B. R. Ambedkar

Contents

Bhimrao Ramji (B R) Ambedkar's profile

(From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)
Born 14 April 1891, at Mhow, Central Provinces, British India (now in Madhya Pradesh). Passed away on 6th December 1956 (aged 65) Delhi, India. Nationality, Indian.

Other names Baba, Baba Saheb, Bodhisatva, Bhima, Mooknayak, Adhunik Buddha.

Alma mater University of Mumbai, Columbia University, University of London, London School of Economics
Organization: Samata Sainik Dal, Independent Labour Party, Scheduled Castes Federation.1st Law Minister of India, Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. Religion: Buddhism.Spouse Ramabai Ambedkar (married 1906) Savita Ambedkar (married 1948).

Awards: Bharat Ratna (1990)

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (14 April 1891-6th December 1956), also known as Babasaheb, was an Indian jurist, political leader, philosopher, thinker, anthropologist, historian, orator, prolific writer, economist, scholar, editor, and a revolutionary. He was also the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of Indian Constitution. Born into a poor Mahar (considered an Untouchable caste) family, Ambedkar spent his whole life fighting against social discrimination, the system of Chaturvarna — the categorization of Hindu society into four varnas-and the Hindu caste system. He converted to Buddhism and is also credited with providing a spark for the conversion of hundreds of thousands of untouchables to Theravada Buddhism. Ambedkar was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, in 1990.

Overcoming numerous social and financial obstacles, Ambedkar became one of the first so called "Outcasts" to obtain a college education in India. Eventually earning law degrees and multiple doctorates for his study and research in law, economics and political science from Columbia University and the London School of Economics, Ambedkar gained a reputation as a scholar and practiced law for a few years, later campaigning by publishing journals advocating political rights and social freedom for India's so-called untouchables. He is regarded as a Bodhisattva by some Indian Buddhists, though he never claimed himself to be a Bodhisattva.

Early life and education

Ambedkar was born in the British-founded town and military cantonment of Mhow in the Central Provinces (now in Madhya Pradesh).He was the 14th and last child of Ramji Maloji Sakpal and Bhimabai.His family was of Marathi background from the town of Ambavade (Mandangad taluka) in the Ratnagiri district of modern-day Maharashtra. They belonged to the Mahar caste, who were treated as untouchables and subjected to intense socio-economic discrimination.[citation needed] Ambedkar's ancestors had for long been in the employment of the army of the British East India Company, and his father Ramji Sakpal served in the Indian Army at the Mhow

cantonment. He had received a degree of formal education in Marathi and English, and encouraged his children to learn and work hard at school.

Belonging to the Kabir Panth, Ramji Sakpal encouraged his children to read the Hindu classics. He used his position in the army to lobby for his children to study at the government school, as they faced resistance owing to their caste. Although able to attend school, Ambedkar and other untouchable children were segregated and given no attention or assistance by the teachers. They were not allowed to sit inside the class. Even if they needed to drink water somebody from a higher caste would have to pour that water from a height as they were not allowed to touch either the water or the vessel that contained it. This task was usually performed for the young Ambedkar by the school peon, and if the peon was not available then he had to go without water, Ambedkar states this situation as "No peon, No Water".Ramji Sakpal retired in 1894 and the family moved to Satara two years later. Shortly after their move, Ambedkar's mother died. The children were cared for by their paternal aunt, and lived in difficult circumstances. Only three sons-Balaram, Anandrao and Bhimrao - and two daughters - Manjula and Tulasa - of the Ambedkars would go on to survive them. Of his brothers and sisters, only Ambedkar succeeded in passing his examinations and graduating to a higher school. Bhimrao Sakpal Ambavadekar the surname comes from his native village 'Ambavade' in Ratnagiri District. His Brhamin teacher Mahadev Ambedkar who was fond of him, changed his surname from 'Ambavadekar' to his own surname 'Ambedkar' in school records.

Higher education

Ambedkar married in 1903, and the family moved to Bombay, where he became the first untouchable student at the Government High School near Elphinstone Road. Although excelling in his studies, Ambedkar was increasingly disturbed by the segregation and discrimination that he faced. In 1907, he passed his matriculation examination and entered the University of Bombay, becoming one of the first persons of untouchable origin to enter a college in India. This success provoked celebrations in his community and after a public ceremony he was presented with a biography of the Buddha by his teacher Krishnaji Arjun Keluskar also known as Dada Keluskar, a Maratha caste scholar. Ambedkar's marriage had been arranged the previous year as per Hindu custom, to Ramabai, a nine-year old girl from Dapoli. In 1908, he entered Elphinstone College and obtained a scholarship of twenty five rupees a month from the Gayakwad ruler of Baroda, Sahyaji Rao III. By 1912, he obtained his degree in economics and political science from Bombay University, and prepared to take up employment with the Baroda state government. His wife gave birth to his first son, Yashwant, in the same year. Ambedkar had just moved his young family and started work, when he dashed back to Mumbai to see his ailing father, who died on February 2, 1913.

In 1913 he received Baroda State Scholarship of 11.50 British pounds a month for three years to join the Politics Department of Columbia University as a postgraduate student. In New York he stayed at Livingston Hall with his friend Naval Bhathena, a Parsi; the two remained friends for life. He used to sit for hours studying in Low Library. He passed his MA exam in June 1915, majoring in Economics, with Sociology, History, Philosophy and Anthropology as other subjects of study; he presented a thesis, Ancient Indian Commerce. In 1916 he offered another MA thesis, National Dividend of India-A Historic and Analytical Study. On May 9, he read his

paper Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development before a seminar conducted by the anthropologist Alexander Goldenweiser. In October 1916 he was admitted to Gray's Inn for Law, and to the London School of Economics for economics where he started work on a doctoral thesis. In June 1917 he was obliged to go back to India as the term of his scholarship from Baroda ended, however he was given permission to return and submit his thesis within four years. He sent his precious and much-loved collection of books back on a steamer, but it was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine.

Fight against untouchability

As he was educated by the Baroda State, he was bound to serve the State. He was appointed as Military Secretary to the Gaikwar of Baroda, which he had to quit within short time, this fiasco was described by Ambedkar in his autobiography Waiting for a Visa as

"This scene of a dozen Parsis armed with sticks line before me in a menacing mood, and myself standing before them with a terrified look imploring for mercy, is a scene which so long a period as eighteen years had not succeeded in fading away. I can even vividly recall it-- and I never recall it without tears in my eyes. It was then for the first time that I learnt that a person who is an untouchable to a Hindu is also an untouchable to a Parsi".

Then after he tried to find ways to make a living for his growing family. He worked as private tutor, as an accountant, investment consulting business, but it failed when his clients learned that he was an untouchable. In 1918 he became Professor of Political Economy in the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics in Bombay. Even though he was successful with the students, but other professors objected to his sharing the same drinking-water jug that they all used.

As a leading Indian scholar, Ambedkar had been invited to testify before the Southborough Committee, which was preparing the Government of India Act 1919. At this hearing, Ambedkar argued for creating separate electorates and reservations for untouchables and other religious communities. In 1920, he began the publication of the weekly Mooknayak (Leader of the Silent) in Mumbai with the help of Shahu I (1884–1922), Maharaja of Kolhapur. Ambedkar used this journal to criticize orthodox Hindu politicians and a perceived reluctance of the Indian political community to fight caste discrimination. His speech at a Depressed Classes Conference in Kolhapur impressed the local state ruler Shahu IV, who described Ambedkar as the future national leader and shocked orthodox society by dining with Ambedkar. Having resigned from his teaching position, in July he returned to London, relying on his own savings, supplemented by loans from the Maharaja of Kolhapur and his friend Naval Bhathena. He returned to the London School of Economics, and to Gray's Inn to read for the Bar. He lived in poverty, and studied constantly in the British Museum. In 1922 through unremitting hard work, Ambedkar once again overfulfilled all expectations: he completed a thesis for a M.Sc. (Economics) degree at London School of Economics, and was called to the bar, and submitted a Ph.D. thesis in economics to the University of London. Ambedkar established a successful legal practice. Early on his legal career, Ambedkar was engaged in a very important lawsuit filed by some Brahmins against three non-Brahmin leaders K.B. Bagde, Keshavrao Jedhe and Dinkarrao Javalkar. They were being prosecuted for writing a pamphlet that Brahmins

had ruined India. On the prosecution side was L.B.Bhopatkar, a lawyer from Poona, Ambedkar argued his case very ably, put up a very eloquent defence and won the case in October 1926. The victory was resounding, both socially and individually for the clients.

Missions

While practicing law in the Bombay High Court he tried to uplift the untouchables in order to educate them. His first organized attempt to achieve this was the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, which was intended to promote education and socio-economic improvement, as well as considering the welfare of "outcastes" or the depressed classes.

By 1927 Ambedkar decided to launch active movements against untouchability. He began with public movements and marches to open up and share public drinking water resources also he began a struggle for the right to enter Hindu temples. He led a satyagraha in Mahad to fight for the right of the untouchable community to draw water from the main water tank of the town.

He took a part of the event in which casteist excerpts from the Manu Smriti text was burned by a Brahmin G.N. Sahasrabuddhe. He was appointed to the Bombay Presidency Committee to work with the all-European Simon Commission in 1925.[citation needed] This commission had sparked great protests across India, and while its report was ignored by most Indians, Ambedkar himself wrote a separate set of recommendations for future constitutional recommendations.

Poona Pact

Due to Ambedkar's prominence and popular support amongst the untouchable community, he was invited to attend the Second Round Table Conference in London in 1932.[citation needed] Gandhi fiercely opposed separate electorate for untouchables, though he accepted separate electorate for all other minority groups such as Muslims and Sikhs, saying he feared that separate electorates for untouchables would divide Hindu community into two groups.

When the British agreed with Ambedkar and announced the awarding of separate electorates, Gandhi began a fast while imprisoned in the Yerwada Central Jail of Pune in 1932 against the separate electorate for untouchables only. Gandhi's fast provoked huge civil unrest across India, and orthodox Hindu leaders, Congress politicians and activists such as Madan Mohan Malaviya and Palwankar Baloo organized joint meetings with Ambedkar and his supporters at Yeravada. Fearing a communal reprisal and genocide of untouchables, Ambedkar agreed under massive coercion from the supporters of Gandhi. This agreement, which saw Gandhi end his fast, was called the Poona Pact. As a result of the agreement, Ambedkar dropped the demand for separate electorates that was promised through the British Communal Award prior to Ambedkar's meeting with Gandhi. Instead, a certain number of seats were reserved specifically for untouchables (in the agreement, called the "Depressed Class").

Political career

In 1935, Ambedkar was appointed principal of the Government Law College, Mumbai, a position he held for two years. Settling in Mumbai, Ambedkar oversaw the construction of a house, and stocked his personal library with more than 50,000 books.His wife Ramabai died after a long illness in the same year. It had been her long-standing wish to go on a pilgrimage to Pandharpur, but Ambedkar had refused to let her go, telling her that he would create a new Pandharpur for her instead of Hinduism's Pandharpur which treated them as untouchables. Speaking at the Yeola Conversion Conference on October 13 in Nasik, Ambedkar announced his intention to convert to a different religion and exhorted his followers to leave Hinduism. He would repeat his message at numerous public meetings across India.

In 1936, Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party, which won 15 seats in the 1937 elections to the Central Legislative Assembly. He published his book The Annihilation of Caste in the same year, based on the thesis he had written in New York. Attaining immense popular success, Ambedkar's work strongly criticized Hindu orthodox religious leaders and the caste system in general. Ambedkar served on the Defence Advisory Committee and the Viceroy's Executive Council as minister for labour. With What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables, Ambedkar intensified his attacks on Gandhi and the Congress, hypocrisy.In his work Who Were the Shudras?, Ambedkar attempted to explain the formation of the Shudras i.e. the lowest caste in hierarchy of Hindu caste system. He also emphasised how Shudras are separate from Untouchables. Ambedkar oversaw the transformation of his political party into the All India Scheduled Castes Federation, although it performed poorly in the elections held in 1946 for the Constituent Assembly of India. In writing a sequel to Who Were the Shudras? in 1948, Ambedkar lambasted Hinduism in The Untouchables: A Thesis on the Origins of Untouchability:

The Hindu Civilisation.... is a diabolical contrivance to suppress and enslave humanity. Its proper name would be infamy. What else can be said of a civilisation which has produced a mass of people.... who are treated as an entity beyond human intercourse and whose mere touch is enough to cause pollution?

Pakistan or the Partition of India

Between 1941 and 1945, he published a number of books and pamphlets, including Thoughts on Pakistan, in which he criticized the Muslim League's demand for a separate Muslim state of Pakistan but considered its concession if Muslims demanded so as expedient.

In the above book Ambedkar wrote a sub-chapter titled If Muslims truly and deeply desire Pakistan, their choice ought to be accepted. He wrote that if the Muslims are bent on Pakistan, then it must be conceded to them. He asked whether Muslims in the army could be trusted to defend India. In the event of Muslims invading India or in the case of a Muslim rebellion, with whom would the Indian Muslims in the army side? He concluded that, in the interests of the safety of India, Pakistan should be acceded to, should the Muslims demand it. According to Ambedkar, the Hindu assumption that though Hindus and Muslims were two nations, they could live together under one state was but an empty sermon, a mad project, to which no sane man would agree.

Ambedkar was also critical of Islam and its practices in South Asia. While justifying the Partition of India, he condemned the practice of child marriage in Muslim society, as well as the mistreatment of women.

No words can adequately express the great and many evils of polygamy and concubinage, and especially as a source of misery to a Muslim woman. Take the caste system. Everybody infers that Islam must be free from slavery and caste. […] [While slavery existed], much of its support was derived from Islam and Islamic countries. While the prescriptions by the Prophet regarding the just and humane treatment of slaves contained in the Koran are praiseworthy, there is nothing whatever in Islam that lends support to the abolition of this curse. But if slavery has gone, caste among Musalmans [Muslims] has remained.

He wrote that Muslim society is "even fuller of social evils than Hindu Society is" and criticized Muslims for sugarcoating their sectarian caste system with euphemisms like "brotherhood". He also criticized the discrimination against the Arzal classes among Muslims who were regarded as "degraded", as well as the oppression of women in Muslim society through the oppressive purdah system. He alleged that while purdah was also practiced by Hindus, only among Muslims was it sanctioned by religion. He criticized their fanaticism regarding Islam on the grounds that their literalist interpretations of Islamic doctrine made their society very rigid and impermeable to change. He further wrote that Indian Muslims have failed to reform their society unlike Muslims in other countries like Turkey.

Role in drafting India's Constitution

Upon India's independence on August 15, 1947, the new Congress-led government invited Ambedkar to serve as the nation's first law minister, which he accepted. On August 29, Ambedkar was appointed Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, charged by the Assembly to write free India's new Constitution.

Granville Austin has described the Indian Constitution drafted by Dr Ambedkar as 'first and foremost a social document'. ... 'The majority of India's constitutional provisions are either directly arrived at furthering the aim of social revolution or attempt to foster this revolution by establishing conditions necessary for its achievement.'

The text prepared by Ambedkar provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens, including freedom of religion, the abolition of untouchability and the outlawing of all forms of discrimination Ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women, and also won the Assembly's support for introducing a system of reservations of jobs in the civil services, schools and colleges for members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, a system akin to affirmative action. India's lawmakers hoped to eradicate the socio-economic inequalities and lack of opportunities for India's depressed classes through this measure, which had been originally envisioned as temporary on a need basis.

The Constitution was adopted on November 26, 1949 by the Constituent Assembly.

Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet in 1951 following the stalling in parliament of his draft of the Hindu Code Bill, which sought to expound gender equality in the laws

of inheritance, marriage and the economy. Although supported by Prime Minister Nehru, the cabinet and many other Congress leaders, it received criticism from a large number of members of parliament. Ambedkar independently contested an election in 1952 to the lower house of parliament, the Lok Sabha, but was defeated. He was appointed to the upper house, of parliament, the Rajya Sabha in March 1952 and would remain a member until his death.

Conversion to Buddhism

As a student of anthropology Ambedkar made the discovery that the Mahar people are originally ancient Buddhist people of India. They have been forced outside a village to live like an outcast as they refused to leave Buddhist practices and eventually they were made into untouchables. He wrote a scholarly book on this topic, entitled Who were the Shudras?.

Ambedkar studied Buddhism all his life, and around 1950s, Ambedkar turned his attention fully to Buddhism and travelled to Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) to attend a convention of Buddhist scholars and monks. While dedicating a new Buddhist vihara near Pune, Ambedkar announced that he was writing a book on Buddhism, and that as soon as it was finished, he planned to make a formal conversion back to Buddhism. Ambedkar twice visited Burma in 1954; the second time in order to attend the third conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Rangoon. In 1955, he founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha, or the Buddhist Society of India. He completed his final work, The Buddha and His Dhamma, in 1956. It was published posthumously.

After meetings with the Sri Lankan Buddhist monk Hammalawa Saddhatissa, Ambedkar organised a formal public ceremony for himself and his supporters in Nagpur on October 14, 1956. Accepting the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a Buddhist monk in the traditional manner, Ambedkar completed his own conversion. He then proceeded to convert a large number (some 500,000) of his supporters who were gathered around him. He prescribed the 22 Vows for these converts, after the Three Jewels and Five Precepts. He then traveled to Kathmandu in Nepal to attend the Fourth World Buddhist Conference. His work on The Buddha or Karl Marx and "Revolution and counter-revolution in ancient India" (which was necessary for understanding his book The Buddha and His Dhamma remained incomplete.

Death

Since 1948, Ambedkar had been suffering from diabetes. He was bed-ridden from June to October in 1954 owing to clinical depression and failing eyesight. He had been increasingly embittered by political issues, which took a toll on his health. His health worsened during 1955. Three days after completing his final manuscript The Buddha and His Dhamma, it is said[by whom?] that Ambedkar died in his sleep on December 6, 1956 at his home in Delhi.

A Buddhist-style cremation was organised for him at Dadar Chowpatty beach on December 7, attended by hundreds of thousands of supporters, activists and admirers. A conversion program was supposed to be organised on 16 December 1956. So, those who had attended cremation function also got converted to Buddhism at same place.

Ambedkar was survived by his second wife Savita Ambedkar (née Sharda Kabir) who converted to Buddhism with him and died as a Buddhist in 2002, his son Yashwant (known as Bhaiyasaheb Ambedkar) and his daughter-in-law Meera Tai Ambedkar. Ambedkar's grandson, who is the national president of the "Indian Buddhist Association" Advt Prakash, né Balasaheb Yaswant Ambedkar, leads the Bhartiya Bahujan Mahasangha and has served in both houses of the Indian Parliament.

A number of unfinished typescripts and handwritten drafts were found among Ambedkar's notes and papers and gradually made available. Among these were Waiting for a Visa, which probably dates from 1935–36 and is an autobiographical work, and the Untouchables, or the Children of India's Ghetto, which refers to the census of 1951.

A memorial for Ambedkar was established in his Delhi house at 26 Alipur Road. His birthdate is celebrated as a public holiday known as Ambedkar Jayanti or Bhim Jayanti. He was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, in 1990.[citation needed] Many public institutions are named in his honour, such as the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University in Hyderabad; Dr BR Ambedkar University in Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh; B. R. Ambedkar Bihar University, Muzaffarpur and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar National Institute of Technology, Jalandhar and the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport in Nagpur, otherwise known as Sonegaon Airport. A large official portrait of Ambedkar is on display in the Indian Parliament building.
On the anniversary of his birth (14 April) and death (6 December), and on Dhamma Chakra Pravartan Din (14 October) at Nagpur, at least half a million people gather to pay homage to him at his memorial in Mumbai. Thousands of bookshops are set up, and books are sold. His message to his followers was "Educate!, Organize!, Agitate!."

Writings and speeches

The Education Department, Government of Maharashtra(Bombay) Published the Collection of Ambedkar's writings and speeches in twenty one volumes.

- vol.1.Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development and 11 other essays
- vol. 2. Dr Ambedkar in the Bombay Legislature, with the Simon Commission and at the Round Table Conferences, 1927–1939
- vol. 3. Philosophy of Hinduism ; India and the pre-requisites of communism ; Revolution and counter-revolution ;Buddha or Karl Marx
- vol. 4. Riddles in Hinduism
- vol. 5. Essays on untouchables and un-touchability
- vol. 6. The evolution of provincial finance in British India
- vol. 7. Who were the shudras? ; The untouchables
- vol. 8. Pakistan or the partition of India
- vol. 9. What Congress and Gandhi have done to the untouchables ; Mr. Gandhi and the emancipitation of the untouchables
- vol. 10.Dr. Ambedkar as member of the Governor General's Executive Council, 1942–46
- vol. 11.The Buddha and his Dhamma
- vol. 12.Unpublished writings; Ancient Indian commerce; Notes on laws; Waiting for a Visa; Miscellaneous notes, etc.
- vol. 13.Dr. Ambedkar as the principal architect of the Constitution of India
- vol. 14.(2 parts) Dr.Ambedkar and The Hindu Code Bill
- vol. 15.Dr. Ambedkar as free India's first Law Minister and member of opposition in Indian Parliament (1947–1956)
- vol. 16.Dr. Ambedkar's The Pali grammar
- vol. 17.(Part I)Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and his Egalitarian Revolution – Struggle for Human Rights. Events starting from March 1927 to 17 November 1956 in the chronological order
- (Part II) Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and his Egalitarian Revolution – Socio-political and religious activities. Events starting from November 1929 to 8 May 1956 in the chronological order
- (Part III) Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and his Egalitarian Revolution – Speeches. Events starting from 1 January to 20 November 1956 in the chronological order
- vol. 18.(3 parts) Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s Speeches and writing in Marathi
- vol. 19.Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s Speeches and writing in Marathi
- vol. 20.Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s Speeches and writing in Marathi
- vol. 21.Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s Photo Album and correspondence.

Criticism and legacy

This section may contain original research. Please improve it by verifying the claims made and adding references. Statements consisting only of original research may be removed. More details may be available on the talk page. (September 2007)

Ambedkar's legacy as a socio-political reformer, had a deep effect on modern India. In post-Independence India his socio-political thought has acquired respect across the political spectrum. His initiatives have influenced various spheres of life and transformed the way India today looks at socio-economic policies, education and affirmative action through socio-economic and legal incentives. His reputation as a scholar led to his appointment as free India's first law minister, and chairman of the committee responsible to draft a constitution. He passionately believed in the freedom of the individual and criticised equally both orthodox casteist Hindu society. His condemnation of Hinduism and its foundation of caste system, made him controversial, although his conversion to Buddhism sparked a revival in interest in Buddhist philosophy in India and abroad.

Ambedkar's political philosophy has given rise to a large number of Dalit political parties, publications and workers' unions that remain active across India, especially in Maharashtra. His promotion of the Dalit Buddhist movement has rejuvenated interest in Buddhist philosophy in many parts of India. Mass conversion ceremonies have been organized by Dalit activists in modern times, emulating Ambedkar's Nagpur ceremony of 1956.

Some scholars, including some from the affected castes, took the view that the British were more even-handed between castes, and that continuance of British rule would have helped to eradicate many evil practices. This political opinion was shared by quite a number of social activists including Jyotirao Phule.[citation needed]

Some, in modern India, question the continued institution of reservations initiated by Ambedkar as outdated and anti-meritocratic. However, such arguments have always been dismissed by the Dalit masses. They express that the opposition of Caste-based reservations in India, primarily comes from the antagonism rooted in the Hindu society towards the Dalits. And, that the Caste-based reservations in India, in fact,have become the uplifting of Dalits in the post-colonial period.

Outside India, at the end of the 1990s, some Hungarian Romani people drew parallels between their own situation and the situation of the Dalits in India. Inspired by Ambedkar's approach, they started to convert to Buddhism.

Theorized Mahar bias by Dalit leaders
Narayan Rao Kajrolkar critisized Ambedkar because he believed that he was biased to spend government on his own caste, the Mahar, rather than divide the funds equally among others such as the Chambars and the Mangs.Sitaram Narayan Shivtarkar critisised him on the same account at the Chambar conference held at Khond at the Ratnagiri District on 27 October, 1037.At the "First Chambar Conference" at Ratnagiri on December 1937, chaired by S. G. Songaonkar, echoed this yet again.

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Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches Vol 5.

Essays on Untouchables and Untouchability

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches Vol 6

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Mr Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables

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Dr. Ambedkar as Member of the Governor-General's Executive Council 1942-46

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches Vol 11.

The Buddha and His Dhamma

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches Vol 12

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The Untouchables and the Pax
Britanica, Lectures on the English constitution
The Notes on Acts and Laws
Waiting for a Visa
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Dr. Ambedkar as the Principal Architect of the Constitution of India

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches Vol 14.
Dr. Ambedkar and the Hindu Code Bill

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches Vol 15.

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Dr Ambedkar and Untouchability: Analysing and Fighting Caste: By Christophe Jaffrelot.Orient Total pages 218.

Dr. Ambedkar And Untouchability: Fighting The Indian Caste System.
(Hardcover) by Christophe Jaffrelot. Publisher: Columbia University Press, 205 pages. (Mar 2005). Price: Rs. 3028.

(Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891--1956) rose from a community of "untouchables," to become a major figure in modern Indian history. Christophe Jaffrelot's biography reconsiders Dr. Ambedkar's life and thought and his unique combination of pragmatism and idealism. Establishing himself as a scholar, activist, journalist, and educator, Ambedkar ultimately found himself immersed in Indian politics and helped to draft the nation's constitution as law minister in Nehru's first cabinet. Ambedkar's ideas remain an inspiration to India's Dalit community).

Indias Silent Revolution: by Christophe Jaffrelot. Price: Rs.495. Rs.470
Ambedkar: Towards An Enlightened India: by Gail Omvedt. Price: Rs.250 Rs.163**.** Publisher: Penguin (2008) Price: Rs. 163

Book Summary of Ambedkar: Towards An Enlightened India

If Gandhi was Bapu, the "father" of a society in which he tried to inject equality while maintaining the "Hindu" framework, Ambedkar was Baba to his people and the great liberator from that framework.' Born in 1891 into an 'untouchable' family, Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was witness to all the decisive phases of India's freedom movement. While the well-known elite nationalists like Gandhi and Nehru led the struggle for political freedom from British colonial rule, Ambedkar fought a correlated but different struggle, one for the liberation of the most oppressed sections of Indian society. Ambedkar's nationalism focused on the building of a nation, on the creation of social equality and cultural integration in a society held enslaved for centuries by the unique tyrannies of caste and varna ideologies. His would be an enlightened India based on the values of liberty, equality and fraternity. In this concise biography, Gail Omvedt, a long-time researcher of Dalit politics and culture, presents with empathy Ambedkar's struggle to become educated, overcome the stigma of untouchability and pursue his higher studies abroad. She portrays how he gradually rose to become a lawyer of international repute, a founder of a new order of Buddhism and a framer of India's Constitution. Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India puts the man and his times in context and explains to a new generation of readers how he became a national and Dalit leader and an icon of the dispossessed.

Dalit Visions (revised Edition) by Gail Omvedt. Price: Rs.195 Rs.156

Dalits And The Democratic Revolution :by Gail Omvedt.Price:Rs.446

Growing Up Untouchable In India:A Dalit Autobiography, by Vasant Moon. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.Price: Rs.1587

India's Silent Revolution: The Rise Of Dalits: by Christopher Jaffrelot

Dr. Ambedkar And Untouchability: by Niranjan Das. Price: Rs.755

Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission. The Pioneering biography by Dhananjay Kheer. Popular Prakashan, 1954.Price: Rs.280.

Dr. Ambedkar and the Mahar Movement by Eleanor Zelliot, unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1969.The best biography of Dr Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar, by D N Shikare.Poona: Jayant and Co., 1963.

B. R. Ambedkar, by W N Kuber, Government of India, New Delhi, 1978.

The Life of Dr. Ambedkar, by Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar Memorial Society, Hyderabad, 1979.
Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar by C B Khairmode, in 14 volumes in Marathi first published in 1952.

Dr Bahasaheb Ambedkar Ka Jivan Sangharsh: By CP Jigyasu, (Lucknow, Hindu Samaj Sudhar Karyalaya, 1961).

From Periphery to Centre Stage: Ambedkar, Ambedkarism and Dalit Future, by K C Yadav, Delhi:Manohar, 2000.

Dr Bahasaheb Ambedkar and the Significance of his Movement, by K N Kadam.Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1991.

Gandhi, Ambedkar and the Poona pact, 1932, by R Kumar, New Delhi.

The Indian Constitution-Cornerstone of a Nation, by **G**. **Austin**, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1972.

'Dr Ambedkar and the framing of the Indian Constitution' by HS Verma and N. Verma, paper presented to the colloquium 'Contribution of Dr B R Ambedkar to law and Constitution of India'.Lucknow, April, 1997.

The social context of an ideology: Ambedkar's political and social thought **by M S Gore:** Sage Publications, 1993 - 361 pages.

(Social movements are not idiosyncratic events which occur randomly; rather, they are collective attempts to bring about--or prevent-- either individual or institutional social change by means characterized in identifiable patterns of behavior. In this major study, Gore examines the nature of an ideology of protest and locates it within the broader framework of a study of both social movements and the sociology of idea-systems. Predicated on the need to more fully explore and discuss the doctrine of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, this volume approaches his work from substantive as well as theoretical perspectives in its presentation of his arguments promoting the rights of individuals trapped within the lower levels of the caste system. This integration of Ambedkar's philosophy with a historical overview of social protest provides an excellent balance of ideological positing with established fact. As an introduction to Ambedkar, The Social Context of An Ideology is a broad and useful reference; as the catalyst for renewed study and debate, it is a valuable resource. "A valuable sociological treatise. The most important single distinguishing feature of Gore's endeavor is that he has characterised Ambedkar's movement as a protest movement. It is this protest framework that enables one to understand and even appreciate Ambedkar's critique of the efforts of early and contemporary social reformers directed towards the eradicating of untouchability." --Freedom First "The author has successfully shown how Dr. Ambedkar's efforts were different in nature, contents and style from his predecessors in the social field and his contemporaries in the political

field. the author has succeeded in scrutinising 'Amdedkar ideology' by putting it in a theoretical context and establishing linkage between social context, role of leadership and ideology.... The book is an important addition to the literature about Dr. Ambedkar's thought and movement. The compact and analytical treatment of the subject is helpful to both the students of political sociology and social activists in understanding Dr. Ambedkar and his protest movement in a better manner." --The Downtrodden India "There is enough in these pages to set off other researches on related themes....The sections on Ambedkar's ideology and his participation in the national political scene are the most interesting and provocative, and it is for these that the book will be noticed, read, and remembered. On the whole, it is the author's presentation of Ambedkar's thought that will win this volume a wide readership." --Economic and Political Weekly "This book can legitimately claim a special status in the literature on Ambedkar and his social and political philosophy . . . . Prof. Gore's is a well-researched, elegant work on Ambedkar's ideology of struggle and its social setting. This should be read with great interest by all serious students of Indian society and polity." -Deccan Herald "Being a professional social scientist with a firm grip over sociological concepts, the author has been able to deal with his theoretical framework with ease." -New Quest "This book is of immense value to those who want to get a correct picture of the nature of life in Ambedkar." --The Hindu "The book under review is a brilliant research by Professor Gore into the life and career of Ambedkar and the implications of the Ambedkaian ideology of protest vis-a-vis the Hindu social order. . . . His review of the performance of Ambedkar as a politician is superbly authentic. . . . The book is superb by all yardsticks and will prove rewarding to the scores of practical politicians." --Business Standard "An in-depth analysis of Ambedkar's ideology and its social origins." --South Asia

Unity in diversity: the Indian experience in nation-building: M S Gore. Rawat Publications, 2002 - 246 pages.

"Most of the papers in this collection deal with one or more of the problems that our society is facing in consolidating itself into a nation and in living up to the ideals of democracy, secularism and social equality. Though the perspective from which these papers were written is that of a sociologist, one cannot really discuss any societal problem exclusively from the standpoint or within the framework of a single discipline. For, one has to trespass into areas which are more legitimately those of an economist or a political scientist. Hence, the book will interest not only sociologists but political scientists and economists as well."

Waiting for a Visa, is a short life history of B. R. Ambedkar written in a period of 1935-36. This article consists of some of the reminiscences drawn by Dr. Ambedkar in his own handwriting. This book is used as a text book in Columbia University.[1] This was first published by Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, in 1993 along with some collections in Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 12, Part I. In 1990, People's Education Society has published this work as a booklet.

References

http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/txt_ambedkar_waiting.html

Source: Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 12, edited by Vasant Moon (Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1993), Part I, pp. 661-691.

"Here are some of the reminiscences drawn by Dr. Ambedkar in his own handwriting. The MSS traced in the collection of the People's Education Society were published by the society as a booklet on 19th March 1990— ed." (p. 661)

It seems from internal evidence that this piece was written about eighteen years after Dr. Ambedkar's return from America and Europe, which would put it in 1935 or 1936.

This text has been edited for classroom use by Prof. Frances W. Pritchett, Columbia University. Original spellings of proper names have been retained, with inconsistencies standardized according to the author's most frequent usage. Editing has consisted chiefly of slightly adjusting punctuation and breaking up long paragraphs. Bracketed descriptive titles have been added by the editor.

Waiting for a Visa, by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

ONE [A childhood journey to Koregaon becomes a nightmare]

TWO [Back from the west--and unable to find lodging in Baroda]

THREE [Pride, awkwardness, and a dangerous accident in Chalisgaon]

FOUR [Polluting the water in the fort of Daulatabad]

FIVE [A doctor refuses to give proper care, and a young woman dies]

SIX [A young clerk is abused and threatened until he gives up his job]

Foreigners of course know of the existence of untouchability. But not being next door to it, so to say, they are unable to realise how oppressive it is in its actuality. It is difficult for them to understand how it is possible for a few untouchables to live on the edge of a village consisting of a large number of Hindus; go through the village daily to free it from the most disagreeable of its filth and to carry the errands of all and sundry; collect food at the doors of the Hindus; buy spices and oil at the shops of the Hindu Bania from a distance; regard the village in every way as their home and yet never touch or be touched by any one belonging to the village.

The problem is how best to give an idea of the way the untouchables are treated by the caste Hindus. A general description or a record of cases and of the treatment accorded to them are the two methods by which this purpose could be achieved. I have felt that the latter would be more effective than the former. In choosing these

illustrations I have drawn partly upon my experience and partly upon the experience of others. I begin with events that have happened to me in my own life.

ONE [A childhood journey to Koregaon becomes a nightmare]

Our family came originally from Dapoli Taluka of the Ratnagiri District of the Bombay Presidency. From the very commencement of the rule of the East India Company, my fore-fathers had left their hereditary occupation for service in the Army of the Company. My father also followed the family tradition and sought service in the Army. He rose to the rank of an officer, and was a Subhedar when he retired. On his retirement my father took the family to Dapoli with a view to settling down there. But for some reason my father changed his mind. The family left Dapoli for Satara, where we lived till 1904.

The first incident, which I am recording as well as I can remember, occurred in about 1901, when we were at Satara. My mother was then dead. My father was away on service as a cashier at a place called Koregaon in Khatav Taluka in the Satara District, where the Government of Bombay had started the work of excavating a Tank [=artificial reservoir] so as to give employment to famine-stricken people, who were dying by thousands.

When my father went to Koregaon he left me, my brother who was older than myself, and two sons of my eldest sister (who was dead), in charge of my aunt and some kind neighbours. My aunt was the kindest soul I know, but she was of no help to us. She was somewhat of a dwarf and had some trouble with her legs, which made it very difficult for her to move about without somebody's aid. Oftentimes she had to be lifted. I had sisters. They were married and were away living with their families.

Cooking our food became a problem with us, especially since our aunty could not, on account of her helplessness, manage the job. We four children went to school, and we also cooked our food. We could not prepare bread. So we lived on Pulav--which we found to be the easiest dish to prepare, requiring nothing more than mixing rice and mutton.

Being a cashier, my father could not leave his station to come to Satara to see us; therefore he wrote to us to come to Koregaon and spend our summer vacation with him. We children were thoroughly excited over the prospect, especially as none of us had up to that time seen a railway train.

Great preparations were made. New shirts of English make [=style], bright bejewelled caps, new shoes, new silk-bordered dhoties [=wrapped lower garments], were ordered for the journey. My father had given us all the particulars regarding our journey, and had told us to inform him on which day we were starting, so that he would send his peon [=errand-runner] to the Railway Station to meet us and to take us to Koregaon. According to this arrangement myself, my brother, and one of my sister's sons left Satara, our aunt remaining in the charge of our neighbours, who promised to look after her.

The Railway Station was ten miles distant from our place, and a tonga (a one-horse carriage) was engaged to take us to the Station. We were dressed in the new clothing

specially made for the occasion, and we left our home full of joy--but amidst the cries of my aunt, who was almost prostrate with grief at our parting.

When we reached the station my brother bought tickets, and gave me and my sister's son two annas each as pocket money, to be spent at our pleasure. We at once began our career of riotous living, and .each ordered a bottle of lemonade at the start. After a short while the train whistled in and we boarded it as quickly as we could, for fear of being left behind. We were told to detrain at Masur, the nearest railway station for Koregaon.

The train arrived at Masur at about five in the evening, and we got down with our luggage. In a few minutes all the passengers who had got down from the train had gone away to their destinations. We four children remained on the platform, looking out for my father or his servant whom he had promised to send. Long did we wait--but no one turned up. An hour elapsed, and the station-master came to enquire. He asked us for our tickets. We showed them to him. He asked us why we tarried.

We told him that we were bound for Koregaon, and that we were waiting for father or his servant to come, but that neither had turned up, and that we did not know how to reach Koregaon. We were well-dressed children. From our dress or talk no one could make out that we were children of the untouchables. Indeed the station-master was quite sure we were Brahmin children, and was extremely touched at the plight in which he found us.

As is usual among the Hindus, the station-master asked us who we were. Without a moment's thought I blurted out that we were Mahars. (Mahar is one of the communities which are treated as untouchables in the Bombay Presidency). He was stunned. His face underwent a sudden change. We could see that he was overpowered by a strange feeling of repulsion. As soon as he heard my reply he went away to his room, and we stood where we were. Fifteen to twenty minutes elapsed; the sun was almost setting. Our father had not turned up, nor had he sent his servant; and now the station-master had also left us. We were quite bewildered, and the joy and happiness which we had felt at the beginning of the journey gave way to a feeling of extreme sadness.

After half an hour, the station-master returned and asked us what we proposed to do. We said that if we could get a bullock-cart on hire, we would go to Koregaon; and if it was not very far, we would like to start straightway. There were many bullock-carts plying for hire. But my reply to the station-master that we were Mahars had gone round among the cartmen, and not one of them was prepared to suffer being polluted, and to demean himself carrying passengers of the untouchable classes. We were prepared to pay double the fare, but we found that money did not work.

The station-master who was negotiating on our behalf stood silent, not knowing what to do. Suddenly a thought seemed to have entered his head and he asked us, "Can you drive the cart?" Feeling that he was finding out a solution of our difficulty, we shouted, "Yes, we can." With that answer he went and proposed on our behalf that we were to pay the cartman double the fare and drive the cart, and that he should walk on foot along with the cart on our journey. One cartman agreed, since it gave him an opportunity to earn his fare and also saved him from being polluted.

It was about 6:30 p.m. when we were ready to start. But we were anxious not to leave the station until we were assured that we would reach Koregaon before it was dark. We therefore questioned the cartman about the distance, and the time he would take to reach Koregaon. He assured us that it would be not more than three hours. Believing in his word, we put our luggage in the cart, thanked the station-master, and got into the cart. One of us took the reins and the cart started, with the man walking by our side.

Not very far from the station there flowed a river. It was quite dry, except at places where there were small pools of water. The owner of the cart proposed that we should halt there and have our meal, as we might not get water on our way. We agreed. He asked us to give a part of his fare to enable him to go to the village and have his meal. My brother gave him some money and he left, promising to return soon. We were very hungry, and were glad to have had an opportunity to have a bite. My aunty had pressed our neighbours' womenfolk into service and had got some nice preparation [of food] for us to take on our way. We opened the tiffin basket [=lunchbox] and started eating.

We needed water to wash things down. One of us went to the pool of water in the river basin nearby. But the water really was no water. It was thick with mud and urine and excreta of the cows and buffaloes and other cattle who went to the pool for drinking. In fact that water was not intended for human use. At any rate the stink of the water was so strong we could not drink it. We had therefore to close our meal before we were satisfied, and wait for the arrival of the cartman. He did not come for a long time, and all that we could do was to look for him in all directions.

Ultimately he came, and we started on our journey. For some four or five miles we drove the cart and he walked on foot. Then he suddenly jumped into the cart and took the reins from our hand. We thought this to be rather strange conduct on the part of a man who had refused to let the cart on hire for fear of pollution--to have set aside all his religious scruples and to have consented to sit with us in the same cart; but we dared not ask him any questions on the point. We were anxious to reach Koregaon, our destination, as quickly as possible. And for some time we were interested in the movement of the cart only.

But soon there was darkness all around us. There were no street lights to relieve the darkness. There were no men or women or even cattle passing by, to make us feel that we were in their midst. We became fearful of the loneliness which surrounded us. Our anxiety was growing. We mustered all the courage we possessed. We had travelled far from Masur. It was more than three hours. But there was no sign of Koregaon.

There arose a strange thought within us. We suspected that the cartman intended treachery, and that he was taking us to some lonely spot to kill us. We had lot of gold ornaments on us, and that helped to strengthen our suspicion. We started asking him how far Koregaon was, and why we were so late in reaching it. He kept on saying, "It is not very far, we shall soon reach it." It was about 10:00 at night when, finding that there was no trace of Koregaon, we children started crying and abusing the cartman. Our lamentations and wailings continued for a long time. The cartman made no reply.

Suddenly we saw a light burning at some distance. The cartman said, "Do you see that light? That is a light of the toll-collector. We will rest there for the night." We felt some relief and stopped crying. The light was distant, and we could never seem to reach it. It took us two hours to reach the toll-collector's hut. The interval increased our anxiety, and we kept on asking the cartman all sorts of questions, as to why there was delay in reaching the place, whether we were going on the right road, etc.

Ultimately by midnight the cart reached the toll-collector's hut. It was situated at the foot of a hill, but on the other side of the hill. When we arrived we saw a large number of bullock-carts there, all resting for the night. We were extremely hungry, and wanted very much to eat. But again there was the question of water. So we asked our driver whether it was possible to get water. He warned us that the toll-collector was a Hindu, and that there was no possibility of our getting water if we spoke the truth and said that we were Mahars. He said, "Say you are Mohammedans and try your luck."

On his advice I went to the toll-collector's hut and asked him if he would give us some water. "Who are you?" he inquired. I replied that we were Musalmans. I conversed with him in Urdu (which I knew very well), so as to leave no doubt that I was a real Musalman. But the trick did not work and his reply was very curt. "Who has kept water for you? There is water on the hill, if you want to go and get it; I have none." With this he dismissed me. I returned to the cart, and conveyed to my brother his reply. I don't know what my brother felt. All that he did was to tell us to lie down.

The bullocks had been unyoked, and the cart was placed sloping down on the ground. We spread our beds on the bottom planks inside the cart, and laid down our bodies to rest. Now that we had come to a place of safety we did not mind what happened. But our minds could not help turning to the latest event. There was plenty of food with us. There was hunger burning within us; with all this we were to sleep without food; that was because we could get no water, and we could get no water because we were untouchables. Such was the last thought that entered our mind. I said, we had come to a place of safety. Evidently my elder brother had his misgivings. He said it was not wise for all four of us to go to sleep. Anything might happen. He suggested that at one time two should sleep, and two should keep watch. So we spent the night at the foot of that hill.

Early at five in the morning our cartman came, and suggested that we should start for Koregaon. We flatly refused. We told him that we would not move until eight o'clock. We did not want to take any chance[s]. He said nothing. So we left at eight and reached Koregaon at eleven. My father was surprised to see us, and said that he had received no intimation [=information] of our coming. We protested that we had given intimation. He denied the fact. Subsequently it was discovered that the fault was that of my father's servant. He had received our letter, but had failed to give it to my father.

This incident has a very important place in my life. I was a boy of nine when it happened. But it has left an indelible impression on my mind. Before this incident occurred, I knew that I was an untouchable, and that untouchables were subjected to certain indignities and discriminations. For instance, I knew that in the school I could not sit in the midst of my classmates according to my rank [in class performance], but

that I was to sit in a corner by myself. I knew that in the school I was to have a separate piece of gunny cloth for me to squat on in the classroom, and the servant employed to clean the school would not touch the gunny cloth used by me. I was required to carry the gunny cloth home in the evening, and bring it back the next day.

While in the school I knew that children of the touchable classes, when they felt thirsty, could go out to the water tap, open it, and quench their thirst. All that was necessary was the permission of the teacher. But my position was separate. I could not touch the tap; and unless it was opened for it by a touchable person, it was not possible for me to quench my thirst. In my case the permission of the teacher was not enough. The presence of the school peon was necessary, for he was the only person whom the class teacher could use for such a purpose. If the peon was not available, I had to go without water. The situation can be summed up in the statement—no peon, no water.

At home I knew that the work of washing clothes was done by my sisters. Not that there were no washermen in Satara. Not that we could not afford to pay the washermen. Washing was done by my sisters because we were untouchable,s and no washerman would wash the clothes of an untouchable. The work of cutting our hair or shaving the boys, including myself, was done by our elder sister, who had become quite an expert barber by practising the art on us. Not that there were no barbers in Satara, and not that we could not afford to pay the barber. The work of shaving and hair-cutting was done by my sister because we were untouchables, and no barber would consent to shave an untouchable.

All this I knew. But this incident gave me a shock such as I had never received before, and it made me think about untouchability--which, before this incident happened, was with me a matter of course, as it is with many touchables as well as the untouchables.

TWO [Back from the west--and unable to find lodging in Baroda]

In 1916 I returned to India. I had been sent to America by His Highness the Maharaja of Baroda for higher education. I studied at Columbia University in New York from 1913 to 1917. In 1917 I came to London and joined the post-graduate department of the School of Economics of the University of London. ln l918 I was obliged to return to India without completing my studies. Since I had been educated by the Baroda State, I was bound to serve the State. [Note: the dates here appear to be a bit confused.]

Accordingly, on my arrival I straightway went to Baroda. The reasons why I left Baroda service are quite irrelevant to my present purpose. I do not therefore wish to enter into them. I am only concerned with my social experiences in Baroda, and I will confine myself to describing them.

My five years of staying in Europe and America had completely wiped out of my mind any consciousness that I was an untouchable, and that an untouchable wherever he went in India was a problem to himself and to others. But when I came out of the station, my mind was considerably disturbed by a question, "Where to go? Who will take me?" I felt deeply agitated. Hindu hotels, called Vishis, I knew there were. They

would not take me. The only way of seeking accommodation therein was by impersonation. But I was not prepared for it, because I could well anticipate the dire consequences which were sure to follow if my identity was discovered--as it was sure to be.

I had friends in Baroda who had come to America for study. "Would they welcome me if I went?" I could not assure myself. They may [=might] feel embarrassed at admitting an untouchable into their household. I stood under the roof of the station for some time, thinking where to go, what to do. It then struck me to enquire if there was any place in the camp. All [the other] passengers had by this time gone; I alone was left. Some hackney [=carriage] drivers who had failed to pick up any passengers were watching and waiting for me.

I called one of them, and asked him if he knew if there was a hotel in the camp. He said that there was a Parsi inn, and that they took paying guests. Hearing that it was an inn maintained by the Parsis, my heart was gladdened. The Parsis are followers of the Zoroastrian religion. There was no fear of my being treated by them as an untouchable, because their religion does not recognise untouchability. With a heart glad with hope and a mind free from fear, I put my luggage in a hackney carriage and asked the driver to drive me to [the] Parsi inn in the camp.

The inn was a two-storied building, on the ground floor of which lived an old Parsi with his family. He was a caretaker, and supplied food to tourists who came there to stay. The carriage arrived, and the Parsi caretaker showed me upstairs. I went up while the carriage driver brought up my luggage. I paid him and he went away. I felt happy that after all I had solved my problem of finding a place to stay. I was undressing, as I wanted to be at ease. In the meantime the caretaker came with a book in his hand. Seeing as he could well see from my half-undressed state that I had no Sadra and Kasti, the two things which prove that one is a Parsi, in a sharp tone he asked me who I was.

Not knowing that this inn was maintained by the Parsi community for the use of Parsis only, I told him that I was a Hindu. He was shocked, and told me that I could not stay in the inn. I was thoroughly shocked by his answer and was cold all over. The question returned again, where to go? Composing myself, I told him that though a Hindu, I had no objection to staying there if he had no objection. He replied, "How can you? I have to maintain a register of all those who stay here in the inn." I saw his difficulty. I said I could assume a Parsi name for the purpose of entering it in the register. "Why do you object, if I do not object? You will not lose, you will earn something if I stay here."

I could see that he was inclined favourably. Evidently he had had no tourist for a long time and he did not like to forego the opportunity of making a little money. He agreed, on condition that I pay him a rupee and a half per day for board and lodging, and enter myself as a Parsi in his register. He went downstairs, and I heaved a sigh of relief. The problem was solved, and I felt very happy. But alas! I did not then know how short was to be this happiness. But before I describe the tragic end of my stay in this inn, I must describe how I passed my time during the short period I lived therein.

The inn on the first [=second] floor had a small bed-room, and adjoining it was one small bath room with a water tap in it. The rest was one big hall. At the time of my stay the big hall was filled up with all sorts of rubbish--planks, benches, broken chairs, etc. In the midst of these surroundings I lived, a single solitary individual. The caretaker came up in the morning with a cup of tea. He came again at about 9:30 a.m. with my breakfast or morning meal. A third time he came up at about 8:30 in the evening with my dinner. The caretaker came up only when he could not avoid it, and on these occasions he never stayed to talk to me. The day was spent somehow.

I was appointed as a probationer in the Accountant General's Office by the Maharaja of Baroda. I used to leave the inn at about ten a.m. for the office, and return late at about eight in the evening, contriving to while away outside the inn as much time in [the] company of friends as I could. The idea of returning to the inn to spend the night therein was most terrifying to me, and I used to return to the inn only because I had no other place under the sky to go for rest. In this big hall on the first [=second] floor of the inn there were no fellow human beings to talk to. I was quite alone. The whole hall was enveloped in complete darkness. There were no electric lights, nor even oil lamps to relieve the darkness. The caretaker used to bring up for my use a small hurricane lamp. Its light could not extend beyond a few inches.

I felt that I was in a dungeon, and I longed for the company of some human being to talk to. But there was no one. In the absence of the company of human beings I sought the company of books, and read and read. Absorbed in reading, I forgot my lonely condition. But the chirping and flying about of the bats, which had made the hall their home, often distracted my mind and sent cold shivers through me--reminding me of what I was endeavouring to forget, that I was in a strange place under strange conditions.

Many a time I must have been angry. But I subdued my grief and my anger through the feeling that though it was a dungeon, it was a shelter, and that some shelter was better than no shelter. So heart-rending was my condition that when my sister's son came from Bombay, bringing my remaining luggage which I had left behind, and when he saw my state, he began to cry so loudly that I had to send him back immediately. In this state I lived in the Parsi inn, impersonating a Parsi.

I knew that I could not long continue this impersonation, as I would be discovered some day. I was therefore trying to get a State bungalow to stay in. But the Prime Minister did not look upon my request with the same urgency [as I did]. My petition went from officer to officer--and before I got the final reply, the day of my doom arrived.

It was the eleventh day of my stay in the inn. I had taken my morning meal, and had dressed up, and was about to step out of my room to go to [the] office. As I was picking up some books which I had borrowed overnight, for returning them to the library, I heard [the] footsteps of a considerable number of people coming up the staircase. I thought they were tourists who had come to stay, and was therefore looking out to see who these friends were. Instantly I saw a dozen angry-looking, tall, sturdy Parsis, each armed with a stick, coming towards my room. I realised that they were not fellow tourists, and they gave proof of it immediately.

They lined up in front of my room and fired a volley of questions. "Who are you? Why did you come here? How dare you take a Parsi name? You scoundrel! You have polluted the Parsi inn!" I stood silent. I could give no answer. I could not persist in impersonation. It was in fact a fraud, and the fraud was discovered, and I am sure if I had persisted in the game I was playing, I would have been assaulted by the mob of angry and fanatic Parsis and probably doomed to death. My meekness and my silence averted this doom. One of them asked when I thought of vacating.

At that time my shelter I prized more than my life. The threat implied in this question was a grave one. I therefore broke my silence and implored them to let me stay for a week at least, thinking that my application to the Minister for a bungalow would be decided upon favourably in the meantime. But the Parsis were in no mood to listen. They issued an ultimatum. They must not find me in the inn in the evening. I must pack off. They held out dire consequences, and left. I was bewildered. My heart sank within me. I cursed all, and wept bitterly. After all, I was deprived of my precious possession--namely, my shelter. It was no better than a prisoner's cell. But to me it was very precious.

After the Parsis were gone, I sat for some time engaged in thinking, [seeking] to find a way out. I had hopes that I would soon get a State bungalow, and my troubles would be over. My problem was therefore a temporary problem, and I thought that going to friends would be a good solution. I had no friends among the untouchables of Baroda State. But I had friends among other classes. One was a Hindu, the other was an Indian Christian. I first went to my Hindu friend and told him what had befallen me. He was a noble soul and a great personal friend of mine. He was sad and also indignant. He, however, let fall one observation. He said, "If you come to my home, my servants will go." I took the hint, and did not press him to accommodate me.

I did not like to go to the Indian Christian friend. Once he had invited me to go and stay with him. But I had declined, preferring to stay in the Parsi inn. My reason was that his habits were not congenial to me. To go now would be to invite a rebuff. So I went to my office, but I could not really give up this chance of finding a shelter. On consulting a friend I decided to go to him [=to the Indian Christian friend] and ask him if he would accommodate me. When I put the question, his reply was that his wife was coming to Baroda the next day, and that he would have to consult her.

I learnt subsequently that it was a very diplomatic answer. He and his wife came originally from a family which was Brahmin by caste, and although on conversion to Christianity the husband had become liberal in thought, the wife had remained orthodox in her ways, and would not have consented to harbour an untouchable in her house. The last ray of hope thus flickered away. It was four p.m. when I left the house of my Indian Christian friend. Where to go was the one supreme question before me. I must quit the inn, and had no friend to go to!! The only alternative left was to return to Bombay.

The train to Bombay left Baroda at nine p.m. There were five hours to be spent. Where to spend them? Should I go to the inn? Should I go to my friend? I could not muster up sufficient courage to go back to the inn. I feared the Parsis might come and attack me. I did not like to go to my friend. Though my condition was pitiable, I did not like to be pitied. I decided to spend the five hours in the public garden which is

called Kamathi Baug, on the border of the city and the camp. I sat there partly with a vacant mind, partly with sorrow at the thought of what had happened to me, and thought of my father and mother--as children do when they are in a forlorn condition.

At eight p.m. I came out of the garden, took a carriage to the inn, brought down my luggage. The caretaker came out, but neither he nor I could utter a word to each other. He felt that he was in some way responsible for bringing him [=me] into trouble. I paid him his bill. He received it in silence, and I took his leave in silence.

I had gone to Baroda with high hope[s]. I had given up many offers. It was wartime. Many places in the Indian Educational service were vacant. I knew very influential people in London. But I did not seek any of them. I felt that my duty was to offer my services first to the Maharaja of Baroda, who had financed my education. And here I was driven to leave Baroda and return to Bombay, after a stay of only eleven days.

This scene of a dozen Parsis armed with sticks lined [up] before me in a menacing mood, and myself standing before them with a terrified look imploring for mercy, is a scene which so long a period as eighteen years has not succeeded in fading [=causing to fade] away. I can even now vividly recall it--and [I] never recall it without tears in my eyes. It was then for the first time that I learnt that a person who is an untouchable to a Hindu is also an untouchable to a Parsi.

THREE [Pride, awkwardness, and a dangerous accident in Chalisgaon]

The year was 1929. The Bombay Government had appointed a Committee to investigate the grievances of the untouchables. I was appointed a member of the Committee. The Committee had to tour all over the province to investigate the allegations of injustice, oppression and tyranny. The Committee split up. I and another member were assigned the two districts of Khandesh. My colleague and myself, after finishing our work, parted company. He went to see some Hindu saint. I left by train to go to Bombay. At Chalisgaon I got down to go to a village on the Dhulia line, to investigate a case of social boycott which had been declared by the caste Hindus against the untouchables of that village.

The untouchables of Chalisgaon came to the station and requested me to stay for the night with them. My original plan was to go straight to Bombay after investigating the case of social boycott. But as they were keen [=eager], I agreed to stay overnight. I boarded the train for Dhulia to go to the village, went there and informed myself of the situation prevailing in the village, and returned by the next train to Chalisgaon.

I found the untouchables of Chalisgaon waiting for me at the station. I was garlanded. The Maharwada, the quarters of the untouchables, is about two miles from the Railway Station, and to reach it one has to cross a river on which there is a culvert. There were many horse carriages at the station plying [=available] for hire. The Maharwada was also within walking distance from the station. I expected immediately to be taken to the Maharwada. But there was no movement in that direction, and I could not understand why I was kept waiting.

After an hour or so a tonga (one-horse carriage) was brought close to the platform, and I got in. The driver and I were the only two occupants of the tonga. Others went on foot by a short cut. The tonga had not gone 200 paces when there was almost a collision with a motor car. I was surprised that the driver, who was hired for driving every day, should have been so inexperienced. The accident was averted only because on the loud shout of the policeman the driver of the car pulled it back.

We somehow came to the culvert on the river. On it there are no walls as there are on a bridge. There is only a row of stones fixed at a distance of five or ten feet. It is paved with stones. The culvert on the river is at right angles to the road we were coming by. A sharp turn has to be taken to come to the culvert from the road. Near the very first side stone of the culvert, the horse, instead of going straight, took a turn and bolted. The wheel of the tonga struck against the side stone so forcibly that I was bodily lifted up and thrown down on the stone pavement of the culvert, and the horse and the carriage fell down from the culvert into the river.

So heavy was the fall that I lay down [=there] senseless. The Maharwada is just on the other bank of the river. The men who had come to greet me at the station had reached there ahead of me. I was lifted and taken to the Maharwada amidst the cries and lamentations of the men, women and children. As a result of this I received several injuries. My leg was fractured, and I was disabled for several days. I could not understand how all this had happened. The tongas pass and repass the culvert every day, and never has a driver failed to take the tonga safely over the culvert.

On enquiry I was told the real facts. The delay at the railway station was due to the fact that the tongawalas were not prepared to drive the tonga with a passenger who was an untouchable. It was beneath their dignity. The Mahars could not tolerate that I should walk to their quarters. It was not in keeping with their sense of my dignity. A compromise was therefore arrived at. That compromise was to this effect: the owner of the tonga would give the tonga on hire, but not drive. The Mahars may [=could] take the tonga, but must find someone to drive it.

The Mahars thought this to be a happy solution. But they evidently forgot that the safety of the passenger was more important than the maintenance of his dignity. If they had thought of this, they would have considered whether they could get a driver who could safely conduct me to my destination. As a matter of fact none of them could drive, because it was not their trade. They therefore asked someone from amongst themselves to drive. The man took the reins in his hand and started, thinking there was nothing in it. But as he got on [=went along], he felt his responsibility and became so nervous that he gave up all attempt to [=at]control.

To save my dignity, the Mahars of Chalisgaon had put my very life in jeopardy. It is [=was] then I learnt that a Hindu tongawalla, no better than a menial, has a dignity by which he can look upon himself as a person who is superior to any untouchable, even though he may be a Barrister-at-law.

FOUR [Polluting the water in the fort of Daulatabad]

In the year 1934, some of my co-workers in the movement of the depressed classes expressed a desire to go on a sight-seeing tour, if I agreed to join them. I agreed. It was decided that our plan should at all events include a visit to the Buddhist caves at Verul. It was arranged that I should go to Nasik, and the party should join me at Nasik. To go to Verul we had to go to Aurangabad. Aurangabad is a town in the Mohammedan State of Hyderabad, and is included in the dominion of His Exalted Highness, the Nizam.

On the way to Aurangabad we had first to pass another town called Daulatabad, which is also in the Hyderabad State. Daulatabad is a historical place and was, at one time, the capital of a famous Hindu King, by name Ramdeo Rai. The fort of Daulatabad is an ancient historical monument,, and no tourist while in that vicinity should omit a visit to it. Accordingly our party had also included in its programme a visit to the fort of Daulatabad.

We hired some buses and touring cars. We were about thirty in number. We started from Nasik to Yeola, as Yeola is on the way to Aurangabad. Our tour programme had not been announced--and quite deliberately. We wanted to travel incognito, in order to avoid difficulties which an untouchable tourist has to face in outlying parts of the country. We had informed only our people at those centres at which we had decided to halt. Accordingly, although on the way we passed many villages in the Nizam's State, none of our people had come to meet us.

It was naturally different at Daulatabad. There our people had been informed that we were coming. They were waiting for us and had gathered at the entrance to the town. They asked us to get down and have tea and refreshment first, and then to go to see the fort. We did not agree to their proposal. We wanted tea very badly, but we wanted sufficient time to see the fort before it was dusk. We therefore left for the fort, and told our people that we would take tea on our return. Accordingly we told our drivers to move on, and within a few minutes we were at the gate of the fort.

The month was Ramjan, the month of fast for the Mohammedans. Just outside the gate of the fort there is a small tank of water full to the brim. There is all around a wide stone pavement. Our faces, bodies and clothes were full of dust gathered in the course of our journey, and we all wished to have a wash. Without much thought, some members of the party washed their faces and their legs on the pavement with the water from the tank. After these ablutions, we went to the gate of the fort. There were armed soldiers inside. They opened the big gates and admitted us into the archway.

We had just commenced asking the guard the procedure for obtaining permission to go into the fort. In the meantime an old Mohammedan with [a] white flowing beard was coming from behind shouting "The Dheds (meaning untouchables) have polluted the tank!" Soon all the young and old Mohammedans who were nearabout joined him and all started abusing us. "The Dheds have become arrogant. The Dheds have forgotten their religion (i.e. to remain low and degraded). The Dheds must be taught a lesson." They assumed a most menacing mood.

We told them that we were outsiders and did not know the local custom. They turned the fire of their wrath against the local untouchables, who by that time had arrived at the gate. "Why did you not tell these outsiders that this tank could not be used by untouchables?" was the question they kept on asking them. Poor people! They were not there when we entered [the] tank [area]. It was really our mistake, because we acted without inquiry. The local untouchables protested that it was not their fault.

But the Mohammedans were not prepared to listen to my explanation. They kept on abusing them and us. The abuse was so vulgar that it exasperated us. There could easily have been a riot, and possibly murders. We had, however, to restrain ourselves. We did not want to be involved in a criminal case which would bring our tour to an abrupt end.

One young Muslim in the crowd kept on saying that everyone must conform to his religion, meaning thereby that the untouchables must not take water from a public tank. I had grown quite impatient, and asked him in a somewhat angry tone, "Is that what your religion teaches? Would you prevent an untouchable from taking water from this tank if he became a Mohammedan?" These straight questions seemed to have some effect on the Mohammedans. They gave no answer, and stood silent.

Turning to the guard I said, again in an angry tone, "Can we get into the fort or not? Tell us; if we can't, we don't want to stop [=stay]." The guard asked for my name. I wrote it out on a piece of paper. He took it to the Superintendent inside, and came out. We were told that we could go into the fort, but we could not touch water anywhere in the fort; and an armed soldier was ordered to go with us to see that we did not transgress the order.

I gave one instance to show that a person who is an untouchable to a Hindu is also an untouchable to a Parsi. This will show that a person who is an untouchable to a Hindu is also an untouchable to a Mohammedan.

FIVE [A doctor refuses to give proper care, and a young woman dies]

The next case is equally illuminating. It is a case of an Untouchable school teacher in a village in Kathiawar, and is reported in the following letter which appeared in the Young India, a journal published by Mr. Gandhi, in its issue of 12th December 1929. It expresses the difficulties he [=the writer] had experienced in persuading a Hindu doctor to attend to his wife, who had just delivered, and how the wife and child died for want of medical attention. The letter says:

"On the 5th of this month a child was born to me. On the 7th, she [=the writer's wife] fell ill and suffered from loose stools. Her vitality seemed to ebb away and her chest became inflamed. Her breathing became difficult and there was acute pain in the ribs. I went to call a doctor--but he said he would not go to the house of a Harijan, nor was he prepared lo examine the child. Then I went to [the] Nagarseth and Garasia Darbar and pleaded [with] them to help me. The Nagarseth stood surety to the doctor for my paying his fee of two rupees. Then the doctor came, but on condition that he would examine them only outside the Harijan colony. I took my wife out of the colony along with her newly born child. Then the doctor gave his thermometer to a Muslim, he

gave it to me, and I gave it to my wife and then returned it by the same process after it had been applied. It was about eight o'clock in the evening and the doctor, on looking at the thermometer in the light of a lamp, said that the patient was suffering from pneumonia. Then the doctor went away and sent the medicine. I brought some linseed from the bazar and used it on the patient. The doctor refused to see her later, although I gave the two rupees fee. The disease is dangerous and God alone will help us.
The lamp of my life has died out. She passed away at about two o'clock this afternoon."

The name of the Untouchable school teacher is not given. So also the name of the doctor is not mentioned. This was at the request of the Untouchable teacher, who feared reprisals. The facts are indisputable.

No explanation is necessary. The doctor, in spite of being educated, refused to apply the thermometer and treat an ailing woman in a critical condition. As a result of his refusal to treat her, the woman died. He felt no qualms of conscience in setting aside the code of conduct which is binding on his profession. The Hindu would prefer to be inhuman rather than touch an Untouchable.

SIX [A young clerk is abused and threatened until he gives up his job]

There is one other incident more telling than this. On the 6th of March 1938, a meeting of the Bhangis was held at Kasarwadi (behind Woollen Mills), Dadar, Bombay, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Indulal Yadnik. In this meeting, one Bhangi boy narrated his experience in the following terms :

"I passed the Vernacular Final Examination in 1933. I have studied English up to the 4th Standard. I applied to the Schools Committee of the Bombay Municipality for employment as a teacher, but I failed, as there was no vacancy. Then I applied to the Backward Classes Officer, Ahmedabad, for the job of a Talati (village Patwari [=scribe]), and I succeeded. On 19th February 1936, I was appointed a Talati in the office of the Mamlatdar of the Borsad Taluka in the Kheda District.

Although my family originally came from Gujarat, I had never been in Gujarat before. This was my first occasion to go there. Similarly, I did not know that untouchability would be observed in Government Offices. Besides in my application the fact of my being a Harijan was mentioned and so I expected that my colleagues in the office would know before-hand who I was. That being so, I was surprised to find the attitude of the clerk of the Mamlatdar's office when I presented myself to take charge of the post of the Talati.

The Karkun contemptuously asked, "Who are you?" I replied, "Sir, I am a Harijan." He said, "Go away, stand at a distance. How dare you stand so near me! You are in office, if you were outside I would have given you six kicks. What audacity to come here for service!" Thereafter, he asked me to drop on the ground my certificate and the order of appointment as a Talati. He then picked them up. While I was working in the Mamlatdar's office at Borsad I experienced great difficulty in the matter of getting water for drinking. In the verandah of the office there were kept cans containing drinking water. There was a waterman in charge of these water cans. His duty was to

pour out water to clerks in office whenever they needed it. In the absence of the waterman they could themselves take water out of the cans and drink it.

That was impossible in my case. I could not touch the cans, for my touch would pollute the water, I had therefore to depend upon the mercy of the waterman. For my use there was kept a small rusty pot No one would touch it or wash it except myself. It was in this pot that the waterman would dole out water to me. But I could get water only if the waterman was present. This waterman did not like the idea of supplying me with water. Seeing that I was coming for water, he would manage to slip away, with the result that I had to go without water; and the days on which I had no water to drink were by no means few.

I had the same difficulties regarding my residence. I was a stranger in Borsad. No caste Hindu would rent a house to me. The Untouchables of Borsad were not ready to give me lodgings, for the fear of displeasing the Hindus who did not like my attempt to live as a clerk, a station above me. Far greater difficulties were with regard to food. There was no place or person from where I could get my meals. I used to buy 'Bhajhas' morning and evening, eat them in some solitary place outside the village, and come and sleep at night on the pavement of the verandahs of the Mamlatdar's office. In this way, I passed four days. All this became unbearable to me. Then I went to live at Jentral, my ancestral village. It was six miles from Borsad. Every day I had to walk eleven miles. This I did for a month and a half.

Thereafter the Mamlatdar sent me to a Talati to learn the work. This Talati was in charge of three villages, Jentral, Khapur and Saijpur. Jentral was his headquarters. I was in Jentral with this Talati for two months. He taught me nothing, and I never once entered the village office. The headman of the village was particularly hostile. Once he had said, "Your fellows, your father, your brother are sweepers who sweep the village office, and you want to sit in the office as our equal? Take care, better give up this job!"

One day the Talati called me to Saijpur to prepare the population table of the village. From Jentral I went to Saijpur. I found the Headman and the Talati in the village office doing some work. I went, stood near the door of the office, and wished them "good morning," but they took no notice of me. I stood outside for about fifteen minutes. I was already tired of life, and felt enraged at being thus ignored and insulted. I sat down on a chair that was lying there. Seeing me seated on the chair, the Headman and the Talati quietly went away without saying anything to me.

A short while after, people began to come, and soon a large crowd gathered round me. This crowd was led by the Librarian of the village library. I could not understand why an educated person should have led this mob. I subsequently learnt that the chair was his. He started abusing me in the worst terms. Addressing the Ravania (village servant) he said, "Who allowed this dirty dog of a Bhangi to sit on the chair?" The Ravania unseated me and took away the chair from me. I sat on the ground.

Thereupon the crowd entered the village office and surrounded me. It was a furious crowd raging with anger, some abusing me, some threatening to cut me to pieces with the Dharya (a sharp weapon like the sword). I implored them to excuse me and to have mercy upon me. That did not have any effect upon the crowd. I did not know

how to save myself. But an idea came to me of writing to the Mamlatdar about the fate that had befallen me, and telling him how to dispose of my body in case I was killed by the crowd. Incidentally, it was my hope that if the crowd came to know that I was practically reporting against them to the Mamlatdar, they might hold their hands. I asked the Ravania to give me a piece of paper, which he did. Then with my fountain pen I wrote the following on it in big bold letters so that everybody could read it:

"To,
The Mamlatdar, Taluka Borsad.
Sir,

Be pleased to accept the humble salutations of Parmar Kalidas Shivram. This is to humbly inform you that the hand of death is falling upon me today. It would not have been so if I had listened to the words of my parents. Be so good as to inform my parents of my death."

The Librarian read what I wrote and at once asked me to tear it off, which I did. They showered upon me innumerable insults. "You want us to address you as our Talati? You are a Bhangi and you want to enter the office and sit on the chair?" I begged for mercy and promised not to repeat this, and also promised to give up the job. I was kept there till seven in the evening, when the crowd left. By then the Talati and the Mukhiya had still not come. Thereafter I took fifteen days' leave and returned to my parents in Bombay." -- fwp's main page --