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BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR : THE SOUL OF DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

The name Ambedkar is an institution, an ideal, a mass leader, a champion of caste annihilation: this list goes on endlessly. Babasaheb always practised what he preached. So, as ardent followers of him, we should follow him in every sense literally. Babasaheb has shown us a path, with his ideology and philosophy. What is important today is the implementation of Babasaheb's principles in practice. It's because of Babasaheb that Dalits could live with respect and freedom.

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Key Words: *Institution, Ideal, Ideology, Philosophy, Principles.*

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What Ambedkar means to me, this statement intrigued me when I thought of writing an article on the theme, Ideology and Philosophy of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar. Efforts to read or write anything on Babasaheb, amounts to writing theses! He is a multi-faceted personality, anything and everything ranging from caste annihilation to constitution framing; water and electricity policy to economic reforms. Babasaheb is prolific and a genius.A public intellectual and a social reformer in the tradition of Charvaka, Buddha, Mahaveera and Vachana poets who dissented against the brahminical ideology which had created the oppressive caste system. Understanding Babasaheb from his personal, professional life to the contributions and achievements in every possible field is huge and enormous. So talking on these issues would be a Herculian task for me.

I think if anyone says that they have read and understood Babasaheb completely it is a myth to me. He is such a towering personality that anybody can understand only a chunk of what he is and has done to the society. It will take my lifetime to read what he has written and to understand the body of his work and achievements to our country in modern times. The name Ambedkar is an institution, an ideal, a mass leader, a champion of caste annihilation: this list goes on endlessly. People have access to information on Babasaheb from his birth to Mahaparinirvan; his childhood, education, political career, movements, conversion to Buddhism etc. So I was perplexed on what to write? Because on the above mentioned topics, there is nothing new that I can add. So I decided to write straight from my heart on what Ambedkar means to me.

We have heard of Babasaheb, read about him but how much we follow what Babasaheb preaches? Babasaheb always practised what he preached. So, as ardent followers of him, we should follow him in every sense literally. He has shown a path paved by himself which is full of obstacles but he has cleared it for us. It's our time to travel the road Babasaheb took. People talk about secularism, democracy and freedom but how much is in practice, is the question I ask to myself. Babasaheb has shown us a path, with his ideology and philosophy. What is important today is the implementation of Babasaheb's principles in practice.

Discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, gender and class is happening in our country since time immemorial. Babasaheb fought against these issues not only for his people but to all the citizens of this country. But the sad part is that people have reduced/ restricted him as a leader of Dalits and the general population knows of him as a maker of constitution. It's very unfortunate in today's scenario that Babasaheb is remembered only on his birthdays and death anniversaries! His contribution to India is enormous and stupendous. If today's youth follow Babasaheb's shown path, there would be no turning back.

Very little of Ambedkarism is read, understood and talked about, because of political reasons. The caste politics does play a significant role in each and every aspect of our lives today. For example, I don't want to remember or use my caste in work place but people around me remind me of it, for me this is politics! Wherever you go and whatever you do the first thing people want to know about you is the caste factor. Fine, I know it's an identity for me but for others it gives an opportunity to judge me on the basis of my caste.This is politics for me. I wanted to convey that the caste discrimination has taken a different shape and space altogether. The strong hold of political power and its influence on the general population is significant; everywhere and by everyone, almost everything is politicized. That's where the political dissidence steps-in. Ambedkar was a born fighter; he fought for the rights till his last breath. The people and situations were adverse to Babasaheb in his struggle for equality but still unwavering faith in democracy and his ideology made him what he was and is till date.

Babasaheb was influenced by Jyotiba Phule, a social reformer and followed his footsteps towards the annihilation of caste which was inhuman and unconstitutional. Even though we live in democracy, how democratic people are, is a big question? It's because of Babasaheb that Dalits could live with respect and freedom. I could attempt to write on Babasaheb Ambedkar with free will that's because of the confidence he has imbibed in us. Definitely and staunchly, we owe so much to Babasaheb. Our lives

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are real live examples of how Dalits were before Babasaheb and after him. India's independence was not in real sense independence to us if Babasaheb had not stepped in and made us live equally among other people in this country. Today I take my name, gender, caste, religion and nationality as an identity with so much of confidence and secured mind. Where do I get this from, Babasaheb obviously.

I have been reading and will be reading on Babasaheb till the day this life would come to an end; it's a continuous spiritual process to me. The more I read, learn and try to understand Babasaheb the more I discover that I am still ignorant of him. He is and will be a great source of inspiration to many many millions of people like me throughout the world. He stands for solidarity, freedom, democracy and equality. I always wonder who else in place of Babasaheb would have written our constitution, the answer is straight No. None could have ventured this task other than one and only Babasaheb. He is an epitome of intelligence, knowledge and what not, sorry I am falling short of words to sum up Babasaheb's personality.

"I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which its women have achieved" – B R Ambedkar.

This statement is a source of inspiration to me. I can write on this topic in pages including my own experiences as a Dalit woman, that's the strength of a statement made by Babasaheb. True, people talk about giving respect to women, treating them equal and quoting some sacred books but how many of us do practice it in reality? Very few, we all know of it. As I mentioned earlier Babasaheb practiced what he preached. On the issues of women, he stands apart to his contemporaries. In 1942, being a Labor Minister of Executive Council of Governor General, he introduced a Maternity Benefit Bill.(Dr. M.R.Singariya, Dr B R Ambedkarand Women Empowerment in India.He introduced The Hindu code bill in parliamentgiving equal property rights to women and resigned when the bill was not passed in 1951. - Today I take pride in saying that I am Dalit and a woman who is independent in mind and spirit because of Babasaheb's contribution to the welfare of women folk.

My father always says that he doesn't believe in any religion and has known one religion that is Ambedkarism. He kept reiterating the statement that if Ambedkar wasn't there; if reservation for under-privileged castes wasn't in existence then his life would have been a mere animal like. That's what he says always so that we shouldn't forget the fact that the lives we live isn't for granted. We owe it to Babasaheb and we should always give it back to our community people this is want I learnt from my father. I think following the ideology of Babasaheb, my father gave me the education and freedom to choose my career and the kind of life I wish to. Yes, today when I look back I feel proud to say that am a Dalit woman whose father following the ideology of Babasaheb made my life a better place to live. Talking on Babasaheb is never ending but would like to end this article by saying that whether we realize or acknowledge the contribution of Babasaheb to women of this country or not but the fact is that people like me writing on Babasaheb with free will, confidence and a sense of pride is the result of Babasaheb's vision.

"My final word of advice to you is to educate, agitate, organize and have faith in yourself. When justice is on our side, I don't see how we can lose our battle. For ours is a battle not for wealth or for power. It is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of the human personality."—Dr BR Ambedkar. JAI BHIM

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