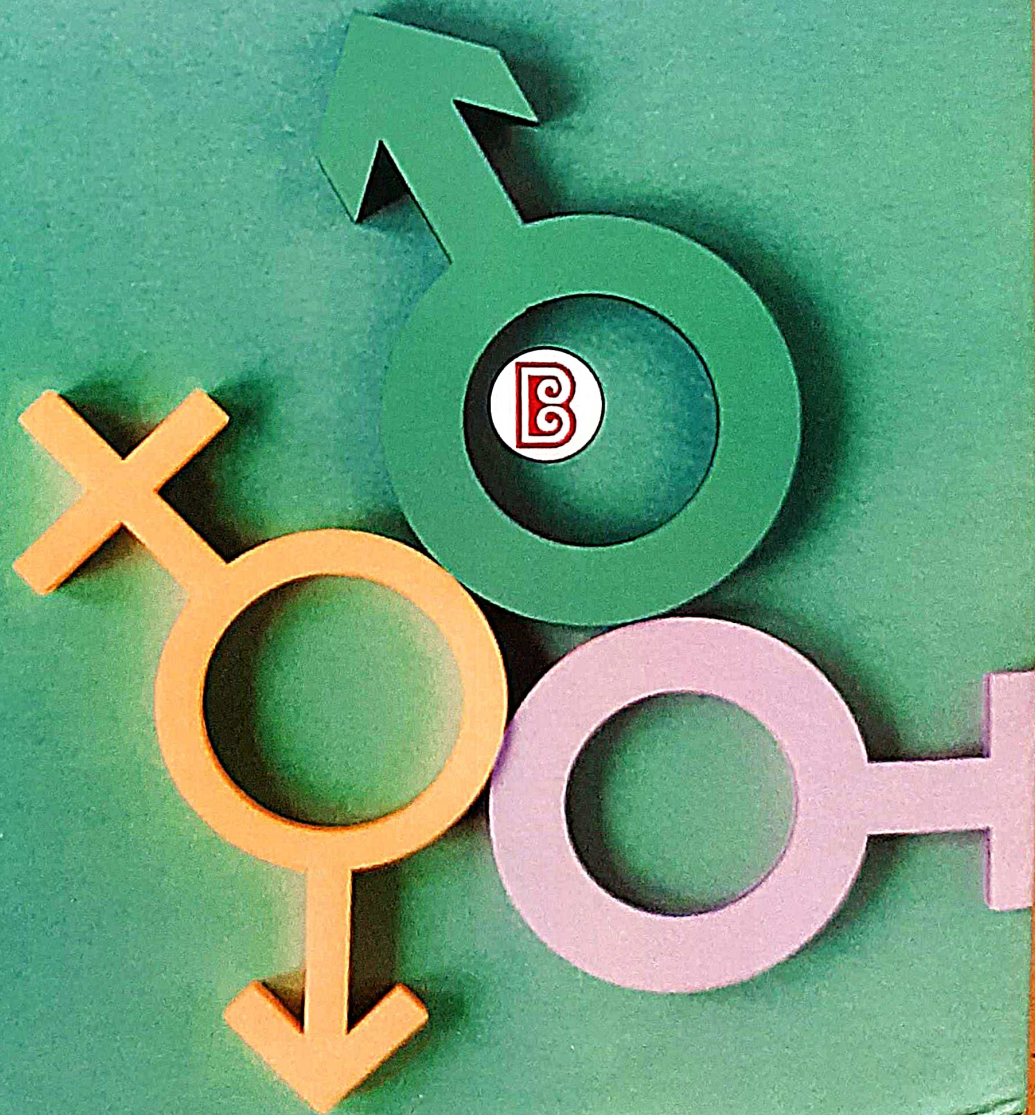
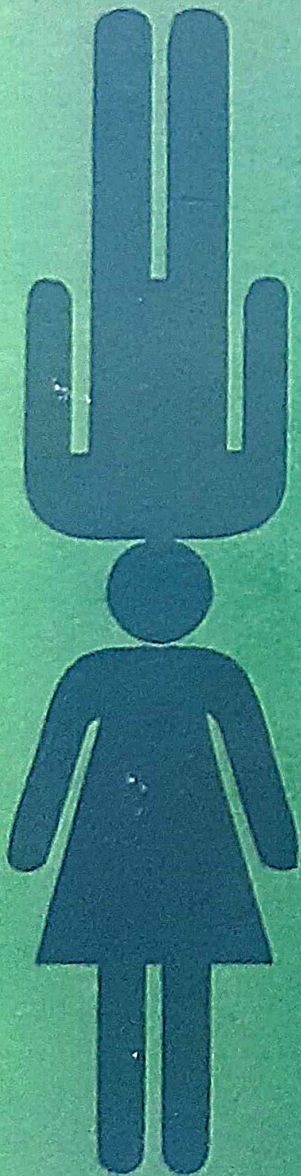


Integrating Gender Discourse Across **Disciplines**

Past, Present and Future

Dr. Mahananda C. Dalvi



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**Book Enclave
Jaipur India**

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Gender Sensitisation and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar

Dr. Milind Mane

The history of humanity is characterised by transformations. Civilisations drastically changed from its early position to the today's world. Everything has gone under transformation only one thing is not changed and that is woman's position in society. It was secondary when human being was living in the early stage of his civilisation. Due to some natural responsibilities biologically nature conferred upon women like child bearing; breast feeding, child rearing, menstrual period, menopause, etc. During that period, she is dependent as a female bird has to feed by male bird during egg hatching. Being free from all these biological responsibilities naturally male chose the outside side matters leaving behind female to stick up to family and automatically daily chores became her responsibility. Her position deteriorated which is still the same. In the world of globalisation woman has acquired mastery over each and every field. She has proved her efficiency that she is biologically, physically, psychologically fit and equivalent to her male counterpart to handle both affairs and sometime more efficiently than man. Aparna Mahanta aptly observes in her article, she says:

With higher standards of living and better healthcare, some of the physical barriers to women's physical and mental development caused by gender discrimination have been removed allowing women to prove that their innate capacities for study and self-improvement are in no way inferior to men's. With better education and better health, in advanced industrial countries women's participation in the workforce has gone up. It is nearly 45 per cent in some Nordic

countries. Moreover, women participate in all kinds of work including heavy manual labour and advanced research, be lying the notion female physical or mental inferiority. (4: Jha, Ed: *Femininity and Women Writing*: Author's Press, New Delhi, 2012)

She has proved in the passing time that she is not less than man. Though society burdens her by neglecting her true capacities it is bound to come up the real face of her strength. Nevertheless her position remained secondary in a male-oriented society.

If one thinks about Indian history, it was the Vedic era in which she had enjoyed equal status but after the foreign intrusions and particularly Muslim intrusions her position started to deteriorate and remains secondary. Since last hundred years India is also no exception in regards of its transformations like the world. The last hundred years brought drastic changes in the country which can be divided into two parts, before Independence and after Independence. It was said that India will ruin after Independence due to caste, creed, race, religion, language and regional barriers. But all these proved wrong, India remain united and progressed up to a rapidly progressive country in last few years. It has acquired a prominent position in the international affairs and politics. Of course, the credit goes to its efficient Constitution and its maker Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who was the Chairman of its Drafting Committee upon which the country is progressing and will progress. Bharatratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, father and architect of Indian Constitution was the first law minister of free India. He was a multidisciplinary scholar, a savior of the suppressed classes, a noted jurist, a profound scholar, a daring leader, worldwide famous economist, politician, social reformer and a ray of hope for underprivileged section of Indian society. He is a natural phenomenon to be champion in all these variety of fields over which he proved his mastery. He is unique. His work for women empowerment for the country and for the world is noteworthy. He thinks that being a human being woman is a part and parcel of human society. If a society consider itself powerful by undermining her it is wrong. Such society is paralysing his body how can it be a whole, he asks. The society which misuses women or use them as a weapon for caste conflicts should not be consider as human society. He says such society's culture remain in interrogation.

Dr. Ambedkar who says, "I measure the progress of country by the degree of progress which woman have achieved". The very sentence witnessed that how he has honourable position for woman folk in his mind. It is majorly discussed about his fighting for the rights of unprivileged class that is *Dalit* for which he had fought throughout his life, his education, his study, his works, his movements and his being

chairman of writing constitution and his hard work for the same. But it is not much discussed about the legal justice or rights which he has conferred upon Indian women. This paper is an attempt to focus the same, how Dr. Ambedkar has waged a long war to get the rights from the traditional mindset (affected by *Manusmirti*) for women to empower her. The woman which one can see today forefront of all the activities in the male dominated patriarchal world. She would have not been on that platform if Dr. Ambedkar would have not been there. A champion of women problems his work proved a launch pad for her to consider 'sky is the limit'. It is said that those who have never seen sunrise is not afraid of to be in darkness or he doesn't have any grudge about her being in darkness. Indian women were groping in darkness from ages as it is considered her ill fortune. The great social reformer Mahatma Phule and his wife Savitribai took pain staking and spine chilling efforts to educate girls apart from a lot of oppose and threatening from high class and privileged society. Dr. Ambedkar to whom he considered Mahatma Phule as his master is one step ahead in his attempts of Phule couple to offer legal rights to Indian women. He had to fight a fearful battle for the same. His contribution always remains ground breaking because if you are provided rights as human being the rights remain non-violated if it has legal protection. By not only providing basic human rights to woman but he has taken full care to not to break it by bringing them in the capacity of law to not to be trespassed by the patriarchal society. He has recommended strict legal action for the trespassers which is considered his significant step towards women's emancipation.

In July 1942, Dr. Ambedkar has given his speech in front of twenty five thousand women in Nagpur Conference, in which he suggested women to educate their children and to make them ambitious by removing the inferiority complexes from their mind. He also suggested to not to make haste of their marriage if you can provide them every possible means of their development which enable them to take responsibility of their marriage then only tie their nuptial knot. He further suggest to the married women not to beget much children which is considered as a national offence. About the relationship between husband and wife, a wife should consider he said, "above all let each girl who marries stand up to her husband claim to her husband's friend and equal and refuse to his slave". He insisted his male followers to bring their women for conferences, meeting and public places to make them aware of outer world to avoid them to lock up in the houses and limit their mentality. He wants to widen the brain and thinking capacity by bringing them in the main stream which the traditional society has been denying from ages to control her.

Dr. Ambedkar told four places of women's discrimination or exploitation by the so-called system they are:

1. Male domination—where she is mere second sex and treated like toy by her male counterpart.
2. Class—where she is exploited on the basis of her financial condition as rich and poor.
3. Caste system—where graded inequality is observed.
4. Racism—where she is discriminated on the basis of race.

Dr. Ambedkar suggested five points to come out of it successfully. It is famous as his *Panchsutri*: (1) Equality between men and women (2) Educate yourself to create knowledge out of it (3) Creation of wealth (4) Encouragement for inter-caste marriages to eradicate caste system (5) Examine the system which has brought inequality in our society.

The suggestions that he has given women to develop their status in society are not only useful for Indian women but women worldwide. He has recommended equal rights through Article Nos. 14 and 15 in the Constitution. In the preamble of the Constitution, the foundation of women empowerment are laid down. He includes women by saying "We, the people of India". During 1942 to 1946, he passed Revolutionary Bill when he was a Labour Minister that is 'equal pay for equal work' according to the sub article D of Article 39 in 1950. While the women in Western countries were facing the discriminations in payment till the recent times Dr. Ambedkar had offered the same much earlier for the women of his country. He is a leader who was thinking ahead of time. He is successful in creating the feeling of 'sky is the limit' among women through self-respecting, self-reliance and being humble.

Thousands of women were participated in Mahad Satyagraha in 1927, where he arranged a separate conference for them in which he addressed women to change their look. He told them to wear saree like high class women fully up to the tow and not up to their knees and to throw away their iron ornaments and of course, not to tattoo their foreheads. These are the indication marks of their identity as lower caste women in society and they become easy target for the discrimination by the so-called society in four Varna system. Inspired by his speech the women went in the nearby fields and came by corrected their sarees and throwing away their iron ornaments as tattoo was impossible for them. Dr. Ambedkar highly appreciated their attitude and offered one rupee coin to each of them as a prize. It is said that many women have still preserved the coin as a matter of pride.

Dr. Ambedkar was elected on Legislative Assembly of Mumbai in 1927. In 1928 he passed the for worker women as Maternity Benefit Bill.

He was the first who insisted for the payable medical leave with as their right. The act was Passed in 1928 with twelve weeks leave.

Dalits have been most marginalised sections of Indian society. Caste has been in India a living reality and throughout historical time caste system has been evolved. It was not always find in the present form as one find it today. None the less it has a very long history in fact as long as Indian history is and since ancient times caste system divided Indian people into four *Varnas*. The lowest *Varna* is considered as *Shudras*. According to Dr. Ambedkar, the lower caste woman is in triple lock being women, being *Dalit* and being poor. She is exploited by the males of her family and society on being women and by upper castes as a *Dalit* and exploited by upper castes as being poor. She is controlled by various means prevalent in the society by the unjust social system like child marriages, spinster marriages (*Jarath* marriage) de-sexualise and head shaving after becoming widow, abandonment, and *Sati*. He always insisted to demolish the control of social system over women.

According to Article 326, he has passed the right for vote to each and every Indian citizen irrespective of sex who has completed his eighteen years of age. The right of vote was not prevalent in British era or pre Independent era.

After a thorough study of Indian society, he had suggested and advocated ideal model of gender sensitisation to develop the status of women in the country in the form of Hindu Code Bill. Influenced and inspired by his master Mahatma Phule he was a true lover of human independence. He opined that any person can lead to progress only if he is in free atmosphere. He believes that if men can enjoy every type of freedom in our society so why not women. Hindu society had bound them in the name of religion, tradition and fatal customs. Initially, he studied Hindu Law veraciously to understand the roots of her subjugation and to root out these bloody traditions to free them from the shackles of complex and rigid social system. Finally, he proposes the reforms in the name of Hindu Code Bill. It consists of:

1. In the order of succession to a deceased Hindu, the Bill seeks to make four changes. One change is that the widow, the daughter, the widow of a pre-deceased son, all are given same rank as the son in the matter of inheritance. In addition to that, the daughter, is also is given share in her father's property; her share is prescribed as half of the son
2. Second change which the Bill makes so far as the female heirs are concerned is that the number of female heirs recognised now is much longer that under either the *Mitakshara* or the *Dayabhaq*.

3. Third change made by the Bill is this that under the old law, whether the *Mitakshara* or the *Dayabhag*, a discrimination was made among female heirs.... All these consideration which led to discrimination in the female heirs are now abolished by Bill. A woman who has a right to inherit gets it by reason of the fact that she is declared to be on heir irrespective of any other consideration.
4. The last change that is made relates to the rule of inheritance in the *Dayabhag*. Under the *Dayabhag*, the father succeeds before in preference to the mother; under the preference Bill the position is altered so that the mother comes before the father.

(6,7: Moon Ed: Govt. of Maharashtra Pub., 1995)

In 1955-56 under the leadership of Nehru, the Parliament has passed four acts of his Hindu Code Bill and still law makers are insisted to follow his footsteps. Someone believes or not Hindu Code Bill brought a drastic change in Hindu society. Flavia Agnes believes the Bill, "was a mile stone in the history of Hindu life and society, and shook the Hindu psyche to a more realistic understanding of the plight of the Hindu women" (2004: 148). The Bill has provided her emancipation in real sense, filled up power in her wings. The woman of India owe a tremendous debt to Ambedkar not only for the manner in which he drew up the Hindu Code Bill but also for bringing to their notice the fact that *Panchayati Raj* at the time would have been disastrous. Morey further opines about the Bill, "The mechanism is satisfactory working and women are now marching towards liberating women and to make them convenient to realise the freedom and to get enforced their Human Rights in real sense, of which they were denied from long ages". (quoted in Chopade (ed) 2017: 240) Today's woman is educated, free, earning and the credit goes to Mahatma Phule. Today's woman knows her rights, she is conscious and awakened. She can fight for her rights; she is able to take political and social stand. She is aware of injustice inflicted upon her and her being powerful to fight against it, all the credit goes to the great leader Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.

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