

## Mahaparinirvan Diwas - 6th December

Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, more dearly known to us, the citizens of India as Babasaheb or the Father of Indian Constitution, took his last breath while in his sleep on 6 December 1956. To commemorate Dr Ambedkar's valuable contribution to society, this day is observed as Mahaparinirvan Diwas all across India.

### Mahaparinirvan: The Meaning

Parinirvan is one of the primary principles of Buddhism. It means 'someone who has attained nirvana or freedom in his lifetime and after death.' In Sanskrit, 'parinirvan' means attaining 'nirvana after death', i.e., freedom of the soul from the body after death. In Pali, it is written as '*parinibbana*,' meaning the attainment of nirvana.

According to the Buddhist literature Mahaparinibbana Sutta, Lord Buddha died at the age of 80; and the day- the most sacrosanct day in the Buddhist calendar, is considered the original Mahaparinirvan Diwas.

### Significance of Dr Ambedkar Mahaparinirvan Diwas

Dr B.R. Ambedkar was working on a book named 'The Buddha and His Dhamma.' He breathed his last just a few days after completing the book. On 14 October 1956, Babasaheb converted to Buddhism after studying the religion for years in Nagpur. He even preached Buddhism later in his life, and was considered a Buddhist leader by his 5,00,000 strong followers. After his death on 6 December 1956, the mortal remains were cremated at Dadar Chowpatty in Mumbai, now known as Chaitya Bhoomi. Every year, thousands of people and his followers gather at the Chaitya Bhoomi on this day, to pay their homage to the great leader.

Dr Ambedkar was considered a Buddhist guru because of his stature and contributions in eradicating untouchability in India. His followers believe that he was as influential, pure and blessed as Lord Buddha. It is for this reason that his death anniversary is considered as Mahaparinirvan Diwas.

### Ambedkar and His Contribution to the Indian Society

As an IAS aspirant, you must have gone through previous years' IAS exam papers and observed questions related to this day and Dr Ambedkar. Hence, it is essential to dig a little deeper into his life and contributions.

Born on 14 April 1891, in Madhya Pradesh, in a Mahar (Dalit) family, Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar faced a lot of harassment as an 'untouchable' and was subjected to socio-economic discrimination. Although the Dalits were allowed to attend schools, Ambedkar and other untouchable children were segregated from other children, and were not given much attention by the teachers. They were neither

allowed to sit inside the class nor touch or drink water from the vessel kept in the classroom. A person of a higher caste used to pour water from a height. Usually, the school peon provided water to young Ambedkar, but if he was unavailable, Ambedkar had to stay without water. He had to sit on a gunny sack that he had to carry with him back home every day. All these incidents and many more demeaning ones had left a strong impact on young Ambedkar's mind.

As a child, he was a bright student and the only one to pass examinations and continue higher studies. After matriculation, he enrolled himself at Elphinstone College under Mumbai University, did post-graduation from Columbia University, and then completed his Bar course from the London School of Economics.

Later in his life, Ambedkar joined India's freedom movement and made a mark as a revolutionary freedom fighter, social reformer, economist, thinker, and politician, with multiple arrows in his quiver. It is to be noted for your UPSC exam preparation that Babasaheb, along with Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi, played a pivotal role in uplifting society's poor and backward classes. Moreover, he led the Dalit Buddhist campaign from the front and worked persistently for their equal rights and betterment.

### **BR Ambedkar: The Architect of the Indian Constitution**

Post India's independence, on 15 August 1947, the new Congress-led Government invited Ambedkar to serve as the nation's first Law Minister, which he accepted. On 29 August, he was appointed Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee and the Assembly to write India's new Constitution.