

# Geo-Social Structure of India and Dr. Ambedkar

## Abstract

Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, popularly known as Babasaheb, was inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and campaigned against social discrimination against Untouchables, while also supporting the rights of women and labour. He was Independent India's first law minister and the principal architect of the Constitution of India. His later life was marked by his political activities; he became involved in campaigning and negotiations for India's independence, publishing journals advocating political rights and social freedom for lower strata of the society and contributing significantly to the establishment of the state of India. In 1956 he converted to Buddhism, initiating mass conversions. Ambedkar's legacy includes numerous memorials and depictions in popular culture. Ambedkar was born into a poor low Mahar caste, which were treated as untouchables and subjected to socio-economic discrimination. Ambedkar's ancestors had long worked for the army of the British East India Company, and his father served in the British Indian Army at the Mhow cantonment. Although they attended school, Ambedkar and other untouchable children were segregated and given little attention or help by teachers. They were not allowed to sit inside the class.

**Keywords:** Buddhist, Jurist, Untouchables, Second-Rate, Precepts, South borouth, Mooknayak, Bahishkrit, Poona Pact, Segregated, Conversion

## Introduction

Ambedkar was born on 14 April 1891 in the town and military cantonment of Mhow in the Central Provinces (now in Madhya Pradesh). He was the 14th and last child of Ramji Maloji Sakpal, a ranked army officer at the post of Subedar and Bhimabai Murbadkar Sakpal. His family was of Marathi background from the town of Ambavade (Mandangad taluka) in Ratnagiri district of modern-day Maharashtra. When they 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 for the young Ambedkar by the school peon and if the peon was not available then he had to go without water; the situation he later in his writings described as "No peon, No Water". He was required to sit on a gunny sack which he had to take home with him. In 1897, Ambedkar's family moved to Bombay where Ambedkar became the only untouchable enrolled at Elphinstone High School. In 1906, when he was about 15 years old, his marriage to a nine-year-old girl, Ramabai, was arranged. In 1907, he passed his matriculation examination and in the following year he entered Elphinstone College, which was affiliated to the University of Bombay. This success evoked much celebration among untouchables and after a public ceremony; he was presented with a biography of the Buddha by Dada Keluskar, the author and a family friend.

Ramji Sakpal retired in 1894 and the family moved to Satara two years later. Shortly after their move, Ambedkar's mother died. The children were cared for by their paternal aunt and lived in difficult circumstances. Three sons— Balaram, Anandrao and Bhimrao; and two daughters— Manjula and Tulasa; of the Ambedkars' would go on to survive them. of his brothers and sisters, only Ambedkar passed his examinations and graduated to high school. His original surname Ambavadekar comes from his native village 'Ambavade' in Ratnagiri district. His Brahmin teacher, Mahadev Ambedkar, who was fond of him, changed his surname from 'Ambavadekar' to his own surname 'Ambedkar' in school records. This is the different aspect of Ambedkar, which boosts his life in positive direction by an upper caste teacher. Ambedkar's legacy as a socio-political reformer had a deep effect on modern India. In post-Independence India, his socio-



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political thought is respected across the political spectrum. His initiatives have influenced various spheres of life and transformed the way India today looks at socio-economic policies, education and affirmative action through socio-economic and legal incentives. His reputation as a scholar led to his appointment as free India's first law minister and chairman of the committee for drafting the constitution.

#### Review of Literature

Ambedkar's grandson, Ambedkar Prakash Yashwant, is the chief-adviser of the Buddhist Society of India, leads the Bharipa Bahujan Mahasangh and has served in both houses of the Indian Parliament. A number of unfinished typescripts and handwritten drafts were found among Ambedkar's notes and papers and gradually made available. Among these were waiting for a Visa, which probably dates from 1935–36 and is an autobiographical work, and the Untouchables, or the Children of India's Ghetto, which refers to the census of 1951. A memorial for Ambedkar was established in his Delhi house at 26 Alipur Road. His message to his followers was "educate, organize, and agitate" celebrated on the occasion of Ambedkar Jyanti.

His conversion to Buddhism sparked a revival in interest in Buddhist philosophy in India and abroad. A large official portrait of Ambedkar is on display in the Indian Parliament building. The Maharashtra government has acquired a house in London where Ambedkar lived during his days as a student in the 1920s. The house is expected to be converted into a museum-cum-memorial to Ambedkar. Osho, a spiritual teacher, remarked "I have seen people who are born in the lowest category of Hindu law, the sudras, the untouchables, so intelligent: when India became independent, the man who made the constitution of India. President Obama addressed the Indian parliament in 2010, and referred to Dalit leader Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as the great and revered Human Rights champion and main author of India's constitution.

Several movies, plays, and other works have been based on the life and thoughts of Ambedkar. Jabbar Patel directed the English-language film Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in 2000 with Mammootty in the lead role. David Blundell, professor of anthropology at UCLA and historical ethnographer, has established Arising Light – a series of films and events that are intended to stimulate interest and knowledge about the social conditions in India and the life of Ambedkar. In Samvidhaan, a TV mini-series on the making of the Constitution of India directed by Shyam Benegal, the pivotal role of B. R. Ambedkar was played by Sachin Khedekar. The play Ambedkar Aur Gandhi, directed by Arvind Gaur and written by Rajesh Kumar, tracks the two prominent personalities of its title.

Graphic novel 'Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability' by Prabhakar Joshi narrates episodes of the life of Ambedkar. It is in Pardhan-Gond Sanskrit style, comprises 1,577 shlokas and is intended as an atonement for the injustice done to the young Bhimrao by some teachers. Michael, S.M. (1999) Untouchable and Dalits in Modern India. Lynne Rienner Beltz, Johannes; Jondhale, S. (eds.). Reconstructing the

World: B.R. Ambedkar and Buddhism in India. The Education Department, Government of Maharashtra (Mumbai) published the collection of Ambedkar's writings and speeches in different volumes; Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development and 11 Other Essays; Ambedkar in the Bombay Legislature, with the Simon Commission and at the Round Table Conferences, 1927–1939; Philosophy of Hinduism; India and the Pre-requisites of Communism; Revolution and Counter-revolution; Buddha or Karl Marx, Riddles in Hinduism; Essays on Untouchables and Untouchability; The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India; , The Untouchables Who Were They And Why They Became Untouchables?; The Annihilation of Caste; Pakistan or the Partition of India; What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables; Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables. Ambedkar's Speeches and writing in Marathi, Ambedkar's Photo Album and Correspondence.

#### Objectives of the Study

Ambedkar's first wife Ramabai died in 1935 after a long illness. After completing the draft of India's constitution in the late 1940s, he suffered from lack of sleep, had neuropathic pain in his legs, and was taking insulin and homeopathic medicines. He went to Bombay for treatment, and there met Dr. Sharada Kabir, a Brahmin, whom he married on 15 April 1948, at his home in New Delhi. Doctors recommended a companion who was a good cook and had medical knowledge to care for him. She adopted the name Savita Ambedkar and cared for him the rest of his life. Ambedkar considered converting to Sikhism, which encouraged opposition to oppression and so appealed to leaders of scheduled castes. But after meeting with Sikh leaders, he concluded that he might get "second-rate" Sikh status, as described by scholar Stephen P. Cohen.

Instead, he studied Buddhism all his life. Around 1950, he devoted his attention to Buddhism and travelled to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to attend a meeting of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. While dedicating a new Buddhist vihara near Pune, Ambedkar announced he was writing a book on Buddhism and that when it was finished, he would formally convert to Buddhism. He completed his final work, The Buddha and His Dhamma, in 1956 which was published posthumously. After meetings with the Sri Lankan Buddhist monk Hammalawa Saddhatissa, Ambedkar organized a formal public ceremony for himself and his supporters in Nagpur on 14 October 1956. Accepting the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a Buddhist monk in the traditional manner, Ambedkar completed his own conversion, along with his wife. He then proceeded to convert some 500,000 of his supporters who were gathered around him. He prescribed the 22 Vows for these converts, after the Three Jewels and Five Precepts. Three days after completing his final manuscript The Buddha and His Dhamma, Ambedkar died in his sleep on 6 December 1956 at his home in Delhi. A Buddhist cremation was organized at Dadar Chowpatty beach on 7 December, attended by half a million grieving people. A conversion program was organized on 16 December 1956, so that cremation attendees were also converted to Buddhism at the same place.

In 1913, Ambedkar moved to the United States at the age of 22. He had been awarded a Baroda State Scholarship of £11.50 (Sterling) per month for three years under a scheme established by Sayajirao Gaekwad III (Gaekwad of Baroda) that was designed to provide opportunities for post graduate education at Columbia University in New York City. Soon after arriving there he settled in rooms at Livingston Hall with Naval Bhatena, a Parsi who was to be a lifelong friend. He passed his M.A. exam in June 1915, majoring in Economics and other subjects of Sociology, History, Philosophy and Anthropology.

On 9 May, he read his paper Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development before a seminar conducted by the anthropologist Alexander Goldenweiser. In October 1916, he enrolled for the Bar course at Gray's Inn, and at the same time enrolled at the London School of Economics where he started working on a doctoral thesis. In June 1917, he returned to India because his scholarship from Baroda ended. His book collection was dispatched on different ship from the one he was on, and that ship was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine. He got permission to return to London to submit his thesis within four years. He returned at the first opportunity, and completed a master's degree in 1921. So, objective of this study is to understand the situation behind Ambedkar and the solution, which he has provided the society. The country like India with their location and geographical structure was much more responsible for the situation of Ambedkar and the same has the solution, which has acknowledged by Ambedkar on time.

## Discussion

According to Arvind Sharma, Ambedkar noticed certain flaws in the Aryan invasion theory that were later acknowledged by western scholarship. For example, scholars now acknowledge anasa in Rig Veda 5.29.10 refers to speech rather than the shape of the nose. Ambedkar anticipated this modern view by stating: The term Anasa occurs in Rig Veda V.29.10. What does the word mean? There are two interpretations. One is by Prof. Max Muller. The other is by Sayanacharya. According to Prof. Max Muller, it means 'one without nose' or 'one with a flat nose' and has as such been relied upon as a piece of evidence in support of the view that the Aryans were a separate race from the Dasyus. Sayanacharya says that it means 'mouthless,' i.e., devoid of good speech. This difference of meaning is due to difference in the correct reading of the word Anasa. Sayanacharya reads it as an-asa while Prof. Max Muller reads it as a-nasa. Question is, which of the two readings is the correct one? There is no reason to hold that Sayana's reading is wrong. On the other hand there is everything to suggest that it is right. In the first place, it does not make non-sense of the word. Secondly, as there is no other place where the Dasyus are described as nose less, there is no reason why the word should be read in such a manner as to give it an altogether new sense. It is only fair to read it as a synonym of Mridhravak. There is therefore no evidence in support of the conclusion that the Dasyus belonged to a different race.

Ambedkar viewed the Shudras as Aryan and adamantly rejected the Aryan invasion theory, describing it as "so absurd that it ought to have been dead long ago" in his 1946 book Who Were the Shudras?. Ambedkar viewed Shudras as originally being "part of the Kshatriya Varna in the Indo-Aryan society", but became socially degraded after they inflicted many tyrannies on Brahmins. Ambedkar disputed various hypotheses of the Aryan homeland being outside India, and concluded the Aryan homeland was India itself. According to Ambedkar, the Rig Veda says Aryans, Dasa and Dasyus were competing religious groups, not different peoples.

As Ambedkar was educated by the Princely State of Baroda, he was bound to serve it. He was appointed Military Secretary to the Gaikwad but had to quit in a short time. He described the incident in his autobiography, waiting for a Visa. Thereafter, he tried to find ways to make a living for his growing family. He worked as a private tutor, as an accountant, and established an investment consulting business, but it failed when his clients learned that he was an untouchable. In 1918, he became Professor of Political Economy in the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics in Mumbai. Although he was successful with the students, other Professors objected to his sharing a drinking-water jug with them.

Ambedkar had been invited to testify before the Southborough Committee, which was preparing the Government of India Act 1919. At this hearing, Ambedkar argued for creating separate electorates and reservations for untouchables and other religious communities. In 1920, he began the publication of the weekly Mooknayak in Mumbai with the help of Shahaji II (1874–1922), Maharaja of Kolhapur. Ambedkar went on work as a legal professional. In 1926, he successfully defended three non-Brahmin leaders who had accused the Brahmin community and were then subsequently sued for libel. Dhananjay Keer notes that "The victory was resounding, both socially and individually, for the clients and the Doctor". While practicing law in the Bombay High Court, he tried to promote education to untouchables and uplift them. His first organized attempt was his establishment of the central institution Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, intended to promote education and socio-economic improvement, as well as the welfare of 'outcastes', at the time referred to as depressed classes. For the defense of Dalit rights, he started many periodicals like Mooknayak, Bahishkrit Bharat and Equality Janta.

Ambedkar had decided to launch active movements against untouchability in 1927. He began with public movements and marches to open up public drinking water resources. He also began a struggle for the right to enter Hindu temples. He led a satyagraha in Mahad to fight for the right of the untouchable community to draw water from the main water tank of the town. In 1930, Ambedkar launched Kalam Temple movement after three months of preparation. About 15,000 volunteers assembled at Kalam Temple satyagraha making one of the greatest processions of Nashik. The procession was headed by a military band, a batch of scouts, women and men walked in discipline, order and determination

to see the god for the first time. When they reached to gate, the gates were closed by the authorities.

British announced the formation of a separate electorate for 'Depressed Classes' in the Communal Award in 1932. Gandhi fiercely opposed a separate electorate for untouchables, saying he feared that such an arrangement would divide the Hindu community. Gandhi protested by fasting while imprisoned in the Yerwada Central Jail of Poona. Following the fast, Congress politicians and activists such as Madan Mohan Malaviya and Palwankar Baloo organised joint meetings with Ambedkar and his supporters at Yerwada. On 25 September 1932, the agreement known as Poona Pact was signed between Ambedkar (on behalf of the depressed classes among Hindus) and Madan Mohan Malaviya (on behalf of the other Hindus). The agreement gave reserved seats for the depressed classes in the Provisional legislatures, within the general electorate. Due to the pact, the depressed class received 148 seats in the legislature, instead of the 71 as allocated in the Communal Award earlier proposed by the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. The text uses the term "Depressed Classes" to denote Untouchables among Hindus who were later called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under India Act 1935 and the later Indian Constitution of 1950. In 1936, Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party, which contested the 1937 Bombay election to the Central Legislative Assembly for the 13 reserved and 4 general seats, and secured 11 and 3 seats respectively. It was the big victory of Britain to divide and rule India.

Ambedkar was appointed as Principal in 1935 of the Government Law College, Bombay, a position he held for two years. He also served as the chairman of Governing body of Ramjas College, University of Delhi, after the death of its Founder Shri Rai Kedarnath settling in Bombay. Ambedkar oversaw the construction of a house and stocked his personal library with more than 50,000 books. His wife Ramabai died after a long illness the same year. It had been her long-standing wish to go on a pilgrimage to Pandharpur, but Ambedkar had refused to let her go, telling her that he would create a new Pandharpur for her instead of Hinduism's Pandharpur which treated them as untouchables. At the Yeola Conversion Conference on 13 October in Nasik, Ambedkar announced his intention to convert to a different religion and exhorted his followers to leave Hinduism. He would repeat his message at many public meetings across India.

Ambedkar published his book *Annihilation of Caste* on 15 May 1936. It strongly criticised Hindu orthodox religious leaders and the caste system in general, and included 'A rebuke of Gandhi' on the subject. Ambedkar served on the Defence Advisory Committee and the Viceroy's Executive Council as minister for labour. In his work 'Who Were the Shudras?', Ambedkar tried to explain the formation of untouchables. He saw Shudras and Ati Shudras who form the lowest caste in the ritual hierarchy of the caste system, as separate from Untouchables. Ambedkar oversaw the transformation of his political party into the Scheduled Castes Federation, although

it performed poorly in the 1946 elections for Constituent Assembly of India. Later he was elected into the constituent assembly of Bengal where Muslim League was in power.

He tried to enter Lok Sabha again in the by-election of 1954 from Bhandara, but he placed third (the Congress Party won). By the time of the second general election in 1957, Ambedkar had died. Ambedkar also criticised Islamic practice in South Asia. While justifying the Partition of India, he condemned child marriage and the mistreatment of women in Muslim society. No words can adequately express the great and many evils of polygamy and concubinage, and especially as a source of misery to a Muslim woman. Take the caste system. Everybody infers that Islam must be free from slavery and caste. While slavery existed, much of its support was derived from Islam and Islamic countries. While the prescriptions by the Prophet regarding the just and humane treatment of slaves contained in the Koran are praiseworthy, there is nothing whatever in Islam that lends support to the abolition of this curse. But if slavery has gone, caste among Muslims has remained.

During the debates in the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar demonstrated his will to reform Indian society by recommending the adoption of a Uniform Civil Code. Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet in 1951, when parliament stalled his draft of the Hindu Code Bill, which sought to enshrine gender equality in the laws of inheritance and marriage. Ambedkar independently contested an election in 1952 to the lower house of parliament, the Lok Sabha, but was defeated in the Bombay (North Central) constituency by a little-known Narayan Sadoba Kajrolkar, who polled 138,137 votes compared to Ambedkar's 123,576. He was appointed to the upper house, of parliament, the Rajya Sabha in March 1952 and would remain as member till death.

Ambedkar opposed Article 370 of the Constitution of India, which granted a special status to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, and which was included against his wishes. Balraj Madhok reportedly said, Ambedkar had clearly told Sk. Abdullah: "You wish India should protect your borders, she should build roads in your area, she should supply you food grains, and Kashmir should get equal status as India. But Government of India should have only limited powers and Indian people should have no rights in Kashmir. To give consent to this proposal, would be a treacherous thing against the interests of India and I, as the Law Minister of India, will never do it." Then Sk. Abdullah approached Nehru, who directed him to Gopal Swami Ayyangar, who in turn approached Sardar Patel, saying Nerhu had promised Sk. Abdullah the special status. Patel got the Article passed while Nehru was on a foreign tour. On the day the article came up for discussion, Ambedkar did not reply to questions on it but did participate on other articles. All arguments were done by Krishna Swami Ayyangar.

### Conclusion

Drafting India's Constitution, People paying tribute at the central statue of Babasaheb Ambedkar in Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University in Aurangabad. Upon India's 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, charged by the Assembly to write India's new Constitution. Granville Austin described the Indian Constitution drafted by Ambedkar as 'first and foremost a social document'. ... 'The majority of India's constitutional provisions are either directly arrived at furthering the aim of social revolution or attempt to foster this revolution by establishing conditions necessary for its achievement.'

The text prepared by Ambedkar provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens, including freedom of religion, the abolition of untouchability, and the outlawing of all forms of discrimination. Ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women, and won the Assembly's support for introducing a system of reservations of jobs in the civil services, schools and colleges for members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and Other Backward Class, a system akin to affirmative action. India's lawmakers hoped to eradicate the socio-economic inequalities and lack of opportunities for India's depressed classes through these measures. The Constitution was adopted on 26 November 1949 by the Constituent Assembly. Ambedkar's political philosophy has given rise to a large number of political parties, publications and workers' unions that remain active across India, especially in Maharashtra. His promotion of Buddhism has rejuvenated interest in Buddhist philosophy among sections of population in India.

Now, the question arises that who promoted Dr. Ambedker to go abroad for studying? Who has given importance to look for the pact like Poona? Who has given chance to upgrade or promote during his school days? Who has provided opportunity to become Chairman of 'Constitution Drafting Committee'? Who has send him Upper house 'Rajya Sabha' inspite of his loosing the election? Who has make him to became the first law minister of India? Who were the supporters of his 'Hindi Code Bill', Common Civil Code, Article 370? Etc. are the

question, which Dr. Ambedker has never been honored and acknowledge. If there is the problem; there were the solutions in the same bucket. It is sure that first has been condemned,; but it is also necessary to welcome the positive behavior making by many others. Without this, It was not possible for Ambedker to lift like this; if it is true that there was the problem like, he has mentioned many a time.

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