

Born on April 14th, 1891, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was an Indian nationalist, jurist, Dalit leader and a Buddhist revivalist. But most importantly, he was the chief architect of the Indian constitution. Born into a poor family, he spent his entire life fighting social discrimination against the lower castes. He overcame numerous social and financial obstacles to become the first 'untouchable' to obtain a college degree. He went on to earn a degree in law, and then doctorates in economics, and political science.

Throughout his early life, Ambedkar was subjected to intense social discrimination; but his father who had received some formal education, encouraged all his children to go through school. He also gave them a thorough knowledge of the Indian classics. Though Ambedkar attended school, he faced segregation by the teachers as well as the upper caste students, he too like other untouchable children, was not allowed to touch the earthen jar containing water. If there was no peon to pour him a drink, he went thirsty.

As he entered college in Bombay, he became increasingly disturbed by the discrimination that he faced. Though, excelling in academics, he was still treated as an 'untouchable' by most people. After completing his degree in economics and political science from the USA, he was recognized as a leading Indian scholar and was invited to chair the committee set up to draft the constitution of India. He became independent India's first law minister and was conferred the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1990. He relentlessly fought for the promotion of education and socio – economic upliftment of the depressed classes. He launched active movements against untouchability and started public protests to open and share public drinking water resources. He also began a struggle for the right to enter Hindu temples. He strongly believed that 'God helps those who help themselves' and being an 'untouchable' was no excuse for remaining a suppressed and backward community. They had to improve their way of living through 'education, organization and agitation'.

When drafting the constitution he drew his inspiration from the Buddhist scriptures which he had read extensively. Voting by ballots, rules of debate and the formation of committees were incorporated from these scriptures. Thus, Ambedkar drew up a constitution that was shaped upon western models but was Indian in spirit. In it he provided a number of clauses that would help eradicate socio-economic inequalities and lack of opportunities. He also sought to expound gender equality in laws of inheritance, marriage and equality.

Ambedkar was a major influence in transforming the way India looks at socio-economic policies today. Regarded highly as a scholar, he passionately believed in the freedom of the individual. He was highly critical of any caste system and

his conversion to Buddhism played a vital role in the revival of Buddhism in India and abroad. He remained an important member of the Rajya Sabha until his death on 6th December, 1956.