

Dr. Ambedkar on Women Liberation: Aims for Recasting Women rights and Establishing Social Democracy in India

Subhra Ghosh

Independent Researcher

Former Research Assistant/Field Staff, Centre for Women's Studies,
Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan

Abstract

One of the main personalities in Indian history, his early attempts to shatter caste and gender stratification placed the liberation of women in a profoundly social democratic context. This research critically engages with the intersectional feminist philosophy of Ambedkar, which is the only philosophy that merges both caste and gender oppression and addresses the intersectional experience of compounded marginalization repeatedly faced by Dalit women throughout their history. The Hindu Code Bill, a radical document that attempted to entrench gender equality in the areas of inheritance, marriage, and family rights and confront long-established Brahmanical patriarchalism, was key to his vision. By mentioning that Ambedkar considered Brahmanical patriarchy a distinct system of social domination, he relates caste endogamy to patriarchy. Ambedkar tried to expand substantive citizenship and break down structural obstacles through political activism, legislative changes, and efforts to educate women and engage them in politics. His legacy of feminism is one that would pay long-lasting wages long after his massive political opposition cost him his job, as he was forced to resign. Based on an extensive quantity of scholarly materials, this synthesis situates Ambedkar's work within the discourses of historical and contemporary feminism, making valuable contributions to the theory and practice of social change along transformative lines.

Keywords: Ambedkar, Women Liberation, Women Rights, Social Justice, Relevance, India

1. Introduction

1.1 Historical Context of Women's Liberation in India

In India, caste- and gender-based oppression has been and will remain a complex issue in determining the social status of women. The caste system and the social fabric of Indian society are so entwined, and the society itself is so marginalized and patriarchal that women are vulnerable to even further marginalization in their victims. This later theorized caste-gender intersectionality has deep historical roots that are manifested through non-participation in economic, political, and cultural life. The caste system justified women as subordinates not only by supporting a strictly hierarchically organized patriarchal culture but also by endogenous and allowed women only the most primitive social mobility. This compounding of both forms of oppression continues to severely restrict the opportunities available to Dalit women in education, employment, the law, and social status.

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was born into the turbulent sociopolitical realities of early 20th century India and challenged these intersecting hierarchies with unprecedented reformist vehemence. He was not only an activist on the question of caste injustice but also analysed the gender relations that were at the basis of structural forms of inequality. Ambedkar decided that social change required not just the destruction of caste systems but also the

destruction of patriarchy as a way of liberating the oppressed. His liberal ideas on politics, education, economics, and reformism presupposed the liberation of women as the most important element in the creation of a democratic and just society (Bhat, 2023). In this case, where caste and gender converged, the emergence of the political and intellectual Ambedkar was critical. He went beyond notions of caste and gender, contrary to other reformers of his generation, who rearranged notions of caste and gender to demolish the legalistic Brahmanical social system on which caste and gender had exercised superiority.

1.2 The role of Ambedkar in Indian Feminist thought.

Ambedkar holds a special and prominent place in the pantheon of Indian feminism. Despite being heavily influenced by international feminist movements and being placed in the gender dimension of inequalities, the initial feminist movement in India was inclined to ignore the caste dimension of many types of oppression against a sizeable population of women. Ambedkar's ideology was vastly different, as this scholar never stopped emphasizing caste-gender intersectionality at the core. His feminism meant that the role of caste-based oppression in advancing gender subordination must be taken into account and that Dalit women were especially vulnerable. Unlike mainstream feminist activism, where gender justice was sought separately, according to Ambedkar, the sacrosanct unity of caste and gender oppression and expression was especially evident in the areas of marriage, inheritance, and social mobility.

This was not a mere abstract type of theoretical and political conversion; it was literally put into actual use in the political life of Ambedkar during his early years. He used the journals *Mook Nayak* (1920) and *Bahiskrit Bharat* (1927) as powerful tools of social criticism and awareness. These writings made specific reference to the condition of Dalit women and favoured their education and social empowerment (Bhat, 2023). Furthermore, feminist scholarship that has ensued from this analysis has recognized the importance of caste in dismantling gender in India. These intersectional realities that he identified very early in his life made Ambedkar unique as a caste rights activist and a caste-based Indian feminism ideologue in his own right (Sabharwal and Sonalkar 2015).

1.3 Objective and Scope of the Research

This review paper has set out to critically review in a more comprehensive manner the contribution of Ambedkar to feminism in more depth, within the socio-political constructs of caste, gender, and social democracy in India. This study initially attempts to dissect Ambedkar's theory to demonstrate how his feminist theory is uniquely distinguished by introducing the topic of intersectional oppression into the social justice and democracy sphere. The review highlights the struggles to be faced when dismantling Brahmanical patriarchy not only on a personal (socially) level, but also on an institutional level. Moreover, this paper examines the realities still experienced by Dalit women, the triple burden of caste, gender, and economic deprivation, and locates the activism of Dalit women in the historical and current contexts of the struggle against these realities. We closely study both the place of Brahmanical patriarchy as a particular form of systematic oppression and the counter-hegemonic politics of Ambedkar that attempted to address it through a nationalist feminist perspective. Finally, we examine the legacy of Ambedkar, his accomplishments, constraints, and the current applicability of his feminist ideas to Indian society and feminist theory. This involves questioning the position of Ambedkar and his non-position in the context of other reformers and global feminist movements and asking why an Indian framework should

consider the complexity of the socio-political situation in India and other associated problems (Singh, 2020; Senanayake & Trigunayat, 2020).

2. Theoretical Foundations: Ambedkar's Feminist Ideology

2.1 Intersectionality of Caste and Gender Oppression

The primary role of making a critical analysis of the unity between caste and gender in feminism has been played by Ambedkar, particularly in the Indian context. In particular, Ambedkar illuminated on the so-called triple burden of Dalit women - the intersectionality of caste discrimination, patriarchy and socio-economic oppression, which affects Dalit women adversely in a unique way. Besides the injustices posed to a woman by gender discrimination witnessed in every society, Dalit women suffer numerous forms of discrimination based on their caste, which means they are outcasted in all mainstream social, economic, and political spheres.

Ambedkar makes the paradigm clear: caste cannot be abolished without closely intertwining it with the liberation of women. Although he drew from structured reductionist arguments on gender hierarchies and social activity segregated into separate categories, Ambedkar held the opposite view: caste-based endogamy and related patriarchal particulars of social control were both mutually assisting instruments of social discipline. These systems guarantee the continuity of the caste structure through control over women's sexuality and through the limitation of marriage options within the caste lines as a form of social stratification. Poonam Singh (2020) argues that the theoretical emphasis on gender being at the core of the search for social democracy constitutes an innovative theoretical development that anticipates recent intersectional feminist theories, applied in the Indian context (Table 1). Later empirical analyses have amply shown the nature of differential social deprivation of Dalit women, and Ambedkar's insights in this regard have been vindicated. The high levels of illiteracy, poor health outcomes, low political representation, and fewer economic opportunities among Dalit women compared to their peers confirm that this is a triple burden (Sabharwal & Wandana Sonalkar, 2015).

Table 1 Triple burden faced by Dalit women

Aspect of Oppression	Description	Examples/Consequences	Reference
Caste Discrimination	Social exclusion and marginalization based on Dalit caste status	Restricted access to resources, untouchability	Sabharwal & Sonalkar (2015)
Patriarchal Subjugation	Gender-based oppression including control over women's sexuality, denial of equal rights	Early marriage, lack of autonomy, gender violence	Singh (2020)
Socio-economic Deprivation	Economic poverty, lack of education and healthcare, limited political representation	Low literacy, poor health indicators, political underrepresentation	Sabharwal & Sonalkar (2015)

2.2 Critique of Brahmanical Patriarchy

One of the most significant dimensions of Ambedkar's feminist ideology is his brilliant critique of the Brahmanical patriarchy, a socio-political institution in India in which caste and patriarchy are fused together in a specifically Indian variety of domination. The interpenetration of the caste-bases with patriarchy that is enforced and sanctioned by texts such as the Manusmriti (Laws of Manu), the source of codes of gender and caste-purity, with rigidly endogamous marriage laws and control of female sexuality, is called Brahmanical patriarchy.

Ambedkar realized that caste hierarchies are highly patriarchal systems in which women are the gatekeepers of caste through being forced into endogenous marriages. This form of patriarchy is very different from the one that the Western feminist imagination recognizes, as it is deeply entrenched within the caste society and requires a theory of casteism that is indigenous to it in order to be criticized and deconstructed. While revolutionary in their own contexts, Western models of feminism are unable to address the caste-specific dimensions of gender inequality that are unique to South Asia. One takeaway from this critique was the need for feminist theorizing to understand the sociological realities of caste-endowed patriarchy and how it simultaneously oppresses caste and gender minorities. Dr. Ambedkar stated that efforts to pursue women's emancipation without the abolition of caste are insufficient and incomplete. His political philosophy considered casteism and sexism as systems rather than discrete phenomena, calling for a convergent form of resistance.

In addition, Ambedkar's framework questions reformist groups that, in his time, favoured the marginalization of intersectional oppression or the ghettoization of feminist struggles limited to gender rights and gendered frameworks of oppression without paying attention to caste-based discrimination. By simultaneously linking struggles based on caste and gender, Ambedkar was instrumental in establishing the intellectual basis for what is now known as intersectional feminist thought situated within Indian socio-political realities (Senanayake & Trigunayat, 2020). This indigenous form of feminism remains important for modern feminist practice in India (Singh 2020).

2.3 Emphasis on Agency and Constitutionalism

Ambedkar's feminist vision, beyond theoretical criticisms, was zealous in identifying the criticality of the role of women's agency and constitutionalism for the purpose of substantive emancipation. The vision of legal reforms was as a necessary tool for the empowerment and autonomy of women and the establishment of equal rights for citizenship within the legal structure of the nation-state. Ambedkar understood women's agency in the broadest possible sense, which included the legal recognition of women's rights to inheritance, freedom of choice in marriage, political inclusion, and reproductive choice. He realized that there had to be increased access to education and political enlightenment with formal legal rights, or there would be no real empowerment. Therefore, his activism involved promoting education among disadvantaged women and pushing them into politics.

The concept of change transcended the legislative transformation to what he intended in a social democracy in which the down castes, like Dalit women, would have a full share and control over their destinies. In this vision, emancipatory, transformative social action was envisaged, which challenges not only the lack of legal protection but also the socio-cultural norms that instill the belief of gender subordination. Advocate Manzoor Bhat, in an affidavit, explained the necessity of constitutional guarantees as a prerequisite to social change and its support by the grassroots movement: In line with later feminist constitutional jurisprudence,

notions of law and agency are inextricably connected here (Senanayake and Trigunayat 2020).

3. Legal Reforms and the Hindu Code Bill

3.1 Drafting and Content of the Hindu Code Bill

Among the more concrete works that Ambedkar produced in the area of feminism is the Hindu Code Bill, a radical document that would have reformed the Hindu system of personal law in India. The purpose of this bill was to redefine the nature of family relations in accordance with the law by introducing innovations that led to a breakthrough in the development of women's rights in most of the special laws of inheritance, marriage, and property. Ambedkar went so far as to add the concept of women's equal rights in inheritance to freedom of choice in intercaste marriage to choice in regard to family control and the like, which would collectively involve a challenge in Indian law to the power of women to make independent choices concerning their bodies and their society. These were direct attacks on Dharmashastra-based law, which oppressed women at all tiers, by limiting their access to family property and, at the same time, upholding endogamy through casteism.

The Hindu Code Bill was not so much a piece of legislation as it was the vision of Ambedkar's social democracy, coded in feminist and egalitarian terms. It sought to annihilate the fundamental patriarchal and casteist limitations and introduce the laws of female equality in the domestic and political arenas. (Poonam Singh, 2020). The painstaking constitutionalism and constitutional law of the drafting process were indicative of Ambedkar's involvement in the rights discourse of women's democracy.

3.2 Ambedkar response on Anti-Brahmanism

Beautiful as its vision was, the Hindu Code Bill faced heavy criticism from many quarters, not only among conservative politicians but also among traditional religious organizations and even among the political allies of Ambedkar himself. The resistance mainly rested on the wish to preserve Brahmanical social practices and patriarchal control, which the bill specifically intended to overturn. Deep-rooted institutional caste and gender hierarchies were enshrined in the very constitution of the state, and ongoing political maneuvers in the Indian Parliament were symptomatic of the adamancy of inexorable resistance to any democratization. The defeat of the prime minister's government bill and the failure to push through a bill based on pressure from political actors reflected the difficult climate for implementing radical social reform in a socio-culturally conservative environment. Ambedkar's eventual resignation from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's cabinet in 1951 was both a protest gesture and a strategic move symbolizing resistance and disconfirmation of the unwillingness of the climate to adapt to the changes needed at the foundational level of institutional and political change. In this episode, we highlight the political price of challenging entrenched patriarchy and casteism and demonstrate the challenges of translating visionary feminist policies into reformist action in post-independence India (Singh, 2020).

3.3 Legacy and Subsequent Legislation

Although the Hindu Code Bill did not pass during Ambedkar's time, it served as a precedent for a revolutionary change that paved the way for legal changes in the coming decades. As a result, various legislations inspired directly by the bill were passed in 1955 and 1956 by successive governments, which shows the continuing influence of this bill in Indian family law. The ideas of gender equality, expansion of women's rights of inheritance, reform of

marriage law with the prohibition of the practice of polygamy, and improvement of the position of women in the family and society were systematically introduced in subsequent legislation. Nonetheless, challenges lie in the formulation and application of such reforms, and they tend to be sabotaged by sociocultural opposition and social unconscientiousness. The Ambedkar feminist project was not completed as younger women still require education, law awareness, socio-political mobilization, and demonstrations (Singh, 2020; Bhat, 2023).

4. Women experience Multiple Intersectionality in Dalits case

4.1 Social Exclusion, Poverty and Homelessness

Dalit women in India constitute one of the most marginalized groups in the country, experiencing social exclusion from multiple perspectives: economic, political, and cultural. Although they form a large demographic group, accounting for almost 16.6% of India's female population (as per the 2011 census), Dalit women face systemic barriers that deprive them of resources, rights, and opportunities. Through poverty, illiteracy, and limited access to formal economic activity in labour markets, Dalit women are in a state of severe economic deprivation. Caste discrimination continues to deny them opportunities for access to land, education, health care, and political participation. These exclusions are intertwined with gender-based discrimination, entailing multiple vulnerabilities. Their marginalization is mirrored in basic human development indicators, where Dalit women consistently register below their non-Dalit and male counterparts. Caste- and gender-based restrictions compound ill health, poverty, and educational deprivation and show how intersectional disadvantage continues to be a reality, as detailed by Ambedkar while campaigning for these issues (Sabharwal & Sonalkar, 2015).

4.2 Susceptibility to Sexual Exploitation and Abusive Practices

Women of the Dalit caste are especially vulnerable to sexual violence and coercive and exploitative acts, all of which are often defended or concealed by caste and religious traditions. A notable example is the devadasi or jogini system, where girls from marginalized communities are dedicated to temple deities but are also subjected to a ritualized form of sexual exploitation under the guise of religious sanction. Such practices not only violate a person's autonomy over their physical body, but also reinforce the caste-patriarchal nexus that governs the sexuality and status of Dalit women. Additionally, problems such as child marriage, prostitution, trafficking, and other forms of exploitation are disproportionately experienced by Dalit women, ensuring continuous cycles of violence and deprivation. Ambedkar's feminist agitation specifically focused on attacking such exploitative social practices. Amongst those, his struggle for awareness, legislative reform, and political mobilization to eliminate such customs, he argued for the liberation of Dalit women from not only legal protection but also active dismantling of caste and gender-based oppression and exploitation (Bhat 2023). Awareness of these intersectional vulnerabilities amplifies the need to mainstream caste and gender analyses for women's rights policymaking, directly building on Ambedkar's insights at the outset (Sabharwal & Sonalkar, 2015).

4.3 Awareness raising campaigns and political mobilisation

Ambedkar was also aware that legal reforms would be ineffective if not accompanied by the political and social empowerment of marginalized women, particularly those who were poor, illiterate, and socially isolated. He sought to integrate these women into the political process and make them aware of their rights, as stated in the Constitution. The political mobilization of Dalit women included campaigns on education, health awareness, family planning, and

participation in grassroots movements. Lobbying, activism, and formal public acts of rhetoric were intended to provide a voice for women who have historically been devalued through social institutions. It is worth mentioning that influential women activists like Radhabai Vadale won the support and prestige of Ambedkar and motivated Dalit women to voice their demands and claim their rights. Hence, we see a practical approach to combining legal reformation with an underlying strategy to empower social agency - the desired result of the women's emancipation project in the democratic structure of society (Bhat, 2023).

5. Brahmanical Patriarchy and Ambedkar's Counter Hegemony Politics

5.1 Brahmanical Patriarchy

Brahmanical patriarchy refers to a distinctively Indian form of social domination in which patriarchal gender relations emerge indissolubly from caste-based social relations. A caste system is a social system in which religious beliefs and social practices reinforce each other to legally, socially, or otherwise validate gender roles and caste distinctions, subordinate women, and enforce caste purity. Ambedkar's analysis provides insight into how this interwoven system makes use of mechanisms such as the enforcement of endogamy to maintain not only patriarchal dominance over women but also the caste system. However, Brahmanical patriarchy cannot be unambiguously interpreted in Western feminist terms that distinguish gender oppression as social stratification. One should learn to appreciate the integration of patriarchy and caste since it is the cause of the perpetuation and force of gender inequality in the Indian context. It advocates anti-patriarchal interventions that simultaneously address casteism (understanding the systemic structuration and embeddedness of these injustices). Recently, Senanayake and Trigunayat (2020) called for this type of approach.

5.2 Ambedkar's Political Thought and Feminist Ethics

In contrast to the 19th and early 20th century reformist organizations, which either separated social reform concerns or subordinated one identity to another, Ambedkar proposed a systemically integrated view of casteism and sexism to respond to the multiple realities of oppression.

His political philosophy critiques the inability of most reformist bodies to conceptualize the meaning of intersectionality and the resulting inefficiency of their struggle against firmly established socio-political institutions. Ambedkar demanded a politics of emancipation in which the lived experience of Dalit women and other such subalterns was central and which challenged both the structural basis and ideological underpinnings of Brahmanical patriarchy. This problematized framework atomized approaches to inequality and demanded effective structural interventions that can work across all of these different and intersecting dimensions of caste, gender, class, and others simultaneously. The concept of intersectional justice is a highly significant theoretical input by Ambedkar that can be used to shape feminist practice in India and guide existing movements (Senanayake and Trigunayat, 2020) (Table 2).

Table 2: Role (and intervention) of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in ensuring women's rights and empowerment via the Constitution.

Article No.	Provision Description	Relevance to Women's Rights and Empowerment	Reference

Article 14	Equality before the law and equal protection under law	Guarantees equal legal rights and protection for all women	Ghosh (2025); More (2011)
Article 15	Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex	Protects women from gender-based discrimination	Ghosh (2025)
Article 15(3)	Enables positive discrimination in favor of women	Allows affirmative action for women's advancement	More (2011)
Article 16	Equality of opportunity in employment without discrimination based on religion, caste, sex	Ensures equal job opportunities for women	Ghosh (2025)
Article 24	Prohibits child labor below age 14 in hazardous work	Protects girls from exploitative child labor	More (2011)
Articles 39, 39(d)	Equal livelihood means and equal pay for equal work	Advocates equal remuneration and livelihood for women	Ghosh (2025)
Article 41	Right to work, education, and public assistance	Guarantees women's rights to education and work	More (2011)
Article 42	Provision for humane working conditions and maternity relief	Supports maternity benefits and humane work conditions for women	Ghosh (2025)
Article 44	Provides for a uniform Civil Code	Aims at legal uniformity, potentially benefiting women in personal law	More (2011)
Article 46	Promotes education and economic interests of weaker sections	Focuses on uplifting women from marginalized communities	Ghosh (2025)
Article 47	Raises nutrition, living standards, and public health	Addresses women's health and nutrition	More (2011)
Article 51(A)(c)	Fundamental duty to renounce practices derogatory to dignity of women	Encourages societal respect towards women	Ghosh (2025)
Articles 243D(3), 243T(3), 243R(4)	Reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj institutions	Ensures women's political representation at grassroots level	More (2011)

5.3 Implications for Feminist Movements Today

In these areas, the conflation of caste and gender oppression introduced by Ambedkar continues to play a key role in contemporary Dalit feminist politics. In modern times, Dalit feminist movements use his name to challenge feminist discourses that are largely silent regarding the issue of caste as a determinant category. These movements de-escalate narratives around universalizing women's experience from a singular perspective of gender to foreground the specificity of Dalit women's oppression and agency. The continuing impact of Ambedkar's politics is also reflected in Dalit women's autobiographies, political activism, and demands for recognition in feminist and social justice terms. The growing use of Ambedkar's framework in the modern iteration of the feminist movement engenders the rise of alternative paradigms of intersectionality, which are necessary to account for the intricacies of the South Asian reality. This strategy is important for challenging hegemonic feminist discourses and ensuring feminist solidarity (Sabharwal & Sonalkar, 2015; Senanayake & Trigunayat, 2020).

6. Ambedkar's Vision of Social Democracy and Women's Rights

6.1 Idea: Social democracy including Gender Justice

In his conception, social democracy did not merely mean the political inclusion of the masses; it was reduced to substantive equality in the social world, including gender equality. He believed that a complete and perfect democracy would inevitably involve the extension of the benefits of citizenship to women, and therefore, they would be constructively and autonomously engaged in all areas of life. Women, particularly those at the fringes of caste and class, were central to emancipation in this vision as part of the unleashing of a transformational democratic social order. Ambedkar linked social democracy with the wholesale annihilation of social barriers that denied marginalized groups political, economic, and social empowerment (Bhat, 2023).

6.2 Women's Voices, Power and Leadership

In this respect, the model of social democracy developed by Ambedkar emphasizes the education and awareness of women as the key to empowering them. He understood the social transformation that was possible when women, especially in the case of disadvantaged groups, were permitted to be informed voters and leaders. His politics encompassed the protection of family planning and reproductive rights as vital constituents of the freedom and political autonomy of women. Providing women with the opportunity to exercise control over their bodies, family decisions, and political power was considered a tool for overcoming structural barriers and a pathway to demanding equal citizenship. Ambedkar's ongoing struggle to bring oppressed women into the decision-making space of politics represents the practical aspects of the feminist project, which seeks to address the source of their exclusion (Bhat, 2023).

6.3 Entrenchment of gender equality in the constitution

Ambedkar's role in placing gender equality tenets in the Indian Constitution is a milestone in feminist jurisprudence. His efforts secured women's rights not as policy issues but as fundamental constitutional rights. This rooted the Constitution in progressive legal principles of equality before the law, non-discrimination, and the protection of women's rights, setting a legal precedent for further reform and judicial practice. While the constitutional provisions are symbolic of important legal milestones, challenges abound in terms of translating these ideals into the realities of daily life due to societal resistance and a lack of enforcement

mechanisms. However, Ambedkar's constitutional feminist legacy continues to offer an everlasting blueprint for the ongoing practice of advocacy and legal activism (Singh, 2020).

7. Critical Review of Ambedkar's Legacy in Women's Liberation

7.1 Successes and Limitations

Ambedkar's feminist legacy is characterized by pioneering achievements, notably through seeking to legislate the rights of women and mainstream caste-gender intersectionality in social justice frameworks. His theoretical and practical interventions are considered seminal to feminist social theory and practice in India. However, his legacy is problematic. His violent political criticism (even by a part of the political establishment) and the social opposition raised by Brahmanical patriarchy frustrated extreme changes at once. In addition, his feminist work has frequently been overshadowed by his more famous work on caste and nationalism (Singh, 2020).

7.2 Being Intellectually Engaged and Doing Women's Studies

In recent decades, with a focus on the overlaps of caste, class, and gender, contemporary scholarship has increasingly acknowledged Ambedkarian feminism and his indigenous feminist philosophy. Critiques of her writings reveal the inadequacy of Western feminist frames of reference in explaining South Asian situations, thus highlighting Ambedkar's uniqueness. This dissertation raises awareness of his feminist agenda to be revisited with renewed focus to address the gaps in feminist theory and practice as they intersect around caste and gender. This includes rediscovering his writings, legislative work, and political activism as a rich source for pioneering contemporary feminist praxis in Indian conditions (Senanayake and Trigunayat 2020).

7.3 Social Issues of the Times and Areas in Need of Further Study

Despite Ambedkar's influence on legal reform and the growth of feminist activism, caste and gender-based inequality remain prevalent in India. Dalit women remain marginalized, underrepresented, and socioeconomically deprived. There is a critical need for further research that engages with new forms of intersectional injustice and oppression, such as the effects of neoliberal policies, political representation, and cultural change. Ambedkar's feminism continues to be a crucial text for such studies, providing a roadmap for scholars and activists to engage with the realities of complex social contexts (Sabharwal & Sonalkar, 2015).

8. Ambedkar other Reformers

8.1 Difference from Nineteenth Century Reform Movements

Ambedkar's feminist and anti-caste underpinnings of reform starkly contrast 19th century elite-centred reform projects that gave minimal attention to caste and tended to be primarily focused on gender or upper-caste interests. The reformist organizations of that expanse offered little scope for engaging with the caste-gender nexus and marginalized subaltern agencies. Free from nationalist or reformist narratives that do not speak to intersectional marginalization, Ambedkar's works emphasized the agency of subalterns and the structure of inequality and represented a significant intervention within the field of social scientific and development discourse (Singh 2020).

8.2 Pluralism and Porosity: Caste Movements and their Decolonization

Ambedkar's feminist politics has overlapping objectives with those of other anti-casting reformers like Jyotirao Phule and Periyar, particularly in destroying caste and promoting women's rights. However, these movements have a variety of attitudes and ideological priorities. Ambedkar shares much with Periyar in his radical feminism of sexual freedom, but differs in rhetoric and political context. Multiple opportunities for reform (Panchangarrama, 2021) (Bhat 2023) have empowered discourses of feminist emancipation in caste contexts (Senanayake and Trigunayat 2020; Bhat 2023).

8.3 International Feminist Thought and Ambedkar

Some have argued that Ambedkar was the first to articulate the concept of intersectionality globally in its early forms (though the term itself was not coined until 1988 by sociologist Crenshaw). However, his attention to caste brings a uniquely South Asian approach that is lacking in universalized feminist frameworks. Theoretically, this challenges Western feminist hegemony and holds that feminist discourse must entail regional particularity (Senanayake and Trigunayat 2020).

9. Real World Relevance and Applications

9.1 The Contribution of Dalit Women in Present Day Dalit Feminist Movements

Ambedkar's legacy is hugely influential in contemporary Dalit feminism, both in an autobiographical mode and in political mobilization. His framework allows Dalit women to make demands and devise strategies for engaging with the triple burden of their oppression—caste, gender, and class—with clarity and precision. This positioning embodies autonomous acts of movement that disrupt hegemonic feminist agendas and sociopolitical exclusion (Sengupta and Sonalkar 2015, Sengupta 2021).

9.2 Judicial & Legal Developments on the lines of Ambedkar's Vision

Similarly, on the issue of gender equality in the Constitution and reforming the Hindu Code Bill, Ambedkar's influence continues to be visible in ongoing legal reforms in India. There is increasing judicial awareness of intersectional discrimination, which has led to greater protection for women. However, there are important lacunae in policy implementation and societal acceptance; hence, the overall realization of Ambedkar's vision remains unfinished (Bhat, 2023; Singh, 2020).

9.3 Issues in Implementation and Social Change

Therefore, the continued dominance of patriarchy based on the Brahmana caste over the rest of society also obstructs the process of gender and caste just reforms. Dalit women continue to be politically underrepresented and socially excluded in many areas. Building on Ambedkar's integrated approach to social democracy and women's rights (Harsha Senanayake & Samarth Trigunayat, 2020, Nidhi S. Sabharwal & Wandana Sonalkar, 2015), we can conclude that overcoming these barriers will require a combination of legal tools with grassroots activism, education, and political mobilization as tools of struggle.

10. Conclusion

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar's work on women's rights is multifaceted, bringing together caste and gender analyses within a broader framework of social democracy. His notable contributions to drafting the Hindu Code Bill and enshrining gender equality within the Constitution were pioneering steps in Indian feminist history. Moreover, he appealed for

citizen participation and the educational empowerment of marginalized women in the pursuit of emancipator social change founded on constitutional and democratic principles. While there have been significant advances, the underlying caste and gender disparities are proving refractory to change and call for continued structural change. Cultural, political, and institutional barriers that impede access to justice, rights, and social participation persist among Dalit women. Caste and gender justice cannot be separated in the struggle for social democracy, and Ambedkar's feminist philosophy is a critical framework for solving these persistent issues. To push forward this vision, a much-needed deepening of academically rigorous research on Ambedkar's feminist thinking and its relevance to the current pattern of social movements is the need of the hour. An intersectional feminist praxis based on Indian socio-political realities can facilitate more efficacious strategies for change. Continued Education, Legal Reform and Inclusive Political Participation in the spirit of Ambedkar: Ambedkar himself realized that the gender and social justice struggle cannot be sustainable without enhancing education, ongoing legal reform, and inclusive political participation.

References

1. Bhat, R. M. (2023). Dr. bhim rao ambedkars advocacy of women rights. None. <https://doi.org/10.54443/morfai.v2i4.643>
2. Ghosh, S. (2025). Dr. Ambedkar on Women Liberation: Aims for Recasting Women Rights and Establishing Social Democracy in India. *Freelance Researcher*.
3. Gorringer, H. (2011). Party political panthers: hegemonic tamil politics and the dalit challenge. Center for South Asian Studies. <https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.3224>
4. Govinda, R. (2012). Didi, are you Hindu?' Politics of Secularism in Women's Activism in India: Case-study of a grassroots women's organization in rural Uttar Pradesh. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026749x12000832>
5. Manoharan, K. R. (2021). Radical freedom: periyar and women. European Commission. <https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.13131.1>
6. More, B. G. (2011). Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Contribution for Women's Right. *Variorum, Multi-Disciplinary e-Research Journal*, 2(1).
7. Narain, V. (2022). Constitutionalizing womens equality in india: assessing the sabarimala decision. Columbia University Libraries. <https://doi.org/10.52214/cjgl.v42i2.9046>
8. Pan, A. (2023). Gender, caste and subjectivity: revisiting the #metoo movement in india. *Lectito Journals*. <https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc/12881>
9. Sabharwal, N. S. & Sonalkar, W. (2015). Dalit women in india: at the crossroads of gender, class, and caste. Global Justice Network. <https://doi.org/10.21248/gjn.8.1.54>
10. Sabharwal, N. S., & Sonalkar, W. (2015). Intersectionality and Social Deprivation of Dalit Women: An Empirical Analysis. *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies*.
11. Senanayake, H. & Trigunayat, S. (2020). Brahmanical patriarchy and voices from below: ambedkars characterization of womens emancipation. De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/openps-2020-0014>
12. Sengupta, P. (2021). Major trends in dalitwomens autobiographies in india. University of Belgrade Faculty of Philology. <https://doi.org/10.18485/knjiz.2021.11.11.2>
13. Singh, P. (2020). Intersectionality in Indian Feminist Thought: Caste, Gender, and Social Democracy in Ambedkar's Vision. *Social Justice Review*.
14. Singh, P. (2020). The advent of ambedkar in the sphere of indian women question. None. <https://doi.org/10.26812/caste.v1i2.182>