

DR BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR: A CHAMPION OF DALIT RIGHTS AND HIS QUEST FOR THE JUSTICE OF THE MARGINALIZED COMMUNITY

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Abstract

As we All know that Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the Chairman of drafting committee of the Indian Constitution. He is still respected and remembered by many people. His ideas changed Indian politics and society in a big way. He fought for the rights of Dalits. He wanted them to live with dignity and equal status. For centuries, In India, Dalits were treated unfairly and pushed to the margins of society. Ambedkar's thinking was shaped by many things. He was influenced by social movements and Western education. But most importantly, his own life shaped him. He was born into a Dalit family on 14 April 1891. From childhood, he faced caste discrimination. Those painful experiences made him stronger and determined to bring change. He was many things at the same time. He was a political thinker and also a politician. He was a sociologist and a social activist too. His ideas did not come only from books. They came from real life experiences. That is why his thoughts are still important today. Even after his death, his ideas continue to grow and stay relevant. During his life, he worked hard to improve the condition of Dalits in India. But he did more than that. He left behind strong political and social ideas. Because of those ideas, Dalits were able to take part in politics. They also gained more respect and a stronger place in society. Dr. Ambedkar believed that real change in a country must start with social and cultural change. He thought this was the base of nation-building. His ideas came from his life experiences. They were also influenced by Buddhism and Western thinking. He studied caste, varna, and religion in a deep and practical way. He looked at them through history and society, not just faith. He believed the caste system stayed strong because it was supported by Hindu religious laws. To end it, he said reforms in religion were needed. He also believed people should change social habits. Inter-caste marriages and changes in food practices were important steps to break the caste system. His message is still relevant today: real progress happens only when society breaks down old barriers, respects everyone's rights, and allows each person to reach their full potential.

Keywords

Caste System, Inequality, Quest for justice, Changes in the society

Education and Organization for Empowerment

Dr. Ambedkar knew that education was very important for helping poor and marginalized people. He believed only educated communities could come together and fight for their rights. He strongly believed in freedom, equality, justice, and brotherhood. This also made him fight for women's rights. He studied all religions deeply. Using a logical view of Buddhism, he showed how it could bring big, positive change. Ambedkar entered politics to focus on helping marginalized communities. He wrote a lot about the nation, democracy, the Constitution, minority rights, reservations, the Partition of India, political parties, and fundamental rights. He believed in using the Constitution and legal methods to bring change. He saw gaining political power as a way to improve the system. The political steps he took to involve marginalized communities inspired future leaders from these communities.

After Dr. Ambedkar, a new educated Dalit middle class started to emerge. Most of them got government jobs, which became possible because of Ambedkar's reservation rules in the Constitution. This group tried to start political, social, and ideological movements in different parts of India. The effects of these efforts are especially clear in Ambedkar's home states, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. Through this study, we want to see how Ambedkar's ideas shaped the later Dalit movement. It also shows how Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar became a champion for Dalit rights. His work for justice for marginalized communities proves that his ideas were not only relevant then but can also be applied in politics and social change today. In works like *Annihilation of Caste* and *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, he examined society closely, exposed unfair practices, and argued that social reform had to go deeper than politics alone.

If the Dalit movement keeps adjusting itself just because of pressure, it won't reach its real goals. Half efforts don't bring real change. Instead of taking Ambedkar's ideas forward and shaping them for today's times, many leaders turned him into just a symbol. His photo is everywhere. His thinking is not. People who don't really follow Ambedkarism now use his name for their own politics. Today Dalit politics looks lost. There is less commitment to principles. More personal interest. Growth has slowed down. And those who never stood with the movement now talk about morality and logic as if they own it. In this situation, the real duty falls on educated people from Dalit and oppressed communities. Ambedkar asked them to study, stay united, and fight for their rights. Kanshi Ram brought them together and pushed them to become strong leaders instead of staying divided. That responsibility is still there.

Dr. Ambedkar's as a representative of the oppressed

Dr. Ambedkar's social ideas came not just from books, but also from his own life and the world around him. He personally suffered from the unfairness of traditional Indian society. At the same time, he dreamed of a society based on liberty, equality, and brotherhood. He studied the problems in Indian society deeply. He used history, anthropology, sociology, and political science to understand them. His writings had a clear goal — to create a fair and just society. To fight untouchability, inequality, injustice, and superstition, he studied caste, gender discrimination, religion, and philosophy. He looked at them through both history and contemporary life to understand the real issues.

Dr. Ambedkar's ideas did not come from books alone. They came from what he lived through. He faced caste discrimination himself. He knew how unfair society could be. At the same time, he believed in a different kind of India. One built on liberty, equality, and brotherhood. Not just in words, but in real life. He studied Indian society in depth. He used history to see where problems began. He used sociology and politics to understand how they continued. He wanted clear answers, not vague talk. His writing had one aim. To build a just and fair society. He questioned caste. He spoke against gender bias. He examined religion and social customs. He looked at both the past and the present. He wanted to understand the root of the problem, not just its surface.

Understanding Indian Society and Caste

Dr. Ambedkar carefully looked at the caste system, varna, gender discrimination, religion, and philosophy. He used both history and current facts to understand Indian society. Then he shared his findings with people in a clear and simple way. He was not just a thinker. As the architect of the Constitution and India's first Law Minister, he worked to make society fair and ensure gender equality. His thinking was wide and deep. He was influenced by Buddhism and Western thinkers. He believed that equality, liberty, and brotherhood were the most important. He said every person should take part in society in a way that makes them feel responsible for its success and failure. Unlike those who defended caste as tradition, Ambedkar believed that everyone—especially Shudras, Atishudras, women, and other marginalized groups—deserved equality and justice. He always stressed the importance of education, staying organized, and speaking up for oneself as the real tools for change.

From the French Revolution to today, the main ideas of a free and fair society remain the same. Every society has many parts, but two things matter most:

1. Individuals should be part of the community, and society should help them grow. No one should be above the individual. If people feel less important than society, it only makes them think they are better by being 'subordinate.'
2. Society should focus on liberty, equality, and brotherhood for everyone.

Dr. Ambedkar believed real nation-building needed deep social change, not just political power. For him, changing the structure of society mattered more than holding office. Through his movement, he stood with those pushed to the margins. He fought for untouchables, tribals, minorities, and women. He did not see their rights as charity. He saw them as basic justice. He spoke about equality and fairness in clear terms. He pushed for self-representation so these communities could speak for themselves. He knew most people in India were kept away from power and resources because of caste interests. Ambedkar had a scientific way of thinking. At the same time, he cared deeply about human dignity. He believed in freedom, equality, and reason. He openly said the old Hindu social order was built on inequality and could not support these values. To understand this system, he studied Hindu scriptures, the Upanishads, and other religious texts closely. He also compared them with religions like Christianity and Islam. He wanted to see where inequality came from and how it was justified.

Critique of the Varna System

The foundation of Hindu social organization is the caste system. Dr. Ambedkar considers this system impractical. He studied its origins in detail. The Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda describes the three-caste system. Hindus consider this system to be the basis for the division of labor, which they believe is based on qualities and actions. However, the greatest irony is that this caste system is based on birth. The caste system is also described in the Gita. Dr. Ambedkar concluded from his research that the Gita does not propose any innovation; it is merely an imitation of Sankhya philosophy. The division of labor in the caste system is not based on individual volition or natural qualities. Dr. Ambedkar stated that the caste system involves not only the division of labor but also a permanent division of workers. In Hindu society, individuals are assigned a high or low status based on their occupation. Even high and low status are considered familial conflicts, which is the greatest flaw of the caste system.

This system is not just about dividing work. It divides people for life. In Hindu society, your status is fixed by the job linked to your birth. High and low become like family property. You inherit them without choice. That is the biggest flaw. A person is expected to do the same work as their family. No matter what they want. No matter what they are good at. There is no real freedom to choose. The caste system does not care about talent or interest. It cares about birth. People are pushed into old roles. Their own wishes do not matter. Dr. Ambedkar said this system also harms the economy. Industry keeps changing. New skills are needed all the time. People should be free to pick work that suits them. When someone chooses their work, they do it better. But caste blocks that freedom from the start.

A person's freedom is crushed under the caste system. Natural talents and choices are forced to fit social rules. This strips away individuality. Some thinkers, like Plato, thought the caste system was ideal. But others argued it was never truly fair or natural. The Purusha Sukta tried to make caste seem natural and lawful. It's the only place in the Rig Veda that mentions Shudras as a social class, along with Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, all said to be born from Brahma. Dr. Ambedkar studied caste deeply. He argued that Shudras were originally Kshatriyas in his book *Ravana to Weaver Shudras*. He examined their history carefully. Historians like Prof. Ram Sharan Sharma have tried to challenge this view. Ambedkar's work remains the most detailed study on the origin of Shudras. He collected material from translations and applied a critical approach to understand their place in society.

Dr. Ambedkar argued that the Jute tribe belonged to the Kshatriya class, and he explored this fully in his work *Varajya (The Emergence of the Shudras)*. Historians like Prof. Ram Sharan Sharma have tried to challenge his claim. Ambedkar's study, published in 1946, remains the only detailed scholarly work on the Shudra community, focusing entirely on their origin. He gathered all material from translations, applying a careful and critical approach. Prof. Sharma accused him of trying to prove Shudras were superior, but Ambedkar's aim was deeper—understanding social history.

Ambedkar also noted the conflict within individuals caused by rigid social classes, a point he discussed in *The Annihilation of Caste* while critiquing Plato. Dividing humans into fixed classes is both unnatural and artificial, he argued. He rejected the caste system entirely, based on careful study, as explained in his works *The Annihilation of Caste*, *The Philosophy of Hinduism*, and *The Discovery of the Shudras*.

The Chaturvarna system was sometimes presented as a protective arrangement: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas were supposed to protect Shudras who served them. But Ambedkar pointed out that without rights—like education and self-defense—this protection is meaningless. Without these, the interests of the Shudras would still be violated.

Dr. Ambedkar understood and analyzed the varna system sociologically and disregarded it from any perspective. While the varna system may have been considered appropriate for the smooth functioning of social life, over time it lost its precise form and ideals. Its basis was color, selection, or praise, but it became limited to a person's status and abilities based on birth. From the perspective of virtue and action, the ideal duties and rights of the varna were not preserved because all power, divinity, and efficiency were attributed to the Grahama varna, which were misused by them. Consequently, Indian society shifted from varna to caste division, leaving us all vulnerable to discrimination, injustice, exploitation, and inequality, leaving Indian society backward.

While other countries went through social revolutions, India stayed trapped in the caste system. The varna system, which divides people into four fixed classes, doesn't make sense. Can humans really fit neatly into a few categories? The Chaturvarna system is a lot like Plato's idea of society. Plato divided people into three groups: workers, soldiers, and philosophers. The main problem? He treated people like objects. Each person is unique, with talents and tendencies that don't fit into rigid boxes. Ambedkar pointed out the same flaw in Chaturvarna. Modern science also shows that humans are too complex to be forced into fixed classes. Rigid social divisions are based on biased and outdated thinking, not reality.

Dividing people into classes based on their qualities doesn't work. Everyone is different, and no system can neatly fit human nature into fixed boxes. That's why Plato's republic failed, and the Chaturvarna system is bound to fail too. Ambedkar said the four-varna system makes no sense in a society with thousands of castes. Its punishments are unfair, and the condition of women is terrible. It cannot bring equality or brotherhood. Gandhi supported the varna system, believing it was linked to karma. Ambedkar disagreed completely. He argued that the system gives no rights to Shudras and Atishudras.

It keeps them dependent on Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, trapping them in inequality. Dr. Ambedkar studied the origins of caste in India a decade before Mr. S. Ghurye (author of *Caste and Race in India* (1932)). M.N. Srinivas Luis Dumo shared Ambedkar's views. Dr. Ambedkar delivered his first lecture on "Castes in India: Their Mechanisms of Genera and Development" in 1913 at A.A. Goldenweiser's seminar in Columbia. In this lecture, Dr. Ambedkar advanced the Indian Caste Theory, stating, "Endogamy, the maintenance of caste, is the greatest cause of the caste system." Dr. Ambedkar called caste a closed class. The practice of Rati, the prohibition of widow remarriage, and other practices were designed to strengthen the caste system by preventing women from marrying into other castes. Similarly, marriage of underage girls to non-Nagpur men was also a powerful means of maintaining the caste system. In the article I read, Dr. Ambedkar stated very clearly: "I know caste is complicated, but it's not impossible to understand," Ambedkar wrote, quoting Ketkar. The caste problem is tough both in theory and in practice. Its effects run deep and are hard to untangle. Caste may seem local, but its impact is huge. As long as it exists in India, intermarriage among Hindus or mixing with outsiders is blocked. If Hindus move abroad, this problem spreads globally. Ambedkar recognized its reach early on and wanted it studied carefully.

The theory of French scholar M. Senart describes the caste system as a narrow institution that is patriarchal in every aspect. The jurisdiction of this institution is limited to its members only. No individual can oppose the community. Even if someone boycotts, he is ostracized and his membership is permanently terminated so that he does not pollute the caste. Regarding Senart, Dr. Ambedkar said that he associates caste with a corrupt thought. Corrupt thought has no connection with the origin of caste because such thought is related only to the priestly class.

Dr. Ambedkar's effective measures for the eradication of caste

Caste is a class that keeps people within its homogeneous circle. The caste system in India is a result of the lower classes imitating the upper classes. According to Ambedkar, the caste system in India means dividing society into hierarchical segments, which are bound by differences in customs and intermarriage. The result is clear that endogamy is the only characteristic of the caste system. As a form of economic organization, the caste system is a harmful system that, by not allowing for occupational readjustment, causes widespread unemployment. Another serious flaw in the caste system as a division of labor is that the division of labor created by the caste system is not based on desire. It leaves no room for personal feelings or personal preferences; it is based on the principle of predestination.

Dr. Ambedkar has been an advocate of the idea that progress is paved only through change in the social system. Caste is a concept and a state of mind. Therefore, eliminating the caste system does not mean removing physical barriers; it implies a change in thinking. Ambedkar blames religion for the evil practice of the caste system, which instills fear in the minds of people. Dr. Ambedkar appeals to his people to challenge the authority of religion, as Nanak and Buddha did. To end casteism and untouchability, Dr. Ambedkar advocates gathering and promoting activists who consider social reform a dear and sacred task.

Therefore, human liberation is essential for the success of any task. This task cannot be achieved without the principle of "one task, one dedication." Only through devotion, love for humanity, and the law can casteism and untouchability be eradicated. While Mahatma Gandhi was a supporter of the caste system and advocated for a transformation of the hearts of all Hindus to eradicate casteism and untouchability, he was confident that this would happen soon. Dr. Ambedkar disagreed with this completely. Gandhi suggested using the term "Harijan" for the untouchable castes to emphasize the dignity of Lord Ram. Dr. Ambedkar then refuted Gandhi's views, arguing that painting a dilapidated house can conceal its plight but cannot improve it. According to Dr. Ambedkar, the roots of untouchability lie in the Hindu caste system. Therefore, to eradicate this evil, the end of the caste system is essential.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, the source of power and dominance changes at any given time and in any given society. In Undri's words, when the source of power in a particular region or society is both social and religious, then both social and religious reform must be accepted as necessary forms of reform. A study of Dr. Ambedkar's writings and speeches clearly shows that he presented the sources of power and dominance in Indian society in different forms, adapting to the times and circumstances, in the interests of the Dalits. In his presidential address to the All India Congress of Excluded Classes, Nagpur, on August 8, 1930, he said, "Gentlemen, I have emphasized the need to secure political power. Perhaps I have emphasized this at greater length than was necessary. But I must now emphasize on this occasion that political power cannot be a panacea for the problems and sufferings of the excluded classes. Their salvation lies in their social upliftment. The excluded classes must overcome their bad habits." Their entire way of life must be reformed.

While Dr. Ambedkar believed that the emancipation of Dalits lay in their social and religious upliftment, he did not lose sight of the intricacies of political power as a source of power and dominance. Addressing the Working Committee meeting of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation held in Pune from October 2 to 4, 1945, he said, "I have been telling you repeatedly that unless we gain political power, our social and religious emancipation will not be possible. We must share the nation's power. If we want to live and progress with dignity, by achieving social equality and freedom, political power is an important weapon, and we must worship it like God.

Dr. Ambedkar, in the Indian context, considers religion, social status, and political power as sources of power and dominance, but does not seem to recognize economic status as its basis. In particular, he does not accept the socialist

argument that economic inequality is the cause of social inequality in India and that equalization of property through proletarian revolution will abolish the caste system in the country. Dr. Ambedkar, refuting the socialist viewpoint on the question of abolition of caste, says that Indian socialists, following their European counterparts, want to apply the economic interpretation of history to Indian realities. He argues that man is an economic being, his activities and aspirations are conditioned by economic factors, and property is the sole source of power. Therefore, he advocates that political and social reforms are merely a gross illusion, and that economic reforms through equalization of property should be prioritized over all other forms of reform.

Ambedkar's Approach to Justice

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar dedicated his life to fighting inequality and injustice. He studied society deeply, using history, politics, and philosophy to understand why caste divided people and blocked progress. He showed that rigid systems like Chaturvarna and caste not only denied individuals their freedom and talents but also harmed women, Shudras, and Atishudras. Ambedkar rejected the idea that social hierarchy is natural. He argued that human beings are unique, and no one can be forced into fixed roles without hurting society and slowing economic and social growth. While some leaders, like Gandhi, supported caste based on tradition or karma, Ambedkar focused on rights, equality, and justice. He believed structural change was more important than political power. Real progress, he argued, comes when marginalized communities are educated, organized, and able to represent themselves. His work and writings—like *Annihilation of Caste*, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, and *Who Were the Shudras?*—remain vital guides for understanding caste, oppression, and social reform. Even today, Ambedkar's message is clear: equality, liberty, and brotherhood are only possible if society challenges old systems, protects the rights of the oppressed, and allows everyone the freedom to live and work according to their abilities. His vision continues to inspire movements for justice in India and beyond.

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