

Multi -Faceted Profile Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13833122>

Published Date: 24-September-2024

Abstract: Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahow, Satara, Social and Political thoughts, Parliamentary Democracy, Nationalism, Freedom, Buddhism

Keywords: Babasaheb Ambedkar, Social and Political thoughts, Nationalism, Freedom.

1. INTRODUCTION

Babasaheb Ambedkar, He is popularly known as Babasaheb was an Indian jurist, economist, politician, and social reformer. He chaired the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly and was also the first Minister Law of India. He was born on April 14, 1891, into a Dalit Mahar family in Mhow, western India. He was humiliated by his high-caste schoolfellows. His father's name was Ramji Maloji Sakpal. He was an army officer of subedar rank. His mother's name was Bhimabai Sakpal. His family was of Marathi background. In around 1894, his father retired, and the family moved to Satara two years later. After a short period of time, his mother died. His family further moved to Mumbai in 1897, where he was enrolled at Elphinstone High School and was the only untouchable who took admission. At the age of around 15, he married Ramabai, a nine year-old girl,

He passed his matriculation examination in 1907, he entered Elphinstone College. It was affiliated with the University of Bombay. According to him, he was the first to do so from the Mahar caste. He gained his degree in economics and political science from Bombay University in 1912. He was awarded a scholarship by the Maharaja of Baroda namely Sayajirao Gaikwad He received his education at universities in the United States, Britain, and Germany. At the request of Gaekwar, he entered the Baroda Public Service but was again ill-treated by his high-caste colleagues. He then turned to legal practice and teaching.

Political Career of Babasaheb Ambedkar

Babasaheb Ambedkar was appointed principal of the Government Law College, Bombay in 1935. It was a position that was held for two years. He served as the chairman of the governing body of Ramjas College, University of Delhi, after the death of its founder, Shri Rai Kedarnath. On October 13, at the Yeola Conference, Babasaheb Ambedkar in Nasik, announced his intention to convert to a different religion and encouraged his followers to leave Hinduism. Babasaheb Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party in 1936, which contested the Bombay election in 1937 to the Central Legislative Assembly for the 13 reserved and 4 general seats. It secured 11 and 3 seats, respectively.

On May 15, 1936, he published his book, The Annihilation of Caste. During this time, he also fought against the Khoti system that was prevalent in Konkan. Here, "khots" means government revenue collectors who regularly exploit farmers and tenants. In the Bombay Legislative Assembly, Ambedkar tabled a bill in 1937 with the purpose of abolishing the khoti system by generating a direct relationship between the government and farmers.

As a minister of labour, he served on the Defence Advisory Committee and the Viceroy's Executive Council. In 1940, after the Lahore Resolution of the Muslim League demanding Pakistan, he wrote a 400-page tract titled "Thoughts on

Pakistan," which analysed the concept of "Pakistan" in all its aspects. His work who Were the Shudras ? Babasaheb tried to explain the formation of the untouchables. His political party was transformed into the Scheduled Castes Federation. It performed poorly in the 1946 elections for the Constituent Assembly of India. Later, Babasaheb was elected to the constituent assembly of Bengal, where the Muslim League was in power.

Babasaheb Ambedkar and Poona Pact

It was an agreement signed on September 24, 1932, between Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi at Yerwada Central Jail, Poona, on behalf of the depressed class for the reservation of the electoral seats in the Legislature of the British Government. It resulted from the Communal Award of August 4, 1932, which was a proposal by the British government to allot seats in the several legislatures of India to the different communities in an effort to resolve various tensions between communal interests. Leaders of Dalits, mainly Babasaheb Ambedkar, supported the proposal with the belief that Dalit's would be allowed to advance their interests. On the other hand, Mahatma Gandhi objected to it because, as per him, it would weaken India in its bid for independence. Gandhi announced a fast unto death in prison and it started on September 18. The Hindu leaders agreed to the pact in which a separate electorate was declined but gave increased representation to the Dalit's within the Hindu electorate for a 10-year period. It is said that Ambedkar complained of blackmail, but on the other hand, the pact marked the beginning of the movement against "untouchability" within the Indian nationalist movement.

Babasaheb Ambedkar thoughts on Freedom

Babasaheb Ambedkar talked about freedom of India from social inequality and untouchability. This could be understood as a subaltern narrative about the upliftment of downtrodden, deprived and marginalised sections of the society. Oppressed and Depressed people did not have any participation in public life of India. Babasaheb Ambedkar became the voice of these 60 million deprived sections known as Scheduled Castes Without emancipation of these deprived people, Indian freedom struggle was not deemed to be complete. The Indian national struggle in the first half of the century was not merely a struggle to wrest political power from foreign rule but also a struggle to lay the foundation of a modern India by purging the society of outmoded social institutions, beliefs and attitudes. Ambedkar's struggle constituted a part of the internal struggle, one of the divergent and sometimes conflicting currents all of which helped to secure 'freedom' from external and internal oppression and enslavement.

Ambedkar's idea of Nationalism

Ambedkar elaborated on the idea of Nationality and Nationalism in his book *Pakistan or the Partition of India*. He describes nationality as a, "consciousness of kind, awareness of the existence of that tie of kinship" and nationalism as "the desire for a separate national existence for those who are bound by this tie of kinship." It is true that there cannot be nationalism without the feeling of nationality. But, it is important to bear in mind that the converse is not always true. The feeling of nationality may be present and yet the feeling of nationalism may be quite absent. That is to say, nationality does not in all cases produce nationalism. For nationality to flame into nationalism two conditions must exist. First, there must arise the will to live as a nation. Nationalism is the dynamic expression of that desire. Secondly, there must be a territory which nationalism could occupy and make it a state, as well as a cultural home of the nation. Without such a territory, nationalism, to use Lord Acton's phrase, would be a soul as it were wandering in search of a body in which to begin life over again and dies out finding none. Ambedkar had immense faith in the bright future and evolution of this country. Even when he spoke of attaining freedom for India, his ultimate goal was to unite the people. He said, "So far as the ultimate goal is concerned, none of us have any apprehension or doubt. Our difficulty was not about the ultimate thing but how to unite the heterogeneous mass that we are today to take a decision in common and march in a cooperative way on that road, which is bound to lead us to unity." Babasaheb Ambedkar clearly spoke in a felicitation program of his 55th birth anniversary, "I have loyalty to our people inhabiting this country. I have also loyalty to this country. I have no doubt that you have the same. All of us want this country to be free. So far as I am concerned my conduct has been guided by the consideration that we shall place no great difficulties in the way of this country achieving its freedom.

Babasaheb Ambedkar was not against the idea of nationalism but against the Congress's version which entailed freedom of India from British colonialism but not from Brahmanical imperialism under which millions of Scheduled Castes had been yoked for hundreds of years. It was Ambedkar's political challenge which compelled the Congress to appreciate the national significance of the problem of castes and to adopt measures which significantly contributed towards broadening and strengthening the social base of Indian nationalism.

Ambedkar had faith in ancient Indian institutions and texts except caste. He was convinced with the spiritual aspect of Indian texts and codes but not with its ritualistic aspects which had developed in last 1200 years. He talked about *Annihilation of Caste* not *Dharma*. He understood the importance of *Dharma* in India and when the time of conversion came as he had declared earlier, he chose Buddhism and not any other Abrahamic religion. Dr Ambedkar pointed out that historic roots of democracy in India go back to pre-Buddhist India. A study of the Buddhist Bhikshu Sanghas discloses that the Sanghas were nothing but Parliaments and knew all the rules of Parliamentary procedure known to modern times. Although these rules of Parliamentary procedure were applied by the Buddha to the meetings of the Sanghas, he must have borrowed them from the rules of the political assemblies functioning in the country in his time. Babasaheb Ambedkar wanted to build society on the bases of Liberty Equality and Fraternity

Babasaheb Ambedkar in his very first speech in the Constituent Assembly on 17 December 1946 had emphasized the need to create a strong Centre in order to ensure that India's freedom was not jeopardized as had happened in the past on account of a weak central administration. His view was hailed by the Assembly and came later to be reflected in the Emergency Provisions of the Constitution. Undoubtedly the states are sovereign in normal times but by virtue of these provisions, the Centre becomes all-powerful and assumes control over all affairs of the nation whenever a situation arises which poses a danger to the security of the country

2. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that Ambedkar was vehemently opposed to the unjust social stratification in India, but to say that he was against the nation is wholly wrong. He was definitely against the Congress version of Nationalism. Ambedkar says, "I know my position has not been understood properly in the country. I say that whenever there has been a conflict between my personal interests of the country as a whole, I have always placed the claims of the country above my personal claims. I have never pursued the path of private gain... so far as the demands of the country are concerned, I have never lagged behind"

Nationalism is a dynamic process of social assimilation and therefore nationalism is to receive its perfect harmony in the realization of social brotherhood of men irrespective of caste, colour and creed. Nationalism is not antithetical to humanism or individualism. One can enjoy complete individual freedom within a nationalist framework. Everyone needs a space to think, to grow and liberate. In the present point in time, Nation is the best institution we have to fulfil this purpose.

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