



Gujarat National Law University

GNLU PRESS NOTE No. 20/2021

Dialogue on "Dr Ambedkar's Contribution to Women Empowerment"

Gandhinagar, April 14, 2021: On the birth anniversary of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, Gujarat National Law University (GNLU) hosted a dialogue on "Dr Ambedkar's Contribution to Women Empowerment" today.

Dr Deepak Kumar Verma, Dean, School of Social Sciences & Management Studies and Director Research, Extension & Training, Dr B R Ambedkar University of Social Sciences Mhow (BRAUSS) and Prof (Dr) S. Shanthakumar, Director, GNLU, shared their thoughts in the dialogue.

GNLU Director Dr Shanthakumar said that we remember Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar as the architect of the Indian Constitution. But, we often forget that he is also one of the first feminist leaders and women's rights advocates in the country. When women's issues were considered unimportant and secondary, newspapers started by Dr B R Ambedkar, Mook Nayak, and Bahiskrit Bharat covered topics related to women. Babasaheb continuously worked with women to realise the ambition of equality amongst genders. In 1928, as a member of the Legislative Council of Bombay, he supported a Bill granting paid maternity leave for women working in factories. He was instrumental in reducing the number of working hours and improving the working conditions. He also drafted the Mines Maternity Benefit Act, which asked for equal wages and equal representation of women on the welfare fund for the coal mine workers

Dr Shanthakumar said Babasaheb drafted the Indian Constitution, which enshrined EQUALITY as a fundamental right. He also ensured the universal adult franchise, which gave voting rights for women and other minority groups. These provisions put women on an equal footing with men.

Dr Shanthakumar quoted Dr Ambedkar, who had once said, "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved. Let every girl who marries, stand by her husband, claim to be her husband's friend and equal, and refuse to be his slave."

Dr Deepak Kumar Verma of BRAUSS said that Babasaheb was a champion of women empowerment. His Hindu Code Bill is the biggest testament to his views on women empowerment. The bill included for the first time the right of women to divorce, the right of inheritance to daughters, the right of widows to equal property rights, the principle of monogamy.

Dr Verma said Babasaheb was of the view that gender equity is more important than gender equality. Once equity is established, then equality will be ensured because equality is a subset of equity.



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Dr Ambedkar was for a structural change and not change in the structure. He wanted to change the entire social order. He wanted to empower women through the annihilation of the caste system, and, therefore, he always conversed women empowerment with caste.

Dr Verma said that marriage is the most crucial change in a woman's life. It works like a lottery and decides whether a woman's life would be better or worse than before. He said the marriage institution needs a structural change.

The dialogue was organised under the aegis of GNLU Centre for Women & Child Rights in collaboration with GNLU Equal Opportunity Cell.

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