

# Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

THE VISIONARY LEADER OF INDIA



Editor  
**Dr. Kishor N. Ingole**

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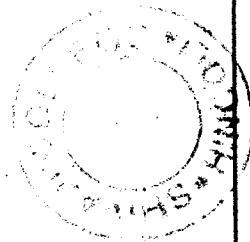
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*(Signature)*  
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar  
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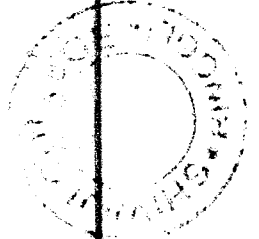
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# Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Contribution for Labourers



NIWRETTI HURGULE

People know Dr. B. R. Ambedkar only as the author of the constitution. But it is equally true that Dr. Ambedkar's contribution in the making of India is unforgettable. Dr. Ambedkar took an active part in all constitutional matters from Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919) to Cabinet Mission. In 1942 Dr. Ambedkar was appointed as Labor Minister. Dr. Ambedkar was not only the maker of the Indian Constitution but was also the visionary architect of India's labor law reforms. He was the savior of the Indian labor, and not a mere Dalit leader. Many of the important labor law initiatives in India were made by Dr Ambedkar himself, being the first Labor Minister of India in the Viceroy's Executive Council during the four years from 1942 to 1946. Those four years can be termed as the golden period of Indian labor.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the most well-known son of this country. His great contribution as a principal architect of the Indian constitution is widely acclaimed. His varied contributions as a scholar, educationist, journalist, and thinker and, above all, as a great social reformer are also widely recognized. Yet there remains one crucial aspect of his versatile personality that has not been fully appreciated and propagated, that is Dr. Ambedkar's contributions in the labour welfare. He founded the Independent Labour Party on 5th August 1936; published a party programme in 1937 to describe Independent labour party as a labour organization in the sense that it would work for the welfare of the labouring class. His entry into Governor General's Executive Council in 1942 held a portfolio of labour and resulted into the formation of many labour laws to promote the labour welfare in India.

Dr. Ambedkar, while working in the Viceroy's cabinet, restored the basic rights of labour workers, he gave recognition to labour unions and he also recommended salary, maternity leave, working hours, employment planning centres, etc. He prepared the right of strike, freedom of labour, wage law etc. According to him the workers should participate in the benefits received from the industries. Keeping this revolutionary idea, the participation of the workers in the industries has been increased. His speech in the Mumbai Legislature on this subject was unforgettable. In the beginning Dr. Ambedkar was associated with the labor movement in Mumbai and he himself was a labor leader.

He cautioned that without social and economic freedom of all, there will not be any meaning of political freedom. Dr Ambedkar declared: "Labor is not content with securing merely fair conditions of

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work. What labor wants fair conditions of life” He criticized those who use the word “cheap labour” and pointed out that it is a shame to the industry as well: “It had been said that India's monopoly was based on cheap labour. If this was true, it was not a matter of complement either to the industry or to labour.”(Saji Narayanan C.K.)

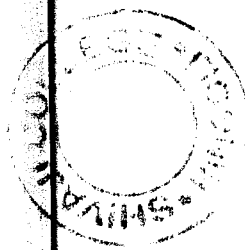
Dr. Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party in 1936. Dr. Ambedkar had made provisions in the constitution for the organization and upliftment of the working class in its context. For the working class, progressive laws like Factory Act, Trade Union Act, Industrial Dispute Act, State Insurance Act etc. were made by him in 1943-46, on the recommendation of the International Labour Organization. He tried to get the rights and facilities which were implemented in other countries. The labourers got it with great difficulty. Dr. Ambedkar made a law and provided it to the labourers during his ministerial period.

Addressing the Indian Labour Conference held in New Delhi on November 26, 1945, Ambedkar emphasized the urgent need to bring progressive labour welfare legislation: “Labour may well say that the fact that the British took 100 years to have a proper code of labour legislation is no argument that we should also in India take 100 years. History is not always an example. More often it is a warning.” (indianexpress.com)

There is no break in Dr. Ambedkar's work from 1942 to 1946, women were also made to work in underground places in coal mines, Dr. Ambedkar had banned women's underground work. By issuing an ordinance on 31/01/1944, a labour welfare quota was established, by levying excise duty on coal, coke and miner, money was deposited in the labor welfare fund. On February 8, 1944, in the legislative assembly during the debate on the Lifting of Ban on Employment of Women on Underground Work in Coal Mines, Ambedkar said: “It is for the first time that I think in any industry the principle has been established of equal pay for equal work irrespective of the sex.” (Meghwal, indianexpress.com) It was a historic moment. Through the Mines Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill 1943, he empowered women workers with maternity benefits.

Dr Ambedkar took steps to amend the Maternity Benefit Act. When the maternity benefit bill was introduced in the House, he said: “I believe that it is in the interest of the nation that the mother ought to get a certain amount of rest during the prenatal period and also subsequently, and this Bill is based entirely on that principle.” (Saji Narayanan C.K, 2021)

Workers Welfare was established in coal, mica mines for the workers. In this organization hospitals were opened for the workers and officers who were working in coal mines. The organization established about 200 centres and arranged education and entertainment for them



and also provided clean drinking water for the labourers. Dr. Ambedkar made a housing scheme through which new houses were built for the migrant laborers. Bathrooms were provided near the mines. Lockers were also made available for them. The amount of compensation was increased and legal arrangements were made to give maternity leave to the women laborers.

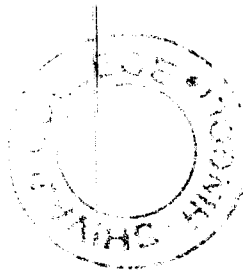
In 1944, Dr. Ambedkar initiated an amendment to amend the Factories Act of 1934 with several modifications. According to the modifications, washing facilities were arranged to the labour in every industry and changes also took place in working hours and earned leave facilities. The recommendations of the International Labour Conference held in 1936 were strictly incorporated in the act. Dr. Ambedkar was pertinacious on length of holiday, qualifying conditions for a right to a holiday, pay during holiday and limiting conditions. He advocated for equal pay for equal work, and he got success in the field of coal mines.

When Dr. Ambedkar was the Labour Minister, the Factories Act was amended thrice, through this Act, arrangement was made for one day's salary in a year, 30 days leave along with salary was provided to those who had served one year in case of illness. Dr. Ambedkar introduced a bill in the Central Legislative Assembly on 13 April 1946, making it mandatory to fix the condition of service in writing and authenticate other conditions by the officer concerned; this bill became law on 23 April 1946.

Dr. Ambedkar followed an English pattern of 48 working hours that is 8 hours of working per day in India. He aggressively opposed the proposal of 12 hours of working per day. He also advocated 10 days earned leave for adults and 14 days earned leave for child labour. More holidays and less working hours to the labour during war time was one of the important pieces of advice by him. (Warbhuwan 36-37)

A law was made to recognize trade unions compulsorily. In April 1946, Dr. Ambedkar introduced a bill in the Central Legislative Assembly, whose objective was to fix the minimum wage in all industries. Dr. Ambedkar introduced the employee insurance bill in the Central Assembly, Employment Exchanges.

From 1942 to 1946, as the Labour Minister of Dr. Ambedkar, the laws made and reforms made for the workers were of very basic nature, the condition of the sanitation workers was always thought-provoking. Dr. Ambedkar made various laws prevailing in India till 1942, which were against the workers. Dr. Ambedkar made the changes in them to resolve the questions of the workers. A Tripartite Board of representatives of the government, the employer and the workers was formed during the tenure of Dr. Ambedkar. He appointed three non-official members on the Labour Department Permanent Committee. He



made the Tea Control Reform Bill for the development of tea plantation workers.

Speaking at the Tripartite Labour Conference, held under his chairmanship, at New Delhi on August 7, 1942 Dr. Ambedkar said: "It is for the first time in the history of these labour conferences that the representatives of the employers and employees have been brought face to face within the ambit of a joint conference." (Velusamy 110)

While wearing a safety cap in Dhanbad on 9/12/1943 Dr. Ambedkar had done the inspection in the 400 feet deep Bulnabari mine as labor minister along with officers to know their conditions. As a labour member in the government of Lord Linlithgow and Lord Wavell, Dr. Ambedkar removed the black laws related to sanitation workers. Dr. Ambedkar introduced The Mines Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill especially for the welfare of the women workers, working in the mines. During his tenure as a labour member, he lifted a ban on employment of women on underground work in coal mines. Also for the first time he established a principle of equal pay for equal work irrespective of gender. (Warbhuwan 36)

Dr. Ambedkar was banned from working for women workers in the lower surfaces of the mines. The British government did not want to implement this law, because they feared that it would have a bad effect on the production of mines. Lord Wavell was compelled to complain to the Secretary's Office that the Labor Minister Dr. Ambedkar was putting a lot of pressure in this direction, finally this law was made and women were stopped from working at the lower level of mines.

Dr. Ambedkar had started the dams being built on the rivers today. Dr. Ambedkar was a labour member in the government of Lord Binlithgow and Lord Wavell. India has a reservoir of rivers, when the rivers flood, the surrounding area becomes like a vast sea. During the tenure of Lord Wavell, there was a tremendous flood in the Damodar river, due to which Bihar and Bengal were in the grip of floods, about 4000 villages were in the grip of floods, to avoid this horrific devastation, Lord Wavell had to subdue the rivers. The work was entrusted to Dr. Ambedkar. He took steps to stop the floods of the rivers of West and Eastern provinces like Bengal, Oriya, Punjab etc. Dr. Ambedkar studied and made a multi-purpose river scheme like the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) of America, he said, "I want to build a dam on the rivers that bring great destruction and convert them into rivers that irrigate and generate electricity and bring prosperity." (Bondade 30) Dr. Ambedkar made plans to bring the problem of flooding of India's rivers under control and for this purpose a board was established. Keeping in mind the convenience of India, Dr. Ambedkar did not want to appoint a foreigner as the chairman of his plans, so he selected Mr. A. N. Khosla, but Mr. Khosla was not ready to work under the leadership of an

श्री. अंबेडकर के जे.  
संशोधन विभाग  
समाज विज्ञान विभाग



untouchable person. In this regard Dr. Ambedkar said to Mr. Khosla that, "If I want, I can call any English or American from England or America for this work, but I am not doing this because I am a patriot and I love India and for the safety of our country I have chosen you." (Bondade 30) While seeing Dr. Ambedkar's boldness, candour and patriotism he bowed down and accepted to be the president.

Dr. Ambedkar in one of his speeches has said: "There were two enemies of the working classes in the country and they were Brahmanism and Capitalism. By Brahmanism I do not mean the power, privileges and interests of the Brahmins as a community. That is not the sense in which I am using the word. By Brahminism I mean the negation of the spirit of liberty, equality and fraternity. In that sense it is rampant in all classes and is not confined to Brahmins alone though they have been its originators. The effects of Brahmanism were not confined only to social rights such as inter-dining and inter-marrying. It also denied them rights. So omniscient is Brahminism that it even affects the field of economic opportunities." (The Times of India, 14th January, 1938)

Inspired by Ambedkar, the current government has taken steps to improve the quality of life of workers. For example, the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojna was launched in February 2019 to ensure protection of unorganized workers in their old age. Through technological interventions like Shram Suvidha Portal, transparency and accountability are ensured in the enforcement of labour law. The government is working to simplify, amalgamate and rationalize the provisions of the existing central labour laws into four labour codes — Labour Code on Wages, on Industrial Relations, on Social Security & Welfare and on Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions.

Dr. Ambedkar is present in our midst as an ideology, we should follow his ideology, following the path shown by him, create a new era of equality, liberty and fraternity.

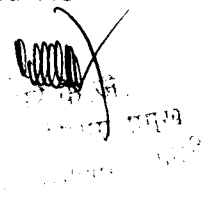
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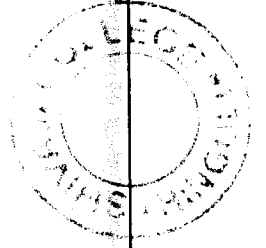
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