

36 Year's

Maharashtra Political Science & Public Administration Conference

VICHAR MANTHAN

National Research Journal of Political Science and Public Administration

(A Peer Reviewed Journal)

Vol. - 6, No - 3

Issue - 18

December, 2018

ISSN- 2347-9639

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R N Chavan's views on Women

- Dr. Vaishali Prakash Pawa
Shri Shahu Mandir Mahavidyalay
Pun

Abstract

Social Inequality based on Gender is Global Phenomenon. Gender inequality is everywhere in the world. There are various thinkers, who raised their voices against Gender inequality. R.N.Chavan focused contemporary women's idea with the help of history of ancient, medieval and modern period. In ancient period, women were knowledge, in medieval period; women were policy maker, in modern era women gets the rights. But all women's condition is not equal. Brahmin, Non-Brahmin, Urban-rural women's issues are different. Women's are excluded from social & political life. Their inclusion is very important for the expansion of Democracy. This paper is sincere attempt to present R.N.Chavan's contribution to the women empowerment.

Key words : Bahujan Feminism, Gender Equality, theology

Introduction

Discourse of women's emancipation has been dealt mainly in modern and medieval period. However, non-brahmin thinker started dealing with this aspect from ancient period. R N Chavan as a non-brahmin thinker raised his voice against gender inequality. He has taken into consideration this aspect from ancient, medieval and modern period. He focused contemporary women's idea with the help of history of ancient, medieval and modern period. Bahujan feminism emerged from the non-brahmin movement. Chavan explained the meaning of Bahujan Feminism. Therefore, his views on women relates to Bahujan Feminism has got prominence while studying feminism. According to Chavan, women were knowledgeable and imaginative; women were participating in the rural development process. Women's History, views on Savitribai Phule and socio economic analysis made by R. N. Chavan, with the help of these points are discussed below in the framework of Bahujan Feminism.

Chavan's adopted the theology, history, anthropology to establish his views on feminism. According to chavan, women's political work and contribution had great importance in History. He gives credit to historical women for present right to intellect, right to property, right to state, right to dignity and right to liberty. Chavan throne light on political work of those women, who were ignored in the main stream history. Chavan narrated women's imaginative work and contributes through ancient, medieval and modern period. He dealt with non-brahmin tradition of ancient and medieval period, he focused on non-brahmin tradition of

women's emancipation to brought forth imaginative reality of Gautama Buddha (C 563-C-483 BC) to Savitribai Phule

1) Ancient History

In the five decade, two types of discourse about Buddhism and women's emancipation were in existence. One, Gautama Buddha permitted women to join his monastic community. Second, Early Buddhism had eliminated the women's participation in his monastic out of two discourses, R. N. Chavan accepted first view of women joining monastic community. He has narrated shortly contribution of Nakulmata, Shubha, Kshama, Utpalvarn, Vishakha alis Migarmata and Punnika. Dr. B R. Ambedkar wrote a book, 'The rise and fall of Hindu women' in which he argued that Buddhism had not eliminated the women's participations in Buddha's monastic as original Buddhism has accepted the concept of the emancipation of women. Dr. Ambedkar further points out that during the pre manu years women occupied a very high position in the intellectual and social life of the country.

Symbol of Bhavani

R. N. Chavan used an idea of Bhavani. He explained an idea of Bhavani, in framework of theology, history, anthropology and feminism.

- A) Idea of Bhavani has linked to Goddess Parvati (Chavan R. N., 2007:12). According to Chavan, Shivaji Maharaj believed on the symbol of Bhavani and symbol of Mahadev (Her her Mahadeo), shivaji accepted both symbols. Through this interpretations of chavan create a meaning of gender equality (Chavan R. N. 2007:78).
- B) According to Chavan, Bhavani has a form of Durga, who is worshiped in Maharashtra. Bhavani and Durga had more impact on people from Maharashtra, Rajasthan and West Bengal. She was the icon of revolutionary freedom fighters. Saint Ramdas also had written a poem on Bhavani (Chavan R. N., 2007:78). These facts show that the symbol of Bhavani has tremendous influences on Indian society. Chavan argued that saffron flag (bhagva zenda) was related to Bhavani. Saffron flag has been symbol of Bhavani which denotes political will from ancient to modern period.
- C) Meaning of Bhavani and Saffron flag means right to life (giver of life), wisdom the power of nature and the resource of creative energy. Symbol of Bhavani was important in providing justice to peasant and women.

- D) According to Chavan, Shivaji Maharaj and his mother was great devotee of Bhavani. Goddess Bhavani giving the weapon (Bhavani Talwar) to Shivaji Maharaj. Weapon as means (medium), not as aim; Aim was political will of common wealth. Idea of Bhavani, it means that, woman articulated the Political will; icon of Bhavani has linked to Political will, and welfare of grassroots mass means the Political will, power symbol of Bhavani, antagonism against wrong and violence for liberation and destruction to empower creation (Chavan R. N. 2007:12).
- E) Symbol of Bhavani, has presented as a peaceful life of grassroots mass. So that, according by R. N. Chavan an idea of Bhavani is against the war and pro pacifism (Tapare Pandit, Wai). All above analysis of chavan shows that Indian society has matriarchy; Bhavani denotes the symbol of matriarchal political power. Symbol of matriarchy has given the right to political power to the male. Therefore, ultimate the control over the political power of matriarchy. Origin of political power from matriarchy. This theory is propounded by R. N. Chavan.

2) Medieval period's Women thought

Medieval period's Women thought were explained by R. N. Chavan. He focused on the symbol of Jijabai (12 January 1598-17 June 1674), Sayibai (1633-5 September 1659) and Tarabai (1675-1761).

- A) Jijabai developed herself through anti political and social environment. The nature of this environment was dual. One was internal harmony within two family had decline (Jadhav and Bhosale). Political and social environment of Lakhoji Jadhav and Shahaji Bhosale hadn't felt appropriate to Jijabai. Therefore, Jijabai was restless of then political and social environment. Second was the relations with the society was not favourable (anti-loyal, anti-national). Most of the saramjamdar were loyal to property. Jijabai rejected this environment and create new environment (Chavan R. N. 2007:24-25).
- B) He described Jijabai as a Rashtramata (Nation Mother), it had narrated this in many denotations. Chavan used the concept of Rashtramata as a psychological because he connected the idea of Nationality, Nation and Nationalism to Rashtramata. After decline of yadav state, patriotic feeling had also decline. Especially maintain sovereignty (self governance) over the homeland had decline. According to Chavan, Jijabai was origin of a nation as she propagated idea of govern themselves, free from outside intervention and connected this idea of self-determination. Jijabai was architect of National

identity. According to her the nation should control the country's government by developing national organism. Those ideas were developed by Jijabai and planted to Shivaji and other people. Therefore, Maratha state had established and spread out. So that, Symbol of Jijabai denotes Nationalism.

- C) Symbol of Jijabai represents as Motivator, Adisor, Political will and creative thinking according by Chavan. She was adviser of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.
- D) Jijabai was first teacher of Shivaji Maharaj. She was strategic as well as inventor of Maratha State (Chavan R. N. 2007:25).
- E) According to R. N. Chavan, Sayibai (wife of Shivaji Maharaj) had given the consent to establish independent state (Chavan R. N. 2007:27)
- F) After Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Tarabai Bhosale was the queen of Chhatrapati Rajaram Bhosale, daughter-in-law of the Maratha states founder Shivaji as well as daughter of famous Maratha state General Hambirrao Mohite. She took charge of the war against Aurangzeb's military. Tarabai was killed in cavalry movement and made strategic movements herself throughout wars. She face-to-face led the war and continued the battle against the Mughals (R. N. Chavan, 2007,151). Therefore, Chavan had accepted and explains women's political right to rule in the medieval state. Chavan gives another example of Tararani. Chavan presenting above mentioned fact and he has narrated following four points
- I) In the medieval period women's political work was creative. Women established state and ruled state II) in the medieval period ruling women were decision maker, policy maker (R. N. Chavan, 2007, 151, III). Aim of state was to empower women and peasant's welfare IV). Inclusion was the main feature of social policy in the period of Jijabai and Tarabai.

3) Modern idea of Woman

R. N. Chavan propounded gender equality, socio-economic equality and religious equality in modern era. This began from biography of Savitribai Phule.

Savitribai Phule

- A) When Jotirao Phule started the girl's school in 1848, Savitribai was its first teacher.
- B) R. N. Chavan propounded the thoughts on Savitribai Phule. He described Savitribai as a Grahini (Housewife) in first state and then afterwards he changed his views about Savitribai because no information available till 1965. In 1911 the second edition of the book of Gulamgiri (slavery) was published in satyashodh parishad pune. That time the chairman of that parishad

described Savitribai as a Striratna, it means that she was not the shadow of Mahatma Phule. Chavan accepted this point and propounded her contribution in different way. In 1953 Leela pande had written a biography on Savitribai. Bhaskarrao Jadhav had written an introduction to this biography. Jadhav said that, although limited resources had available, biography made. R. N. Chavan was unsatisfied. K. P. Deshpande published Savitribai Phule's poem describing nature and critic. Chavan remarked that some part of that is acceptable but some part will have to be proved (R. N. Chavan, 2013, 1-10).

- B) The women belonged in the mali community were illiterate. As compare to them Savitribai was not only literate but also intellect. She didn't know English but she taken Marathi education and became a teacher. In that period, women teacher was very new concept. She achieved this marvalous position (R. N. Chavan, Purogami Satyashodhak, July-Sept 2009, p. g. 84). All the literature was not available to write Savitribai Phule's sketch. R. N. Chavan tried to collect the fact and references about Savitribai Phule. Chavan noted that Yashwant with Jotiba photo was available but Savitribai photo singly or with Jotiba was not available (R. N. Chavan, Purogami Satyashodhak, July-Sept 2009, p. g.84). R. N. Chavan described phule as a true reader with his own library. Chavan argued that Savitribai used this library. Conclusion of R. N. Chavan is that she used to read some literature (Non-Brahmin Journals-Dnyanoday, Subodhpatrika, Gruhini, Dnyanprakash).

After the death of Mahatma Phule, Savitribai Phule continued his social work. R. N. Chavan argued that mali community boycotted Mahatma Phule. Reason of boycott was that Jotirao accepted the Christian religion. Social boycott was for 13 years. Savitribai suffered from the boycott. The nature of this social boycott was a caste violence. The boycott was given up on 22 March 1938 by Pune mali samaj. Chavan argued that it is a caste violence against to Savitribai Phule (R. N. Chavan, Purogami Satyashodhak, July-Sept 2009, p.g.86).

3) Views on social reform

R. N. Chavan was social and religious reformer. In the view point of women, he was influenced by Vitthal Ramji Shinde. He has written women's social history (Baba Adhav). Chavan compared men and women. According to him as compared with the men, women were backward. Men were forwarded. Women got unequal treatment in their respective Caste. Women from Bahujan community were discriminated based on caste and gender, whereas

upper caste women enjoyed the benefits of being a member of upper caste. As compare to upper caste women, Bahujan women were backward. In Buddha religion women are allowed to participate. Hindu religion had not given education to women but Buddha religion has given women right of education.

In rural area caste has his own business e. g. Sutar, Kumbhar, Lohar, Shimpi, Sonar, Parit etc. In that period women were illiterate. But they have the professional skill of their own caste profession. So that, they have equal share in resources and income. Women had to work hard and they were productive. Women have freedom of traditional education of their caste profession. It was not restricted to the women. Although women have freedom of caste profession they have not allowed to take formal education. But upper caste didn't give freedom of professional education to their caste women. e.g. Joshi did marriage ceremony or other spirituals but his wife was not allowed to do this work. In medieval period identity of caste and verna was permanent. Because of that Non-Brahmin's were not allowed as right of education. Non-Brahmin women were more free than Brahmin women e.g. Mirabai, Kanopatra these are the Non-Brahmins Saints. In Jain and Buddha religion women also saints.

Indian culture is male dominated as well as Brahmin dominated. All religious books were written by male. Women got knowledge from Kirtan and Pravachan but from that critical approach were not developed among the women. Child marriage, Padada tradition had prevalence. Padada tradition was the symbol of Upper or high or rich family. Poor family's women were not following the tradition of Padada. There is no padada tradition. Lord, rich and upper caste women must follow the tradition of Padada e. g. Patil, Deshmukh. Because of this padada tradition women were excluded from education and external knowledge.

After independence women got the right of education. But as compare women's education to urban area education to rural women is less in proportion. Because of so many reasons education of women in rural area are restricted. According to Chavan urban women are more free than rural women. Urban women are ready to work in rural area also but rural women have not given freedom to go and work in urban area. Chavan also critic on the education of women. Women got degree but the scientific approach had not developed. Educated women will be free from misconception this hypothesis become wrong. Chavan argued that in educated woman were more followers of misconceptions. The aim of education is to create a happy individual but educated women were not happy. Educated women are not confident. Education had not given them confident.

In urban area most of the education institutions are in the hands of upper caste. But in those institutions non-brahmins were very less. Upper castes oppose univerlization of education. But non-brahmin institutions give education to all non-brahmins but women's education was not priority

these institutions. These institutions opened hostels for boys but they didn't open girls' hostels. They give scholarship funding to brilliant students for their future study abroad but they didn't give this to women.

Conclusion

According to R.N.Chavan, Bahujan feminism emerged from the non-Brahmin movement. Chavan explained the meaning of Bahujan Feminism. In ancient times, women occupied a very high position in the intellectual and social life of the country. In the medieval period, ruling women were decision makers, policy makers. R. N. Chavan expounded gender equality, socio-economic equality and

religious equality in the modern era. After independence, women got the right of education. But our patriarchal society denies them equal opportunity. Thus, the contribution of R.N. Chavan to Indian feminism is important for the empowerment of women.

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