



Ambedkar Times Weekly

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VOL- 15 ISSUE- 22 August 9, 2023 California (USA) www.ambedkartimes.com www.deshdoaba.com

On India's 77th Independence Day DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Democracy and social justice are interrelated social processes. The one is incomplete in the absence of the other. Democracy offers freedom space to realize equality and experi-

ence fraternity. Equality and fraternity are the two essential ingredients of social justice, which achieves its true form with the addition of liberty. Thus the trinity of liberty, equality and fraternity constitutes the essence of social justice and the institution of democracy provides the requisite realm for its realization. Though many scholars' boasts of ancient origins of democracy in India but it would be prudent to argue that democracy achieves its roots in the real sense of the term with the adoption of the constitution in independent India. Bodhisattva Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Chairman of Constitutional Drafting Committee, worked very hard to incorporate various provisions for the realization of social justice in the Indian society. He was of the firm views that if social and economic parity remains an elusive to the multitude of poor and historically socially excluded people in the country, then the very purpose of having parliamentary democracy would not be served efficiently. He reiterated the seminal point during his engaging discussions at various important forums within and outside the Indian parliament that for social justice to prevail in the country, India needs effective participation of the downtrodden in all the different spheres of the society.

The demand for social justice was also raised at various platforms during the freedom struggle movement in colonial India. Ad-Movements in North and South India, Justice Party in South India, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia from Punjab, Swami Achhuta Nand Ji from Uttar Pradesh, Baba Ghasi Das Ji from Madhya Pradesh, Sri Narayana Guru from Kerala raised a consistent campaign for the prevalence of social justice in the Indian society. Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia presented a number of resolutions to the British Government for the removal of untouchability and special provisions for the inclusion of socially excluded sections of the society in the public realm of power and social domain.

Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia joined hands with Bodhisattva Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar in his struggle for equal rights for the socially excluded people of India. When Dr. Ambedkar spreaded its movement into the political agile lands of Punjab with the formation of Punjab chapter of Scheduled Castes Federation, there was a tremendous response from the grassroots. That was precisely the contributions of Ad Dharm movement which laid the foundation stone of social justice campaign in the Punjab state in the mid-1920s. But the irony of the matter is that even after more than seven decades of India's independence, Dalits in the country are still subjected to various types of atrocities and social discriminations. Though the Indian state, while making the optimum use of various anti untouchability clauses of the constitution, is doing its best to bridle the monster of caste, but still is more needed to be done at the social level where the people should come forward to internalize the values of liberty, equality and fraternity in order to realize the true sense of democracy and social justice.

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 move-

ments 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
(Contd. on page 2)

Dr. Ambedkar: No less a patriot than anyone else

(Continue from page 1)

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 In-

dian 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 society 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 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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As I Please – Some Random Thoughts

India is passing through an interesting but crucial phase of its existence since independence – its growing stature in the comity of nations, world's largest democracy, fast growing economy, one of the largest reservoir of skilled manpower as some of the encouraging traits on one hand and some disturbing trends; growing communal divide, increasing political animosity, strengthening majoritarian approach, decreasing political and constitutional morality, institutional rot, growing chasm among the organs of the state that is Executive, Legislature, Judiciary and captive (Darbari or Godi) Media on the other. It is a matter of concern and worry for 'we the people of India'. I would touch upon a couple of recent developments to make my point - As I Please.

Communal Riots in Manipur and Haryana - I mentioned about the increasing communal divide. Our constitution makes us a secular state with multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-linguistic diversity as the underlying feature of the society and polity. Unfortunately, of late, this very edifice of the country is coming under increasing threat, most often by design and policy to have communal divide for political polarization and vested and narrow political gains. For the last almost three months, Manipur, a sensitive state on our borders with our apparent adversary, China is burning – killings, looting, rape, arson and destruction of private and public property are going on unabated. The state government has failed totally and the central government, it seems, is trying to save its face not by action to arrest the deteriorating

situation but by sheer jugglery by resorting to the said 'majoritarian' approach. The communal situation in Manipur reminded me of the situation in Rwanda and Burundi in mid 1990s which I witnessed as a diplomat. The over-stated and, to my mind, exaggerated fears of 'conversion' claims of the hard-core Hindutava elements have resulted in communal divide among the Naga and Kuki Tribes on one side and the Meitei residents of the state. The situation is tense and needs immediate attention of both the state and central ruling outfits. The issue requires tactful handling rising above the narrow considerations of votes and sectarian considerations of Christians or Hindus. The communal strife in Nuh and other places in Haryana have added fuel to the communal fire engulfing India and the very 'spirit of Bharat' with the Hindu-Muslim divide. Again, it seems, either the governments or the administration have been caught napping or it has happened by a well thought and planned strategy (Prayog) by the vested interests. But whatever has happened is totally unwarranted and condemnable. It goes without saying that the lofty slogan of 'Sab Ka Sath – Sab Ka Vikas – Sab Ka Vishwas' has totally been negated by the incidents of Manipur and Haryana. Parliamentary standoff between the government and the opposition on debating the issue of Manipur is again a total mockery of parliamentary democratic system. The parliament is held hostage both by the government and opposition. Why does the government develop cold feet in discussing the Manipur incidents threadbare as the opposition demands? Taking shelter under this rule or that rule by the government is totally unjustifiable. Political dust is raised to simply to camouflage the real issues. There are double standards and hypocritical approaches to deal with violence and communal issues – Manipur is



me the face and I will show you the rule' is the norm. Governments woke up on the Manipur situation only after the Supreme Court took a suo-moto note of the matter. We would justify these things at our own peril.

Chupake Ashtin Mein Bijalian Rakh Li Gurdu Ne; Anadil Bagh Ke Gafil Na Baithen Ashiano Mein

Parliamentary Standoff between the Government and the Opposition – In a parliamentary democracy, functioning of parliamentary is of utmost importance as it represents the will of 'we the people of India' through their representatives. But unfortunately again, it is not happening. Like many a times earlier too, the monsoon session of the parliament has almost been wasted. Whatever work has been done is a mere eye wash amounting to fraud on the system and the people as the bills have been passed without proper debate and scrutiny. It is evident, as alleged by the opposition, that even the Presiding Officers of both the Houses of Parliament are not able to shed their partisan behavior as expected of them by the system. First, the standoff persisted on the Rule under which the debate on the Manipur issue should be conducted.

I think the Government should have been magnanimous and accommodative in dealing with the issue. The opposition was compelled to resort to the Motion of No-confidence knowing well that they don't have the numbers to say their mind. Against all norms of precedents and morality, the motion of no-confidence has been listed for the fag end of the session. It has killed the purpose of discussing the Manipur and other issues on one hand and has allowed the government to rush with the legislative business even if the opposition has registered its no-confidence in the government. It simply has no moral justification expect the fact that the government is

obsessed with its absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. It is said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. It amounts to ushering the country into 'Grammar of Anarchy' as warned by Babasaheb Ambedkar in his last speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949. An Urdu couplet explains and may give some direction in this regard:

**Woh Parde Ke Piche; Mein Parde Ke Aage,
Woh Aage Badenege; To Kuch Bhi Na Hoga,
Mein Piche Hatunga; To Dunia Hasegi .**

Repeated Extensions to Senior Bureaucrats – Bureaucracy is the permanent government in a parliamentary democracy. Political leadership changes with the change of government in terms of the parliamentary mathematics. Sardar Patel, the first Home Minister of free India, rightly called the top bureaucracy as 'steel frame' of the government. Governments are expected to maintain some sanctity in managing the bureaucracy. The point in question is the repeated extensions being given to some selected or say pliable top bureaucrats. It is a very negation of the status of a functional an efficient permanent government. The immediate provocation to write this is the recent repeated extensions to the Director of Enforcement Directorate (ED), Sanjay



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Mishra, Cabinet Secretary, Rajiv Gauba and Home Secretary, Ajay Bhalla. Even the Supreme Court commented sarcastically on the extension of tenure of Director of ED and asked the government as to why they could not find any other competent and capable officer to man the show?

These undemocratic and arbitrary decisions not only negate the time tested norms of seniority in the civil services but also generate insecurity among the cadres. Many of the good and meritorious officers who rightly aspired to reach the top in their respective cadres sulk and retire. It leaves and generates demoralizing effect in the bureaucracy which is not good for the system.

Hubeda Aaj Apne Zakhme Pinha Kar Ke Chodunga; Lahu Ro Ro Ke Mehfil Ko Gulistan Kar Ke Chodunga.

I am a small cog in the big wheel and don't know much. I have no mind to find faults and join the blame game. I took the courage of writing about some of the current issues as a concerned and worried citizen without any political affiliation.

I have no personal agenda or axe to grind. India has come a long way and we are still to go a long way on our long and tedious journey of progress and prosperity. We are to be mindful of this – the sooner the better. Babasaheb Ambedkar's assertion comes to mind and we all must learn something from him to keep India on Rails. He said,

"However good a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad. **However bad a Constitution may be, if those implementing it are good, it will prove to be good.**"

Let us prove our Constitution to be good.

**Mein Nahin Sandesh Swarag Ka Lya;
Is Bhootal Ko Hi Swarag Banane Aya.**

Dr. Ambedkar's entry into the Constituent Assembly

Source Courtesy: Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Volume 13

PART I: From Dr. Ambedkar's entry into the Constituent Assembly to the presentation of the Draft of the Indian Constitution to the Constituent Assembly Following paras from Page No.24-26:

The Cabinet Mission had recommended the setting up of an advisory committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities etc. Accordingly, the assembly constituted the Advisory Committee under the Chairmanship of Sardar Patel by a resolution on 24th January 1947. The Committee consisted of 50 members in which Dr. Ambedkar was one. To facilitate its work, the Advisory Committee appointed the following four subcommittees.

1. Fundamental Rights sub-committee.
2. Minorities sub-committee.
3. North-East Frontier Tribal Areas sub-committee.
4. Excluded and partially excluded areas (other than those in Assam) sub-committee.

Dr. Ambedkar was a member of the first two sub-committees and took keen interest in their deliberations. He also submitted a memorandum

to the Fundamental Rights sub-committee in which he gave concrete shape to his ideas. This memorandum was later published for wider circulation under the title 'States and Minorities, what are their rights and how to secure them in the Constitution of free India'.



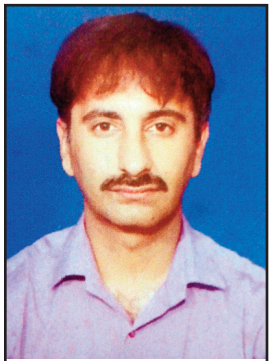
The Constituent Assembly also appointed three other committees, namely (1) the Union Power Committee, (2) the Union Constitution Committee and (3) the provisional Constitution Committee. Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the Chairman of the first two committees while the third one was under the

Chairmanship of Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel. These Committees were set up by a resolution on 30th April 1947. Dr. Ambedkar was member of the Union Constitution Committee. The report of the Committee was submitted to the President of the Assembly by its Chairman Pandit Nehru on 4th July 1947. The work done by Dr. Ambedkar in various sub-committees of the Assembly was considered very useful and convinced the Congress bosses beyond doubt that the legislation and solidification of freedom would not be easy without the services of Dr. Ambedkar. Consequent upon the partition of Bengal, Dr. Ambedkar ceased to be a member of the Constituent Assembly. The Congress Party which had earlier opposed tooth and nail his entry into the Constituent Assembly came forward and sponsored his candidature.

In his letter dated 30th June 1947, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly requested Mr. B. G. Kher, the then Prime Minister of Bombay to elect Dr. Ambedkar immediately. He wrote, "Apart from any other consideration we have found Dr. Ambedkar's work both in the Constituent Assembly and the various committees to which he was appointed to be of such an order as to re-

quire that we should not be deprived of his services. As you know, he was elected from Bengal and after the division of the Province he has ceased to be a member of the Constituent Assembly. I am anxious that he should attend the next session of the Constituent Assembly commencing from the 14th July and it is therefore necessary that he should be elected immediately".

Accordingly, Dr. Ambedkar was re-elected in July 1947 from Bombay as a member of the Constituent Assembly. Soon after, Prime Minister Nehru invited him to join the Cabinet he formed on 15th August 1947 on the eve of independence. Dr. Ambedkar accepted the invitation and became India's first Law Minister. On 29th August the Assembly unanimously elected him as Chairman of the Drafting Committee which was assigned the task of framing the Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar, who was a strong opponent of Congress had now become their friend, philosopher and guide in the Constitutional matters. - Ed



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Assemblyman Hoover's Representative Report

Farm Bureau Legislative Tour

I had a great opportunity to be part of the Sacramento County Farm Bureau's legislative tour to see first hand the hard work and problems facing farmers locally and across the State.

The Farm Bureau is a grassroots membership organization focusing on preserving and protecting our agricultural economy and rural lifestyle. Farm Bureau's voluntary, elected leaders and professional staff work hard for all Californians to ensure the rural economy's growth, to protect the family farm, and to maintain the treasured natural resources that are so important to this state's vitality and lifestyle.

National Police Week Resolution

It was an honor to recognize Folsom Police for their participation in National Police Week, an event established to remember fallen officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Our state can and must do more

to protect the men and women keeping our communities safe.

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed a proclamation which designated Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week. Currently, tens



of thousands of law enforcement officers from around the world converge on Washington, DC to participate in a number of planned events which honor those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

National Night Out

I had an amazing National Night Out on Tuesday in Carmichael, Foothill Farms, Citrus Heights, Orangethorpe, Fair Oaks, Folsom, and Ran-

cho Cordova! Thank you to our local law enforcement partners for joining us in every Assembly District 7 community.

National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that



promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live. National Night Out enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing back a true sense of community. Furthermore, it provides a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances.

Ribbon Cutting in Carmichael

On Wednesday my staff participated in the ribbon cutting of FoodMaxx, who are celebrating the opening of their grocery store. They are located at 4708 Manzanita Avenue in the Crestview Village Shopping Center, and are open 6am-midnight every day of the week.



Assemblyman Hoover



Dr. Paramjit S Takhar, MD

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