

# B.R. AMBEDKAR(1891 – 1956)

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# Life & Works:

- ▶ Bhimarao Ramji Ambedkar popularly known as 'Babasaheb' a great lawyer, jurist and political leader of modern India.
  - ▶ He took upon himself the task of fighting for religious, social and economic equality in the Indian society.
  - ▶ He was born on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1891 in an untouchable community(Mahar) in Maharashtra.
  - ▶ He studied in USA & was a student of Columbia University & London School of Economics.
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# Life and works ....

- ▶ He fought for the political rights & representation for the untouchables.
  - ▶ He was called as the architect of Indian constitution.
  - ▶ He was the law minister under Nehru's cabinet.
  - ▶ He embraced Buddhism in 1956 and in the same year he passed away.
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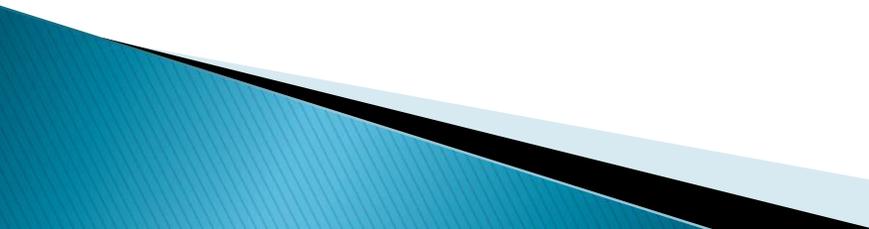
# Influences on Ambedkar:

1. His father took keen interest in training Dr. Ambedkar in religious & spiritual matters.
  2. Bitter experience during his school life, prohibition of Sanskrit teaching to untouchables made Ambedkar a rebel & revolutionary.
  3. John Dewey a teacher at Columbia University became a source of inspiration to Ambedkar.
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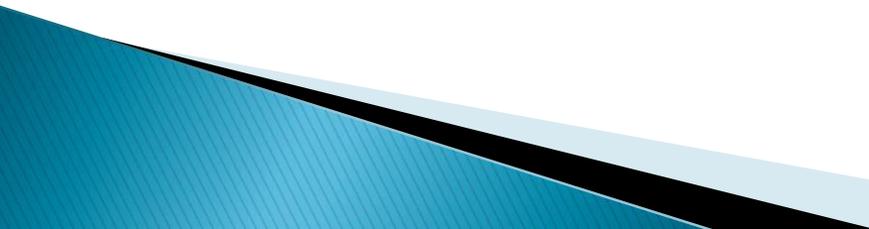
# Influences on Ambedkar .....

4. Jyothiba- Phule a great social reformer & Karl Marx, a great socialist revolutionary also had a great impact on Ambedkar.
  5. Justice Ranade, J.S. Mill & Mahatma Gandhi also influenced his ideals.
  6. Buddhism had a tremendous influence on him so that he converted himself to become a Bhudhist.
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# Major Works of Ambedkar:

- ▶ He was a versatile writer & has done writing on different subjects related to history, economics, religion, sociology, anthropology, law, politics, etc.
  - ▶ Some of his works were,
    1. Who were Shudras?
    2. The Untouchables,
    3. Caste in India,
    4. Annihilation of Caste,
    5. Buddha & his Dhamma,
    6. What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables, etc.
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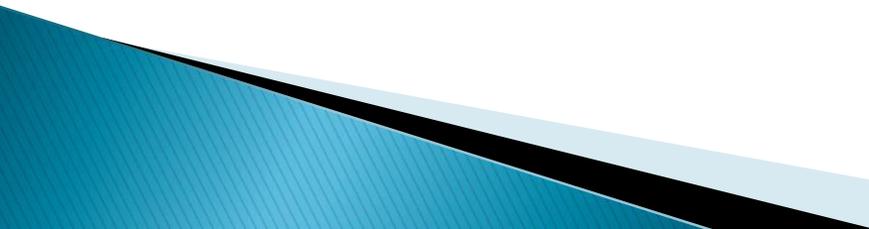
# Ambedkar on Caste Equality:

- ▶ To him, Hindu scheme of social structure based on the four Varna's breeds inequality & has been the parent of Caste system & untouchability which were merely forms of inequality.
  - ▶ In his writings he has denounced the old law givers like Manu & totally rejected Hindu society especially Brahmanism.
  - ▶ His conception of caste inequality has the following main ideas –
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# 1. Hindu society & Caste Inequality:

- ▶ To him, Hindu scheme of social structure is based on the four varnas which breeds inequality.
  - ▶ He found in the Hindu society the total absence of freedom, equality and justice.
  - ▶ There was a wide gap between the ideals preached & their practice in the Hindu society.
  - ▶ The entire Hindu society was divided into different castes, each caste having different rights and purposes.
  - ▶ Ambedkar said “Hindu society as such does not exist. It is a collection of castes & each caste is conscious of its existence. It is not even a federation.”
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## 2. Varna system breeding inequality:

- ▶ Hindu scheme of social structure is based on 'Chaturvarnas' which breeds inequality and has created the caste system and untouchability which are different forms of inequality.
  - ▶ Hindu society gave sanction to division of labour which led to social stratification ultimately resulting in widespread inequality.
  - ▶ It also led to suppression & subordination of a large number of people just because they happened to be born in a certain caste.
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### 3. Division between touchable and untouchables:

- ▶ To him, class division in the society is quite natural based on economic and social consideration but in the Hindu social system it was based on birth with the sanction of religion.
  - ▶ The religion of Hindus prohibited them from free social life.
  - ▶ Hindu religion treats some men as untouchables & denies them equal rights in the society.
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### 3. Division between touchable & untouchables .....

- ▶ These untouchables were considered as not fit for social association & hence they were not treated as human beings.
  - ▶ The untouchables were given only duties & no rights whereas the higher castes enjoyed all rights & privileges.
  - ▶ Thus, the Hindu society had a system of graded inequality.
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# 4. Degrading social system:

- ▶ According to him, this graded inequality among the Hindus made the Hindu religion the most degrading system of social organization.
- ▶ “there could not be a more degrading system of social organization than *chaturvarna* . It is a system which deadens, paralyses and cripples the people from helpful activity.” – Ambedkar.

# 5. Creation of Shudras:

- ▶ He holds the Brahmins responsible for the creation of Shudra class in order to meet their vested interest.
- ▶ Ambedkar noted that there was no mention of shudras in the Rig-Veda.
- ▶ According to him, shudras formed a part of kshatriyas and since there were fights between shudra kings and Brahmins regularly these Brahmins developed hatredness towards shudras & refused to perform upanayana to the shudras & were socially discarded & thus formed the fourth Varna.

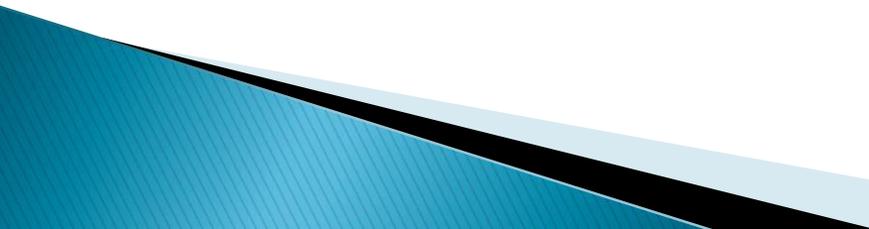
# 6. Creation of Untouchables:

- ▶ Ambedkar felt that the refusal of Brahmins to perform the rites of shudras created the beginning of their social segregation.
  - ▶ Shudras were denied all rights in the society & were looked as inferior by 3 castes.
  - ▶ There were penalties if the Brahmins performed upanayana for any shudra.
  - ▶ Thus, the Hindu society developed a class of outcastes and untouchables who forfeited their civic rights & were forced to lead a depressed life.
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# 7. Practice of untouchability:

- ▶ The practice of untouchability led to many atrocities & sufferings. E.g. they could not get equal education like others.
  - ▶ Many outcaste people did not receive timely medical help, as they could not be touched by higher caste doctor.
  - ▶ There were restriction imposed on their habit eating as well as their movements.
  - ▶ Hinduism refused to regard the untouchable as a human being fit for comradeship – Ambedkar.
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# 8. Empowerment of the Untouchables:

- ▶ Ambedkar was a rationalist, revolutionary, savior of the downtrodden masses and felt strongly that the weaker sections of the society should be empowered.
  - ▶ He was a strong critic of orthodoxy, fanaticism & rigidity of the caste system as laid down by Manu.
  - ▶ He felt that the Varna system had denied the human values like liberty, equality & fraternity.
  - ▶ He considered untouchability as a product of caste system of the Hindu society which stood in the way of establishing true democracy, socialism & humanism.
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# STEPS TAKEN TO EMPOWER THE UNTOUCHABLES:

- ▶ In his work “Annihilation of Caste” Ambedkar exposed the evils of caste system & suggested certain strategies for its abolition & empowerment of the untouchables.
- ▶ The steps taken by him to uplift the untouchables listed as below –
  1. Spreading of education,
  2. Entry into temples,
  3. Burning Manusmriti,
  4. Inter-caste marriages,
  5. Establishment of political party,
  6. Pancha-sutras for the progress of the dalits,
  7. Reforming the style of life,
  8. Education, agitation & organization,
  9. Political efforts made by him to empower the dalits, etc.

# 1. Spreading of education:

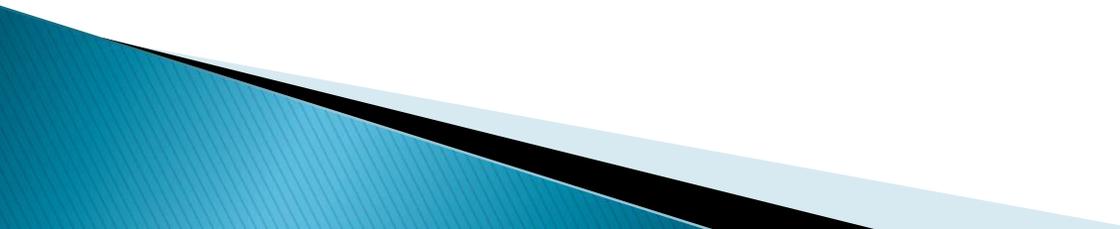
- ▶ In 1924, he started a Sabha in Bombay to establish hostels for the spread of education for the downtrodden, develop their culture through a reading & spiritual centre, open industrial & agricultural schools for economic development and so on.
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## 2. Entry into temples:

- ▶ In 1927, he led a movement of about 500 untouchables to use the water of a tank in a village in Bombay.
  - ▶ In 1930, he launched another movement to make their entry into the temples at Nasik.
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- ▶ In 1927, he burnt Manusmrithi at Mahad as he considered it the root cause of untouchability and inequality.

## 4. Inter-caste marriages:

- ▶ Besides, the above, he also promoted inter-caste dinners & marriages to reorganize the Hindu society.
  - ▶ But he felt that in order to empower them, there should be a change in law.
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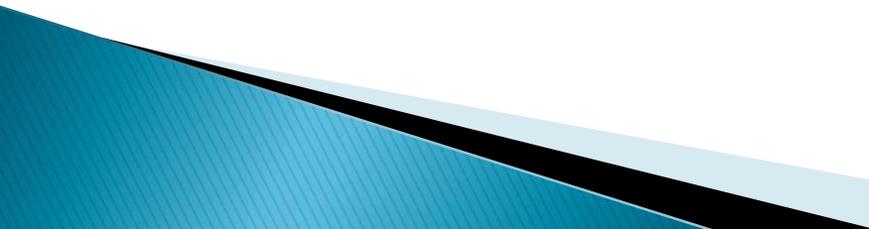
## 5. Establishment of political party:

- ▶ During his times, due to his high education, he became the undisputed leader of the untouchables.
  - ▶ In order to fight against the injustices meted out the untouchables establishing political party & few such organizations of the untouchables is necessary.
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## 6. Panch-sutras for the progress of the Dalits:

- ▶ He wanted the dalits to follow pancha-sutras in life in order to attain a respectable status in their life. They are –
  - a. Self-improvement,
  - b. Self-progress,
  - c. Self-dependence,
  - d. Self-respect &
  - e. Self-confidence.

# 7. Reforming the style of life:

- ▶ He made an appeal to his community men to reform the style of their life to suit the needs of time.
  - ▶ He wanted to give up alcoholic drinks, begging & become literates, so that they can send their children to schools.
  - ▶ He also wanted them to dress well and have self-respect for themselves.
  - ▶ He wanted to bring about a revolution in the way of life of the untouchables.
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# 8. Education, Agitation & Organization:

- ▶ These were the 3 principles suggested by Ambedkar to help the Dalits to empower themselves.
  - ▶ He also wanted them to fight against all exploiters and cheaters.
  - ▶ He also felt that they should organize themselves to thrash out individual differences so that they may fight for a common cause.
  - ▶ Ambedkar himself worked to put all these 3 principles into practice.
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# 9. Political efforts made by him to empower the Dalits:

- ▶ To him, caste system is the main obstacle to the empowerment of the Dalits.
- ▶ He thought that political empowerment is the key to social empowerment.
- ▶ Following were the efforts made by him towards their empowerment, they are –
  - a. Demand for separate electorate for the dalits,
  - b. Anti-untouchability League,
  - c. Safe-guards in the constitution,
  - d. Empowerment of dalits and women,
  - e. Political safe-guards for dalits, etc.

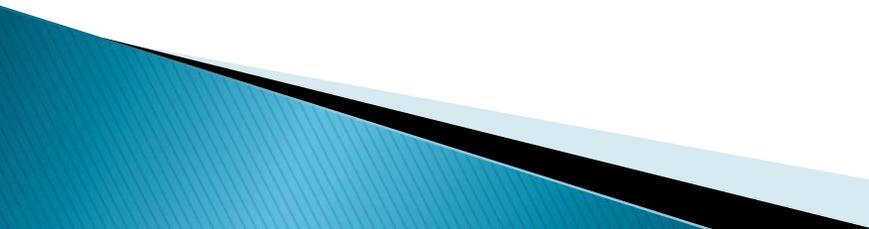
## a. Demand for separate electorate for dalits:

- ▶ During the Round Table Conferences, Ambedkar represented the dalits in India, where he demanded a separate electorate for the depressed classes.
  - ▶ Gandhi opposed this proposal, but the famous Poona–pact (1932) resulted in sorting out the differences between the two.
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## b. Anti-untouchability League:

- ▶ He supported the Anti-untouchability League to secure for the depressed classes enjoyment of their civil rights such as taking water from the wells, admission to the village schools and so on.

## c. Safeguards in the Constitution:

- ▶ He provided for the legal abolition of untouchability in the Part III of the Constitution(Art. 17).
  - ▶ Art. 17 not only abolished untouchability but has made its practice in any form, an offence punishable under law.
  - ▶ This provision of the constitution has gone a very long way in giving a constitutional & legal foundation to overcome the sorrows and troubles of the untouchables.
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## d. Empowerment of dalits and women:

- ▶ As the chairman of the Drafting Committee, Ambedkar laid maximum efforts to incorporate as many provisions as possible for the protection of dalits to safeguard their interests & providing for reservation.
- ▶ As the law minister he had the chance to include certain laws which provided protection for the weaker sections of the society.
- ▶ It is for his contributions to protect the interests of the weaker sections of the society he has been called as the “Abhinava Manu”.

## e. Political safeguards for Dalits:

- ▶ He has exerted influence in the independent India in providing following political safe-guards to the Dalits –
  1. Equal citizenship which included in the F. Rights,
  2. Free enjoyment of equal rights,
  3. Protection against discrimination of Dalits,
  4. Providing adequate representation in the legislatures,
  5. Given adequate representation in the services,
  6. Providing adequate measures to redress against neglect of their interests,
  7. Special departmental care to protect depressed classes,
  8. Finally, giving adequate representation to these depressed classes in the cabinet.
- ▶ In recognition to his services to the depressed classes the Government of India awarded to him “Bharata Rathna” posthumously.