



# Ambedkar Times

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VOL- 6

ISSUE- 10-11

August 16-31, 2014

[www.ambedkartimes.com](http://www.ambedkartimes.com)

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## BABASAHEB DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR AND HIS COMMITMENT TO HIS PEOPLE

Prem K. Chumber, Editor-in-Chief:

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On the eve of the occasion for a farewell function organized in honor of Dr. B.R Ambedkar's departure for London on 15th August 1931 to attend the second session at Round Table Conference as a representative of Untouchable class at Sir Cawasji Jahangir Hall on 14th August 1931, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar said "In a conference of one hundred and twenty-five members we are two; but rest assured that we will move heaven and earth for the sake of your welfare. I had a talk with Gandhi this afternoon. At present he cannot do anything to promote your interests. We must stand on our own feet and fight as best as we can for our rights. So carry on your agitation and organize your forces. Power and prestige will come to you through struggle".



The way that Babasaheb preferred to adopt for the uplift of his people was democratic one. After grappling with the obdurate tormentors at Mahad, he successfully fought the legal battle to the advantage of his people and proved the

oppressive social structures that the so-called untouchables were powerful enough to melt them thoroughly. For Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the battle is not for material and political gains; it was for self-respect, dignity and spiritual elegance.

Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar fulfilled his promise to leave his mortal frame not as a Hindu precisely for this very purpose while embracing Buddhism. He exhorted his people to leave Hinduism if they wanted to live with dignity. And the only religion that gives them the same was/is Buddhism. He became Buddhist not to renounce the world but to retrieve his and for his people their due place in Indian society.

At the time of his Diksha (adoption of Buddhism) at Nagpur in 1956, he told his people that he was offered on many occasions prestigious offices of profit but he declined simply for the reason that he wanted to serve his fellow beings. He used to say that the difference between a great man and an eminent man is that the former prefers to serve his people.

Anyone who defies social tyranny is more courageous than the one who defies political tyranny. Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar proved to be a great rather a greatest of all great men who fought valiantly all the might of social tyranny singlehandedly throughout his life.

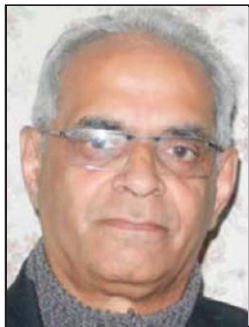
We are proud of our Babasaheb who gave us all what we enjoy today. It is all due to his life-long struggle that we are what we are and we salute our Babasaheb on the day of Independence of India which coincides with his march towards second session of Round Table Conference at London.

## DR. AMBEDKAR: NO LESS A PATRIOT THAN ANYONE ELSE

Dr Hemant Devasthali

Formerly Principal, Ness Wadia College of Commerce, University of Pune, Pune

**Dr Ambedkar's life should be viewed as a part of a larger and 'a correlated but different freedom struggle, one for the liberation of the most oppressed sections of Indian society. This was a liberation movement wider and deeper than that of fighting colonialism'**



Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has been accused of siding with the British and keeping distance from India's freedom movement which resulted in the alienation of the Dalits from the movement. While it is true that Dr. Ambedkar participated in none of the movements against the British rule that were led by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress, it would be enlightening in this regard to view the Indian political scenario from 1930s till Independence from the perspective of Dr. Ambedkar and the Depressed Classes of India. In this regard attention may be drawn to a moot guiding principle in his thinking he happened to reveal in a very forceful speech he gave while participating in a Bombay Legislative Assembly debate on 26 October 1939. The point has been brought out very lucidly in this address and it would not therefore be out of place to quote an excerpt from it. Dr. Ambedkar says:

"I know my position has not been understood properly in the country. It has often been misunderstood. Let me, therefore, take this opportunity to clarify my position...Whenever there has been a conflict between my personal interests and the interests of the country as a whole, I have always placed the claim of the country above my own personal claims... But I will also leave no doubt in the minds of the people of this country that I have another loyalty to which I am bound and which I can never forsake. That loyalty is the community of untouchables, in which I am born, to which I belong, and which I hope I shall never desert.

And I say this to this House as strongly as I possibly can, that whenever there is any conflict of interest between the country and the untouchables, so far as I am concerned, the untouchables' interests will take precedence over the interests of the country. I am not going to support a tyrannising majority simply because it happens to speak in the name of the country. I am not going to

undertaken by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. These include the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-21, Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-31 and the Quit India Movement of 1942.

In other words, had Dr. Ambedkar felt convinced of the sincerity of the leaders of the freedom movement with regard to the interests of the Depressed



Dr. Ambedkar presenting the draft of India's constitution to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Indian Constituent Assembly (21 February 1948). Only a man who had a vision of free and independent India could have accomplished the task of drafting her constitution.

support a party because it happens to speak in the name of the country. I shall not do that. Let everybody here and everywhere understand that that is my position. As between the country and myself, the country will have precedence; as between the country and the Depressed Classes, the Depressed Classes will have precedence—the country will not have precedence."

It is very plain from the above that Dr Ambedkar was fiercely loyal to the interests of the untouchables and in fact of the whole community of the Depressed Classes. It therefore followed naturally that he remained steadfastly opposed to any individual, idea, organisation or movement that he felt was not in the interest of the Depressed Classes. Thus, since in his view the idea of the freedom from the British rule as it existed then did not in any way incorporate furtherance of interests of the Depressed Classes, he distanced himself from any of the freedom movements, particularly those

Classes, he might have extended them cooperation. And in that case, the fight for the freedom from the British rule and the one for the freedom from the social injustice could have been concurrent and simultaneous.

Unfortunately this did not happen since Dr. Ambedkar never felt that the interests of the Depressed Classes would ever be attended to appropriately by either the Indian National Congress or by the Mahatma who was the supreme leader of the movement under its auspices. A few broad reasons as below may be identified for the total absence of any meeting ground for Dr. Ambedkar and the leaders of the Freedom Movement:

1. The Freedom Movement, Dr. Ambedkar felt, was overwhelmed by the single goal of attainment of freedom from the British and had therefore little space for the interests of the Depressed Classes. This exclusive focus on the political gain had its roots in the well-known

(Cont.d on page no 4)

### ਲੱਖ ਖੁਸ਼ੀਆਂ ਖਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀਆਂ ਜੇ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇ

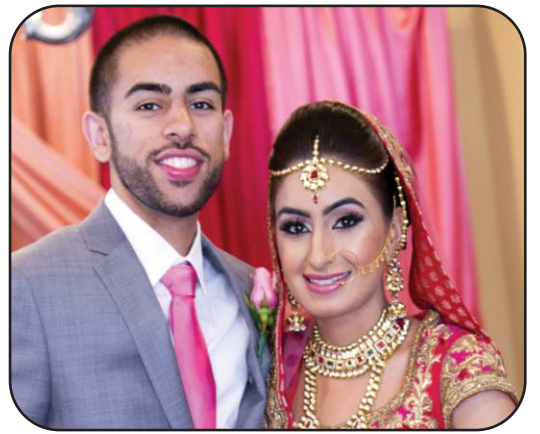
## ਕੈਸ਼ ਫੈਬਰਿਕਸ ਵਾਲੇ ਸ. ਕਸ਼ਮੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਧੁੱਗਾ ਦੀ ਸਪੁੱਤਰੀ ਦਾ ਸ਼ੁਭ ਵਿਆਹ ਕਾਕਾ ਜਸਦੀਪ ਸੰਘੇੜਾ ਨਾਲ ਹੋਇਆ

ਬੀਤੀ 5 ਜੁਲਾਈ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸੈਨਹੋਜੇ ਵਿਖੇ ਕੈਸ਼ ਫੈਬਰਿਕਸ ਵਾਲੇ ਸ. ਕਸ਼ਮੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਧੁੱਗਾ ਅਤੇ ਬੀਬੀ ਗੁਰਜੀਤ ਕੌਰ ਧੁੱਗਾ ਦੀ ਸਪੁੱਤਰੀ ਰੋਮਾ ਧੁੱਗਾ ਦਾ ਸ਼ੁਭ ਵਿਆਹ ਕਾਕਾ ਜਸਦੀਪ ਸਿੰਘ ਪੁੱਤਰ ਸ. ਬਲਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੰਘੇੜਾ ਨਾਲ ਪੂਰਨ ਗੁਰਸਿੱਖ ਮਰਿਆਦਾ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਸੰਪੰਨ ਹੋਇਆ। ਇਸ ਸ਼ੁਭ ਕਾਰਜ ਮੌਕੇ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਪਰਿਵਾਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਦੋਸਤ-ਮਿੱਤਰ, ਰਿਸ਼ਤੇਦਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਕ-ਸਬੰਧੀ ਨਵੀਂ ਜੋੜੀ ਨੂੰ ਆਸ਼ੀਰਵਾਦ ਦੇਣ ਲਈ ਪਹੁੰਚੇ। ਅਦਾਰਾ "ਦੇਸ਼ ਦੁਆਬਾ" ਅਤੇ "ਅੰਬੇਦਕਰ ਟਾਈਮਜ਼"

ਵੱਲੋਂ ਧੁੱਗਾ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਘੇੜਾ ਪਰਿਵਾਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਸ਼ੁਭ ਦਿਨ ਦੀ ਹਾਰਦਿਕ ਵਧਾਈ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਧੁੱਗਾ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਲੜਕੀ ਰੋਮਾ ਧੁੱਗਾ ਦੇ ਦਾਦਾ ਦਾਦੀ ਸਰਦਾਰਨੀ ਗੁਰਵੰਤ ਕੌਰ ਧੁੱਗਾ ਅਤੇ ਸ. ਬਖਸ਼ੀਸ ਸਿੰਘ ਧੁੱਗਾ ਨੇ ਨਵੀਂ ਜੋੜੀ ਨੂੰ ਆਸ਼ੀਰਵਾਦ ਦਿੱਤਾ। ਲੜਕੇ ਦੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮਾਤਾ ਸਰਦਾਰਨੀ ਦਲਵਿੰਦਰ ਕੌਰ ਸੰਘੇੜਾ, ਪਿਤਾ ਸ. ਬਲਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੰਘੇੜਾ, ਦਾਦਾ ਸ. ਮੋਹਣ ਸਿੰਘ ਸੰਘੇੜਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਮੂਹ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਨੇ ਨਵੀਂ ਜੋੜੀ ਨੂੰ ਆਸ਼ੀਰਵਾਦ ਦਿੱਤਾ।

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# Dr. Ambedkar: No less a patriot than anyone else

controversy at the time of Lokmanya Tilak, G. G. Agarkar and later Justice M. G. Ranade as to whether political reforms should precede social reforms or the other way. In a speech that he gave under the auspices of the Deccan Sabha of Pune in 1940, titled 'Ranade, Gandhi & Jinnah', Dr Ambedkar sided with Justice Ranade and maintained that the thesis that political reforms should precede the social reforms was untenable. The opponents of Justice Ranade maintained that the attainment of political power first was a precondition for protection of rights of the people or conferment of these rights on them, if they did not exist. Dr. Ambedkar however felt that as things stood then, the rights existed only for the minority of people and the vast majority of population stood deprived of these rights. Thus for this vast majority, the rights did not exist in the first place and therefore the question of their protection on attainment of political power did not arise. Secondly, he maintained that even if the rights were conferred on the majority after the political reforms were achieved, these would not be effective since 'the rights are protected not by law but by the social and moral conscience of society.' Dr. Ambedkar felt that the Indian society lacked this conscience and in its absence the conferment of political rights on people would be infructuous. He also further maintained that a self-government was not necessarily a good government since a democratic self-government would be effective only in an atmosphere of social democracy which was absent in the Indian society.

2. The Freedom Movement was dominated by the caste Hindus who, Dr Ambedkar felt, had been by and large ruthlessly indifferent to the fate of the Depressed Classes and were unlikely to change in an independent India. In the speech in the Bombay Legislative Assembly referred to above, Dr. Ambedkar quotes numerous instances to show the continued social injustice by the caste Hindus on the Depressed Classes. This was despite the Herculean efforts by the leaders of the Depressed Classes since the later part of the 19th century to ameliorate their conditions and combat injustice. Dr. Ambedkar thus knew well that only a miracle would work a sudden change of attitude of the caste Hindus on attainment of freedom and self-rule and therefore averred attainment of social democracy prior to political democracy.

3. Even if Dr. Ambedkar had waited for social reforms for removal of untouchability to follow the political freedom, there was a marked difference of approach toward the problem between him and Gandhi. While Gandhi felt there was no place for untouchability in the caste system and disapproved of caste inequality, he did approve of the caste system in the form of varnashram and felt that untouchability should be removed within the framework of the varnashram. He therefore relied largely on the change of heart of the caste Hindus.

Dr. Ambedkar's programme for the removal of untouchability on the other hand focused on uplifting the standard of education of the untouchables and integrating them into the Indian so-

ciety as modern politically strong citizens with aspirations to rise to the level of the highest Hindu. That is why the motto 'Educate, Agitate and Organise' became the motto of the whole Dalit movement not only before Independence but also afterwards.

In view of these fundamental differences in approach toward and perception of the problem of untouchability between Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, it was little wonder that the two men, great souls as they were both, could never find an amicable meeting ground on the Indian political firmament till the end of their life. This is probably the most unfortunate political fact of the modern Indian history.

It would be sinful however to dub Dr. Ambedkar anti-national or a stooge of British government for having kept from the freedom struggle. There are numerous instances when prominent Indian public men including Justice M. G. Ranade, G. K. Gokhale, Dadabhai Nowroji, Pherojshah Mehta and others preferred redressal of peoples' grievances through legislative and constitutional methods.

In a speech in 1917, Shahu Chhatrapati, the ruler of Kolhapur, stated that political independence in the face of a rigid and exploitative caste system would only mean the power in the hands of a few bent on exploitation of the lower classes. He went further and underlined the need for British support and counsel till the evil of caste system had disappeared.

While these men of prominence did face criticism at the hands of their

contemporaries, their views today are perceived with reference to their context. None of them is regarded as having worked against the interest of the country. Dr. Ambedkar should be no exception.

In the independent India, as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar made a lasting contribution to India's stature in the comity of nations as the world's largest democracy.

Beyond this Dr Ambedkar's life should be viewed as a part of a larger and 'a correlated but different freedom struggle, one for the liberation of the most oppressed sections of Indian society. This was a liberation movement wider and deeper than that of fighting colonialism, focusing on the kind of new nation that was to be built' (Gail Omvedt in 'Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India').

The freedom struggle that Dr. Ambedkar waged was no less dignified than the fight against the British rule in that it was an attempt of the weakest of the weak to allow them a rightful place in the society and a life of a human being, respectful and honourable. In the long term perspective, the movement benefitted the caste Hindus as well for no society can thrive for long at the cost of development of one of its own segments. The individual who led this great liberation movement was a true friend of human freedom. The greatness of his mission transcends the boundaries of any kind and shines as the lodestar for the movements of the oppressed everywhere.

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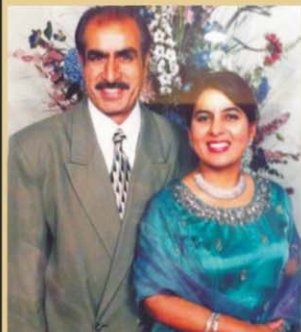
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