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*Dr. B. R. Ambedkar*  
*125<sup>th</sup> Birth*  
*Anniversary*



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**DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR: A STAUNCH SOCIAL REFORMER AND REBEL****Dr. Chandrakant R. Mandlik**

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**Introduction**

Using speeches, writings, public contacts and meetings with authorities Ambedkar gave voice and strength to the Untouchables to struggle against the discrimination which is done on the basis of the caste. His contribution in bringing socio-economic upliftment of them is great. Throughout his life Ambedkar was haunted for basic rights of the downtrodden section of the society. The most valuable works done by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to the Untouchables and neglected people are opening the water tank of Chowdar Tank at Mahad, opening the doors of the Hindu temples and producing the atmosphere of equality and showing the way to the Untouchables for establishing their own identity as a human being. Hence we can name Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar a staunch social reformer.

**Biography of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar**

The architect of Indian Constitution Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was born on 14 April, 1891 in the middle-class family whose grandfather Maloji and father Ramji worked in the Army. As a student in the government school at Satara Bhimrao ceaselessly showed his bright and studious nature in his studies. Due to birth in the untouchable family Babasaheb had to suffer from humiliations and insults. He was insulted by upper classes at school. Being an untouchable he was strictly prohibited from using water. Therefore he had to live without water during a whole day. Bhimrao was forced to sit in the corner of the class. The teachers differentiated the students on the basis of the caste. Due to the thought of being polluted they did not touch his body and notebooks. The teachers did not ask him questions as the other students were asked, During this period 'Sanskrit' was called a language of the God. Hence his Sanskrit teacher did not allow him to learn Sanskrit and he was compelled to select Persian as the second language. Learning Sanskrit in the later course of life Bhimrai achieved scholarship in the same language.

Dr. Babasaheb took his education in the prestigious institutions, and Universities named Elphinstone College and Columbia University. The source of encouragement to his studies was the Maharaja of Baroda who awarded him twenty five rupees per month. He completed Master of Arts in 'Ancient Indian Commerce and Ph.D. in the topic 'National Dividend for India: A Historic and Analytical Study' from Columbia University. Babasaheb was awarded different degrees like M.Sc. in Economics, D.Sc. in Economics by London School of Economics and Political Science and Bar-at-Law from Grays Inn for Law. Impressed by Ambedkar's scholarship Prof. R.A. Seligman in the Introduction of Ambedkar to Prof. Edwin Cannan and Sydney Webb wrote: 'He is an excellent student and a nice fellow, moderate, broad and able, and I know that you will be glad to be of service to him in the prosecution of his researches'. (Bakshi, 1992:2.3)



**Inhuman treatment to Ambedkar:**

After getting Ph.D. by Columbia University on 8 June 1917, Dr. Babasaheb was called back by the Maharaja of Baroda and he was appointed as the Military secretary to the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad. In fact he wished to appoint Ambedkar his finance Minister. He had to leave Baroda in disgust due to inhuman treatment. He was not allowed to drink water in the office. Other people of high caste threw files on the table from a distance. The papers in the Accountant General's Office were flung at him instead of handed to him. Nobody was ready to offer him accommodation. Ambedkar returned to Bombay and involved himself in doing odd jobs. He published his papers on '*Easte in India*'. In his paper '*Small holding in India and Their Remedies*' he expressed his opinion about the need of industrialization as the solution to solve agricultural problems.

Dr. Ambedkar got a job of Professor of Political Economy in Bombay where he had to face inhuman treatment given by Hindu Professors. He was ill-treated by them because he was untouchable. He was strictly prohibited from drinking the water from the pot kept in the professor's room. Ambedkar was not contented with this type of small profession. Hence, leaving the job of professor in Bombay he determinately entered London school of Economics and Political Science and Gray's Inn for Law. He was very grateful to receive Master of Science and Economics and D. sc. in Economics. Ambedkar took hearty efforts to develop his academic career in the U.S.A. and Great Britain.

When Ambedkar became powerful to face any situation he returned to his motherland. Being well acquainted with the problems of backward people he wished to do something valuable through government policies. He began to spare most of his life time to a common person who has been neglected in the society. He achieved success in his task by visiting and revisiting the doors of bureaucracy. The Untouchables raised their hopes to see something new in the direction of Ambedkar.

**Ambedkar's Views on Democratic Society**

Witnessing a very pathetic condition of untouchables in the country Ambedkar decided firmly to devote lot of time for their socio-economic development. To him freedom of the people was the great need for it and no freedom of the nation. He said political democracy must have roots in social democracy. He profoundly declared that the democratic form of the society should have base for democratic form of government. It is obligatory on the part of democratic society to have attitude of mind and respect and equality among the people. According to Ambedkar democratic society must be free from stiff social impediments. Focusing on social democracy Ambedkar said it is a way of life which gives primary preferences to liberty, equality and fraternity. They are the principles of life.

**Ambedkar was a Social Rebel**

Ambedkar fought against the thought that the present position of person has been decided by the good and bad deeds of his past life. He also revolted against exploitation of the downtrodden and inequality. He undertook a task of inspiring the untouchables to raise



voice against the Hindu social system. With gallant efforts Ambedkar was successful in ceasing the slavery of Dalit community.

#### **Revolutionary Decision on Chowdar Tank**

The untouchables were not allowed to use water from public watering places, wells, schools, colleges, and hospitals. Hence, The Bombay Legislative Assembly passed resolution on this issue which was brought by the staunch social reformer Mr. S.K. Bole in 1923. The untouchables were not allowed to take water from the Chowdar tank in Mahad also. The Hindus were the major obstacles. This inspired Dr. Ambedkar to begin agitation against the prevention of using water from the tank. Taking the progressive step the Municipality of Mahad made declaration of opening the Chowdar tank to the untouchables. This revolutionary decision in 1924 gave justice to the downtrodden community on using natural sources of water. In the leadership of Ambedkar ten thousand volunteers on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1927 came together to begin peaceful March for their right of drinking water from the Municipal tank.

#### **Conference against The 'Manuscript' at Mahad**

The first conference took place at Mahad on 25 December 1927, which was attended by thousands of Satyagrahis. Removing the obstacles created by the Hindus the conference started at the evening with Ambedkar's addressing speech: Many resolutions regarding socio-political and religious upliftment of the untouchables were passed on. '*The Manusmriti*' was the reason for creating inequality among the people in the society. The molten lead was poured in the ears of the untouchables if they listened or read the Vedas. Therefore, in the Conference, they passed resolution against '*The Manusmriti*' by burning a copy of it. Burning the old Manusmriti Ambedkar gave voice to have a new one. The purpose behind this work was to bring in action the Hindu code which governs the life of people in great majority.

#### **Entrance in the Hindu Temple**

The untouchables were not allowed in the Hindu temples. The thought 'like others we are human beings' did not permit him sound sleep. Using method of 'Satyagraha' Ambedkar organized the untouchables for opening the doors of the Hindu temples. Consequently, the Satyagrahas like Amravati Satyagraha in 1927, Parvati Satgraha in 1929-30, and Satyagraha of Nasik for temple entry took place. Ambedkar continuously used Gandhi's principles of Ahimsa and Satyagraha for gaining social and religious rights to untouchables.

Ambedkar wanted to reproduce atmosphere of equality in the untouchable community and awareness in them that all human beings are equal. Nobody is small, or big and pure or impure on the basis of birth in the caste. All are the children of God. According to him social upliftment of the down trodden is the only solution for this cause. He advised people to give up old customs and traditions and lead clean life. The art of speech gave Ambedkar a chance of becoming member of the Bombay Legislative Council from 1926 to 1934. It led him to support the Bills of elevation of untouchables from socio-economic point of view.

In order to get share of the untouchables in the politics Ambedkar stood in the front row for signing the Poona Pact. It gave opportunity to the untouchables to establish their identity in the politics also. Because of this act some seats are kept reserve for the downtrodden community in the Hindu constituencies. Taking into consideration of Ambedkar's work for the upliftment of untouchable and his remarkable services to the nation the government of India awarded him 'Bharat Ratna' in 1990.

### Conclusion

Thus Ambedkar's contribution in socio-political and economic upliftment of the untouchables is ever important. Acquiring sound knowledge in the subjects economics and law he fought for socio-economic and political equality of his community. His devotion for the frame work of Indian constitution reflects his dedicated, outstanding and studious nature.

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