

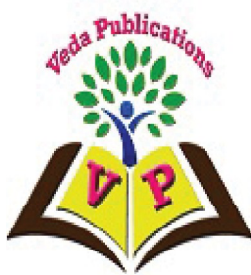


**DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR :  
AS A SOCIO-ECONOMIST**

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**Abstract**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was born in a poor low Mahar Caste who were treated as untouchables. He got Baroda State Scholarship and went to foreign for higher studies. He has been projected as an advocate for the political rights and social freedom for Dalits. He has contributed significantly for the establishment of India. But apart from these significant works he has also done a lot for laborers, common people especially for women laborers and in the field of economics. He has been accepted as the greatest Indian after Mahatma Gandhi. He was the Messiah of the common man.

**Key words :** *Untouchable, Education in London, Messiah of the common man.*



Ramji Maloji Sakpal, an army officer, who held the rank of Subedar was posted in the town and military cantonment of Mhow in the Central Provinces (now in Madhya Pradesh). His wife's name was Bhimabai Sakpal. Bhimabai Sakpal and Ramji Maloji Sakpal had 13 children. On 14<sup>th</sup> April 1891 Ambedkar was born in this family as the 14<sup>th</sup> child. Ramji Maloji Sakpal retired in 1894 and the family moved to Satata after two years. Ambedkar was born in a poor low Mahar Caste who were treated as untouchables. Only Ambedkar passed his examinations and went to high school. His original surname was 'Sakpal' but his father registered his name as Ambadawekar in school. It meant he came from his native village 'Ambadawe' in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. His teacher Krishna Keshav Ambedkar changed his surname from 'Ambadawekar' to 'Ambedkar' in school records. Thus 'BhimRao' the fourteenth son of Ramji Maloji Sakpal became 'Bhim Rao Ramjee Ambedkar'. His family moved to Bombay (Mumbai) in 1897. In 1906, the 15 year-old Bhim Rao was married to a nine year old girl Ramabai.

He got admission in Elphinstone High School as the only untouchable and passed his matriculation examination in 1907 which was affiliated to the University of Bombay. Thus he became the first untouchable to pass matriculation.

By 1912 he obtained his Degree in Economics and Political Science from Bombay University and searching for employment with the Baroda State Government but he was 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 opportunity for post graduate education at Columbia University in New York City. Thus in 1913, Ambedkar moved to the United States at the age of 22 and he passed his M.A. Exam in June 1915 majoring in Economics and other subjects of Sociology, History, Philosophy and Anthropology. He presented a thesis, 'Ancient Indian Commerce'. Ambedkar was influenced by John Dewey and his work on democracy. In 1916 he completed his second thesis "National Dividend of India – A Historic and Analytical Study". For another M.A, he enrolled himself at London School of

Economics where he started working on a doctoral thesis. But in June 1917 he had to return to India as his scholarship from Baroda ended. Later he got permission to return to London to submit his thesis within four years. He returned and completed Master Degree in 1921. His thesis was on "The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and its solution". In 1923, he completed D.Sc. in Economics.

The major publications of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar are "The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and its Solution" and "The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India – A study in the Provincial Decentralization of Imperial Finance". Again all his writings and speeches were compiled by Maharashtra Government in a multi volume complete edition: Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches.

Both at Columbia University in the US and at the University of London Ambedkar got opportunity to study under the foremost authorities of the time. American philosopher of the time John Dewey was among Ambedkar's teacher at the Columbia University.

Ambedkar's teacher of public finance, Edwin R.A. Seligman, who was the then Professor of Political Economy was also at Columbia University. Later when Ambedkar went to London his teacher was an equally eminent economist, Edwin Caman who was an acknowledged authority on the history of economic thought.

We have exaggerated the fact that Ambedkar has written the 'Constitution of India' so much that we forget a lot of socio cultural, economic activities which were initiated and concluded by Dr. Ambedkar. Many of the population are not aware of such facts.

### **1. EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK.**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was the first person who brought "Equal pay for equal work irrespective of the sex" in India in terms of industrial workers as a labor minister in the viceroy executive council.

### **2. REDUCTION OF FACTORY WORKING HOURS**

Previously the laborers were working 12 hours a day. In the 7<sup>th</sup> session of Indian Labor Conference in New Delhi, November 27, 1942 he

brought it and was supported by the representatives of central and provincial Governments, important states and employees and workers organizations unanimously the principle of 48 hours a week in Indian factories. In his speech Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emphasized, "The present is an opportune moment for taking up this question because there is a need for giving relief to factory workers. More over shorter hours will lead to greater employment. The memorandum made it clear the reduction in hours should not be accompanied by any reduction in basic wages or dearness allowances unless there is a fall in prices."

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar formed many laws for women laborers in India like Maternity Benefit Act, Women laborer Welfare Fund, Women and Child Labor Protection Act, Maternity benefit for Women Labor and Equal Pay for equal work irrespective of their sex.

He became instrumental in the establishment of Employment Exchanges in India and also made the provision of assurance for the employees in the name 'Employees State Insurance (ESI). It helped the workers with medical care, medical leave, and facilities to disabled during working hours at work place. He also played the key role for the dearness allowance, holidays with pay for factory workers, health insurance for Thus Ambedkar's thinking process always assisted the common man, the laborers, the real architects of the nation but we talk of 'father of the constitution' only. But before making himself fit for this job of drafting constitution Dr. Ambedkar worked a lot for the people at the grass root level. We know that greatness lies in looking down and Ambedkar always looked at the poorest of the poor, the most helpless among the helpless which elevated him up to the level of messiah for the poor common man irrespective of the caste, color, creed and sex.

Prof. Amartya K. Sen won 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics for poverty and famine. He said that "Ambedkar is my father in Economics. He is a true celebrated champion of the underprivileged. He deserves more than what he has achieved today. However he was a highly controversial figure in his home country which was not the reality. His

contribution to the field of economics is marvelous and will be remembered forever....!" It is proved by a recently conducted survey by 'History TV 18 and CNN IBN' in June 2012, who is the greatest Indian after Mahatma Gandhi? was the question asked from the people of India. The contestants included the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Singer Lata Mageskar, Industrialist JRD Tata, Scientist A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Indira Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, etc. Finally Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was declared the winner. Historian Ramchandra Guha stated on the declaration of results "Dr. Ambedkar's legacy has been distorted to suit particular interests. He was a great scholar, institution builder and economic theorist." We should understand Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as he was.

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