



Dr. Ambedkar- Architect of Modern India

Educate, Agitate and Organise! This is the thought of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar is known as the Architect of Modern India and Constitution of India, a social reformer, an eminent jurist; his contribution as an economist, as an advocate of women's rights, as a writer, an educationist and a philosopher is also equally important. In his capacity he is not only a Dalit Icon but a true revolutionary and recognized as a founding father of Independent India.

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was born to Bhimabai and Ramji on 14 April 1891 in Mhow Army Cantonment, Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh). Dr. Ambedkar hailed from a family belonging to one of the Hindu untouchable community 'Mahar' in India. At that time their community was considered as the lowest fold of the society. Their touch, shadow and even voice were deemed by the caste Hindus to be polluting. They were illiterate, ill-treated and untouchables for ages, all the public services were closed for them and they have to followed hereditary occupations.

Dr. Ambedkar's father was a Subedar in the Indian Army and after his retirement in 1894, the family moved to Satara, which was in Central Provinces. Shortly after this, Bhimrao's mother passed away. Four years later, his father remarried and the family shifted to Bombay. In 1906 when he was married to Ramabai at that time Dr. Ambedkar was 15-year-old and Ramabai 9-year-old. The social oppression and disability attached to him on the ground that he was born to the Dalit family could not prevent him from realising his dreams. His love for learning led him to obtain highest academic degrees available to any person during those days.

Dr. Ambedkar graduated from Bombay University in 1912. Thereafter, he went abroad to pursue higher studies. Maharaja Sayaji Rao of Baroda, a progressive ruler, sent Bhimrao to Columbia University in July, 1913 for higher studies as a Gaekwad Scholar, Dr. Ambedkar was one of the most qualified persons of his time who had such high academic distinctions of his credit as M.A and Ph.D from Columbia University and M.Sc and D.Sc degrees in Economics from London School of Economics. He also studied Law at Gray's Inn, London. Dr. Ambedkar was a versatile genius who wrote about Anthropology, Sociology, Economics, Philosophy, Religion, Law, History and Politics. His burning passion to fight against injustice made him a natural leader of the oppressed and downtrodden sections of Indian society who were persecuted for centuries. In his struggle for academic excellence and eminence, Dr. Ambedkar did

not forget his real aim in life, viz. the social uplift of his people. He decided to lead an independent life to achieve his mission. He temporarily accepted the post of a college professor, and was soon called upon to give evidence before a number of Commissions and Committees on political and social issues involving his people. He started journals like Mooknayak, Bahishkrit Bharat, Janta to propagate his views and aims. He started life as a barrister in' 1923 and became a poor man's barrister.

In 1919 Dr. Ambedkar had tendered evidence before the Southborough Committee, claiming political rights for the Depressed Classes of India. He suggested large constituencies for this class. In a written statement of evidence, he offered a vivid account of the plight of 'Untouchables' in these words.

“The untouchables are usually regarded as objects of pity but they are ignored in any political scheme on the score that they have no interests to protect. And yet their interests are the greatest. Not that they have large property to protect from confiscation. But they have their very persona confiscated. The socio religious disabilities have dehumanized the untouchables and their interests at stake are therefore the interests of humanity. The interests of property are nothing before such primary interests.” (Reference- Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writing & Speeches- Volume 1)

In 1924, Dr. Ambedkar set up an organisation of the 'untouchables', called Bahiskrit Hitakarini Sabha (Council for the Welfare of the Outcastes. He wrote Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Origin and Development – 1916, Problem of Rupee : Its Origin and its Solution – 1923, Annihilation of Caste – 1936, Federation vs Freedom – 1939, Thoughts on Pakistan – 1940, Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah – 1943, Mr. Gandhi and the Liberation of the Untouchables 1943, What Congress and Gandhi did to the Untouchables - 1945, Pakistan or the Partition of India - 1945, Who were the Shudras - 1948, Buddha or Karl Marx - 1956, Buddha and his Dhamma - 1957 etc books.

Dr. Ambedkar's fame as the leader of the socially weaker sections of the society led him to be nominated as a delegate to the Round Table Conference which took place in London. In the Round Table Conference, he took the view that the problem of untouchability was a political problem. Dr. Ambedkar expressed himself clearly against Mahatma Gandhi's approach to the rights of the Untouchables. In fact, from the very beginning of his Political career, Dr. Ambedkar could not reconcile himself to Gandhi's policy towards the Depressed Classes.

In Dr. Ambedkar' several speeches, notes, debates, memorandums and representations made during a period of 35 years, as a Member of the Bombay Legislative Council, a

delegate to the Indian Round Table Conference, a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, and as the Law Minister in Pandit Nehru's Cabinet, he assiduously fought for the rights of the Depressed Classes and for their greater representation in services-Police, Military and Civil. He advocated for the establishment of a Federal Court, Public Service Commissions, Indianization of Army, better placement of Indians in the ICS, provincialization of State services, and more and more recruitment of Depressed Classes. Throughout his life, he fought for social justice and political safeguards for the Deprived Classes.

From the depths of despair Dr. Ambedkar emerged as a colossus in the Indian Political arena to champion the cause of the depressed classes and uphold human dignity. A versatile genius, he played a crucial role in the political, social, economic, religious and other spheres to attain the perspectives. As the architect of Indian Constitution, he has contributed immensely to build up parliamentary institutions and worked for their consolidation. For, he believed that these institutions were the central lever of social engineering which can herald a better tomorrow for the suffering millions. In Dr. Ambedkar's view for freedom and development of society meant the guaranteeing of better conditions for all strata of society in general and positive action for the depressed classes in particular. Being a victim of the social evils that were inflicted on the so-called untouchables for centuries, Dr. Ambedkar could not obliterate the traumatic experiences from his conscious mind. Therefore, all his life his efforts were oriented towards the uplift of the people who were kept enslaved.

Dr. Ambedkar, one of the great opponents of the Congress Party, agreed to become the Law Minister after independence when requested by the national leaders. This illustrates Dr. Ambedkar's love for the people and the country. When the Constituent Assembly was set up for drafting the Constitution, he was elected as one of the Members and later made the Chairman of the Drafting Committee. It was a tremendous task to draft the Constitution for this great country where exist innumerable religions, castes, sub-castes, languages and above all superstitious beliefs. The draft of the Constitution was considered and adopted by the Constituent Assembly. Although there were very eminent leaders in the Drafting Committee, the biggest burden of drafting the Constitution was on Dr. Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar must be recognised not only as a great champion of the human rights of the Depressed Classes but also a great political thinker, social philosopher, a religious leader and one who could easily fit into many other roles in nation building. The grand universal law that liberty is never received as a gift; it has to be fought for. That was the justification for Dr. Ambedkar's primary role as the crusader for the human rights of the underprivileged in the country. Dr. Ambedkar tried to secure human rights for his people without harming the country.

To Dr. Ambedkar, fraternity or social relationship is the key to democracy. His special contribution to political thought lies in his linking liberty, equality and fraternity to the concept of social democracy which, in turn, he related to democracy as a form of government. Dr. Ambedkar's views on politico-economic concepts were very clear. He was opposed to capitalism, but he was also opposed to communism, on different grounds. It will be interesting to note that Dr. Ambedkar has placed labour in the Concurrent List of our Constitution, so that labour's interests would be adequately served by uniformity of legislations throughout the Union and by the requisite power to ensure conformity with international regulations.

Dr. Ambedkar was of the firm view that the outcaste in Hindu society was a by-product of the caste system, and nothing could emancipate the outcaste except the destruction of the caste system. Dr. Ambedkar had been so much concerned about the lot of the downtrodden that he founded an Independent Labour Party as early as August 1936 with a comprehensive programme to meet the needs and grievances of the landless, poor tenants, agriculturists and workers. Very few people are now aware that Dr. Ambedkar was a great advocate of agrarian reforms. He led a peasants' march to the Council Hall in Bombay as early as 1938 and was becoming a great leader of the peasants, workers and the landless.

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Reference: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: The Man and His Message -A Commemorative Volume edited by Sudarshan Agrawal