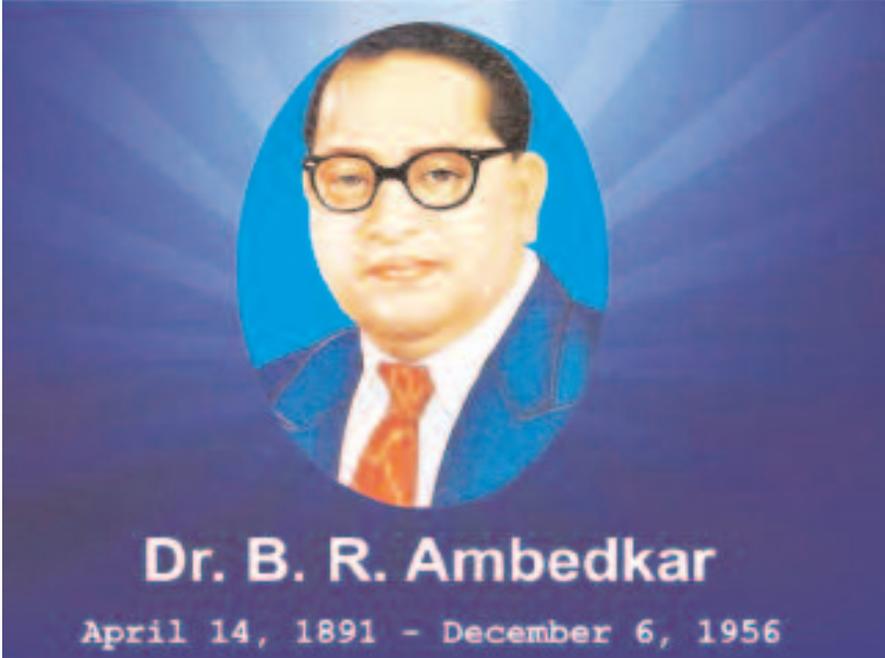


A Journey for Destination

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, popularly also known as Babasaheb, was an jurist, political leader, philosopher, anthropologist, historian, orator, economist, teacher, editor, prolific writer, revolutionary and a revivalist for Buddhism in



India. He was also the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. Born into a poor Mahar (considered an Untouchable caste) family, Ambedkar campaigned against social discrimination, the system of Chaturvarna the categorisation of Hindu society into four varnas and the Hindu caste system. He converted to Buddhism and is also credited with providing a spark for the transformation of hundreds of thousands of Dalits or untouchables to Theravada Buddhism. Ambedkar was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, in 1990. Overcoming numerous social and financial obstacles, Ambedkar became one of the first Dalit to obtain a college education in India. Eventually earning a law degree and doctorates for his study and research in law, economics and political science from Columbia University and the London School of Economics, Ambedkar gained a reputation as a scholar and practised law for a few years, later campaigning by publishing journals advocating political rights and social freedom for India's untouchables. He is regarded as a Bodhisattva by some Indian Buddhists, though he never claimed himself to be a Bodhisattva. Ambedkar said at a public function in 1956, while he was converting, that, "accepting Buddhism does not only mean getting into new religion it means entering into new form of life where everybody has responsibility to cultivate wisdom, compassion and morality in this life moments, buddha's dhamma is here to guide and protect humanity, what we have to do is to strive for creating a moral order. Ambedkar was born 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 and Bhimabai. His family was of Marathi background from the town of Ambavade (Mandangad taluka) in Ratnagiri district of modern-day Maharashtra. They belonged to the Mahar caste, who were treated as untouchables and subjected to socio-economic discrimination. Ambedkar's ancestors had for long been in the employment of the army of the British East India Company, and, his father served in the Indian Army at the Mhow cantonment. Having had little formal education in Marathi and English, but encouraging his children to learn and work hard at school. Belonging to the Kabir Panth, Ramji Sakpal encouraged his children to read the Hindu classics. He used his position in the army to lobby for his children to study at the government school, as they faced resistance owing to their caste. Although able to attend school, Ambedkar and other untouchable children were segregated and given little attention or assistance by the teachers. They were not allowed to sit inside the class. Even if they needed to drink water somebody from a higher caste would have 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, Ambedkar states this situation as "No peon, No Water". He was required to sit on a gunny sack which he had to take home with him. 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 succeeded in passing his examinations and graduating to a high school. Bhimrao Sakpal Ambavadekar the surname 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. B.A.(Bombay University) Bachelor of Arts, MA.(Columbia university) Master of Arts, M.Sc(London School of Economics) Master of Science, PhD (Columbia University) Doctor of philosophy ,D.Sc.(London School of Economics) Doctor of Science,L.L.D.(Columbia University) Doctor of Laws, D. Litt.(Osmania University) Doctor of Literature, Barrister-at-Law (Gray's Inn, London) law qualification for a lawyer in royal court of England. In 1897, Ambedkar's family moved to Bombay where Ambedkar became the only untouchable enrolled at Elphinstone High School. In 1906, 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, becoming the first from his untouchable community to do

so. This success provoked celebrations in his community and after a public ceremony he was presented with a biography of the Buddha by Dada Keluskar, the author and a family friend. By 1912, he obtained his degree in economics and political science from Bombay University, and prepared to take up employment with the Baroda state government. His wife, by then 15 years old gave birth to his first son, Yashwant, in the same year. Ambedkar had just moved his young family and started work, when he dashed back to Mumbai to see his ailing father, who died on 2 February 1913. In 1913, he moved to the United States. He had been awarded a Baroda State Scholarship of £11.50 (Sterling) per month for three years under a scheme established by the Gaekwar of Baroda that was designed to provide opportunities for postgraduate education at Columbia University. Soon after arriving there he settled in rooms at Livingston Hall with Naval Bhathena, a Parsi who was to be a lifelong friend. He passed his MA exam in June 1915, majoring in Economics, with Sociology, History, Philosophy and Anthropology as other subjects of study; he presented a thesis, Ancient Indian Commerce. In 1916 he offered another MA thesis, National Dividend of India-A Historic and Analytical Study. 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 studied for the Bar examination at Gray's Inn, and enrolled at the London School of Economics where he started work on a doctoral thesis. In June 1917 he was obliged to go back to India as the term of his scholarship from Baroda ended, however he was given permission to return and submit his thesis within four years. He travelled separately from his collection of books, which were lost when the ship on which they were despatched was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine. As Ambedkar was educated by the Princely State of Baroda, he was bound to serve that State. He was appointed as Military Secretary to the Gaekwar but had to quit within 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 Bombay. Even though he was successful with the students, other professors objected to his sharing the same drinking-water jug that they all used. 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 (Leader of the Silent) in Mumbai with the help of Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj I (1884–1922) Maharaja of Kolhapur. Ambedkar went on to work as a legal professional. In 1926 he successfully defended three non-Brahmin leaders who had accused the Brahmins subsequently sued for libel. Dhananjay Keer notes that "The victory was resounding, both socially and individually, for the clients and the Doctor". While practising law in the Bombay High Court, he tried to uplift the untouchables in order to educate them. His first organised attempt to achieve this was the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, which was intended to promote education and socio-economic improvement, as well as the welfare of "outcastes", at the time referred to as depressed classes. By 1927 Ambedkar decided to launch active movements against untouchability. He began with public movements and marches to open up and share public drinking water resources, also he 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. He took part in an event in which an ancient Vedic was burned by G.N. Sahasrabudhe, a Brahmin. He was appointed to the Bombay Presidency Committee to work with the all-European Simon Commission in 1925. This commission had sparked great protests across India, and while its report was ignored by most Indians, Ambedkar himself wrote a separate set of recommendations for the future Constitution of India. Due to Ambedkar's prominence and popular support amongst the untouchable community, he was invited to attend the Second Round Table Conference in London in 1932. Gandhi fiercely opposed a separate electorate for untouchables, saying he feared that such an arrangement would split the Hindu community into two groups. In 1932, when the British had agreed with Ambedkar and announced a Communal Award of a separate electorate, Gandhi protested by fasting while imprisoned in the Yerwada Central Jail of Poona. The fast provoked huge civil unrest across India and orthodox Hindu leaders, Congress politicians and activists such as Madan Mohan Malaviya and Palwankar Baloo organised joint meetings with Ambedkar and his supporters at Yerwada. Fearing a communal reprisal and genocidal acts against untouchables, Ambedkar was coerced into agreeing with Gandhi. This agreement, which saw Gandhi end his fast and Ambedkar drop his demand for a separate electorate, was called the Poona Pact. Instead, a certain number of seats were reserved specifically for untouchables (who in the agreement were called the "Depressed Class"). In 1935, Ambedkar was appointed principal of the Government Law College, Mumbai, a position he held for two years. Settling in Mumbai, Ambedkar oversaw the construction of a house, and stocked his personal library with more than 50,000 books. pilgrimage to Pandharpur, but Ambedkar had refused to let her go, telling her that he would create a new Pandharpur for her instead of Pandharpur which treated them as untouchables. Speaking 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 numerous public meetings across India. In 1936, Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party, which contested in the 1937 Bombay election to the Central Legislative Assembly for the 13 reserved and 4 general seats and securing 11 and 3 seats respectively. **CONTD ON PAGE NO. 03**