

DR. BHIMRAO RAMJI AMBEDKAR (1891-1956)

LIFE SKETCH

Bhart Ratna Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, an eminent Indian jurist, economist, politician, social reformer, educationist and the architect of the Constitution of India, was born in a Marathi lower class family (treated as untouchable at that time) on 14th April 1891 in the British-founded town and military cantonment of Mhow, Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh). He was the 14th and last child of Ramji Maloji Sakpal and Bhimabai Murbadkar. Ambedkar's ancestors had long worked for the army of the British East India Company, and his father, Ramji Maloji Sakpal, served in the British Indian Army at the Mhow cantonment, rising to the rank of Subedar and therefore, his father was able to insist that his sons should be educated so Ambedkar was allowed to attend school. Although he attended school, Ambedkar was segregated and given little attention or help by teachers. He was not allowed to sit inside the class. When he needed to drink water, someone from a higher caste had to pour that water from a height as they were not allowed to touch either the water or the vessel that contained it. This task was usually performed by the school peon, and if the peon was not available then he had to go without water; he described the situation later in his writings as "No peon, No Water". He was required to sit on a gunnysack which he had to take home with him. Ambedkar faced the stigmas of caste discrimination and these things affected him deeply.

His father retired in 1894 and the family moved to Satara two years later. Shortly after their move, Ambedkar's mother died. Ambedkar with his two brothers and two sisters (rest died) were cared for by their paternal aunt and lived in difficult circumstances. He was the first in his community to qualify High School and went on to study for a BA in Economics and Politics at Bombay University, where he met Sayaji Rao III, the Maharajah of the princely state of Baroda. 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 (M.A) and a PhD and later at LSE (London School of Economics). Ambedkar was influenced by John Dewey and his work on democracy. He has done three Ph.D. Dr. Ambedkar had knowledge of 9 languages like Hindi, Pali, Sanskrit, English, French, German, Marathi, Persian and Gujarati.

His academic career tells us that he was a brilliant academician and later when he came to India in 1917, he first serve as Military Secretary in Baroda and later became the professor at Sydenham College, Government Law College and later became its Principal. He was also the fellow of University of Bombay. He has written so many books viz. The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and its Solution; Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development; The Annihilation of Caste; Who were the

Shudras?; The Untouchables; Waiting for a Visa; The Buddha and his Dhamma; Philosophy of Hinduism; Caste in India; Pakistan or the Partition of India; The Constitution of India and many more. 'Mook Nayak' and 'Janta' were his two weekly papers to promote socio-political awareness among the Dalits. To intensify this campaign for social reform, he established the *Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha* in 1924 to promote socio-political awareness among the Dalits with his slogan "Educate, Unite, Agitate". In 1935 Ambedkar's wife Ramabai died after a long illness and in the same year he converted into Buddhism.

After independence on 15 August 1947, the new Congress-led government invited Ambedkar to serve as the nation's first Law Minister, which he accepted. On 29 August, he was appointed Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, and was appointed by the Assembly to write India's new Constitution. The Constitution was adopted on 26 November 1949 by the Constituent Assembly.

After completing the draft of India's constitution he suffered from lack of sleep, had neuropathic pain in his legs, and diabetes and died in his sleep on 6 December 1956 at his home in Delhi.

DR. AMBEDKAR, A GREAT THINKER AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION

Dr. Ambedkar was not satisfied by the culture of education system prevalent those days. He was in favour of mass education because at that time the lower classes (shudras/dalits) and women were debarred by the education system. There was no equality and freedom to have education. Due to lack of education, Dalits' became mentally slave, morally degraded, culturally handicapped, economically weaken and socially backward and there was no social status and dignity. The valiant efforts of Ambedkar's guru, Mahatma Jotirao Phule, bore fruit and for the first time the schools for the education of women and the untouchables were established in India. It was Ambedkar, who told the idea of free and compulsory education first time so that the poor citizens, the dalits, get education as they did not had money to pay for it. In constitution he prescribed many articles regarding education viz. Article 28, 29, 30, 45, 46, 350.

Meaning of Education

Education is a key of social progress. It helps man to outgrow the crippling influences of ignorance and superstition and enables him to develop his potentialities to the maximum extent possible. It makes man conscious of his rights as well as obligations towards his fellow beings. Therefore, education is the best possible means to bring about an egalitarian society and very important instrument of social change. Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar said, **"Education is not only the birthright of every human being but also a weapon of social change."**

For the real social and economic progress of the society, education of downtrodden, the Dalits, is must. For him education is not merely a means to get prepared to earn the livelihood but it is a powerful weapon to liberate the people from ignorance and provides them strength to fight against injustice and humiliation. Dr Ambedkar said, **“Education is what makes a person fearless, teaches him the lesson of unity, makes him aware of his rights and inspires him to struggle for his rights.”** His slogan was “Educate, Unite, Agitate”.

Aims of Education

Dr. Ambedkar was deeply influenced by Buddhist philosophy and he advocated development of morality in people. He emphasized such objectives as meaningful that aid in making humans happy and prosperous and helping society progress. At the time of Dr. Ambedkar, many evils pervaded from which was untouchability. Dr. Ambedkar found that the people of India are mental slaves and conditioned, therefore, he emphasized much on development of Mental faculties, scientific attitude and vocational development.

- **Development of Mental and Intellectual Capacities-** so that students should be able to critically examine the things, thoughts and established authority’s statement.
- **Create Curiosity-** so that students develop the habit to study in depth and keep on searching the truth.
- **Development of Insight-** i.e. education should enable them to verify the truth or the falsehood; avoid biased attitude; analyze the problem and resolve it; not being unjustified; should be rational; should evaluate correctly; logically and critically and comment on the views expressed by the authorities.
- **Development of Scientific Temper**
- **Development of Student’s Personality-** education is the important mean to develop one’s rationality, conscience, scientific temper and consciousness which leads to the personality development.
- **Moralization and Socialization-** He considered the chief aim of education is the moralization and socialization of people. He declared that ‘Education is the foundation of civilization and culture.’ utilize his knowledge for the development of human civilization and culture and develop his own personality.
- **Development of Values (Democratic Values) -** Through education, Ambedkar wanted the people to cultivate the democratic values of **freedom** and **equality** among themselves. Then only all will feel brotherhood and do welfare of the poor and society (social justice) and united otherwise it will be a curse to the society.

- **Instill a Sense of Self-Respect and Dignity**
- **Character Development-** In order to do social changes, educated people should have character. An educated man without character and humility was more dangerous than a beast. He emphasized “Character is more important than education.”
- **Development of Right Vocation**

Curriculum

- Dr. Ambedkar was in favor of Homogeneous curriculum without any kind of discrimination
- Curriculum should be based on principle of utility
- Dr. Ambedkar gave much importance to **science** and **technology** courses with other subjects like language, history, geography, etc.
- He emphasized on physical activities also so that harmonious development may be ensured
- Moral education and such activities which ensure value development in the citizens.

Methods of Teaching

- Teaching through mother tongue

Discipline – Free discipline

Ambedkar considers discipline very important to live a happy life. As food, clothes, education and character are important so the discipline is. According to him students should learn to be in discipline regularly. Discipline should be placed in head and heart of the students i.e. they should be free to remain in the discipline. Ambedkar was against to impose discipline forcefully on students as it makes them their minds fearful. Therefore, he was against repressive discipline and emphasized free discipline which encourages students to move forward and continuously towards their goal. He further said that discipline should not to be confined to schools and colleges only; it should be grasped in the life.

Teacher

For Dr. Ambedkar the teacher had a big role to play in the process of learning and imbibing. Dr. Ambedkar said, “He (teacher) must not only be well-read but also a good orator and an experienced person.” In Dr Ambedkar’s view, “It is not necessary that we should agree with the conclusions of our teacher, and the teacher who recognizes this fact is the true teacher. The teacher’s job is to understand the mental abilities of the students and to develop them. He should guide his students. A good teacher is the **friend**, **philosopher** and **guide** of his students.” According to Dr. Ambedkar, a teacher should be

knowledgeable about the reality of society so that they can intersperse their teaching with anecdotes and make it relevant to the real world. Such a teacher deserves the respect of his students.

He expect from teachers to impart education without any discrimination and partiality on any basis. He should treat each and every student equally and provide equal opportunities in the classroom.

Student

- Dr. Ambedkar expect from students to be unwavering and commendable to take education.
- Students should be always ready and curious to learn
- Student should be aware and careful about his health also

Schools/ Universities/ Educational Institutions

- According to Ambedkar, educational institutions should be an assembly of the learned ones, a group of the intellectuals who have been struggling for the development of knowledge and its propagation and dissemination and in which they have been striving for shaping the men.
- It should have healthy environment and every child should have right to get educated in it devoid of their class, caste or gender.
- Ambedkar considered primary school to be the most prominent among the schools because when the child leaves the courtyard of the parents' house, the impact of the atmosphere of the school leaves an indelible impression on his soft mind.
- As it is evident that at that time it was not easy to get education for all classes therefore, he established educational institutions in different parts of Maharashtra. He established colleges and gave opportunities of higher education to Dalits from which Siddhartha Mahavidyalaya and Milind Mahavidyalaya are commonly known.

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