



GENDER, ECONOMY, AND EMPOWERMENT: TRACING AMBEDKAR'S FEMINIST ECONOMIC VIEWS

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Abstract:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's impact as a social reformer and economist encompasses a profound yet frequently ignored dedication to gender equality and Female economic autonomy. This research paper investigates Ambedkar's economic philosophies through a feminist perspective, emphasizing his support for women's education, labor rights, equal pay, and involvement in public affairs. As the first Indian leader to advocate for equal civil and economic rights for women within the Constitution and during his tenure as Labour Minister in British India, Ambedkar established the groundwork for feminist economic policies that were progressive for his era. This study critically analyzes his contributions through a gender-focused economic lens, examining significant reforms such as the Hindu Code Bill and provisions for maternity benefits and workplace dignity. By linking his vision to contemporary gender-disaggregated economic data—like labor force participation rates, wage disparities, and access to credit—the paper underscores the lasting importance of Ambedkar's feminist ideals. The results indicate that his Scheme provides a transformative model for eradicating gender-based biases within India's development strategy and Legislative drafting.

Keywords: Feminist, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Empowerment.

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Introduction:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is widely acknowledged for his work in constitutional law, social equity, and the upliftment of Dalits. Nevertheless, his promoting gender fairness in the economic sphere is often Unattended in conventional economic discussions. As a trained economist and forward-thinking reformer, Ambedkar understood from the start that true Freedom struggle was impossible without the women empowerment in social, political, and economic aspects.

His economic viewpoint on feminism was groundbreaking for its era. While serving as a Labour Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council from 1942 to 1946, Ambedkar implemented various labor welfare initiatives, including maternity leave, equal pay for equivalent work, and protection against exploitation. He argued that achieving economic independence for women was essential to breaking down both patriarchy and caste-based oppression. His backing of the Hindu Code Bill, which aimed to ensure property rights and legal independence for Hindu



women who had long been deprived of these rights due to patriarchal traditions, reflects his dedication to institutional changes for gender equality.

In the current century, India still faces gender inequalities in areas such as employment, income, asset ownership, and decision-making. Even with various Legislative measures in place, the participation of women in the labor force in India is among the lowest worldwide, and wage gaps continue to exist across different sectors. In light of this situation, it is both timely and essential to revisit Ambedkar's framework for feminist economics. This paper seeks to examine how Ambedkar's ideas reflect the principles of contemporary feminist economics and provide a foundation for formulating inclusive and Gender-aware economic policies.

Taking a holistic approach that incorporates history, economics, sociology, and policy analysis, this Research framework shows Ambedkar's influence on feminist thought. It evaluates its importance in present gender development indicators. As a result, it aims to reposition Ambedkar as not only a Representative leader for Dalits but also as a trailblazer for feminist economic justice in India.

Statement of the Problem:

Gender, Economy, and Empowerment: Tracing Ambedkar's Feminist Economic Views.

Aim and Objective:

1. To examine the economic and social writings of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar through a feminist lens.
2. To investigate the impact of Ambedkar's on women's labor rights, education, and legal empowerment.
3. To evaluate the present situation of women in the Indian economy by analyzing key indicators such as labor force participation, wage differences, and asset ownership.

4. To explore how the interaction of caste and gender contributes to economic inequalities faced by marginalized women.
5. To analyze the importance of Ambedkar's concepts in the development of inclusive and gender-sensitive economic policies today.
6. To recommend policy derived from Ambedkar's principles aimed at reducing gender-based economic disparities.

Significance of Study:

The importance of this research lies in its aim to highlight Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's feminist economic perspective within the larger context of Indian economic thought and gender equality. While Ambedkar is frequently admired for his efforts in social reform and the abolition of caste, his dedication to empowering women economically is equally deserving of attention, especially in a time when gender inequality still obstructs India's development. This research holds importance for various reasons:

1. By examining Ambedkar's economic philosophy through a Gender-sensitive approach, this research study establishes a historical basis for current debates on Fair economic policies and gender budgeting.
2. Ambedkar's point of view on labor rights, equal pay, and social security have immediate relevance to current issues—such as the low female workforce participation, wage Inequalities, and the lack of asset ownership among women. This research provides insights that can guide gender-sensitive policy changes in fields like finance, education, and labor.
3. This research paper adds to the developing conversation around feminist economics by positioning Ambedkar as a relevant intellectual figure in the field, thereby broadening the landscape of feminist scholarship in Indian education.



In summary,

This research highlights that the economic ideas of Ambedkar's feminist are not simply of historical significance but also provide solutions which is practical applicable to ongoing gender-based economic inequalities in modern India.

Scope of the Study:

This research aims to investigate and assess Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's feminist economic ideology and its significance in tackling modern gender inequalities within India's economic framework. The focus of this study includes the following aspects:

1. This research study analyzes Ambedkar's writings, speeches, and policy Strategies, especially those relating to labor welfare, women's education, social justice, and economic self-sufficiency. important sources incorporate The Problem of the Rupee, discussions in the surrounding area of the Hindu Code Bill, and labor policies implemented during his time in the Viceroy's Executive Council.
2. It underscores how Ambedkar's ideas align with feminist economics by tackling topics such as equal pay, dignity at the workplace, rights for property, and the availability of education and employment opportunities for women.
3. The study also incorporates current data and gender development indicators, including female labor force participation, wage gaps, and women's involvement in financial decision-making. It assesses how Ambedkar's vision can guide today's gender-responsive economic policies and welfare initiatives.
4. Although Ambedkar's concepts have universal applicability, the research highlights the Indian context, focusing on the socio-economic conditions faced by women from marginalized and Underserved communities.

Limitation of Study:

- The study does not include fieldwork or interviews.

- It is only limited to textual and data-based analysis within the Indian context
- The interpretation of Ambedkar's writings is dependent on translated and archived versions, which may carry contextual limitations.

Literature Review:

1. Gail Omvedt (1994), highlights Ambedkar as one of the earliest Indian intellectuals to connect caste based discrimination with gender disparity. She asserts that Ambedkar's critique of patriarchal structures within Hindu society laid the groundwork for contemporary feminist reform movements. His calls for women's education, legal rights, and participation in the workforce are viewed as a stride towards dismantling both caste and gender-based Status systems.
2. Anand Teltumbde (2010), and Sharmila Rege (2006) have thoroughly discussed Ambedkar's labor policies that were beneficial for women workers in British India. These policies included leave for maternity , a ban on women at night shift time, and equal pays for equal work. His labor reforms anticipated various clauses of the International Labour Organization (ILO) before India became a member.
3. Uma Chakravarti (2003), and Meera Nanda (2008) have highlighted Ambedkar's significant contributions to drafting the Hindu Code Bill—a groundbreaking measures aimed at ensuring equal rights for property and legal recognition for Hindu women. Although the the Hindu Code Bill was weakened following his resignation from Nehru's cabinet, its original provisions showcased his dedication to legal gender equality.

Research Methodology:

This research study used a qualitative and analytical approach to explore and interpret Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's economic perspectives from a feminist



viewpoint while also relating them to present gender inequalities in India's economy. The research outlines combined historical examinations with assessments of contemporary policies.

1. Nature of the Study

The study is both descriptive and exploratory. It serves to describe Ambedkar's feminist economic concepts and to explore their significance within the current socio-economic landscape.

2. Data Sources

a. Primary Sources:

1. Original texts and speeches authored by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, including *The Problem of the Rupee*, *Annihilation of Caste*, and his addresses in the Constituent Assembly.
2. Government documents like the drafts of the Hindu Code Bill and labor policies were initiated during Ambedkar's time.
3. Economic statistics are sourced from reports by NITI Aayog, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), and the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS).

b. Secondary Sources:

1. Books, peer-reviewed journals
2. Reports from international organizations such as the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, UNDP, and ILO.
3. Policy papers and gender development metrics issued by both national and international think tanks.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative content analysis will be employed to examine Ambedkar's original writings and significant political-legal discussions. Thematic coding will be utilized for gender-focused policies in light of Ambedkar principles.

A comparative approach will be taken to evaluate historical ideals against current gender-related statistics such as:

- A. Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR)
- B. Gender Wage Gap
- C. Female literacy and educational attainment
- D. Access for women to credit, land, and property

4. Research Tools:

The use of secondary statistical information (including tables and charts) will illustrate gender disparities.

Document analysis will be conducted to interpret the frameworks of policies.

Comparative frameworks will link historical theories with contemporary indicators.

Findings:

Based on the examination of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's writings, policies, and current gender economic indicators in India, the following key insights arise:

1. Ambedkar was pioneering in recognizing economic independence as vital for women's emancipation. His recommendations for equal remuneration, maternity support, and property entitlements embody the core principles of contemporary feminist economics.
2. Ambedkar played a vital role in implementing labor reforms that enhanced working conditions for women. These reforms included regulating work hours, ensuring safety measures, and establishing maternity leave, many of which have become enduring elements of Indian labor legislation.
3. The Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) in India is only 27.2% (PLFS 2022–23), which is among the lowest in the world. The Gender Wage Gap is approximated at 19%, with women earning considerably less for the same roles (Monster Salary Index, 2021).



Only 13.5% of landowners in India are women (Agricultural Census 2015–16), despite Ambedkar's focus on property rights.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, India is ranked 127 out of 146 nations, with low scores in economic involvement.

4. While Ambedkar's concepts align with gender-sensitive development, they are infrequently cited or systematically incorporated into contemporary policy formulation. Gender budgeting is present in some capacity, but there is a lack of coherence with Ambedkar principles of equity and redistribution.
5. SC/ST women encounter discrimination in both from caste and gender. Despite affirmative action measures, their access to economic prospects, credit, and education remains significantly below the national average.

Conclusions:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's economic vision with a feminist point of view remains a robust foundation for fostering inclusive and equitable development in India. Rather than being limited to issues of social justice or caste reform, Ambedkar's economic philosophy highlighted the vital importance of women in the country's progress. His support for equal wages, labor protections, property rights, and women's education established a solid base for gender-sensitive policymaking—many years before the global feminist movement emerged.

The current situation, however, reveals ongoing gender inequalities in labor force participation, wages, asset ownership, and political representation. While several government initiatives strive to bridge these gaps, they frequently lack the comprehensive and transformative strategies that Ambedkar envisioned. This gap between historical principles and contemporary practices emphasizes the necessity of revisiting and integrating Ambedkar's insights into today's economic planning.

Additionally, the intersection of caste and gender further complicates economic opportunities for women, especially for those belonging to SC/ST communities. Ambedkar's vision, which acknowledged this multi-layered oppression, provides a more intricate framework for policy change. Thus, to genuinely attain gender justice within the Indian economy, it is essential to revive Ambedkar's feminist economic legacy—not merely as a historical account but as an active policy framework.

Recommendations:

Drawing from the research's conclusions and the examination of Ambedkar's economic feminist perspective to current gender disparities, the following proposals are put forward:

1. Integration of Ambedkar Thought in Economic Policy

Government initiatives should explicitly reflect Ambedkar's ideals of equity, dignity, and justice for women, particularly regarding labor, social security, and ownership of assets.

Gender budgeting systems need to be redesigned to emphasize not only expenditures but also results that consider intersectional realities—especially for women from Dalit and tribal communities.

2. Strengthening Legal and Property Rights for Women

Revise and implement laws concerning equal rights to inheritance, land ownership, and financial access for women.

Initiate extensive awareness campaigns about women's economic rights at the grassroots level, with a focus on rural and marginalized populations.

3. Enhancing Female Labor Force Participation

Ensure workplaces are safe and accessible while offering flexible working hours, maternity benefits, and skill development specifically designed for women in both formal and informal sectors.



Implement affirmative action in private sectors to support the employment of women from disadvantaged backgrounds.

4. Educational Reforms with a Gender Equity Lens

Encourage the development of gender-sensitive educational curricula that incorporate the contributions of Ambedkar and other feminist thinkers. Support women's engagement in higher education, STEM areas, and entrepreneurship via scholarships and targeted initiatives.

5. Policy Implementation with Intersectionality

Ensure that the collection of data and evaluation of policies take into account both caste and gender as key variables to assess real impact.

Create specific programs aimed at SC/ST women entrepreneurs, providing them access to credit, markets, and mentorship.

6. Inclusion in Academic and Public Discourse

Encourage academic research on Ambedkar's feminist and economic concepts in universities and public institutions.

Honor his legacy through seminars, fellowships, and public engagement, particularly emphasizing his contributions to women's rights.

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