



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## NON-BRAHMIN FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE IN INDIA: A STUDY OF MAHATMA PHULE, RAJARSHI CHHATRAPATI SHAHU MAHARAJ AND DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR

**Dr. Neha Nitin Wadekar**

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science

Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India

**Abstract:** Broadly speaking we see three main perspectives of feminism in India such as Liberal feminist perspective, Gandhian feminist perspective, non-Brahmin feminist perspective. With the social religious movements of the 19th century came concerns about feminist issues and the pursuit of civil, political, and religious rights which can be named as liberal perspective. The equality of men and women and their complementary nature are the main thrusts of the Gandhian point of view argument. has a unique perspective on understanding feminist issues. The non-brahmin feminist perspective drew attention to the fact that for the actual exercise of rights and freedoms it is not enough to simply assume the innate equality of men and women, but rather equality should be shared between different caste communities and women. The paper begins with the introduction of various feminist perspectives in India. However, this study primarily focuses on the contributions of non-Brahmin feminist perspective especially contributions of Mahatma Phule, Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The analytical framework contains.

**Index Terms - Feminism, Liberal, Gandhian, Non-Brahmin.**

### I. INTRODUCTION

Feminism in India (Feminism in India) is a group of movements that aims to define, protect, strengthen and defend equal rights and opportunities for women in India in all spheres of life such as politics, economy and society. Like feminists around the world, feminists in India strive to promote women's rights and gender equality. The patriarchal structures of Indian culture, including dowry and child marriage, forced widowhood, and sati, were also challenged by Indian feminists. Unlike Western feminism, Indian feminism was started by men and women who merged later.

The feminist movement, initiated by social reformers, did not progress uniformly, or in the same direction across the country. The Indian feminist movement can be analyzed in three stages. The first step was the liberation of women from slavery, which was motivated by male reformers' backing. The second is the age of women and awareness, while the third is that of the age where women have freedom.

Broadly speaking we see three main perspectives of feminism in India such as Liberal feminist perspective, Gandhian feminist perspective, non-Brahmin feminist perspective.

With the social religious movements of the 19th century came concerns about feminist issues and the pursuit of civil, political, and religious rights which can be named as liberal perspective. However, this was due to the influence of Western values such as freedom, equality and fraternity and the liberal ideology created by these values. Because of this influence, the Indian script has experienced waves of contemporary political reflection. Issues such as the religious subordinate position of women, their socio-economic and sexual exploitation through religious rituals came to the forefront of public debate and the need for socio-religious reforms emerged for the upliftment of women. Social religious reform movements like Paramhansa Sabha, Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and many others tried to draw everyone's attention to women and suffrage. Realizing that women cannot overcome their suffering without religious reforms, these reformers raised their voice against the evil social and religious practices that rejected a woman as a person, violated her status, forced her to become a mother, and enslaved her by materializing her. This great task was undertaken by reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Gopal Hari Deshmukh, Justice Ranade, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, D. K. Karve and many others. They tried to spread ideas about women's education and equality throughout the country. However, the liberal feminist perspective was elitist in nature and influenced by colonial and national politics. Feminist thought and movement did not aim to eliminate patriarchy; rather, it encouraged the struggle against oppressive, exploitative, misogynistic and inhumane practices. The liberal reform discourse remained the concern of the upper caste, middle class and men.

The equality of men and women and their complementary nature are the main thrusts of the Gandhian point of view argument. has a unique perspective on understanding feminist issues. Apart from Gandhi Vinoba Bhave, Dada Dharmadhikari, Prema Kantak also developed Gandhi's feminist perspective. Gandhi's nature was contemplative, experimental and he advocated emancipatory politics. Gandhi realized that the problems of women have many dimensions such as economic, social, communal, sexual. Gandhi's understanding of women's problems goes beyond the liberal framework, because they were not naive in believing that the issues of equality between men and women and women's emancipation can only be solved by providing equal rights, freedoms and access to society. He believed that for the emancipation of women in its true sense, men must undergo a fundamental change in psychology through Bramhacharya.

The non-Brahmin feminist perspective was led by non-Brahmin social reformers and thinkers such as Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Tarabai Shinde, Savitribai Phule, Vitthal Ramji Shinde, Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar etc. A special cognizance should be taken of the political contemplation by non-Brahmin perspective in reference with gender equality and emancipation of women. This discourse freed feminist issues from the confines of middle-class and upper-caste concerns. Instead of creating a monolithic identity for women, they proposed feminist questions based on the social hierarchy created by the caste system and explained its various dimensions such as caste-related, urban-rural, religious and cultural dimensions. That position drew attention to the fact that for the actual exercise of rights and freedoms it is not enough to simply assume the innate equality of men and women, but rather equality should be shared between different caste communities and women. Otherwise, the rights and freedoms granted by the state remain documents. This perspective conveyed the message that women's freedom and gender equality could not be secured without the destruction of caste. Furthermore, that perspective did not propose feminist questions only in relation to modernization, but carried those questions forward and linked them to democracy. As the non-Brahmin perspective thought and proposed feminist issues not only from a nationalist perspective, their position became more individualistic, and secular and feminist issues became more temporal.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this paper secondary data has been collected from books, journals, articles etc. The Researcher has used analytical, descriptive and comparative method to study the subject.

This paper concentrates on the non-Brahmin feminist perspective and especially contributions of Mahatma Phule, Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. It tries to focus on the arguments of non-Brahmin feminist perspective and its contributions in working for cause of women.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following discussion focuses on the contributions of Mahatma Phule, Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

### 3.1 Mahatma Jyotirao Phule (1827 –1890)

Mahatma Jyotirao Govindrao Phule was a prominent social reformer and thinker of 19th century India. He led the anti-caste discrimination movement in India. He opposed Brahmin rule and fought for the rights of peasants and other low castes and women. Mahatma Jyotirao Govindrao Phule was also a pioneer of women's education in India, for which he fought throughout his life. He was probably the first to establish an orphanage for children with deformities. Jyotirao together with his followers founded the Satyashodhak Samaj. The main goal of this organization was the freedom of the *shudra* and *ati-shudra* and opposition to Brahmin exploitation.

Phule had a great influence on the famous book *The Rights of Man* by Thomas Paine. Phule believed that the enlightenment of women and lower castes could only be the way to human emancipation.

Phule believed that the creator created both men and women equal, so that he argued for the equality of men and women. According to him, the creator created this world, nature, animals and people and then he left and put the responsibility of this world on our shoulders and so our future is in our hands and our choice is to make it more beautiful, fairer, more prosperous and favorable or make it unsafe and violently oppressive and exploitative. (Sumant (2014) 91) The main purpose of the creator was to please all creatures and people, ie. men and women. However, people violated this goal and a handful of people in their selfishness divided this world on the basis of economy, religions and caste system and threw the oppressed men and women into the darkness of slavery. They denied them justice and equality and created inequalities in the social system and therefore the responsibility to change this scenario now rests solely and solely on the people themselves. Thus, with this proposal, Phule first ensures the commitment of the person and makes him fulfill his duty.

He ponders how long we can stay true to the creator's purpose for all men and women to be happy, and asks, are we treating women fairly, equally and humanely? Explaining religious and caste structures, denying women their humanity, he deepens the relationship between religion, caste and the enslavement of women.

He illustrates how women, Shudras and *Atishudras* are exploited by the Brahminical, feudal and colonial structures. Taking a comprehensive and inclusive approach to women's issues by considering the exploitation of women, Phule includes women of all classes, from the Brahmin class to the *Shudratishudra*. In addition, he tries to specify how women have to face exploitation and oppression according to their hierarchical position in the caste system. Thus, we see a vivid analysis of how *shudratishudra* women have to face not only social exploitation but also materialistic and cultural exploitation. We rarely find such comprehensive analysis in his reformist contemporaries.

He aimed to ensure that women and *shudratishudras* had equal opportunities and dignity, and therefore strongly attacked male chauvinism and caste differences. Phule acted with fearless courage. Phule was a strong advocate for women and education, and in that role, he founded Girls' school in Pune in 1851. (Patil 2020) 17) It was the first girls' school founded by an Indian. He trained his wife, Savitribai Phule, who also participated in the project with him. Later he opened two more schools for girls and a school for lower castes, *Mahars* and *Mangs*. He himself taught in these schools.

The patriarchal society of that time was not conducive to the advancement of women. Infanticide was a common consequence of child marriage. In certain cases, young women married men who were much older than them. It was common for

these women to be widowed before they reached puberty and remained without assistance. The challenging circumstances prompted Phule to establish an orphanage and maternity home for women to protect those unfortunate souls from drowning in the cruel hands of society. Additionally, he endeavored to raise awareness among the barber community about the wicked practice of cutting hair of widows. He urged them to strike and terminate this harmful behavior.

In addition to this he stipulated Satyashodhak marriage process to direct men and women towards a way to emancipate themselves from established authoritative family structure. In his magazine '*Satsar*' he has revealed different aspects of women's victimization. He has analyzed how violence from family fundamentally has its origin in male chauvinism and only women become its victims. Thus, Mahatma Phule had a deep and wholesome understanding of women's issues.

### 3.2 Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj ((1874 –1922)

Another stalwart that followed and carried forward Phule's legacy was Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur. Despite being Chhatrapati, the center of power, he followed the path of social reforms. He is also revered as a fighter for the liberation of the oppressed, depressed, exploited and enslaved sections of society. There were very great military reigns in Indian history, but Chhatrapati Shahu was the one who could work for social justice and the upliftment of the oppressed and women who lived like animals and were oppressed by religious and cultural pressures.

Hon'ble Justice G. N. Vaidya, Advocate D. R. Bagade, in the preface of Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and Laws, mentioned that the laws framed by Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj were based on great and noble attitude and modern rationalism, liberalism and optimism. (Bagade (1982) 13, 14). Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur is also revered as the savior of the oppressed, depressed, exploited and enslaved sections of the society. There were great restless kings in Indian history, but Chhatrapati Shahu was the one who could work for social justice and upliftment of the downtrodden, who lived like animals and were oppressed by religious and cultural pressures. Recognizing the needs of the times in the Dark Ages of the 20th century, he worked to create a new society by changing religious and social orthodox norms. He revolutionized many fields such as women's freedom, intermarriage, education, industry and agriculture, etc. he did significant work for women and pushed for reforms.

When Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj was crowned as a king at the that time Lord Haris was Governor of Mumbai and Lord Duffrin was the Viceroy of India.

As regards Chhatrapati Shahu's contribution to women's issues and social and gender justice, he enacted many laws dealing with issues such as protection of women, compulsory education, stance on purdah, widow remarriage and loss of untouchability. When Chhatrapati Shahu came to power, he found that the Bahun Samaj or non-Brahmins and women remained uneducated. He suffered from social, religious and educational rather than political slavery.

Some of his legislations can be referred here which reflect his concerns on political and socio religious issues of women and deprived sections in the society.

Chhatrapati Shahu observed the deplorable condition of women and the oppressed and the reason was lack of education. In addition, he also noted that simply opening schools or educational institutions is not enough to encourage people to study. These efforts must be accompanied by appropriate legislation. Thus, in 1917, he boldly proposed a law on free and compulsory primary education for all, the purpose of which was to make people literate and acquire the ability to improve their condition. Most importantly, he demanded that parents send their children to school and penalized them with six rupees for failing to comply with this obligation. (Bagade (1982) 23). Addressing the All-India Maratha Education Association at Khangaon in 1917, he mentioned that development of any country without education is impossible. An illiterate country will never produce good diplomats and valuable leaders and therefore free and compulsory education is necessary in India. (Bagade (1982)24)

An administration was established by him to execute the educational tasks correctly. he created a separate education department and appointed Raghunath Narayan Apaté as its director. Professor Ramchandra Babachary Panditrao as Inspector of Education and Anant Bhauchary Panditrao and Shridhar Raghunath Vaknkar as Deputy Inspectors of Education. (Patil (2023) 31) also in 1918, he ordered the regional government to cooperate in education. he wanted every village to have a school. However, these schools could not be built immediately. Thus, he gave and ordered on November 23, 1918, that the temples, Dharmshalas, should be used for schools. As a result of the educational work, the literacy rate in Kolhapur province increased by 27% between 1911 and 1921. (Patil, (2023) 32). although there is no mention of the number of women benefiting from the training, it is estimated that around 20% of girls have benefited. (Patil (2023) 32).

Chhatrapati Shahu sympathized with women and felt that women should also be given equal rights to education and efforts should be made in this regard. In 1919, for the spread of women's education, he issued an order that members of the lower castes do not have the habit of care, so that women of those castes who are interested in education can request administration. So they take care of their housing and accommodation. He not only recommended basic education but also encouraged women to pursue higher education. He established a training college for women and made it compulsory for all graduates to teach girls in school and thus tried to meet the needs of female teachers.

As a man of action, he set an example by encouraging Chhatrapati Indumati Ranisaheb, his daughter in law who had lost her husband, to get an education. After completing his education, Chhatrapati Shahu wanted to entrust him with the education department, but unfortunately his premature departure could not take place. (Bagade (1982) 26). However, another example of his benevolence is that he appointed Smt. Rakhmabai Kelavkar as Educational Officer in 1895 when Miss Little resigned. (Bagade (1982) 26) (Patil (2023) 33). This reflects her view of women's education. Empowering Indian women in any position of power was also a milestone.

Chhatrapati Shahu's daughter Radhabai alias Akkasaheb Maharaj married Tukojirao Maharaj of Dewas on 21 March 1908. At that time, the Maharaja of Bhavnagar deposited 3,000 rupees in the Kolhapur treasury at 4% interest and arranged for two scholarships and a gold medal to deserving girls in the Kolhapur girls' school in the name of Akkasaheb Chhatrapati Shahu started scholarships to Maharani Nandkuvar of Bhavnagar from Akkasaheb Maharaj to give brilliant qualities to girls. In this regard, the order states that "Scholarships will be awarded to the first and second girls in the fourth annual Marathi examination for girls from Kolhapur City and Bawda Infantry Schools, while the first three girls from schools outside the city who are the most deserving will receive merit scholarships." A provision of Rs.40 per annum has also been made for these scholarships. In addition to this, a prize of Rs 40 is awarded every year to a well-behaved girl in the name of Akkasaheb Maharaj. It was also decided that the teachers of Ahilyabai Girls' School would be selected there. (Pawar (2016) 591) Chhatrapati Shahu's aim in starting these scholarships was the education and overall development of girls.



As Chhatrapati Shahu insisted on women's education, he provided for the title "Women's Education" in his provincial budget. (Patil 2023, 35). He also gave financial assistance to many students, especially from weaker sections, for their higher education. He also helped girls who wanted to pursue higher education outside the province. The girls from Kolhapur state were admitted to the Hingane Mahila Ashram in Pune. Each of them Rs. 125 costs were assumed. For this Chhatrapati approved Rs. 500 on 3 May 1918. Maharaj helped many educational institutions and student residences outside his province. It includes many organizations like Shivaji Maratha Education Society, Deccan Maratha Education Society, Sant Sena Nabhik Hostel. He donated 15,000 rupees to the Shivaji Maratha Educational Society on February 8, 1921, and the institution named its guest house 'Chhatrapati Tarabai Maratha Boarding House' in accordance with the Maharaja's wishes. (Patil 2023, 36) Consequently, Chhatrapati Shahu expanded funding and aid for women's higher education.

Because of his enthusiasm for the education of girls, Chhatrapati Shahu continued the education of his wife Lakshmbai. Lakshmbai could read and write before her marriage. Chhatrapati Shahu wanted to continue her studies. However, since she belonged to the royal family, he planned her education at home. He appointed Chandrabai as her teacher. Lakshmbai studied under her guidance for 4 hours a day. (Patil (2023) 37). Because of women and education demanded by Chhatrapati Shahu and, all his family members were also very interested in women and education. Chhatrapati Shahu's paternal grandmother Ahilyadevi Ranisaaheb, her daughter Akkasaheb Maharaj, daughter-in-law Indumatidevi also worked for women and education.

Inspired by Phule's idea, he also actively sought to eradicate untouchability. Some significant legislations were passed by him in that regard. He issued ordinances prohibiting caste-based discrimination and untouchability. For all his subjects, it was necessary to treat everyone equally and allow the "untouchables" access to public places such as village ponds and schools. Some of these legislations like "Integration of Untouchable Schools and Untouchable Schools" (1919) Open Access to village wells, rivers, public food places, equal access to public dispensaries (1919), Equal access to offices like Revenue, Judicial offices (1919) etc. may be mentioned here.

The next most important law concerned inter-caste or inter-religious marriages and the sanction of registered marriages. It was passed on 12 July 1919. In fact, Shahu Maharaj influenced similar legislation at the central level, commonly known as the "Patel Bill". This bill was prepared by Vitthalbhai Patel. However, it was opposed by orthodox and conservative leaders like Lokmanya Tilak, Puri Shankaracharya and the religious orthodox of Karveer. Chhatrapati Shahu was not only in favor of the law, but also made the decision to make it a law for his province. (Bagade (1982) 46)

The next law was the Prohibition of Harassment of Women Act which was passed on 2nd August 1919. Chhatrapati Shahu keenly observed his time, so he thought that the spread of education is a very slow process, so we cannot rely on it to reform the society. This should be accompanied by fear of the law. So, he came up with this law that defined cruelty in detail, including physical and mental cruelty. Such cruelty was punishable with imprisonment for six months, or with a fine of two hundred rupees, or in some cases with both. (Bagade (1982) 49)

The progressive traits of Chhatrapati Shahu were evident in his passing laws such as Kolhapur State Divorce Act 1919 and Re-Marriage Registration Act in 1917. In the case of divorce, Chhatrapati Shahu observed that the process of divorce was carried out according to the will of people or caste panchayats. Chhatrapati Shahu, however, believed that if the same situation continued, the society would morally degenerate and the institution of marriage, which is the foundation of a progressive society, would be destroyed, hence he felt the need for such a law. The Remarriage Registration Act of 1917 was also a very important piece of legislation that encouraged and legalized remarriage. Chhatrapati Shahu also made relentless efforts for the remarriage of widows and divorced women and passed the Remarriage Act in 1917 in his province and tried to achieve human rights for women.

The next important law was Devadasi Prohibition Act and Act of Hindu Law Inheritance Amendment Act (1920). In today's society, it was customary to dedicate a little girl to the name of God. The practice was widespread in the lower castes. These women were known as *Jogtin*, *Murali*, *Devadasi*, *Bhavin* etc. Shahu Maharaj tried to ban this cruel tradition. In addition, women who consecrated themselves to God in childhood had to be deprived of the right of inheritance. So Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj came up with a law which gave inheritance rights even to illegitimate children and women consecrated to God or temple like *Jogtin*, *Murli*, *Devadasi*, *Bhavin* etc. (Bagade (1982) 44).

Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj used his power to uplift the downtrodden and women. He was convinced that the unequal social structure, socio-religious bad practices, patriarchy prevent the unification of society and their removal is a very important task. So, he tried to use his power to create the corresponding laws. Thus, all his efforts were aimed at creating an equal society.

### 3.3 Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891 – 1956)

Another great follower of this broad perspective is Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar agreed to social reform at two levels: one at the level of the Hindu family and another at that of his community. Child marriage, widow marriage, sati, slavery, etc. are connected to the reform of the Hindu family. The abolition of untouchability and the caste system, as well as changes in the laws of adoption, marriage and inheritance, are linked to the reform of Hindu society. (Hariprasanna (1992) 111) The goal was to organize and reconstruct the Hindu society from the basic level and create an egalitarian society

Dr. Ambedkar found that the caste problem to be both theoretically and practically extensive. By practical he meant it was a local problem, he said, but it could become wider because as long as caste existed in India, Hindus almost never intermarried or socialized with foreigners; and if Hindus migrate to other parts of the country, Indian caste would become a global problem. By theoretical he meant the theories of many great scientists about its origin. (Rodrigues (2004) 242)

The subject of the caste system was addressed from an anthropological point of view by Dr Ambedkar in his 1916 article "Caste in India: Their Mechanisms, Genesis and Development". The Indian population was a mixture of Mongols, Dravidians, Aryans and Scythians, he told himself. All people are ethnically diverse. He claims that the Indian people are united by cultural unity. Ambedkar defined this caste after examining the existing theories and various scientific definitions. "The artificial division of a population into fixed and definite units, each of which could not unite with the others by endogamy." Thus, endogamy is the sole property and cause of caste." (Rodrigues (2004) 245)

Dr. Ambedkar believed that caste system was artificial. He challenged the *Viratpurush* theory of origin of caste system. Second, the castes are like water tight compartments where traffic among each other is strictly blocked. Thirdly, this traffic or fusion is prevented by the custom of endogamy. Thus, Ambedkar maintains that factor that establishes the origin and mechanism of caste is endogamy.

Dr. Ambedkar elucidated, exogamy was once an integral part of the primitive world, but it gradually became less useful as history unfolded. Nonetheless, India still has a marriage law based on exogamy principle, as sapindas (blood-kins) marriages are not only restricted, but even *sagotras* (of the same class) are considered sacrilegious. (Rodrigues (2004)246)

He explained that the various gotras of India practiced exogamy in the past. He emphasized the fact that exogamy was strictly practiced despite the practice of internal endogamy within the castes. Actually, exogamy means mixture and absence of caste. However, the case is different in respect of India. In India we have castes and that is because endogamy is replacing exogamy. The ultimate goal of a group that wishes to form a caste is to preserve numerical equality between the two sexes. Without this endogamy can no longer survive. To maintain endogamy, the law of marriage must be organized from within, and this numerical equality between the two sexes with the group that wants to form itself into a caste. Thus, the maintenance of such an equality is essential to the maintenance of endogamy, and a very great inequality will certainly break it.

The maintenance of equality or the correction of inequality is thus an important issue in maintaining the caste system. If left to nature, equality between two beings can occur when a couple dies at the same time. But this rarely happens. The death of a man creates a new woman, or the death of a woman creates a man. Dr. Ambedkar calls it surplus. If a woman has too much, she must be rejected or she will challenge the endogamy of the marriage group and in turn the caste system. So, to get rid of such a society of concubines, apply practices like Sati i.e. cremation of a woman in the state of her deceased husband and compulsory widowhood, whichever is applicable in the case. Societies are attempting to eliminate the additional woman as it poses a threat for the caste system.

Dr. Ambedkar explained that the problem of excess of a man or a widow in the society is considered much more important and much more difficult than the problem of excess of a woman in a group who wants to belong to a caste. Since ancient times, men have been the dominant figure in all groups, and men have more authority than women. With this traditionally masculine strength, his wishes were always heard. Women, on the other hand, were easy victims of all kinds of bad practices. Therefore, in society, redundant men are treated differently from redundant women. (Rodrigues, 2004:249).

The instrument of Sati applied to get rid of a surplus woman cannot be applied to a surplus man simply because he is a man and secondly, he is considered the property of a caste or group, so it is not a convenient way to get rid of him. So, the available way may be male celibacy. But for the caste to grow and live itself, it is necessary to consider him the *Grihastha* (founder of the family). However, the relationship between married men and women cannot be divided into castes, and if the extra man is offered such a new marriage opportunity, the relationship will be disturbed. In such circumstances, a dismissed man can obtain a wife only from among those who are not yet married. so he is kept in a caste. This prevents numerical depletion due to constant outflow, and maintains the morality of inbreeding.

Thus, in his article, Dr. Ambedkar pointed out four ways prevailing in the then society which were used to meaningfully maintain the numerical inequality between men and women. which are: (1) The burning of a widow with her dead husband, i.e. the method of sati. (2) burning - a milder form of burning. (3) forbidding celibacy to a widow and (4) marrying a girl who is not yet married. (Rodrigues (2004)250) Thus, these means create and maintain endogamy, while caste and endogamy, as explained in various definitions of caste, are one and the same. Therefore, the presence of these means already means the presence of the caste and vice versa.

After examining the caste system in general, Dr. Ambedkar further elaborated on the functioning of the caste in Hindu society. He tried to study the settlement reached by the Hindus the surplus men and surplus women.

Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that Hindus practice three practices like sati, forced widowhood and child marriage. In addition, a great longing for sannyasa (renunciation) is observed in the widow, but this may in some cases be due to a purely psychological tendency. Dr. Ambedkar mentioned that people have many philosophies that explain why they do these things, and even today no scientific explanation exists of where those customs originated. (Rodrigues (2004) 251). Ritual of Sati is revered as a demonstration of the flawless connection between body and soul and "faithfulness after death." People follow the compulsory widowhood is respected because even without reason. Child marriage is observed to maintain a woman's purity after and before marriage, which means that she must not feel love for anyone other than the woman they are married to. Likewise, a woman should not feel love for any other man except the man she can marry.

These customs are essentially instruments of caste preservation, as explained above, but they are presented as ideals. However, Dr. Ambedkar opined that "sati, forced widowhood and child marriage, whether viewed as an end or a means, are practices whose main motive was to solve the problem of male and female members of a caste and to maintain its endogamy". rigid endogamy could not be maintained without that custom, while caste without endogamy is false. (Rodrigues, (2004)252)

Ambedkar elucidates the methods by which India's caste system is established and upheld. He states that the question of origin has always been ignored or confused by scholars in caste studies. Therefore, it is very clear in the analysis of this question, and therefore by origin he means the origin of the mechanism of endogamy.

Analyzing the evolution of caste, he based his analysis on the composition of society. His view that individuals make up society is trivial. Society is always made up of classes. Although it is true that there are classes in society, the reasons for this vary. They may be economic, intellectual or social, but individuals in society are always members of a class. The fact is a universal truth, and early Hindu societies were not exceptions to this. He maintains that the only thing left to do is to identify the class that created caste first, as class and cast are so similar, and it is only an interval that separates the two. A caste is a closed category.

To investigate the origin of caste, Ambedkar considered it important to examine the classes that formed its "enclosure" around you. Unraveling the Secrets of the Growth and Development of Castes Across India. In search of an answer to this question, Ambedkar argues that these practices are strictly practiced by only one caste, the Brahmins, who occupy the highest position in the social hierarchy of Hindu society. Their prevalence among the non-Brahmin castes is merely imitative or unoriginal, and their practice is neither strict nor perfect. This important fact is the basis for an important observation. As it is very easy to show, if the spread of these practices among the non-Brahmin caste is unoriginal or copied, no argument is necessary to show that class is the father of the caste system. It proves that the Brahmin class, who strictly followed these practices since ancient civilizations, were the beings of this unnatural institution. (Rodrigues (2004) 253) Thus he proves caste is an unnatural institution which is maintained through unnatural means.

After elucidating the origins of caste, Dr. Ambedkar moved on to the question of the growth and spread of the caste system in India. This is because there is a general belief among scholars that the caste system was introduced by Parliament as a divine mercy to the poor in India or that it became indigenous to the people of India. (Rodrigues (2004) 254). Dr. Ambedkar said that Manu did not give the caste law and could not have done it. The caste existed long before Manu. He was a proponent of it, so he philosophized about it. He only systematized the existing caste rules and caste his dharma preaching. The expansion and expansion of the caste system is too huge a task for the power and cunning of individuals and classes. For the same reason, he rejected the theory that Brahmins were the authors of the caste system. He mentioned that, "Brahmins could have committed many sins, and even it was beyond their power to impose a caste system on the non-Brahmin masses." (Rodrigues (2004) 255) In addition, there is a strong belief in the Hindu community that the caste system was created by the Shastras. Ambedkar opposed this theory and offered a scientific explanation.

Western scientists have proposed a theory that castes form around certain cores. Survival of tribal organizations, emergence of new beliefs, mating and migration. He rejected these theories on the ground that these nuclei were not unique to India but common to the whole world and therefore could not be the basis of their growth. If they were true, the castes would have been born in other parts of the world as well.

After rejecting the prevailing theories about the growth of the caste system, Dr. Ambedkar expressed his thoughts. As he has already explained, Hindu society consists of classes, the first of which is known as the Brahmin or priestly class. The Kshatriya or military class. The Vaishya or merchant class. and the Shudras, or artisan and servant classes. Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that this class system is basically an open system where people move between classes. At some point in the history of Hinduism, the priestly class became socially separated from the other classes and became a separate caste through closed politics. given The Vaishya and Sudra classes were the first primitive classes that formed the sources of the various modern castes. Since there were no such small subgroups within the ranks of the army, the *kshatriya* class could be divided into military and administrative positions.

Dr. Ambedkar explained that such a distribution is completely natural. However, the unnaturalness of this division lies in the fact that they lost the open character of the class system and became an independent entity called caste, which has the character of a class system. He raised the question of whether they were forced to close the door and go into endogamy or whether they closed voluntarily. (Rodrigues (2004) 257). According to Ambedkar, one interpretation is psychological and the other is mechanical, but they are complementary and both are necessary to explain caste phenomena as a whole.

To explain the psychological interpretation, Dr. Ambedkar argued that endogamy or the closed-door system originated in the Brahmin caste and was imitated by all subgroups or classes except the Brahmins who became an endogamous caste. Detailed description of the caste forming process. Ambedkar said it was mechanical because it was inevitable. He further said that the unique number of castes is unreal: castes exist only in the plural. Therefore, there is no caste. There are always castes. By forming castes, Brahmins created these non-Brahmin castes. In other words, while closing admission to their class, they closed others entry out.

Thus, it is clear that the caste system was created by imposing some restrictions on women. These restrictions were justified by religious and ceremonial justifications within society. Dr. Ambedkar concludes that women are the gateway to the caste system. This theme is evident not only in his writings on the origins of the caste system, but also in his speech at Mahad Satyagraha Parishad. (Pardeshi Pratima, Leaflet: April, 16, 2022) Dr. Ambedkar noted that the exploitation of women is related to caste and patriarchy. Therefore, the reasons for the enslavement of women are unequal, hierarchical social structures and male-dominated societies.

Analyzing how the caste system perpetuates the subjection of women Dr. Ambedkar sought to make oppressed women aware of how the children born to them are considered impure and denied basic human rights. Children of Brahmin women are acceptable in society. (Dr. Ambedkar, (1928) Speech at the Mahad Satyagraha Parishad, Bahishkrut Bharat.).

Dr. Ambedkar emphasized that it is a fact that the caste system is a system that oppresses women, it is a class system, the lower the woman and the position in the class, the greater is her oppression. He warned Dalit women at the conference that they were being exploited as women born at the bottom of the hierarchy and urged them to think about why their status was so different from that of Brahmin women. He challenged them to consider why their position was so different from that of Brahmin women, pointing out that their main aim was to destroy untouchability. He urged them to join the struggle to destroy the caste system.

In his various writings, the objective of Dr. Ambedkar was to grasp the factual position of women. According to him, the author and his predecessors are responsible for the current lack of awareness about women's status in India. Ambedkar says that Manu presented the theory of eternal slavery of women. Manu Smriti laid down certain rules and guidelines for women that women should not be free in any relationship. Consequently, men treated women as objects of pleasure, created only to please them. Women were deprived of the right to education and the right to property.

Dr. Ambedkar aimed to enhance the image of women by means of legal measures. However, when we examine Dr. Ambedkar's contribution to Hindu law, we should consider the efforts to reform Hindu law on women's issues. After the Montague Chelmsford reforms, the powers of the Upper House increased and the number of publicly appointed members increased over the number of governments appointed members. Members like H.B. Sarda, H. S. Gaur and G. V. Deshmukh had concern for women's issues. In 1929, H. B. Sarda presented a draft on the age of marriage for women. It was suggested that it be more than 14 years and with the support of other elected members the bill was passed. Later, Gaur and Sarada proposed bills on women's right to divorce, widowhood and property. However, those bills could not be accepted at that time.

Women's movement had stressed on the issue of child marriage and during 1930-1933 started demanding laws and reforms regarding marriage and succession rights. And out of this the idea of New Hindu Law came to forefront. In 1934 women's movement started stressing need to appoint a separate commission to study Hindu laws and suggested reforms. After Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 women's participation in politics was rising. They were active in the discourse regarding new laws. They were also present in the Congress National Planning Committee which was working for future path for India. In response to demands for the integration of Hindu law, government appointed a committee under the chairmanship of B. N. Rao in 1941. That committee accepted the need for codification of laws and accordingly a committee was reorganized under the chairmanship of B. N. Rao to prepare the draft proposal for Hindu Code Bill. After discussions on various issues in various meetings the committee presented the draft on 15th August 1944 in the Central legislature. However, due to happenings like



Second World War, partition, transfer of political power the bill was kept aside and could not be proceeded for further process. Women were central to the Hindu Code Bill and property, marriage and divorce laws; he tried to advance the cause of women. His argument was that the existing Hindu law, which allows men to marry twice, is unjust and requires a uniform principle of monogamy for both genders. However, his belief remains unchanged. Since marriage was a sacrament under that Hindu law, it could not be annulled. Dr. Ambedkar considered this unfair and tried to correct it. Women were not entitled to equal property until the Inheritance Act was passed in 1937. This is a historical precedent. Dr. Ambedkar aimed to modify the situation by allocating equal allocation between male and female children. (Pardeshi Pratima, Leaflet: April, 16, 2022) He emphasized that the passage of the bill is important for the benefit of Indian women.

Dr. Ambedkar, made several changes to the bill. When the draft was published, it was criticized by various sections for various reasons. Dr. Ambedkar answered all criticisms. No Hindu Code was passed at that time, but it later became a reality. Nehru's government saw the need for a codification to unite the Hindu community, ideally a first step toward uniting the country. They passed his four Hindu laws from 1955 to 1956 including the Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, and Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act.

#### IV. CONCLUSION:

Thus, to conclude the non-Brahmin feminist discourse first freed feminist issues from the constraints of middle-class and upper-caste concerns. Second, instead of creating a monolithic identity for women, they proposed feminist questions based on the social hierarchy created by the caste system and explained its various dimensions as caste-related, urban-rural, religious and cultural. Thirdly, this position drew our attention to the fact that for the actual enjoyment of rights and freedoms it is not enough to simply assume the innate equality of men and women, rather equality should be shared between different caste communities and women. Otherwise, the rights and freedoms granted by the state remain documents. This perspective conveyed the message that women's freedom and gender equality could not be secured without the destruction of caste. Fourth, this perspective did not propose feminist questions only in relation to modernization, but took those questions beyond it and linked them to democracy. As the non-Brahmin perspective thought and proposed feminist issues not only from a nationalist perspective, their position became more individualistic, and secular and feminist issues became more temporal.

#### V. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my Political Science teachers, colleagues who always encouraged me to do research on this topic. I would also like to express my deepest thanks to my friends and family who supported me a lot in all my endeavors. Thanks to all again who supported me during my research.

#### REFERENCES:

1. Ambedkar B. R. (Dr.), (1928), Speech of at the Mahad Satyagraha Parishad, Bahishkrut Bharat.
2. Bagade D.R., (1982), Chh. Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj and Law, Padm Prakashan Sanstha, Kolhapur.
3. Hariprasanna A., (March 1992), Ambedkar and the Upliftment of the Status of Women, in Dr. S. S. Shashi Director, (Ed)Ambedkar and Social Justice, volume I, Publications division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New India.
4. Jagannatham Begari, (April-June 2010) Jyotirao Phule: A Revolutionary Social Reformer, The Indian Journal of Political Science, VOI. LXXI, No.2
5. Pardeshi Pratima, (April, 16, 2022), Leaflet: <https://theleaflet.in/dr-babasaheb-ambedkar-and-the-question-of-womens-liberation-in-india-i/>
6. Patil Bharati (2023), *Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj aani Stri Unnti*, Publisher Dr. Vilas Shinde, The Registrar, Shivaji University Kolhapur.
7. Patil Pandharinath Sitaram (2020) Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Saket Prkashan,
8. Pawar Jaysingrao, (2016), *Rajshri Shahu Chhatrapati: Ek Samaj Krantikari Raja*, Hindi Translation – Padma Patil, Maharashtra Itihas Prabodhini, Kolhapur.
9. Rodrigues Valerian, (Ed), (2004), The essential writings of B. R. Ambedkar, editor, Oxford India Paperback.
10. Sumant Yashwant, *Aadhunik Bhartachya Rajkiy Chintanatil Stiprshnananchi Jan*, in Vandana Bhagwat, Anil Sapakal, Geetali V. M. (Ed.), (2014) *Sandarbhasahit Streevad: Streevadache Samakalin Charchavishwa*, Shabd Publication, Mumbai, (ISBN 978-93-82364-19-1).