

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Notes [GS-I]

Topic: Dr. BR Ambedkar [Modern Indian History For UPSC]

Dr. B R Ambedkar (14 April 1891 – 6 December 1956)

- Popularly known as Baba Saheb. He was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly and is called the 'Father of the Indian Constitution'.
- He was a jurist and an economist. Born into a caste that was considered untouchable, he faced many injustices and discrimination in society. He was born in Mhow in the Central Provinces (modern-day Madhya Pradesh) to a Marathi family with roots in Ambadawe town of Ratnagiri, Maharashtra.
- He was a brilliant student and had doctoral degrees in economics from the Columbia University and the London School of Economics.
- Ambedkar was against the caste-based discriminations in society and advocated the Dalits to organise and demand their rights.
- He promoted the education of Dalits and made representations to the government in various capacities in this regard. He was part of the Bombay Presidency Committee that worked with the Simon Commission in 1925.
- He established the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha to promote education and socio-economic improvements among the Dalits. He started magazines like Mooknayak, Equality Janta and Bahishkrit Bharat.
- In 1927, he launched active agitation against untouchability. He organised and agitated for the right of Dalits to enter temples and to draw water from public water resources. He condemned Hindu scriptures that he thought propagated caste discrimination.
- He advocated separate electorates for the 'Depressed Classes', the term with which Dalits were called at that time. He was in disagreement with Mahatma Gandhi at that time since Gandhi was against any sort of reservation in the electorates. When the British government announced the 'Communal Award' in 1932, Gandhi went on a fast in Yerwada Jail. An agreement was signed between Gandhi and Ambedkar in the jail whereby it was agreed to give reserved seats to the depressed classes within the general electorate. This was called the Poona Pact.
- Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party (later transformed into the Scheduled Castes Federation) in 1936 and contested in 1937 from Bombay to the Central Legislative Assembly. He also contested from Bombay (north-central) after independence in the country's first general elections. But he lost both times.
- He also worked as Minister of Labour in the Viceroy's Executive Council. After independence, Ambedkar became the first Law Minister in 1947 under the Congress-led government. Later he resigned due to differences with Jawaharlal Nehru on the Hindu Code Bill.

- He was appointed to the Rajya Sabha in 1952 and remained a member till his death.
- He advocated a free economy with a stable Rupee. He also mooted birth control for economic development. He also emphasised equal rights for women.
- A few months before he died, he converted to Buddhism in a public ceremony in Nagpur and with him lakhs of Dalits converted to Buddhism.
- He authored several books and essays. Some of them are: The Annihilation of Caste, Pakistan or the Partition of India, The Buddha and his Dhamma, The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India, Administration and Finance of the East India Company, etc.
- Ambedkar considered the Right to Constitutional Remedy as the soul of the constitution.
- Ambedkar died of ill health in 1956 at Delhi. He was cremated according to Buddhist rites in Dadar and a memorial is constructed there. The place is called Chaitya Bhoomi. His death anniversary is observed as Mahaparinirvan Din. His birth anniversary is celebrated as Ambedkar Jayanti or Bhim Jayanti on 14 April every year.

