

B. R. Ambedkar

Guiding Light of India's Constitution

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, fondly known as Babasaheb, was a visionary leader whose life and work have left a permanent mark on modern India. Born on April 14, 1891, in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh, he faced the harsh realities of caste-based discrimination from an early age. Despite these adversities, Ambedkar displayed remarkable determination and intellect, pursuing education as a means to rise above societal constraints.

After completing his undergraduate studies at Elphinstone College, Bombay, he earned a scholarship to Columbia University in the United States, where he obtained a Ph.D. for his thesis *National Dividend of India: A Historic and Analytical Study*. Later, he pursued further education at the London School of Economics, earning a Doctorate in Economics for his work, *The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution*. These academic experiences broadened his perspective, instilling in him a deep commitment to social reform and human rights.

Returning to India, Ambedkar devoted his life to advocating for the rights of the marginalized and oppressed. He founded organizations like the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha and started newspapers such as *Mooknayak* and *Bahishkrit Bharat* to amplify the voices of the downtrodden. Through movements like the Mahad Satyagraha in 1927, he challenged caste-based injustices and fought for equal access to public resources. His belief in the power of education as a transformative tool led him to establish institutions and scholarships for Dalit students, urging them to "Educate, Agitate, and Organize."

Ambedkar's appointment as Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly in 1947 was a momentous occasion for the nation. Over 141 sessions, he played a pivotal role in shaping the Indian Constitution, ensuring it upheld principles of justice, equality, and liberty. His efforts abolished untouchability, guaranteed equal rights, and safeguarded cultural and educational freedoms for all citizens. Ambedkar envisioned the Constitution not just as a legal document but as a tool for social and economic transformation.

Disillusioned with the rigid caste system within Hinduism, Ambedkar converted to Buddhism in 1956, inspiring millions to follow suit. He saw Buddhism as a path to equality and liberation, aligned with his ideals of social justice. Throughout his life, he wrote extensively on issues of caste, religion, and governance, with works like *Annihilation of Caste*, *Who Were the Shudras?*, and *Thoughts on Linguistic States* cementing his status as a profound thinker and reformer.

Dr. Ambedkar passed away on December 6, 1956, leaving behind a legacy of resilience, intellect, and unwavering commitment to justice. In recognition of his contributions, he was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1990. Babasaheb's life remains an enduring inspiration, reminding us of the power of education, equality, and perseverance in building an inclusive society.

Excerpts of Speeches made by Babasaheb in Constituent Assembly

On the Role of the Constitution

"The Constitution is not a mere lawyer's document; it is a vehicle of life, and its spirit is always the spirit of the age."

"People must hold fast to constitutional methods to achieve their social and economic objectives, if they wished to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact."

"Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated. We must realize that our people have yet to learn it. Democracy in India is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil, which is essentially undemocratic."

On Citizenship and Fundamental Rights

"The proposed Indian Constitution is a dual polity with a single citizenship. There is only one citizenship for the whole of India. It is Indian citizenship. There is no State citizenship. Every Indian has the same rights of citizenship, no matter in what State he resides."

"It is incorrect to say that fundamental rights are absolute while non-fundamental rights are not absolute. The real distinction between the two is that non-fundamental rights are created by agreement between parties while fundamental rights are the gift of the law."

On Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity

"On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics, we will have equality, and in social and economic life, we will have inequality. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment, or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy."

"Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things."

"Justice is another name for liberty, equality, and fraternity. Unless these three are realized, social justice cannot be achieved."

Transformation of Political Democracy

"Democracy in India is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil, which is essentially undemocratic."

"Political democracy must transform into social democracy. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy."

"We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy."

"If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, what must we do? The first thing in my judgment we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives."

