general elections, the percentage of women in the Lok Sabha increased to 14.4%, the highest since independence. However, this was still far from proportional representation.

Social Movements:

Movements like MeToo in India brought attention to issues of sexual harassment and violence against women, influencing public discourse and policy.

constitutional provision of women empowerment in india:

Dr. Bhimrao ambedkar played an important role for ensuring social justice in India and made a several constitutional provisions for women such as-

Article(14) Guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of laws within the territory of India.

Article(15) Prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

Article15(3) Allows the state to make special provisions for women and children, thereby recognizing the need for affirmative action to achieve gender equality.

Article(16) Ensures the equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.

Article(23) Prohibits trafficking of human beings and forced labor.

Article39(A) Directs the state to ensure that men and women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.

Article39(d) Mandates equal pay for equal work.

Article(42) Directs the state to make provision for just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

Article243(d) and **243(t)** Provide for the reservation for seats for women in panchayats and municipalities, respectively ensuring their participation in local governance.

Women present condition in current scenario:

In politics-

Ambedkar vision of women empowerment has been taken forward by the government from time to time and policies have been made such as National Policy for the Empowerment of Women(2001), Women's Reservation Bill 2023 reserves one third of all seats for women in lok sabha, state legislative assembly of the national capital territory of Delhi including those reserves for SCs and STs. Some states have gone beyond the constitutional requirements and increased the reservation for women to 50%. States like andhra pradesh, Bihar, chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh etc have implemented this in local bodies. After these efforts The political condition of women in India has seen some progress over the years as female voter turnout has increased but significant challenges remain. According to Inter parliamentary union data, as of 2023 India ranks 148th out of 193 countries in terms of women's representation in national parliament. Recently in the 18th lok sabha election 2024, a total of 74 women out of 543 candidates have won the lok sabha elections consisting of only 13.6% of total members.

In bureaucracy-

Women's participation is low for several public services jobs at the center and the state. In the Indian Administrative System, women accounted for approximately 13% of the officers in 2020 as of recent data.

Key challenges:

1) **Patriarchal society-** Traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms often restrict women's participation in politics.

2) **Social attitudes and stereotypes-** There is a prevalent belief that politics is a male domain. Women in politics often face stereotypes questioning their capabilities and leadership qualities.

- 3) **Violence and harassment**- women in politics are subjected to gender-based violence, harassment, threats both offline and online.
- 4) **Financial constraints**- Economic dependence on male family members can restrict women's political ambitions and abilities.
- 5) **Education**- Although there has been significant progress in female literacy and education in India, disparities still exist, particularly in rural areas and among marginalized communities. Limiting access to quality education can hinder women's ability to compete for public sector jobs.

Conclusion:

At last we have come to the conclusion that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's contributions to the political empowerment of women in India are profound and enduring. His vision for an inclusive society, where women enjoy equal rights and opportunities, has shaped the legislative and social landscape of modern India. While significant progress has been made, Ambedkar's legacy reminds us that the pursuit of gender equality is an ongoing journey that requires unwavering commitment and action. His life and work continue to inspire generations of women to fight for their rights and strive for a more just and equitable society. But Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar's vision for women empowerment is still yet to be realized. In any country, the political empowerment of women is generally possible with two routes-the first is to reserve seats for women in legislature by means of legislation and the second is to have provision for quotas for women candidates within political parties while nominating candidates. Besides this we should strengthen legal frameworks, promote internal democracy, implement gender sensitive policies, provide leadership training programs, implement policies to enhance women's economic independence etc.