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WE THE PEOPLE

The Constitutional Narrative

SPECIAL ED: A TRIBUTE TO DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR



EARLY LIFE OF DR. AMBEDKAR

Dr. Ambedkar was born Bhimrao Ramji Sakpal on 14 April 1891, in Mhow, Central Provinces, British India, to Ramji Maloji Sakpal and Bhimabai. His father served in the Indian army. Dr. Ambedkar was the last of the 14 children born to his parents. Belonging to 'Mahar' caste and considered among the untouchables, he suffered from socio-economic discrimination. However, due to special privileges given to the children of parents serving the army, he received good education.

A young Ambedkar faced a lot of problems during his school days but he managed to overcome his problems. In 1897, he along with his family moved to Bombay where he enrolled at 'Elphinstone High School,' becoming the first ever untouchable to receive higher education.

Completing his matriculation degree in 1907, he enrolled at 'Elphinstone College' in 1908, once again creating history by becoming the first untouchable to enter a university. He graduated from 'Elphinstone College' in 1912 with a degree in economics and political science. He secured a job with the Baroda state government but did not continue his job for long as he was awarded a 'Baroda State Scholarship,' which provided him the opportunity to receive 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. In 1927, he obtained a PhD in Economics.



“However good a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad. However bad a Constitution may be, if those implementing it are good, it will prove to be good.” - Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Contributions

Ambedkar and the Constitution

As soon as India became independent, Dr. Ambedkar administered the transformation of his political party into the ‘All India Scheduled Castes Federation.’ However, the party did not perform well at the 1946 elections, held for the ‘Constituent Assembly of India.’

He served as the Labor Minister for the Viceroy’s Executive Council. He also served on the board of the Defense Advisory Committee. It was his dedication that earned him the chair of free India’s First law minister. He also became the chairman of the drafting committee of the Indian Constitution.

The Constitution drafted by Sir aimed at bringing about a social revolution in the country and freeing it from any sort of discrimination. It provided the citizens with freedom of religion, abolished untouchability, advocated rights for women, and bridged the gap between the different classes of the society.

Other than his pivotal role as the framer of the Constitution, Sir also helped establish the ***Finance Commission of India***. It was through his policies that the nation progressed both economically and socially. He emphasized on free economy with a stable rupee.

In 1951, following the indefinite stalling of the ‘**Hindu Code Bill**’ which was proposed by him, he resigned from the Cabinet. He contested for a seat at the Lok Sabha but was defeated. Sir was later appointed to the Rajya Sabha and remained a prominent member until his unfortunate demise.

Movement Against Caste Discrimination

After returning to India, Bhimrao Ambedkar decided to fight against the caste discrimination that plagued him throughout his life. In his testimony before the Southborough Committee in preparation of the Government of India Act in 1919, Ambedkar opined that there should be separate electoral system for the untouchables and other marginalized communities. He contemplated the idea of reservations for Dalits and other religious and social outcasts.

Dr. Ambedkar started exploring ways to reach to the people and make them aware of the prevalent social evils. He launched a newspaper by the name “**Mooknayaka**” (leader of the silent) in 1920 with the assistance of Shahaji II, the Maharaja of Kolhapur. It is said that after hearing his speech at a rally, Shahu IV, an influential ruler of Kolhapur, dined with the leader. The incident also created a huge uproar in the socio-political arena of the country.

Dr. Ambedkar started his legal career after passing the Bar course in Gray's Inn. He applied his litigious skills in advocating cases of caste discrimination. His resounding victory in defending several non-Brahmin leaders accusing the Brahmins of ruining India, established the bases of his future battles.

By 1927, Ambedkar launched full-fledged movements for Dalit rights. He demanded public drinking water sources open to all and right for all castes to enter temples. He openly condemned Hindu Scriptures advocating discrimination and arranged symbolic demonstrations to enter the Kalagram Temple in Nashik.

In 1932, the Poona Pact was signed between Dr. Ambedkar and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, representative of the Hindu Brahmins relinquishing reservation of seats for the untouchable classes in the Provisional legislatures, within the general electorate. These classes were later designated as Scheduled Classes and Scheduled Tribes

“Men are mortal. So are ideas. An idea needs propagation as much as a plant needs watering. Otherwise, both will wither and die.”

- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

In 1923, Dr. Ambedkar set up the ‘Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha (Outcastes Welfare Association).

Sir founded the Independent Labor Party in 1936 and his party contested the 1937 elections to the Central Legislative Assembly.

He was then appointed as the first Law Minister and Chairman of India and the Viceroy Executive Council as Minister for Labor based on his achievements and hard efforts.

In 1942 he founded Scheduled Castes Federation. In 1947 Dr. Ambedkar was appointed as the chairman of the constitution drafting committee.

In 1950 Dr. Ambedkar founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha



“Political tyranny is nothing compared to the social tyranny and a reformer who defies society is a more courageous man than a politician who defies Government.”

- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

SUGGESTIONS
FROM
DR. AMBEDKAR

Women Empowerment

Dr. Ambedkar championed the cause of women as well as the miserable plight of Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes throughout his career. He discussed a number of problems of Indian women and sought for their solutions in Bombay Legislative Council, in the Viceroy's Assembly as the chairman of the Drafting Committee and also in the Parliament as the first Law Minister of Independent India.

Dr. Ambedkar was sworn in as a nominated members of the Bombay Legislative Council on 18th Feb., 1927. He advised Indians to participate in the world war on behalf of the British Government. His arguments on the Maternity Benefit Bill and on Birth Critical were quite relevant to recognize the dignity of women. He vehemently supported the Maternity Bill.

Equality

He incorporated the values of liberty, equality and fraternity in the Indian Constitution. Based on the belief that any scheme of franchise and constituency that fails to bring about representation of opinions as well representation of persons falls short of creating a popular government, he submitted the Constitution with a warning. He said in his speech delivered in the Constituent Assembly on 25th November 1949, “Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy.” By social he means a way of life, which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as principal of life.

Hinduism

Ambedkar made some memorable speeches in the Round Table conference. He placed the view point of the depressed classes and pleaded for Dominion Status. His speeches created a good impression upon the British public. He served on a number of important sub-committees and prepared scheme of political safeguards far the protections of depressed classes in the future constitution of a self governing India. Ambedkar also advocated the immediate introduction of adult franchise.

About

The Constitutional Law Studies and Orientation Committee (CLSOC), is devoted to enduring the legacy of organizing activities that entail exploring realms of Constitutional law with its interpretation and engage in discussions on contemporary issues through esprit de corps. The CLSOC looks forward to staying dedicated and emerge victorious in its aims and organization of various discussion forums, essay competitions, quizzes, guest lectures, and seminars.

“Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellow men.”

-B. R. Ambedkar

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