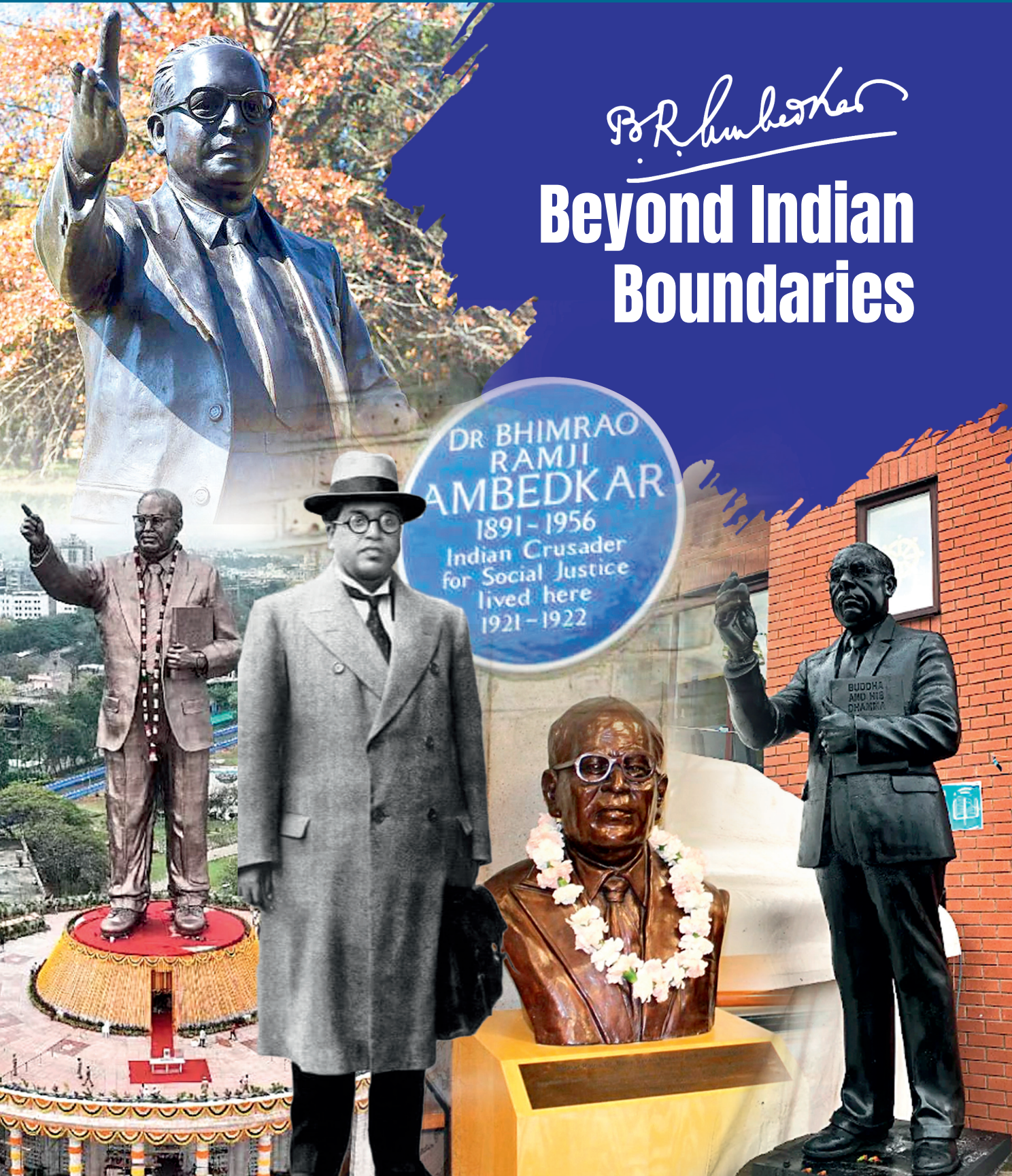


UNHEARD VOICES[®]



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B.R. Ambedkar

Beyond Indian Boundaries

DR. BHIMRAO
RAMJI
AMBEDKAR
1891-1956
Indian Crusader
for Social Justice
lived here
1921-1922

BUDDHA
AND HIS
DHARMA

Don't Go Anti-clock

US President Donald Trump's executive order to eliminate funding for DEI – diversity, equity and inclusion - has sparked a big debate not only in America but all over the world. Trump, himself, is a controversial person because of his decisions and behaviour. But his decision on elimination of DEI has even shocked intelligentsia as they feel it would affect human values.

The Trump administration might have its own compulsions to decide policy on DEI. India has no reason to interfere in internal matters of the US but we can surely discuss human values involved in the decision. DEI – diversity, equity and inclusion are three separate words but all of them are related with one single term that is – discrimination. Currently, only an insane person would back discrimination on any ground. In Indian context, the issue like DEI has several sensitive aspects like opposition or support to reservation. We, therefore, have to be sensible and responsible while passing remarks on DEI. Any attempt to retain, protect and promote discrimination on any ground has no space in the current world. Any effort in that direction would be regressive and going anti-clock. Charles Darwin put forth the theory of evolution, which underlines that only dominant animals survived. But this theory is not applicable to social life, which mainly encompasses human interaction and transactions, which have to be founded on human values. In other words, deprived community people have to be given a helping hand to achieve and retain equality.

We ought to understand that no concept is everlasting except eternal human values. Every idea has its own limitations. Human history shows that any ideology or idea had a great impact on human history. Human history also shows that ideology and ideas vanished in the

course of time, signalling their inbuilt limitations. Take the case of Karl Marx. He certainly changed the character of capitalism, giving it a human face. But Marx's ideas were not implemented by even Communist countries. In India, we see Communist government in Kerala is making all efforts to attract private investment. Case of Communism shows that Marx's ideology had its own limitations and followers of Marx are badly struggling to retain his ideology.

Same is the case with the idea of secularism. The only dominant and decisive factor to shape up Europe and other parts of the world was Church/Christianity before the emergence of the term secularism. Secularism was the reaction by intellectuals to unrequired interference of the Church in political and state affairs. Situation was so bad that it was difficult to draw a dividing line between politics and the role of the Church. Many intellectuals posed a crucial question whether the Church was a religious or political organization. However, the influence of the Church's role in politics began to diminish after the emergence of the concept of secularism. Surprisingly, Christians themselves supported secularism. As a result, Vatican City had to change its policies to cope with the situation. Currently, idea of secularism is not at the central stage because of changed situations.

Idea of DEI needs to be checked against this backdrop. Reality is that social gaps are widening every day. While one can see existing social gaps are widening, new gaps are taking place mainly because of technical advancement. A lot is being said about artificial intelligence (AI). How many scholars have thought about deprived people, who have no access to primary education and technology. Do they feel that AI can be helpful for them?

For feedback please click the below link : <https://forms.gle/XWQ19k9xC1CyNr6e7>

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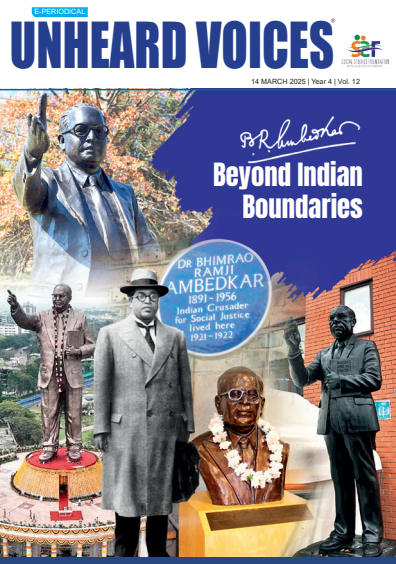
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Many scholars have feared that technology like AI would further alienate deprived communities from the so-called mainstream. Are we seriously addressing this issue? It is possible that existing and new gaps would adversely affect social balance. Still, we are insisting on them.

India, as a nation, should not fall in the trap of Trump's policy of DEI. We must chalk out our own agenda. Neither should we look to the United States for ideological guidance. Let the US handle its own problems by their ways. India has a long tradition of 'renaissance', which is a continuous process. European renaissance

was mainly materialistic and resulted into consumerism while continuous renaissance in India mainly originated from spiritual concepts, which teaches human beings to control their lives by values. In fact, this is the right time and opportunity for India to continue to walk on its path and emerge as a real icon for the rest of the world. Equality and inclusiveness are two prominent features of Indian ideology. These are fundamental human values, which should never be compromised. Let US and European scholars discuss elimination of DEI. We should not allow ourselves to deviate from our path.



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Appeal for financial assistance



Social Studies Foundation (SSF) is working with the prime objective of conducting social studies and research of the society in a multi-disciplinary fashion. SSF focus, however, is on those people, who have been facing discrimination and are deprived of benefits of the development and democratic process. SSF logo, thus says, "Knowledge for Empowerment".

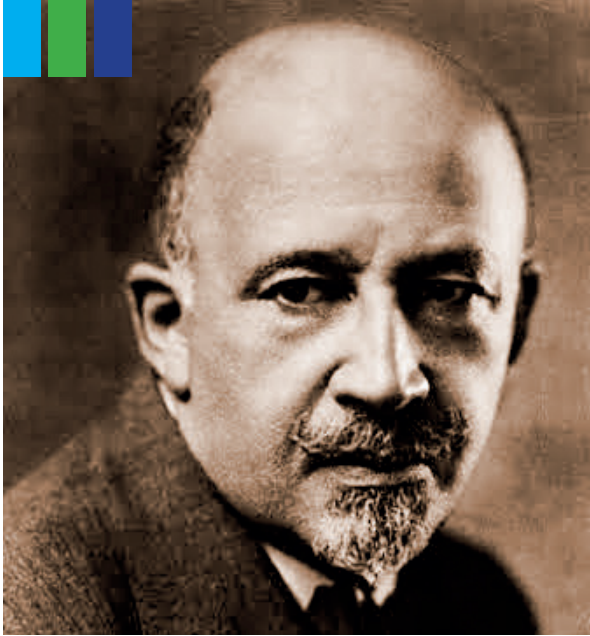
"UNHEARD VOICES" is a small step in this direction. It provides a platform to all those people, who have to be listened to by the Indian citizens to make this country united and integral. We will raise the voice of these people fearlessly. Social Studies Foundation has currently a small set-up to carry out its objectives. We, however, need financial support from our well-wishers, who agree with our objectives. We appeal to the readers and well-wishers to donate generously to the foundation.

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Please contact : 9699644930, (020)29526979

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W. E. Burghardt Du Bois,
Pan-Africanist civil rights activist.



Dr Ambedkar

Dr B. R. Ambedkar from African viewpoint

Dr B. R. Ambedkar, described by Jawaharlal Nehru as “a symbol of revolt”, was a pivotal figure in the nation-building of modern India. As the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, he played a crucial role in shaping the country’s political and social framework. Despite the socio-economic challenges of his birth, His extensive contributions spanned the fields of humanities, social sciences, politics, and law, leaving an enduring impact on India’s political landscape. His advocacy for social justice and equality has found resonance among certain African intellectuals and leaders, who draw parallels between his fight against caste discrimination in India and the struggles against racial oppression in Africa. His legacy has been recognized beyond India, particularly in Africa, where his advocacy for the upliftment of marginalized communities resonates with historical struggles against colonialism, apartheid, and racial discrimination.

Dr Ranjeet Kumar



Dr B. R. Ambedkar regarding Indian Dr Ambedkar’s prolific writings reveal his deep engagement with issues concerning Dalits while also addressing broader political and social concerns. His distinction among his contemporaries lies in three key aspects. First, he combined the roles of scholar, social revolutionary, and statesman, possessing an encyclopedic intellect that set him apart. His breadth of knowledge, analytical rigor, and rational perspective distinguished his

work from that of other leading figures of his time. Second, his writings were not driven by literary pursuits but by a commitment to addressing critical social and political challenges. He actively shaped discussions on minority rights, state reorganization, partition, and the constitutional framework of independent India. His interventions were decisive in shaping the country’s development during its formative years. Third, Dr Ambedkar’s intellectual legacy is defined by the pressing



and often uncomfortable questions he raised, which were crucial for nation-building yet largely unacknowledged by others. He was convinced that politics should serve as an instrument for justice, particularly in securing rights for the marginalized.

Over three decades of public life, he relentlessly pursued social justice through political means, formulating original ideas on contemporary Indian society and governance. Convergence of ideas Dr Ambedkar's engagement with legal frameworks and imperial citizenship was deeply rooted in the British colonial context, where he sought to leverage the legal promises extended by the Crown to its Indian subjects. His efforts to secure rights for Indians in Africa were firmly embedded within the legal structures of the empire. However, this approach entailed distinguishing between Indians and Black Africans, thereby complicating the broader discourse of equality. Indians, as inheritors of an ancient civilization, were positioned in contrast to Black Africans, who were often constructed within colonial narratives as simplistic, naïve, and fundamentally other. This conceptual differentiation persisted when Gandhi relocated to India and encountered the figure of the untouchable, a social category that similarly occupied an ambiguous space in discussions of shared humanity.

Dr Ambedkar's reflections on the Dalit condition were informed by his lived experiences of caste-based exclusion and the systemic indignities he endured, even as one of the most highly educated Indians of his time. His intellectual pursuits led him to interrogate the origins and perpetuation of caste oppression through a critical examination of classical Indian literature.

He famously characterized the caste system as structured by a descending scale of contempt and an ascending scale of reverence. Yet, his engagement with the problem of caste was not limited to an inward historical analysis. Dr Ambedkar drew upon multiple intellectual traditions, including the pragmatism of John Dewey, which linked equality to the right of every individual to fully develop their potential; the historical struggles of African Americans; the Buddhist philosophy of radical equality; and a conviction that both democracy and socialism, in their conventional formulations, were insufficient to address the entrenched realities of caste oppression in India.

While Dewey's framework emphasized liberty and equality, it failed to account for the absence of fraternity within the

caste-ridden Indian social order. Socialism, despite its transformative potential, remained inadequate due to its neglect of caste as a fundamental axis of oppression. Dr Ambedkar, in his critical assessment of revolutionary socialism, presciently observed that a socialist revolution which ignored caste before its occurrence would be compelled to reckon with it afterward, underscoring the necessity of addressing caste as a central concern in any transformative socio-political project.

Reflections on equality

Dr Ambedkar's disillusionment with the Constitution's capacity to effectuate social change is evident in his 1946 work, "What Gandhi and Congress have done to the Untouchables". Written shortly before he assumed the role of Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, this text provides a trenchant critique of elections, caste dynamics, the influence of money in politics, and the limited scope of political documents in achieving substantive social transformation, regardless of how radical or comprehensive they may be.

President Obama remarked: "We believe that no matter who you are or where you come from, every person can fulfil their God-given potential. Just as a Dalit like Dr Ambedkar could lift himself up and pen the words of the constitution that protects the rights of all Indians". This statement underscores Dr Ambedkar's journey from marginalized beginnings to becoming a pivotal architect of India's democratic framework, reflecting the universal ideals of equality and self-determination.

Significantly, six years after the Constitution was promulgated, Dr Ambedkar converted to Buddhism, underscoring his belief in its radical egalitarian principles. His decision to embrace Buddhism, shortly before his passing, was accompanied by a textual legacy that highlighted the transformative potential of Buddhist thought in addressing issues of social equality. This act serves as a reminder that, for Dr Ambedkar, the Constitution was, at best, a compromise in the face of India's deeply

entrenched structural inequalities.

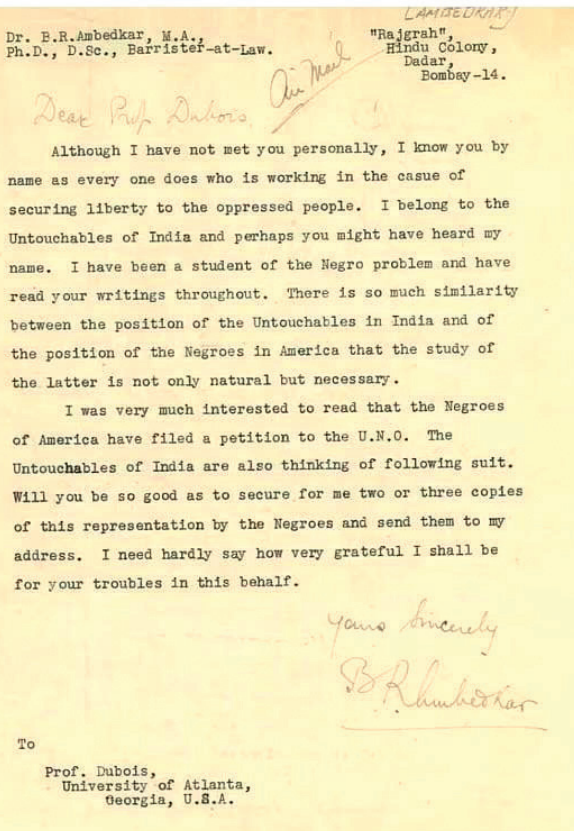
Making Art Politically

Komu's "Dhamma Swaraj" (2018) further explores these tensions through a horizontal triptych that employs photo realistic techniques to merge the images of Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar into one another. Rather than suggesting harmony or complementarity, this morphing serves as an ironic commentary on the ways in which the popular imagination reconciles their ideological opposition. Dr Ambedkar is often domesticated through his perceived affinities with Gandhi, while Gandhi is radicalized through his association with Dr Ambedkar. However, such a portrayal overlooks Dr Ambedkar's fundamental question:

vision of political solidarity through Black Consciousness. However, the symbolism of the empty plinths remains open-ended do they signify those yet to come, or those who have been removed. Has Gandhi been displaced? The varied heights of the four plinths may allude to the four-fold varna system, yet Dr Ambedkar's statues are positioned on the median and lowest plinths, leaving the highest ones unoccupied. Given that untouchables exist outside and below the varna system, Dr Ambedkar's placement without ceremonial elevation is particularly significant. The ongoing conversation initiated by Dr Ambedkar in India extends outward, inviting participation from diverse voices on issues of race, post-coloniality, and transnational solidarity. As with the Kochi Biennale, which Komu co-founded, this installation resonates with an idea of the unexpected, the unintended, and the utopian audience.

However, in the context of contemporary Hindu nationalist politics and broader global trends that systematically victimize minorities and the marginalized, the Fourth World is no longer a fixed category but one that is expanding. Unlike earlier solidarities rooted in decolonization, the Third World, or Afro-Asian unity, Komu's work underscores a contemporary reality in which Dalit, Black, lives are rendered precarious, and the struggle for recognition of a common humanity persists. The call for conversation that Dr Ambedkar initiates originate from the Cradle of Humankind, the site of humanity's earliest migrations across landscapes and epochs. In doing so, it addresses present-day anxieties and oppressions, urging the creation of new archives of resistance and hope.

Some African and American leaders' views on Dr Ambedkar Many African scholars and activists draw parallels between Dr Ambedkar's fight against caste-based discrimination and Africa's struggles against racial oppression and colonial subjugation. His emphasis on human dignity, social equality, and political empowerment aligns with the principles of Pan-Africanism and anti-apartheid movements. Some African intellectuals and civil rights activists, including those involved in Black liberation movements. His emphasis on education as a means of emancipation is particularly relevant to African movements that sought to use knowledge as a tool for social and political empowerment. Dr Ambedkar is often compared to African leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Kwame Nkrumah, who also focused on constitutional reforms,



Could Gandhi ever be a true kaivari (friend) who genuinely advocated for the untouchables? Dhamma Swaraj preserves the ambiguity of this unresolved relationship.

The installation at Nirox Sculpture Park raises further critical inquiries by incorporating empty plinths, prompting contemplation on the figures that ought to be placed in dialogue with Dr Ambedkar. Situated in South Africa, the location naturally evokes historical figures such as Nelson Mandela, who championed peace, and Steve Biko, who articulated a radical



political representation, and social justice. Like Dr Ambedkar, Mandela played a crucial role in drafting South Africa's democratic constitution, which sought to dismantle institutionalized discrimination. In recent years, there has been growing academic interest in comparing the experiences of Dalits in India with those of historically marginalized African communities. Studies have explored similarities between caste oppression and racial discrimination, leading to dialogues on how Dr Ambedkar's philosophy can inform contemporary struggles in Africa. Dr Ambedkar's role in shaping India's Constitution has been studied in African countries undergoing constitutional transitions. His ideas on social justice, minority rights, and state responsibility towards the disadvantaged are particularly relevant to post-colonial African states that aim to create inclusive societies.

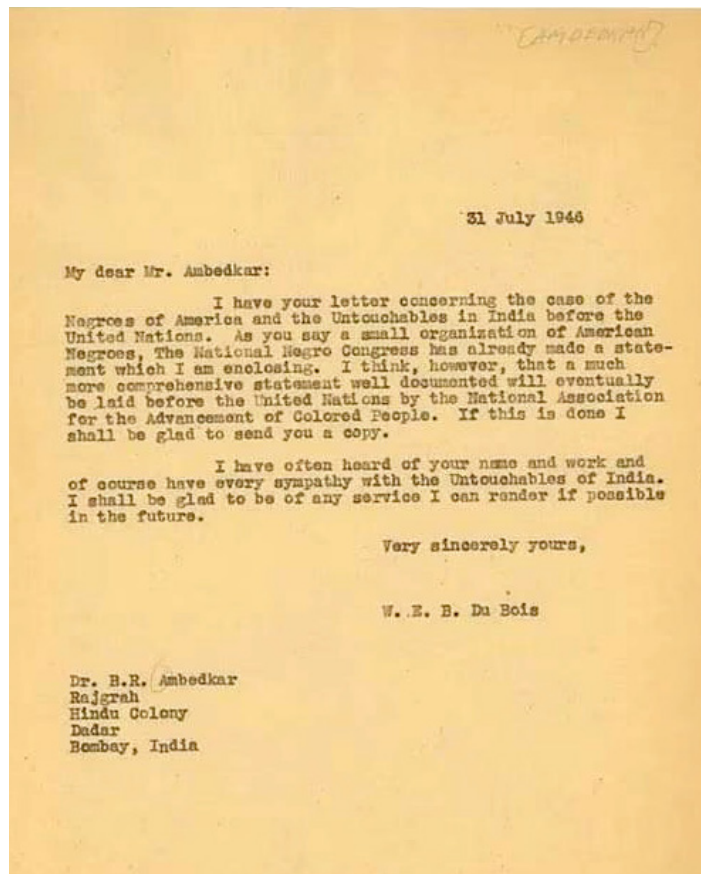
A prominent figure in African academia, Dr Obadele Kambon, University of Ghana, has highlighted the relevance of Dr Ambedkar's work to African contexts. He has advocated for the recognition of Dr Ambedkar over figures like Gandhi, stating, "In India, if you want to give us a statue, give us a statue of Dr Ambedkar. That is whose writings we can relate to as Black people". In 2016, Dr Osei Darkwa, President of Ghana, and Technology University College paid tribute to Dr Ambedkar's role in drafting the Indian Constitution and combating discrimination, describing his life as "an inspirational story of achievement to move against discrimination".

In November 2010, during his address to the Indian Parliament, U.S. President Barack Obama acknowledged Dr B.R. Ambedkar's significant contributions to Indian society and the drafting of the Indian Constitution. Highlighting the principles of opportunity and empowerment, President Obama remarked: "We believe that no matter who you are or where you come from, every person can fulfil their God-given potential. Just as a Dalit like Dr Ambedkar could lift himself up and pen the words of the constitution that protects the rights of all Indians". This statement underscores Dr Ambedkar's journey from marginalized beginnings to becoming a pivotal architect of India's democratic framework, reflecting the universal ideals of equality and self-determination.

Conclusion

The caste system continues to exert a profound influence on Indian politics and elections, where dominant castes often secure Assembly and Parliamentary seats

through communal voting patterns. Minority communities frequently face coercion and marginalization, undermining democratic principles. Dr B.R. Ambedkar's concept of democracy, centered on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, remains crucial for achieving social justice, eradicating



untouchability, and ensuring equality and freedom. His vision of democratic socialism underscores constitutionalism as the pathway to these objectives.

Recent academic discourse has drawn parallels between caste-based oppression in India and racial discrimination in Africa, exploring how Dr Ambedkar's ideas on social justice, minority rights, and state responsibility inform struggles against systemic marginalization. His contributions to India's constitutional framework are particularly significant for post-colonial African nations striving to build inclusive societies. Thus, Dr Ambedkar's legacy continues to guide efforts toward justice, liberty, and equality both in India and beyond.

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Growing influence of Dr Ambedkar

Edward



Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution and a champion of social justice remains pivotal in any discussion on the rights of the marginalized. His legacy has now transcended national boundaries, evolving him into a globally recognized icon. His vision of equality, social justice, and human rights continues to inspire movements worldwide, with an increasing presence in academia, international human rights discourses, and Dalit diaspora communities. Here we explore the factors contributing to Dr Ambedkar's global recognition, the expanding reach of Dalit organizations, and the increasing migration of Dalits worldwide.

Dr Ambedkar's ideas on social and economic equality, caste annihilation, and constitutional democracy have found resonance beyond India. His works, especially *Annihilation of Caste* and *The Problem of the Rupee*, have been extensively discussed in universities across North America, UK, Europe, and Australia. Dr Ambedkar's thoughts on gender rights, access to education and political representation of the marginalized to ensure social equality have proliferated in the rights movements across the globe. The thriving presence of Dalit scholarship in international academia, coupled with growing awareness of caste as a global human rights issue, has propelled Dr Ambedkar's status as a thinker of international significance.

The legacy is gaining prominence not just from academia or social movements but the governments and organizations



worldwide have acknowledged Dr Ambedkar's contributions through various means. Canada has declared April 14 as 'Dr B.R. Ambedkar Equality Day', recognizing his contributions to human rights and social justice. Several states in the U.S., including New York, California, and Texas, have issued proclamations observing Dr Ambedkar Jayanti. The city of Burnaby in British Columbia, Canada, also officially recognized Dr Ambedkar's contributions through municipal declarations.

The global presence of Dr Ambedkar's legacy is further emphasized by the installation of his busts and statues in countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, Australia, and Germany. London's Dr Ambedkar House, where he lived while studying at the London School of Economics, has been converted into a museum dedicated to his work alongside a bronze statue installed at LSE's library. Statues of Dr Ambedkar have been erected in places like Japan's Osaka University, the University of Columbia in the U.S., and outside the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C. In Australia, Dr Ambedkar's statues have enriched the University of Melbourne among other institutions. In Hungary, organisations working for the Roma Tribes established 'Dr Ambedkar School' to facilitate education in communities where the proportion of graduates does not reach 1%. Additionally, several streets and public places around the world have been named after Dr Ambedkar. In the USA, a street in New Jersey has been named 'Dr BR Ambedkar Avenue' while an intersection in Queens, New York also bears his name. These instances illustrate the growing international recognition of Dr Ambedkar's contributions to social justice.

Many universities worldwide now offer courses on Ambedkarite philosophy, Dalit studies, and caste discrimination. Prestigious institutions like Harvard, Columbia, and the University of California have research programs dedicated to caste and inequality, often referencing Dr Ambedkar's work. Scholars in universities across the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe invoking Dr Ambedkar further signifies the acceptance of his ideas into global academic discourse.

Major research is being conducted on Dr Ambedkar's contributions to social justice, labour rights, and economic thought. Scholars are examining his ideas on caste and economic justice in comparison to thinkers like Karl Marx, John Rawls, and W.E.B. Du Bois. In particular, research on labor rights and Dr Ambedkar's role in drafting labour laws in India has gained

global attention, with studies being conducted at institutions like the London School of Economics and the University of Toronto.

The growing presence of Ambedkarite thought in conferences and research initiatives also highlights his emergence as a universal figure in struggles against systemic oppression. Scholars from various backgrounds engage with his work, drawing parallels between caste-based oppression and racial discrimination in the United States and Europe.

Parallel to Dr Ambedkar's growing global stature, Dalit organizations have strengthened their presence across continents. These groups play a critical role in advocating for caste-related concerns in international human rights forums. Organizations such as the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), Equality Labs, and the Dalit Freedom Network have been instrumental in bringing caste issues to global platforms. These organisations have established

The growing presence of Dalit organizations and the expanding Dalit diaspora highlights a global movement toward social justice. The future holds promise for further institutional recognition of caste discrimination and stronger global networks advocating for social justice, ensuring Dr Ambedkar's vision remains a guiding force in human rights movements worldwide.

a network of Dalit migrants to push for equal rights in the field of work as well as in the social life in the cities they live in. Their efforts have provided extended exposure to Dr Ambedkar's thoughts in public life in the foreign lands. Through lobbying at the United Nations, these groups have influenced international policies on discrimination and social justice.

Dalit diaspora-led organizations have also taken centre stage in pushing for legislation in Western countries to protect against caste discrimination. For instance, the state of California in the U.S. has been at the forefront of addressing caste-based discrimination in workplaces and educational institutions, largely due to advocacy efforts by Ambedkarite groups. Recognition of caste as a protected category in

the anti-discrimination list by Toronto District School Board in Canada was a significant progression of Dr Ambedkar's doctrine. In June 2018, Australian Parliament passed a motion on to address "Discrimination based on Work and Descent" including caste-based discrimination while acknowledging progressive steps taken in India. Perhaps against common assumptions, many of these organizations are not created by people from India, but instead by Dalit immigrants from other Indian-subcontinent nations.

Dr Ambedkar's philosophy has influenced and gained support from other rights-based organizations working on minority rights, racial justice, and indigenous movements. Groups such as Black Lives Matter, indigenous rights organizations in Canada and Australia, and migrant rights organizations have increasingly expressed solidarity with Dalit struggles. This growing confluence of movements strengthens global advocacy against caste-based discrimination and affirms Dr Ambedkar's vision of universal human rights.



One of the most significant contemporary developments in the global Dalit movement is the increasing migration of Dalits under student and work visas. The growing presence of Dalits in countries like the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany is reshaping diaspora communities and amplifying international engagement with caste issues. A rising number of Dalit students are seeking higher education opportunities abroad, particularly in disciplines such as social sciences, law, and STEM fields. This migration is facilitated through scholarships, international collaborations, and affirmative action policies

in a few universities. A premier example of this being the National Overseas Scholarship by the Government of India along with a few state-based scholarships providing a platform to young Dalits in following the footsteps of Dr Ambedkar. Many Dalit students studying abroad actively engage with Ambedkarite organizations and contribute to discussions on caste and social justice.

Dalit professionals are also migrating under skilled worker programs, particularly in technology, healthcare, and academia. Countries like the United States and Canada have seen an increase in Dalit professionals in Silicon Valley, where debates about caste-based discrimination in the tech industry have gained prominence. The presence of Dalit professionals in multinational corporations has led to efforts to include caste in corporate diversity and inclusion policies. Companies like Google and Microsoft have faced demands to recognize caste as a protected category, largely due to the advocacy of Dalit employees and international Ambedkarite groups empowered by the ideas of Dr Ambedkar.

Despite growing international recognition, Ambedkarism faces challenges that must be addressed for sustained global impact. For example, efforts to recognize caste-based discrimination and Dr Ambedkar's contributions have met resistance from particularly within the Indian diaspora, some of whom oppose caste-based protections in Western legal frameworks. While Ambedkarite studies are growing, more funding and institutional backing are required to establish dedicated research centres and programs focusing on caste and social justice. The governments India, Federal and State, need to streamline funding for overseas studies for Dalits. Digital platforms, documentaries, and films play a crucial role in spreading Awareness about Dr Ambedkar's ideas. More representation in mainstream media can help educate global audiences about caste discrimination.

The rise of Dr B.R. Ambedkar as a global icon reflects the increasing recognition of his treatise concerning social justice and equality and gender rights as pressing human rights issues. The growing presence of Dalit organizations and the expanding Dalit diaspora highlights a global movement toward social justice. The future holds promise for further institutional recognition of caste discrimination and stronger global networks advocating for social justice, ensuring Dr Ambedkar's vision remains a guiding force in human rights movements worldwide.

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WORLD ORGANIZATIONS

Beyond Caste: Global Initiatives for Social Justice and Human Dignity

Caste-based discrimination remains a global issue, affecting millions by limiting opportunities and violating fundamental rights. Various organizations work to combat this injustice through advocacy, policy reform, and community support. From Caste Watch UK to the International Labour Organization, these groups strive to promote equality, social justice, and human dignity. This overview highlights key organizations dedicated to eradicating caste oppression and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

Team UV



Caste Watch, UK

Caste watch is a UK-based secular and independent charity dedicated to combating caste discrimination and promoting social equality. Established in 2003 and formally launched in 2004, the organization gained charitable status in 2005. Its mission is to foster social cohesion and ensure individuals are valued regardless of caste, colour, creed, gender, age, race, or other protected characteristics under UK equality laws.

To achieve this, Caste Watch UK focuses on public education, raising awareness of caste discrimination in the UK, and reviewing relevant policies and practices. It also provides

support services to those affected by caste-based discrimination and engages in various charitable activities. The organization is



managed by an elected executive committee, which oversees its initiatives and has the authority to appoint sub-committees, patrons, and advisors.

Caste Watch UK encourages public participation through membership and volunteering. Those interested in supporting its cause can download a membership form from the website and get involved in its efforts to promote social justice. It not only works for caste discrimination but also works for various other forms of discrimination arising due to biological variations.

International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)

Caste-based discrimination continues to impact millions of people around the world, denying them basic rights, limiting opportunities, and often exposing them to violence. The International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) is dedicated to fighting this injustice. Since its founding in 2000, IDSN has brought together human rights groups, activists, and organizations to advocate for the eradication of caste discrimination on a global scale.

Working closely with the United Nations, the European Union, and various governments, IDSN pushes for stronger laws and policies to protect affected communities. The organization raises awareness through reports, real-life stories, and documentaries that shed light on the harsh realities of caste-based oppression. Their efforts aim to ensure equal access to education, fair wages, and legal protection for Dalits and other marginalized groups.

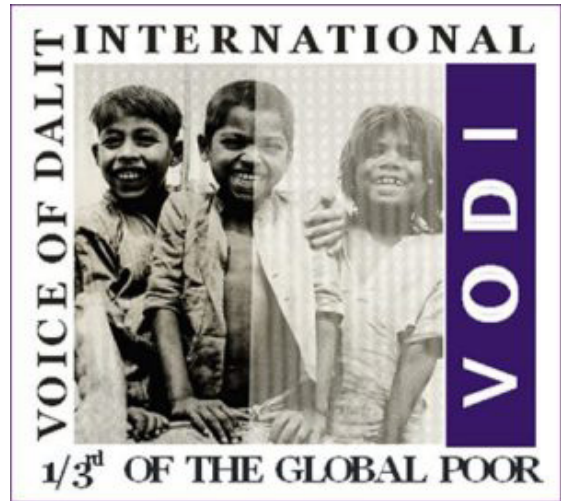


Many Dalits, particularly women and children, face extreme discrimination in workplaces and society. IDSN actively challenges these injustices by advocating for stronger legal rights and fair treatment. In recent years, their work has led to significant progress. In 2025, they hosted a major summit in South Asia to address caste-based slavery. In 2024, they played a key role in bringing caste discrimination into crucial human rights discussions at the European Union.

IDSN envisions a world where no one's life is determined by caste. Through advocacy, education, and direct action, they continue to fight for justice and equality.

Voice of Dalit International (VODI)

It is an organization dedicated to promoting equality and freedom for all individuals through integrated development programs.



Their mission is to raise awareness about the severe poverty, discrimination, and human rights abuses faced by over 300 million Dalits. One of their key initiatives is a supplementary school that offers additional English support to primary school children from non-English speaking migrant families. This program aims to help these children meet required standards at the primary level, providing a strong foundation as they progress to secondary education and enhancing their opportunities for achieving good GCSE grades and pursuing their career goals.

The Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organisations UK

The Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organisations UK (FABO UK) is a prominent organization dedicated to promoting the teachings of Dr B.R. Ambedkar and Buddhist principles. Established in 1986, FABO UK has been instrumental in advocating for social justice, human rights, and the eradication of caste-based discrimination.

In its early years, FABO UK focused on raising awareness about Dr Ambedkar's contributions beyond the Dalit community. Between 1989 and 1992, the organization orchestrated events to commemorate Dr Ambedkar's birth centenary, including seminars at esteemed institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge Universities. These events aimed to introduce Dr Ambedkar's philosophies to a broader audience, transcending cultural and national boundaries. Recognizing the importance of preserving Dr Ambedkar's legacy, FABO UK facilitated the installation of his busts at significant locations, including the London School of Economics and Columbia University in the USA. These memorials serve as enduring symbols of his contributions to social justice.



In a landmark achievement, FABO UK advocated for the purchase of 10 King Henry's Road in London, where Dr Ambedkar resided during his studies. In 2015, the Government of Maharashtra acquired the property, transforming it into a museum and cultural centre that offers insight into Dr Ambedkar's life and work.

FABO UK has been at the forefront of campaigns addressing caste-based discrimination within the UK. The organization has actively lobbied for legal protections, contributed to comprehensive reports highlighting the prevalence of caste discrimination, and collaborated with various human rights groups to raise awareness and drive legislative change.

Under the guidance of leaders like Arun Kumar, General Secretary of FABO UK, the organization has fostered unity among Ambedkarite and Buddhist communities across the UK. Through cultural events, educational seminars, and advocacy campaigns, FABO UK continues to promote the principles of equality and social justice espoused by Dr Ambedkar.



Through unwavering commitment and proactive initiatives, the Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organisations UK remains a pivotal force in preserving Dr Ambedkar's legacy and advancing the cause of social equality and justice worldwide.

The International Commission for Dalit Rights (ICDR)

The International Commission for Dalit Rights (ICDR) is a global organization dedicated to eradicating caste-based discrimination, inequality, and injustice. It advocates for the rights and dignity of over 280 million Dalits and other marginalized communities worldwide.

With a network of over 255 members, ICDR collaborates with civil societies, governments, and local communities to promote equal opportunities, civil rights, and the rule of law.

ICDR raises public awareness of constitutional and international human rights laws while holding governments accountable for



protecting marginalized groups. Through research, advocacy, and community mobilization, it fosters diversity, equality, and access to justice. Its initiatives include investigating discrimination,

publishing reports, and educating the public about caste-based injustices.

A crucial aspect of ICDR's work is legal support and policy advocacy. It offers affordable or pro-bono immigration legal services, ensuring vulnerable communities have access to justice. The organization also influences policies to recognize caste discrimination within civil rights frameworks, pushing for stronger legal protections and political representation. ICDR has played a vital role in global efforts to combat caste discrimination through marches, conferences, and policy discussions. By empowering communities and engaging decision-makers, it continues to fight for a world where caste does not determine one's rights or opportunities, championing justice, equality, and human dignity.

Equality Labs

Equality Labs is a South Asian Dalit civil rights organization dedicated to dismantling caste-based discrimination, gender-based violence, and white supremacy. Since its founding in 2015, it has led advocacy, research, and community engagement efforts to create a more just and inclusive world for marginalized communities.

At the core of its mission is the fight for caste equity. Through ground-breaking research and policy advocacy, Equality Labs has highlighted the often-overlooked realities of caste discrimination, particularly in South Asian communities. Its 2016 survey was the first comprehensive study on caste bias in the United States, revealing the systemic inequalities faced by caste-oppressed individuals. This work has been instrumental in driving legal reforms and raising awareness of caste-based injustices.

Beyond research, the organization provides digital security training, equipping activists and vulnerable communities with tools to protect themselves from online harassment and surveillance. In an era where disinformation

EQUALITY LABS

and hate speech are rampant, Equality Labs advocates for stronger content moderation policies to safeguard marginalized voices.

The organization also emphasizes healing justice, offering spaces and resources for collective healing to address trauma caused by systemic oppression. Through art, storytelling, and cultural initiatives, it fosters solidarity and empowerment for communities that have long been silenced. With a commitment to justice, Equality Labs continues to lead the fight against caste oppression and systemic inequality.

Through a blend of activism, research, and community-building, it remains a vital force in shaping a world where every individual is treated with dignity, respect, and equality.

The Ambedkar International Center

The Ambedkar International Center (AIC) is a non-profit organization founded in June 2012 in the United States to promote unity among Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC). It



advocates for their rights and welfare while working towards an egalitarian society by eradicating caste-based discrimination through educational seminars, social

campaigns, and policy initiatives.

In May 2013, AIC acquired a 13.2-acre property near Washington, D.C., to establish the first Ambedkar International Center in the Western Hemisphere. This center serves as a hub for learning and development, providing intellectuals, scholars, and students with resources to explore and disseminate Dr B.R. Ambedkar's philosophies. It was inaugurated on July 21, 2013, by former Chief Justice of India, K.G. Balakrishnan.

AIC envisions a just society rooted in intellectual, moral, and democratic principles, striving to prevent caste-based human rights violations. By creating awareness, exchanging knowledge, and influencing public policy in collaboration with the United Nations and the Indian government, AIC works towards

meaningful social reform. The organization aims to establish a world-class center for social change initiatives, economic development, and cultural activities while promoting Ambedkarite values across the United States.

Governed democratically, AIC elects its Executive Board every two years, with dedicated members working towards its mission. Through its commitment to social justice and equality, AIC continues to champion the rights of marginalized communities, striving to eliminate caste-based discrimination and build an inclusive, fair, and rational society.

International Labour Organisation

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations



established in 1919 with the primary aim of promoting social justice and fair labour standards worldwide. It is the only tripartite United Nations agency, meaning it brings together representatives

of governments, employers, and workers to discuss and create policies related to labour and employment.

The ILO's main objectives include promoting decent work, improving working conditions, enhancing workers' rights, and ensuring fair wages. The organization is also focused on reducing inequality, promoting gender equality, and eliminating child labour. The ILO develops international labour standards in the form of conventions and recommendations, which member states are encouraged to adopt and implement.

Through its work, the ILO strives to address global challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and exploitation in the workplace. It provides technical assistance and policy advice to countries and helps them implement labour laws and standards. The ILO also conducts research, organizes training programs, and fosters global dialogue on labour issues.

By fostering cooperation between governments, businesses, and trade unions, the ILO seeks to create inclusive and sustainable economies where workers' rights are respected and working conditions are improved worldwide.

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Ramesh Chander




Describing Dr B.R. Ambedkar, in April, 2016 at the celebrations of 125th birth anniversary of the leader as a global “icon” for marginalized people, a top UN official (UNDP Administrator Helen Clark) voiced the world body’s commitment to working closely with India to help realize the noted Indian social reformer’s vision of empowerment and socio- economic equality. She added, “We are committed to continuing our very close partnership with India to help realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda and ensure that Dr Ambedkar’s vision becomes reality for the poor and marginalized around the world.”

It is a matter of satisfaction to note that April 14, the birth anniversary of India’s foremost civil rights leader, scholar, statesman and the most powerful crusader against the inequalities perpetuated by the caste system is commemorated in the remotest Indian village to the major cities around the world. Dalit Ambedkarites observe the day as their most important festival. Dr Ambedkar is the only Indian leader, whose birth anniversary is celebrated globally not only by the Dalit diaspora but also by the local establishments. In the recent years, the state of Michigan and Minnesota officially announced “Social Equity Week.” to celebrate the icon.

Likewise, the State of New

Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar - an International Icon

Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar is an international icon, who fought against caste-based discrimination and for social justice. He is considered a global icon in the fight against injustice and graded inequality. It has been fully recognized by the world body, the UN.



Hampshire in the US, State of British Columbia and the City of Burnaby in Canada declared April 14 the "Day of Equality." The state of Washington has gone further and decided to observe April 2023 as "Dalit History Month." There are many other States and the Cities in the US, Canada, the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Hungary, many countries in the African continent among others which have started commemorating Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar in one way or the other over the successive years.

Dr Ambedkar has truly become a global icon to fight injustice. The British newspaper Guardian, in its editorial "Unthinkable? An Ambedkar Memorial" dated April 30, 2011, noted the remarkable journey of Dr Ambedkar. It detailed Dr Ambedkar's role in the emancipation of the untouchables and his fight "for a free India, and for the freedom of all castes within that state". It concluded that Dr Ambedkar's "message intended for 20th century India, is just as relevant for 21st century Britain" and proposed a public memorial to him in Great Britain. Accordingly, it is matter of gratification to note that not only one there are several memorials in Britain including the Oxford University and the House where Dr Ambedkar lived while studying in that country.

The UN Headquarters in New York and Geneva and also the Columbia University in the US adorn the statues of the icon. A household name throughout India, Dr B. R. Ambedkar is one of the country's most important figures, second only to Mahatma Gandhi. He played a major role in drafting the constitution for a newly independent India and led the fight against caste-based discrimination. Babasaheb Ambedkar was born into a Dalit caste (the so-called 'untouchables'), but his academic brilliance saw him study at Columbia University and London School of Economics. As a politician, he fought to overturn centuries of discrimination and promoted liberal constitutionalism in a traditionally illiberal society. He did more than anyone to articulate a cogent and enduring case for the principles of democracy in a country emerging from imperial rule.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar, a key figure in India's fight for independence and social justice, is widely recognized as a global icon, particularly for his contributions to constitutionalism, social reform, and the fight against caste-based discrimination.

Here is a more detailed look at his international significance:

Global Recognition:

Dr Ambedkar's ideas on social justice, human rights, Buddhism, and constitutionalism have

gained international recognition, leading to his recognition as a global social revolutionary and a prominent political philosopher.

UN Recognition:

The United Nations has recognized Dr Ambedkar as a global icon for marginalized people, underscoring his vision of empowerment and social and economic equality.

International Institutions:

Busts and statues of Dr Ambedkar have been installed in institutions like the London School of Economics, Columbia University, Simon Fraser University, York University, and the United Nations headquarters.

Global Dalit Movement:

Dr Ambedkar is a central figure for the global Dalit movement, which strives to eliminate caste-based discrimination and achieve human rights and dignity.

Inspiration for Social Change:

His motto, 'Educate, Agitate, organize' serves as a rallying cry for human rights defenders and those fighting for social justice around the world.

International Awards:

The Dr Ambedkar International Award is given to individuals and organizations which have done outstanding work for social change, fighting against inequality and injustice.

Global Celebrations:

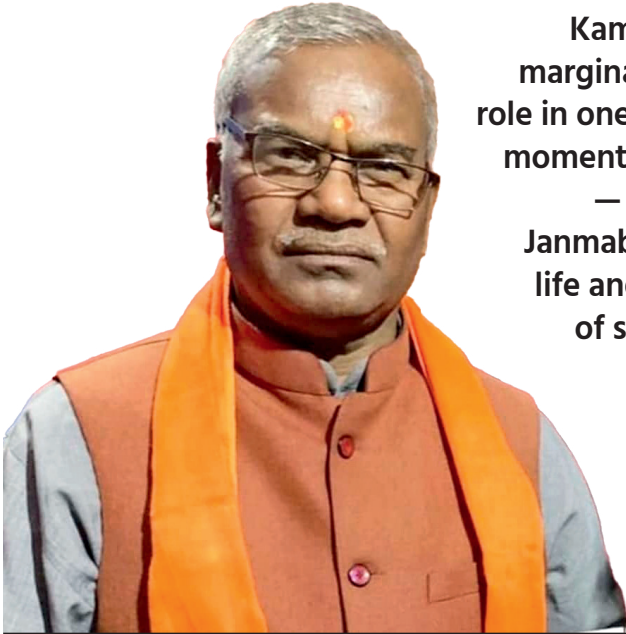
Dr Ambedkar's birth anniversary is celebrated globally by Dalit Ambedkarite groups, further solidifying his status as a global icon. More is yet to come – Dr Ambedkar's potent legacy has the desired strength to acquire its space on its own with or without any patronage. It may not be out of place to mention that the writer of this piece is the proposer and initiator of the proposal on April 14, birthday of Babasaheb Ambedkar, as the International Day of Equality under the aegis of the UN. The proposal has been pending with the Government of India since June, 2015. We have been reminding the GoI (MEA and PMO) and other stakeholders regularly but things are not moving as desired and required.

The acceptance of the proposal will not be a befitting tribute to one of the greatest sons of India, an international icon but will also add yet another feather to the Soft and Cultural Diplomacy of India. International Day of Equality will be a step forward in carrying the lofty agenda of the UN in bringing about the much needed 'Equitable World Order' for further peace and prosperity in the world at large.

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Tribute to Kameshwar Chaupal



Kameshwar Chaupal, a man hailing from a marginalized community, played a significant role in one of the most defining and contentious moments in India's post-independence history – the laying of the first brick of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya in 1989. His life and actions embody a complex narrative of social, political, and religious change in India, providing a unique perspective on how individuals from historically marginalized communities often navigate and contribute to national movements that transcend their own personal struggles.

Vijendra



Born into a lower-caste family, Kameshwar Chaupal's early life was steeped in the harsh realities faced by those at the bottom of India's rigid caste hierarchy. The caste system, which has structured social relations in the country for centuries, often relegated people from lower-caste communities to the margins of society. Growing up in such a society, Chaupal was exposed to the painful undercurrents of caste-based discrimination. Opportunities for education, upward mobility, and economic advancement were virtually non-existent for someone of his social status. Such systemic barriers pushed him and many others like him to the fringes of society, where they were denied a voice in decisions that shaped the country's future.

However, Chaupal's journey defies the limitations typically imposed on individuals born into such circumstances. His life was marked by an indomitable spirit and a determination to rise above the rigid structures of caste-based oppression. Despite the difficult

circumstances, Kameshwar Chaupal's personal journey was characterized by a deep belief in his own potential and in the cause, he came to champion. While many from his community were marginalized and silenced, Chaupal managed to carve out a place for himself in the larger narrative of India's political and religious history.

In 1989, a landmark year in the history of Indian politics, Kameshwar Chaupal was chosen to lay the first brick of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya, a highly symbolic event that would mark the beginning of a long and contentious journey towards the construction of the temple. The decision to allow a man from a marginalized community to perform such a pivotal act was deeply significant. The Ram Janmabhoomi movement, which had become the focal point of a nationwide religious and political campaign, had been characterized by its polarizing nature, evoking strong emotions on both sides of the debate. For many Hindus, the temple was a symbol of religious identity



and the restoration of a long-lost cultural heritage. For others, the movement was seen as an effort to assert religious dominance and disregard the pluralistic fabric of India.

Kameshwar Chaupal's involvement in the event was profound, as it symbolized much more than just an act of faith. His participation in laying the first brick was a powerful statement against the centuries of social, religious, and political exclusion that people from marginalized communities had faced. In many ways, it was a historical moment that transcended the individual and spoke to the collective struggles of India's lower castes. The event marked the convergence of religion, politics, and social identity in the late 20th century, and for Chaupal, it became a significant turning point that gave him a platform in national discourse.

The Ram Janmabhoomi movement, at its core, was about more than just a religious site; it was about identity, belonging, and a sense of place within the larger national framework. In this context, Chaupal's role was pivotal. For the marginalized communities of India, who had long been denied the benefits of mainstream political and social life, Chaupal's participation provided a sense of empowerment. It was a moment where the voices of those long relegated to the sidelines were finally being heard, even if in a complex and often controversial manner. His involvement in the movement symbolized how social and religious identities could intersect, allowing individuals from lower-caste backgrounds to carve out a place for themselves in the country's larger political narrative.

However, Chaupal's life was not without its share of struggles and challenges. Throughout his journey, he faced the difficulties inherent in his caste status, including intense scrutiny and criticism. His involvement in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, a deeply divisive issue, invited both admiration and condemnation. To some, he was a hero — a man who defied the odds and took part in a historic and transformative movement. To others, particularly those critical of the movement's exclusionary aspects, his participation represented the complexities of caste, religion, and political opportunism.

Kameshwar Chaupal's role in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement was not just an act of individual agency, but also a reflection of the larger shifts taking place in Indian society during the late 20th century. The movement, which gained momentum in the 1980s and culminated in the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992, marked a decisive moment in India's political

history. The movement galvanized Hindu sentiments but also raised questions about the role of religion in politics and the potential dangers of majoritarianism. For those who supported the temple's construction, Chaupal's involvement was seen as a moment of victory and vindication. For others, it represented the fracturing of India's secular ethos.

In the years that followed, Chaupal faced not only social and political challenges but also the deep divisions that the Ram Janmabhoomi movement had created. He navigated a world where the lines between religion, politics, and identity were increasingly blurred, and his own personal identity became inextricably linked to the larger debates surrounding the temple. Despite this, Chaupal maintained his conviction, never backing away from the cause he believed in. Kameshwar Chaupal passed away on February 7, 2025 at the age of 68, bringing an end to the life of a man whose journey had intersected with some of the most transformative and controversial moments in India's modern history. His death marked the closure of an era that had been shaped by the rise of identity politics, religious mobilization, and the complex realities of caste in India. Though he is no longer with us, his legacy continues to shape how we understand the intersection of religion, caste, and politics in modern India.

In the years following the groundbreaking of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, Kameshwar Chaupal's life and actions continued to spark debate, reflection, and discourse. Some view him as a hero who played a pivotal role in a movement that restored the pride of millions of Hindus. Others see his involvement as emblematic of the ways in which marginalized communities have often been co-opted in larger political struggles, sometimes blurring the lines between empowerment and exploitation. Regardless of one's perspective, Kameshwar Chaupal's life is a powerful reminder of the complexities of identity, social justice, and the politics of inclusion and exclusion in contemporary India.

His passing marks the end of an era, but the lessons of his life and his involvement in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement will continue to resonate in the ongoing debates about the role of religion and caste in Indian society. Whether viewed as a symbol of empowerment or a figure enmeshed in the divisive forces of history, Kameshwar Chaupal's story remains an essential chapter in India's modern political and social narrative.

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Kameshwar Chaupal gave an exclusive interview to UNHEARD VOICES in February 2024 after consecration ceremony of Prabhu Ramchandra in Ayodhya. We remember him by publishing excerpts from the said interview.

UV: How did the ceremony display the spirit of cohesiveness?

Kameshwar Chaupal: I say the ceremony displayed the spirit of cohesiveness because when Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived for the consecration (Pran Pratishtha) ceremony, such was the atmosphere prevailing that everyone felt Lord Shri Ram is our forefather and the blemish of the humiliation of Lord Shri Ram that our society faced is being removed today. Therefore, everyone was overwhelmed. It was a moment when everyone could experience the feeling of Ramatva (spiritual oneness with Lord Shri Ram). Tears rolled down and everybody was overcome with emotions. Many burst into tears and sobbed at that moment. Such was the effect of that feeling of Ramatva (spiritual oneness with Lord Shri Ram) that all hearts got cleansed. Such was the effectiveness of this feeling of Ramatva (spiritual oneness with Lord Shri Ram) that people overcame all differences of castes and language. Everybody was experiencing his spiritual oneness with Lord Shri Ram. Nobody noticed who belonged to which caste, sect, or school of thought. The entire society was charged with the devotion to Lord Shri Ram. That was the biggest inspiration for cohesiveness we have experienced. In the charged atmosphere that prevailed, everybody loved everybody. All adored each other and found perfect harmony with each other. If such an atmosphere continues to prevail, nobody will pay any attention towards the caste differences.

UV: You explained the atmosphere that prevailed in Ayodhya. However, Hindu organisations and people on their own too organised a variety of programmes to mark the occasion, not only all over the country but across the world. What feedback concerning this from the point of view concerning unity, integrity and cohesiveness have you received?

Kameshwar Chaupal: The people from India and even abroad who found themselves unable to reach Ayodhya to attend the ceremony too were overwhelmed with the feeling that Lord Shri Ram was arriving and that would make our houses pious. It

will make our lives worthwhile. The rich and the poor, the urban and the rural all people had the same feeling. Each person had cleaned and decorated his house with Torans (garlands) and Rangolis. The entire country appeared to have transformed in the hut of Mata Shabari decorated to welcome the arrival of Lord Shri Ram. I was at Prayagraj the day before the ceremony. People belonging to the backward classes had organised a rally to celebrate the consecration (Pran Pratishtha) ceremony. I was to flag it off. I noticed that the slum dwellers were so charged with enthusiasm that they had overcome all differences and attained spiritual oneness with Lord Shri Ram. The rally went on for four hours and I experienced the same atmosphere prevailing during the entire period. There was not a single chowk on the procession route that had not been cleaned spotlessly. All roads used as routes of the procession were decked with arches decorated with garlands. Caste and language differences carried no meaning in that atmosphere. Consequently, the entire nation found itself in perfect unison with Lord Shri Ram on January 22, the day of the consecration (Pran Pratishtha) ceremony. People had forgotten their castes. Everybody had the divine feeling of oneness with Lord Shri Ram.

UV: Would it be appropriate to describe it as an extension of Bhakti movement? The Bhakti movement has made great efforts to eradicate social inequality in the past.

Do you look at the Ayodhya movement as an extension of the Bhakti movement?

Kameshwar Chaupal: It was a powerful agitation against social inequality. Let me tell you, Domb Raja (representative of the Domb community) was also present for the consecration (Pran Pratishtha) ceremony in Ayodhya. The supreme pontiffs were also present there. But nobody noticed any difference. Everyone was immersed in the devotion to Lord Shri Ram. They could see Lord Shri Ram prevailing in each other. It all was a miracle of Lord Shri Ram. I feel we had not realised that such is the power in the name of Lord Shri Ram that it can end all sufferings and conflicts of people.



India pays tribute to contribution of **Marginalised Queen** IIII



Programme at Kirti College, Mumbai.



Programme at Ranchi, Jharkhand.



Programme at Kirti College, Mumbai

India pays tribute to contribution of
Marginalised Queen ■■■



Punyshlok Ahilyadevi Abhivadan Samaroh, Chaundi



Programme at Shahid Bhima Nayak Shaskiy Mahavidyalay, Nagpur



Programme at Baitul, Madhya Pradesh

Sanitation Workers: Budget Allocation and Socio-Cultural Challenges

Sanitation workers in India form a cornerstone of public health infrastructure, ensuring hygiene and cleanliness across urban and rural landscapes. Despite their critical role, these workers, predominantly from Scheduled Caste (SC) communities, face systemic neglect, hazardous working conditions, and socio-economic discrimination.

India has approximately five million sanitation workers engaged in various tasks such as cleaning toilets, sewers, septic tanks, drains, and waste treatment plants. Many of these workers belong to Dalit sub-castes, historically relegated to sanitation work by the caste system. This caste-based occupational confinement perpetuates poverty and systemic exclusion from social mobility. The invisibility of sanitation workers



within policy frameworks exacerbates their plight. A lack of comprehensive data on this workforce denies them access to government benefits and protections. For instance, many sanitation workers employed through subcontracting chains are excluded from formal recognition, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

Despite flagship programs like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Jal Jeevan Mission, Open Defecation Free initiatives, and the NAMASTE scheme aimed at improving sanitation infrastructure, the allocation for sanitation workers remains insufficient. The NAMASTE scheme, launched in 2021-22 as a reformed version of the Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers, aims to provide skill development training and loans for sanitation workers. However, its budget allocation remains minimal—Rs 116.94 crore in FY 2024-25 and Rs 130 crore in FY 2025-26. The National Safai Karamchari Finance & Development Corporation (NSKFDC), responsible for implementing the scheme, received only Rs 0.01 crore for loan schemes.

Under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Rs 615.90 crore was allocated from the Annual Work Plan & State Target and Rs 1,354.90 crore from the Annual Work Plan & State Component (AWSC) for FY 2025-26, which remains unchanged from

the previous fiscal year. Similarly, the Jal Jeevan Mission allocated Rs 8,800 crore from AWSC and Rs 4,000 crore from AWST for FY 2025-26, representing a significant decline compared to FY 2024-25. These schemes focus primarily on improving sanitation infrastructure but fail to address the dire working conditions or socio-economic upliftment of sanitation workers themselves.

Sanitation work in India is deeply intertwined with caste-based discrimination. Workers from SC communities are often forced into these roles due to societal stigma and lack of alternative livelihood opportunities. This systemic oppression perpetuates their marginalization. The caste system confines Dalits to hazardous jobs like manual scavenging, which involves direct contact with human waste. Despite being banned since 1993 under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers Act (PEMSR), manual scavenging persists due to societal norms and economic desperation.

Female sanitation workers face compounded challenges due to caste, class, and gender discrimination. They are exposed to toxins that cause respiratory and skin diseases while enduring verbal abuse at work. Most women lack fair wages or legal protections. Sanitation workers often operate without protective equipment or training, leading to preventable deaths during sewer cleaning operations. Between 2019 and 2021 alone, 161 deaths were reported in sewers across 18 states—a stark reminder of systemic negligence.

A transformative approach is needed to address the challenges faced by sanitation workers comprehensively. This includes increasing budget allocation specifically for their welfare under schemes like NAMASTE, covering skill development programs, health insurance, protective equipment distribution, and alternative employment opportunities. Policy reforms are essential, such as conducting a national survey to identify all individuals engaged in sanitation work and ensuring formal recognition of all categories of sanitation work within government records. Strengthening enforcement mechanisms under PEMSAR Act to eradicate manual scavenging entirely is also crucial.

Technological interventions, such as deploying assistive technologies like mechanized sewer cleaning devices, can eliminate hazardous



manual practices. Social inclusion programs should provide education scholarships for children of sanitation workers and promote awareness campaigns to dismantle caste-based stigma associated with sanitation work. Creating platforms for worker unions that include women and informal laborers is vital for amplifying their voices.

Health and safety measures must be prioritized, including regular health check-ups for sanitation workers, compensation for occupation-related health issues, and rigorous implementation of workplace safety protocols. By recognizing their contributions and addressing their challenges comprehensively, India can align its efforts with Sustainable Development Goal

6—clean water and sanitation—while fostering equity and justice for its most vulnerable citizens.

Sanitation workers are indispensable yet invisible within India's socio-economic fabric. Their plight underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions that go beyond infrastructure improvements to address systemic discrimination and occupational hazards. A holistic approach—integrating adequate budget allocation with policy reforms, technological advancements, social inclusion initiatives, and health safeguards—is imperative to uplift this marginalized workforce while ensuring dignity in labor.

*Author is Pune based journalist.
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Denied Entry to Bengal Temple, 130 Dalit Families Fight for Right to Worship

Despite a formal resolution affirming their right to worship, around 550 Dalits from 130 families in Gidhagram village continue to be denied entry into a 200-year-old Shiva temple. "For years, we've been barred from even climbing the steps," said Ekkori Das, a local farmer.

Ahead of Shiv Ratri, the families petitioned district officials, but their entry was blocked again on the festival day. A February 28 meeting, attended by authorities and temple representatives, ruled in their favour. Yet, citing "law and order concerns," police revoked access.

Temple committee members insist on upholding "age-old traditions," while Dalit families vow to continue their fight for equal rights. "We are just 130 families against 1,800. But times have changed and we won't give up," said Sukanta Das, a resident. Officials say they are working on a peaceful resolution, but the community is prepared to escalate the matter to higher authorities or the courts.

Dalit Farmers Face ₹2 Lakh Crop Loss in Drone Attack Over Land Dispute

A long-standing land dispute in a Tamil Nadu village has escalated into violence, with Scheduled Caste (SC) farmers alleging that caste Hindus used drones to destroy their crops with chemical spraying.

On February 11, 2025, SC farmers cultivating Panchami land—a historically allotted land

for Dalits—reported that a group led by K. Harshavarthini sprayed herbicide on their nearly ready-for-harvest black gram and sesame crops, causing a ₹2 lakh loss. The attack follows years of land ownership conflicts, with both Dalits and Reddiyar caste Hindus claiming rights over the land.

Farmers M. Sukumar and M. Thilakaraj detailed multiple threats, including casteist abuse and physical intimidation. "We begged them to stop, but they ignored us and



continued spraying," Thilakaraj said. Despite complaints filed under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, no arrests have been made, while Harshavarthini countered with a harassment case against the SC farmers.

Authorities, including the Cheyyar Sub-Collector, have begun an inquiry, but Dalit farmers say no action has been taken. "We won't back down until justice is served," said Sukumar, a lawyer and activist. The case highlights Tamil Nadu's ongoing struggle over Panchami land rights, with Dalits facing systemic land alienation and caste-based violence despite legal protections.

*Compiled by Prajvalant.
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DIN VISHESH



Remembering Mahatma Phule

11th April

Mahatma Phule Birth Anniversary

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule (also known as Jyotirao Phule) was a pioneering social reformer, thinker, and activist in 19th-century India. Phule was a strong critic of the caste system and its impact on the oppressed, particularly the lower castes (Dalits). He believed that the caste system, imposed by Brahminical orthodoxy, was unjust and a major barrier to social justice. He emphasized the need for education and social equality to combat caste-based discrimination and argued that social reforms should prioritize the marginalized groups.

One of Phule's greatest contributions was in the field of education, particularly for women and lower-caste people, who were often excluded from the formal education system. In 1848, he and his wife Savitri Bai Phule opened the first school for girls in India in Pune, a groundbreaking step for women's education in a society that largely restricted them to domestic roles.

He also opened schools for untouchables (Dalits), challenging the prevalent norms that denied them access to education and opportunities for advancement.



14th March

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
Birth Anniversary



16th March

Sant Tukaram Maharaj
Birth Anniversary



23rd March

Dr Ram Manohar Lohia
Birth Anniversary



1st April

Reserve Bank of
India established



5th April

Babu Jagjivan Ram
Birth Anniversary



11th April

Mahaveer
Birth Anniversary

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