

Annexus - V

Revisiting Bhimrao Ambedkar

A Study of Social and Political Justice



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A Study of Social and Political Justice

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Foreword

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar played a pivotal role in social, political and economic transformation of India. He struggled throughout his life for securing the human rights. The main aim of his ideology is to forge national unity and fraternal relationship amongst the people. He is rightly remembered as a chief architect of the Constitution of India, which paved the way for laying the firm foundation of social and political democracy, embodying the spirit of equality, liberty and fraternity. He availed this opportunity to establish just society which was full of inequality, discrimination and other things that stood in conflict with our fundamental rights. Indian Constitution provides equal rights and equal opportunities to every citizen of the country as well as special safeguards to the downtrodden, minorities and women. Being the first Law Minister, he also decided to free women from old-age captivity by reforming the traditional Hindu social laws.

Ambedkar stressed on the establishment of *Samta Samaj* and *Samatagrahi*. He holds the view that for social and political justice these two concepts must be interlinked. He emphasizes on the need for eradicating idea of upper classes and lower classes, inculcating among the people a sense of self-elevation through self-respect and self-knowledge. His view on social and political democracy is to remove of all kinds of inequalities through law, morality and public conscience. He says, 'A democracy from government presupposes a democratic form of society. The formal framework of democracy is of no value and would indeed be a misfit if there

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Role of Baba Saheb Ambedkar in Indian Nationalism

—Pinki

Abstract:

B.R. Ambedkar was a leading activist and social reformer who gave his life working for the upliftment of the Dalits and the socially backward class of India. A messiah for the downtrodden, he continuously fought for eradication of caste discrimination that had fragmented the Indian society and made it cripple. Born in a socially backward family, Ambedkar was the victim of caste discrimination, inequality and prejudice. However, fighting all odds, he attained higher education thus becoming the first ever untouchable to attain the same. No sooner after completing his studies, he launched himself politically fighting for the rights of the depressed class and inequality practiced in the society. He was a crusader of social equality and justice. Academically trained as a jurist, he went on to become the first Law Minister of Free India and the framer or chief architect of the Constitution of India. In his later years, he acted as a revivalist of Buddhism in India, by converting himself to the religion to free himself from the perils of caste differences and unfairness practiced by the Hindus.

He was born as Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar to Ramji Maloji Sakpal and Bhimabai in the Central Province of India. His father

served in the Indian army. He was the last of the fourteen children born to the couple. Belonging to Mahar caste, who were considered untouchables, his family suffered from socio-economic discrimination. However, due to special privileges rendered to army children, he secured good education. Young Ambedkar surfaced a lot of problems while academically training himself but he surpassed all of them. In 1897, he along with his family moved to Bombay where he enrolled at the Elphinstone High School, thus becoming the first ever untouchable to attain higher education. Completing his matriculation degree in 1907, he admitted himself to Elphinstone College in 1908, again creating history by becoming the first untouchable to enter university. He graduated from the same in 1912 with a degree in economics and political science. He secured a job at the Baroda state government but did not continue the same for long as he was awarded a Baroda State Scholarship, which provided him the opportunity to gain postgraduate education at Columbia University in New York City. To pursue the same, he moved to America in 1913. He completed his MA in June 1915, majoring in Economics, with Sociology, History, Philosophy and Anthropology as other subjects of study. Two years henceforth, he gained a PhD in Economics. Meanwhile, in 1916, he enrolled for a bar course at Gray's Inn. However, due to the termination of the scholarship, he had to return to India. In 1917 Ambedkar's studies were disrupted by the war and the termination of his scholarship. He was obliged to return to India, where he was forcibly reminded of his Untouchable status, something which he had been able to escape while studying in the West. Even when he was appointed as a Professor at the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics in Bombay, other faculty would object to him using the communal water jug. It was at this time that he began to campaign in earnest for Dalit rights. In 1919 he gave evidence to the British in favour of separate electorates and reserved seats for Untouchables and religious minorities, ahead of the Government of India Act 1919 which laid the first (very limited) foundations for Indian self-government. In 1920 he started a weekly Marathi paper, which strongly criticised the caste hierarchy and called for

a Dalit awakening and mobilisation against inequality. He also spoke at two Conferences of the Depressed Classes convened by the Maharajah of Kolhapur, both of which culminated in powerfully symbolic inter-caste dining. He met Sayaji Rao III, the Maharajah of the princely state of Baroda at Bombay University. The Maharajah was an active advocate of social reforms, including the removal of untouchability. He sponsored Ambedkar's further education abroad, first at Columbia University in New York where he completed a Masters and a PhD, and later at LSE. During this period Ambedkar studied economics, history and political science, and wrote on a wide range of topics, including the history of caste in India. There is also evidence in his letters at this time of his belief in education as a path to progress, with a particular emphasis on female education. By 1923 with M.A., Ph.D (Columbia, USA); M.Sc., D.Sc. (London University); BAR-AT-Law (Greys-Inn, London) Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was the most educated Indian of His times; much ahead of the leading personalities of the day. Not only the most educated Indian, but most educated Asian too. In 1935, Ambedkar was appointed principal of the Government Law College for two years. He founded the Independent Labour Party in 1936, which won 15 seats in the 1937 elections to the Central Legislative Assembly. He was appointed chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee.

Ambedkar had been suffering from diabetes since 1948. From June to October in 1954, he was bed ridden owing to clinical depression and failing eyesight. He died in his sleep on December 6, 1956 at his home in Delhi. A memorial for Ambedkar was established in his Delhi house at 26 Alipur Road. His birth date is celebrated as a public holiday known as Ambedkar Jayanti. Many public institutions are named in his honor, such as the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University in Hyderabad, B.R. Ambedkar Bihar University, Muzaffarpur etc.

Upon returning to India, he worked as the Defence Secretary for the Princely State of Baroda. However, the work was not easy for him as he was often ridiculed and castigated for being an untouchable. B R Ambedkar was born in 1891 into an Untouchable

caste, known as Mahar – a group which was viewed by the British as ‘inferior village servants’. He experienced discrimination from an early age, which he described vividly in his later writings: “While in the school I knew that children of the touchable classes, when they felt thirsty, could go out to the water tap, open it, and quench their thirst...But my position was separate. I could not touch the tap; and unless it was opened for it by a touchable person, it was not possible for me to quench my thirst.” He made his community proud when he became the first youngster from Mahar community to receive college education, as earlier, untouchables weren’t allowed to receive any education. Babasaheb faced discrimination from a very young age but it did not hinder his self-believe. While he vehemently criticised Hindu religion and its caste structure, he wasn’t much of a theist until a few years before his death, when he decided to convert to Buddhism for its morality, wisdom, and to protect humanity. He became a great teacher, orator, philosopher, leader and earned many more laurels of this kind. Also, he was first from his caste to get a college education in India, as untouchables were not allowed to get an education, they were not allowed to worship in temples, they were not allowed to drink water from the source that was used by upper caste people etc. So even while studying in school, he had faced all such discriminations. But with a true spirit of a fighter after completing his studies in India, he went to London School of Economics for further studies and became a great lawyer. He is a true example of a self-made man who worked so hard against all the odds to achieve his goal. Also, he discovered that Mahar people were actually Buddhist who refused to give up Buddhism at one point of time. Because of this, they were forced to live outside the village and with time they became an untouchable caste. He also wrote a book named – ‘The Buddha and His Dhamma’. As Babasaheb was from an untouchable caste so he knew what it feels when people discriminate you without any fault of yours. He did a great job in removing such social issues in India. Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha was the first organized attempt from his side to uplift the untouchables. He wanted to educate them for a better life. After

this many public movements and marches had been initiated under his leadership that was meant to bring equality in the society. He was elected as a first law minister of independent India and appointed as a Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. His role was to write a new Constitution for India. By keeping in mind to bring equality in society he did great for untouchables. For this, freedom of religion was defined the Constitution. He created the system of reservation by keeping in mind untouchable and their condition in that India. He worked for the improvement of the status of women in India. Not only this, but the formation of the Reserve Bank of India in 1934 was also based on the ideas of Babasaheb that he had presented to the Hilton Young Commission. He was a trained Economist of his time and even written very intellectual books on Economics. Amartya Sen who is a Nobel Prize winner in Economics had said that Ambedkar is his father in Economics.

Dr B. R. Ambedkar was truly a builder of a nation and a global leader instead of just a Dalit leader. He is the one who had given the principles of social justice. Babasaheb is one of those who had built India in her initial days. They fought to free India and then tried to build India of their dreams. To remember this great man, Ambedkar Jayanti is celebrated all across the country especially by the one who follows him. B.R. Ambedkar "Babasaheb" was an Indian political reformer who campaigned for the rights of the 'untouchable' caste of India. He played a role in the Indian independence movement. The Mahars are mainly found in Maharashtra and comprise around 10% of the population. However, as an officer in the British Indian army, his father lobbied for his children to be allowed to go to school. Ambedkar was allowed to attend, but because of great opposition from Brahmins and other upper classes, the untouchables were segregated and often not allowed in the classroom. In his later writing "No peon, No Water." Ambedkar later explained how he was not allowed to take water, without the school peon (person to do manual labour). It was an example of the discrimination and exclusion that untouchables often faced. However, his father was ambitious for

his children and encouraged them to read both the Hindu classics and other literature to further their education. The discrimination and segregation of being born into the Mahar caste had a lasting influence on Ambedkar's outlook on Indian society and political life.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar is a great and a inspiring leader of all time had a positive view on the women empowerment. We know that the women empowerment is really a good thing for all our Indian society and even economy. We also know that women in our society mostly are discriminated because of their various reason but yet now because of the modernization and growing mind set of the people now a days women are even allowed to participate in the some aspects of the society. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar always tried and even supported the women power because even the women are the part of this modern society and all. The women empowerment is really needed for this modern society because of many reasons like the women can help out in increasing the economic status and even social status of the country. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar always tried to ensure and even women were given the equal rights as the men had. The women empowerment was always important for our society.

Thursday 14th April 2016 marked the 125th birth anniversary of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, who is perhaps best known as the principle architect of the Indian Constitution and a champion of Dalit rights (or 'Untouchables' as they were referred to in colonial India). He also served as the first Minister of Law and Justice in post-colonial India between 1947 and 1951. To put his plan into action, Dr. Ambedkar formed the outcaste welfare society and organised the so-called untouchables to initiate his fight for them. He created awareness in them to have a graceful life. He launched a Satyagraha on Chandan Tank. His major victory was to seek the right to fetch water from the tank. He tried hard to bring about a change in the life of the downtrodden. He had all the support of the British government which believed in the policy of 'Divide and Rule'. Later the Congress due to the influence of Mahatma Gandhi included eradication of untouchability in its agenda. He supported

equality of opportunity. He was hurt at the condition of the labourers. He organised them under the banner of Savatantara Mazdoor Dal. It was due to his popularity and influence that Swantatara Mazdoor Dal bagged all the fifteen seats in the elections held in Bombay. His popularity rose all the more. He became the hero of the underdog. He was their messiah. They began to worship him like God. All through his life Dr. Ambedkar struggled for the upliftment of the weaker sections of society. He deeply studied the various constitutions of the world and took out their good points. He assimilated all those points in Indian Constitution. He is rightly called the Founding Father of Indian Constitution. After independence, he was made the Law Minister in the union cabinet. Dr. Ambedkar was deeply hurt by the casteism prevalent in Indian society. Therefore, in the later stage of his life, he embraced Buddhism. He is fondly called Baba Saheb. Dr. Ambedkar died on 6th December 1956. He was honoured with Bharat Ratna posthumously—the highest civilian award of India. Many colleges and universities have been named after him to commemorate this great soul. On the anniversary of his birth and death and on Dhamma Chakra Pravartan Din, 14th October at Nagpur at least half a million people gather to pay homage to him at his memorial in Mumbai. He was an Indian nationalist, jurist, dalit, Buddhist, political leader and a Buddhist revivalist. He was also the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar spent his whole life fighting against social discrimination and the Indian caste system. His message to his followers was “Educate!!!, Organize!!!, Agitate!!!”

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