

# **Dr. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR WRITINGS AND SPEECHES**

**Vol. 17  
PART THREE**

## **Dr. B. R. AMBEDKAR AND HIS EGALITARIAN REVOLUTION**

**PART THREE  
SPEECHES**



**Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Source Material Publication Committee.  
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**“Positively, my Social Philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words : Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Let no one, however, say that I have borrowed my philosophy from the French-Revolution. I have not. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science. I have derived them from the teachings of my Master, the Buddha. In his philosophy, liberty and equality had a place; but he added that unlimited liberty destroyed equality, and absolute equality left no room for liberty. In His Philosophy, law had a place only as a safeguard against the breaches of liberty and equality ; but He did not believe that law can be a guarantee for breaches of liberty or equality. He gave the highest place to fraternity as the only real safeguard against the denial of liberty or equality or fraternity which was another name for brotherhood or humanity, which was again another name for religion”. — (P. No. 503)**

**— Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.**

**DR. BABASAHEBAMBEDKAR  
WRITINGS AND SPEECHES**

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**PART THREE**

**DR. B . R. AMBEDKAR AND HIS  
EGALITARIAN REVOLUTION**

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To give education to those who want to keep up the Caste System is not to improve the prospect of Democracy in India but to put our Democracy in India in greater jeopardy.

– Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

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**VOL. 17**

**PART THREE**

**DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR AND HIS  
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**PART THREE**

**SPEECHES**

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## CONTENTS

<b>Sr. No. (1)</b>	<b>Date (2)</b>	<b>Subject (3)</b>	<b>Page (4)</b>
1.	1-1-1927	Great Fight	3
2.	18-1-1928	The Value of a Man is Axiomatic, Self-Evident	8
3.	13-4-1929	We are a Warrior Clan	10
4.	14-4-1929	Send Right Type of Men to Legislatures	12
5.	8-8-1930	People Cemented by feeling of One Country, One Constitution and One Destiny, take the risk of being Independent	13
6.	2-9-1930 (Times of India)	Secure Constitutional Safeguards and Guarantees	60
7.	27-9-1930	Agitate much more, Organise Better, than at Present	61
8.	2-10-1930	..... otherwise Advanced Hindu Castes would remain in Power and Rule the Minorities	62
9.	14-8-1931	Power and Prestige will come to you through Struggle	65
10.	29-1-1932	Future Generations of Hindus will Appreciate my Services	66
11.	28-2-1932	Keep before your Eyes the Struggle of Gautam Buddha and Ramanuja	75
12.	7-5-1932	Untouchables must have Political Power	76

**CONTENTS – Contd.**

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
13.	21-5-1932	I would not Budge an Inch from my Righteous Cause	80
14.	24-5-1932	Political Reform must precede Social Reform	82
15.	28-9-1932	Care More for Material Good than for Spiritual Food	83
16.	9-10-1932	Act and Utilise the Power coming into your Hands	84
17.	28-10-1932	Abandon the Thought of Slavery	85
18.	18-2-1933	Do not Believe in fate, Believe in your Strength	86
19.	Feb. 1933	They alone Rise who Strive	87
20.	4-3-1933	Do not Depend upon God or Superman	88
21.	23-4-1933	I will wrest as much Power for the Country as Possible	90
22.	16-12-1934	Find men who will Promote your Interests	91
23.	13-10-1935	Unfortunately I was Born a Hindu Untouchable but I will not die a Hindu	94
24.	8-12-1935	My Ability and Eminence were the Fruit of my Patient Labour and Intellect	100
25.	11112-1-1936	Go anywhere, we have to Fight for our Welfare	101
26.	13/14-4-1936	Decided to Renounce Hinduism	103

**CONTENTS – Contd.**

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
27.	1-5-1936	I cannot Sacrifice my Conscience for Success	105
28.	17-5-1936	Conversion is Necessary for your Emancipation and Advancement	107
29.	31-5-1936	What Way Emancipation?	113
30.	2-6-1936	..... there will be no Distinction between the Mahars and the Mangs	148
31.	16-6-1936	You must give up your Disgraceful Profession	150
32.	8-11-1936	Do not become a Victim to any Conspiracy	151
33.	30-5-1937	We cannot allow our Grievances to Continue	157
34.	31-7-1937	There are no Depressed Class Ministers	158
35.	28-8-1937	Do not Worship God in Hindu Religion	159
36.	Sept. 1937	Communists Exploited the Labourers	163
37.	30-12-1937	Be on the Guard against Exploiters	164
38.	31-12-1937	Self-respect and Self-help movement has nothing to lose but everything to gain	165
39.	1-1-1938	Christians lagged behind Politically	166
40.	1-1-1938	Work for Uplift of Untouchables	167

**CONTENTS – Contd.**

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
41.	1-1-1938	Democracy must give Respectful hearing to all who are worth Listening to	168
42.	10-1-1938	Peasants and workers should think over the Causes of their Poverty	170
43.	15-1-1938	Guard the Interests of the Depressed Classes	172
44.	13-2-1938	Trade Unions must enter Politics to Protect their Interests	173
45.	12-2-1938	Educated man without Character and Humility is more Dangerous than a Beast	193
46.	19-3-1938	Untouchables have to Strive themselves	194
47.	14-5-1938	Lead Decent Life	195
48.	22/23-10-1938	Government did not Care Depressed Classes	196
49.	25-12-1938	Need for United Political Organisation to Fight Common Opponent Foreign Imperialism	197
50.	30-12-1938	Send Gtievances to me	200
51.	8-1-1939	Be Men of Sterling Character	201
52.	29-1-1939	What is the Goal of India's Political Evolution ?	203
53.	12-2-1939	Gandhi prepared to accept Federation in whatever form	208

**CONTENTS – Contd.**

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
54.	26-2-1939	Save your Children from Harrowing Life	209
55.	2-7-1939	I worked for Benefit of whole Community not for a Particular	210
56.	July 1939	Taxes must be Utilised for Farmers	212
57.	16-12-1939	Mahar Watan is Heartless Exploitation	213
58.	24-12-1939	Government has done Nothing for Depressed Classes	216
59.	26-12-1939	Hindus Responsible for Sin of Untouchability	217
60.	28-1-1940	Regain past Position in Army	218
61.	4-2-1940	Safeguards under Government of India Act and Poona Pact are Inadequate	219
62.	19-3-1940	Hindu Society must Organise on Modern lines Breaking down its Age-long Framework	220
63.	23-2-1941	Gandhi's Efforts are Inadequate	221
64.	28-3-1941	Without Strenuous Efforts our Social Position might get even	222
65.	13-7-1941	You have not Realised what Tremendous Power you have	224
66.	16-8-1941	Watandari, A Curse to Mahars	227
67.	August 1941	Remarkable Change Under gone...	230

**CONTENTS – Contd.**

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
68.	24-9-1941	Educated Persons should join Military	231
69.	Feb. 1942	I shall lay down my Life in Defence of Our Land	233
70.	26-4-1942	Your Salvation must lie in your Own Hands	234
71.	2-7-1942	The doors of my House would always remain open to Friends	238
72.	12-7-1942	Struggle of Lowest Strata of Society is Bound to help all Sections of Working Class	239
73.	15-7-1942	If the Bottom-Most Stone is shifted those above are to be Shaken	240
74.	18/19-7-1942	If Democracy dies it will be Our Doom	242
75.	20-7-1942	Educate, Agitate, Organize, Have Faith and lose no hope	273
76.	20-7-1942	Progress of the Community is Measured by Progress of women	277
77.	20-7-1942	I make Distinction between Ahimsa and Meekness	284
78.	21-7-1942	I will Stand by you	291
79.	22-7-1942	I Yield to none in my desire for the Freedom of this Country	292
80.	23-8-1942	I want the Reins of Government in your Hands	294

**CONTENTS – Contd.**

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
81.	3-11-1942	Present Disorders Harming only Indians	296
82.	12-1-1943	Non-Brahmin Party should Rebuild itself	298
83.	17-1-1943	Join Army, Navy and Air Forces	299
84.	2-5-1943	Gandhi and Jinnah should Retire	300
85.	10-5-1943	Poverty will not be Tolerated in Post-war Period	303
86.	10-5-1943	Swaraj could be in hands of Labour	304
87.	5-12-1943	Qualify for Enjoying the Rights	305
88.	31-1-1944	Scheduled Castes must Discard Hinduism	306
89.	26-8-1944	“Now or Never” is the Question before Scheduled Castes	308
90.	20-9-1944	Depressed Classes are not a part of Hindu Community	310
91.	22-9-1944	I am no opponent of Nationalism But .....	314
92.	23-9-1944	Unity is of Supreme Importance	319
93.	24-9-1944	I was far Ahead of ..... Patriots of India	322
94.	24-9-1944	Indian History is nothing but Struggle between Buddhism and Brahminism	334
95.	24-9-1944	Gandhi was Contented with Provincial Autonomy	337

**CONTENTS – Contd.**

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
96.	28-9-1944	We are the Makers of the Destiny of this Country	339
97.	2-1-1945	Students should see that Degree Carries Positive Knowledge	341
98.	3-1-1945	Lay the Foundation for a Regime of Prosperity for the Poverty Stricken Millions of the Country	344
99.	3-1-1945	News Paper in a Modern Democratic System IS Fundamental Basis of Good Government	346
100.	7-4-1945 (People's Herald)	Scheduled Castes must organise	351
101.	6-5-1945	There should be Statutory Commission for Aboriginal Tribes	352
102.	20-5-1945	No Dispute over India's goal of Freedom	357
103.	3-10-1945	Make Deliberate attempt to make man Politically Conscious	359
104.	30-11-1945	Action by Government in August 1942 was Justifiable	361
105.	16-1-1946	Gandhiji Declined	362
106.	17-2-1946	Scheduled referred to an Impartial International Tribunal Castes demands be	363
107.	12-3-1946	Depressed Classes Neglected	367

**CONTENTS – Contd.**

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
108.	13-8-1946 (Jai Bheem)	The Scheduled Castes had been left where they were	368
109.	14-4-1947	I have Loyalty to our People also to this Country	369
110.	25-9-1947	The Minority must always be won over, it must Never be Dictated to	374
111.	14-1-1948	Art of Public Speaking could be Developed	384
112.	10-4-1948	Because of Divine Law of Manu or Yajnavalkya, Hindu Society was never able to repair itself	385
113.	24/25-4-1948	Organise under One Leader, One Party, One Programme	388
114.	16-1-1949	Progress of a Community always Depends upon Education	395
115.	11-1-1950	The Hindu code was a Right Step Towards a Civil code	396
116.	11-1-1950	We should Ensure that India is not Enslaved again	397
117.	27-1-1950	Maharashtrians are More Sincere, More Duty Conscious to the Nation	401
118.	2-5-1950	Religion no Longer be Inherited but be Examined Rationally by Everybody	402
119.	26-5-1950	Non-Believers should be Converted to the Eight-Fold Path	404

**CONTENTS – *Contd.***

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
120.	6-6-1950	Buddhism Paved way for Democracy and Socialistic Pattern of Society	406
121.	29-9-1950	I shall Devote Rest of my Life to the Revival and spread of Buddhism	410
122.	26-12-1950	The Bill was Aimed at the Social Advancement of Women	411
123.	12-6-1951	The Scheduled Castes should give up Political Aloofness	412
124.	27-10-1951	I am like a Rock which does not melt but Turns the Course of Rivers	
125.	28-10-1951	Failure of Parliamentary Democracy will result in Rebellion, Anarchy and Communism	422
126.	28-10-1951	If our True Representatives are not Elected, Independence will be a Farce	429
127.	29-10-1951	Poor People must Unite Separately to Achieve their Purpose	438
128.	7-11-1951	... Let us save our Kith and Kin	447
129.	20-11-1951	Why I did not Resign Earlier?	449
130.	22-11-1951	Federation will not Give up its Separate Political Entity	453
131.	24-11-1951	The Hindu Code Bill would Improve Condition of Women	

**CONTENTS – *Contd.***

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
132.	25-11-1951	It is bad for People to remain idle and Indifferent	456
133.	26-11-1951	Purity of Administration is necessary for Welfare of the People	459
134.	23-12-1951	Alliance to Appose	462
135.	31-5-1952	I always have the Interest of the Country at heart	463
136.	28-9-1952	All my attention is Concentrated on Building of Hall for Federation	470
137.	15-12-1952	Recognise University Education to meet the Requirements of the Modern World	471
138.	22-12-1952	Conditions Precedent for the Successful Working of Democracy	472
139.	24-12-1952	Knowledge is the Foundation of Man's Life	487
140.	25-12-1952	Women Leaders are not interested in the Social Progress of Women	488
141.	25-12-1952	.....I shall take Stern Measures	489
142.	12-1-1953	Osmania University Honoured Dr. B. R. Ambedkar	490
143.	15-2-1953	If Buddhist Gospel is not Adopted History of Conflict in Europe, will Repeat in Asia	493
144.	2-5-1953	.....the So called Upper Classes will be wiped out of Existence	494

**CONTENTS – *Contd.***

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
145.	27-5-1953	Unless Casteless and Classless Society is Created, there will be no Progress in India	495
146.	3-6-1953	Don't get Misled by Cliticism	496
147.	July 1953	Politics is not the Be-All and End-All of the Nation's Life	497
148.	16-11-1953	We will carry on All India Land Satyagraha even against Central Government	498
149.	24-1-1954	It is Criminal to Collect Money in the name of Religion and Waste it	500
150.	3-10-1954	My Philosophy of Life	503
151.	28-10-1954	I am a devotee of Gautam Buddha, Kabir, Mahatma Phule and Worshipper of Learning, Self-Respect and Character	504
152.	4-12-1954	Buddhist Movement in India : A Blue Print	506
153.	25-12-1954	Pandurang was None other than Buddha	513
154.	5-2-1956	There is Difference between the Ahimsa Preached by Buddhism and Jainism	514
155.	12-5-1956	Why I like Buddhism	515
156.	24-5-1956	The Tide of Buddhism would never Recede in India	517

**CONTENTS – *Contd.***

Sr. No. (1)	Date (2)	Subject (3)	Page (4)
157.	20-5-1956	Prospect of Democracy in India	519
158.	15-10-1956	The Buddha Dhamma will be the Saviour of the world	524
159.	20-11-1956	Buddha or Karl Marx	549
<b>APPENDICES</b>			
Appendix-I:		Gandhiji's article on Dr. H. R. Ambedkar's proclamation of Coversion	560
Appendix-II :		Constitution of the Samata Sainik. Dal	566
Appendix-III :		An Out spoken Utterancee	573
		Bibliography	577
		Index	579

**PART-3**

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**SPEECHES**

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## 1

## GREAT FIGHT

“The new year i.e. 1st January 1927, opened with a meeting at the Koregaon War Memorial held by the Depressed Classes. This year prominent leaders of the Depressed Classes attended the ceremony.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar addressed the meeting at the Memorial and told the audience that hundreds of fighters from their community had fought on the side of the Britishers who ungratefully later dubbed them a non-military community. Since the caste Hindus treated them as Untouchables and a despicable lot, they had no means of livelihood, and in the last resort they joined the British forces. In the end, he asked his people to agitate against this policy and compel Government to remove the ban on their military career.”<sup>1</sup>

### Importance Of The Koregaon War Memorial

However, the entry of Untouchables in the British army in the past (especially Bombay Army) gave Untouchables an opportunity to prove their bravery in so many battlegrounds within and outside the country, that the British Officers showered praise on them.

“Gen. Malcolm praised the Bombay Officers and Sepoys, for their fidelity. Writing to the Secretary of the Board of Directors in 1816, Gen. Malcolm confirmed that the Bombay Army was composed of all classes and all religions like Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Among the Hindus of Maharashtra, the Parwaris (Mahars) were more numerous than the Rajputs and some other higher castes. These Parwaris hailed from the south coast of Bombay. Much praise was showered on the Mahar Sepoys of the Bombay Army who endured the tigours of difficult marches when rations were low and disease was high among men and

## GREAT FIGHT

animals. Whether they were charging ahead or were besieged or taken prisoner-of-war, whether they were storming fortresses or making tactical withdrawals, they always stood steadfast by their officers and comrades, never letting down the honour of their Regiments. The crowning glory of the Mahars was achieved on the New Year Day of 1818 on the hot and parched battlefield of Koregaon beside the bank of the rivers Bhima. A small force of 500 men of the 2nd Battalion 1st Regiment Bombay Native Infantry together with 250 men of the Poona Irregular Horse and two six-pounder guns with 24 European gunners of the Madras Artillery, under the command of Capt. F. F. Staunton, fought without rest or respite, food or water, continuously for twelve hours against a large force of 20,000 horses and 8,000 Infantry of Peshwa Bajirao II who was threatening the British garrisons at Kirkee and Poona.

Capt. Staunton’s detachment had been rushed from Sirur on the evening of December 31 to hold the Poona garrison. Marching throughout the night, covering a distance of about 27 miles, the detachment had arrived at Koregaon on the morning of 1st January 1818 to witness a frightening array of the famous Maratha Horse. Capt. Staunton had hardly prepared his defences when three detachments of the Peshwa’s Infantry, each about 600 strong, had advanced simultaneously from three directions. They were supported by two guns and the advance was covered by a continuous barrage of rockets. In spite of the gallant efforts of the Poona Irregular Horse, the entire British force at Koregaon was encircled by the Maratha Cavalry and Infantry and all accesses to the river were cut off. The assaulting parties came in force and pushed their way into the heart of the village seizing some strong and commanding positions from which it was impossible to dislodge them. There was severe hand-to-hand fighting for each house, hut, and street, and the British were suffering heavy losses. But they would not give up and the Indian Sepoys, many Mahars, held on doggedly, fighting tenaciously and with magnificent courage. Capt. Staunton asked his men to fight to the last man and the last bullet. The

<sup>1</sup> Keer, P. 69

Mahars showed tremendous intrepidity and continued to battle with the utmost bravery against hopeless odds. As the sun set the British found themselves in a desperate situation. The Maratha Army, led by their able general Gokhle, was dominating the British on all sides. Fortunately, the nightfall brought some relief to the British and the attacks of the Maratha forces relaxed in vigour. Then, just one of the unaccountable chances of war changed the course of events. It was difficult to say why the Peshwa's forces ceased firing by 9 o'clock at night and withdrew from Koregaon when victory was within their reach. Twelve men of the Madras Artillery and fifty men of 21st Regiment Bombay Native Infantry as also three British Officers were killed in action. One hundred and thirteen men and two British Officers were wounded. Of the men of the 21st Regiment Bombay Native Infantry who fell in action, 22 were Mahars or Parwaris (identified by their names ending with "nak"), \*16 were Marathas, 8 were Rajputs, two were Muslims, and one or two were probably Indian Jews.

This action of "heroic valour and enduring fortitude" displaying "disciplined intrepidity" and "devoted courage and admirable constancy"<sup>1</sup> I won imperishable renown for the Mahar soldier. It has been recorded that "it is hard to say who has the greater glory, the Indian soldiers themselves, or the British Officers, who had been able to ensure and command such faith and such staunch and amazing loyalty"<sup>2</sup> (Many of the Indian soldiers were Mahars.)

---

\*Names of martyred Maher: 1 Somnak Kamalnak Naik, 2 Ramnak Yemnak Naik, 3 Godnak Kothenak, 4 Ramnak Yeshak, 5 Bhognak Harnak, 6 Ambanak Kananak, 7 Gannak Balnak, 8 Balnak Kondnak, 9 Rupnak Lakhnak, 10 Wapnak Ramnak, 11 Vitnak Dhamnak, 12 Ragnak Gannak, 13 Wapnak Harnak, 14 Rainak Wannak, 15 Gajnak Dharmanak, 16 Deonak Aannak, 17 Gopalnak Balnak, 18 Harnak Hirnak, 19 Jetnak Dhainak, 20 Gannak Lakhnak

"Names of Injured Maher : 21 Jananak Hirnak, 22 Bhiknak Ratannak, 23 Ratannak Dhannak. (Ref. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkarache Bahishkrit Bhartatil Agralekh, (Marathi) Editor Ratnakar Ganvir, P. 247.)

<sup>1</sup>. Brigadier-General Lionell Smith's report to the Resident at Poona, the General Orders of the C-in-C of the Army of the Deccan and the Governor General of India, and the Despatch of the Court of Directors of the East India Company.

<sup>2</sup>. Maj. J. T. Gorman, *Historical Record of the Second Battalion Fourth Bombay Grenadiers, 1796-1933*.

Soon, the immense importance of the Koregaon action was realized. It was decided to raise an obelisk, 65 feet high, standing on a stone platform about 32 square feet, on the spot onto which the first shot was fired at Koregaon.<sup>1</sup> The foundation - stone of this monument was laid on 26th March 1821. The Column was erected to commemorate the valour of the force. To perpetuate the memory of the brave troops "to whose heroic firmness and devotion it owes the glory of that day" it was decided to inscribe the names of the killed and the wounded on the monument. A special medal was issued in 1851 inscribed "To the Army of India" and two clasps of the medal commemorated "Kirkee" and "Koregaon."<sup>2</sup>

The Mahars continued to participate in the operations of the Bombay Army and give proof of their redoubtable courage and undeflecting devotion to duty. They fought gallant battles and won renown for their valour at Kathiawar (1826), Multan and Gujarat (1849), and Kandahar (1880). The Bombay Army took part in the First and the Second Afghan Wars, the Battle of Meeanee (1843), and in the Persian War of 1856-57.<sup>3</sup> Soldiers of the Bombay Army went to China (1860), Aden (1865), and Abyssinia (1867), Gen, Sir Charles Napier of Magdala who never forgot the significant contribution that the 25th Bombay Native Infantry made, under his command, to the conquest of Sind was, for ever, praising the Bombay soldier : "I love the Bombay Army most. I never think of its Sepoys without admiration." The Mahars in the Bombay Army were moving from place to place leaving imprints of their heroism on various battlefields, far and near. During the Second Afghan War (1878-1895)

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<sup>1</sup>. Lt.-Col. H. E. Kenyon, "The Battle of Koregaon", *United Services Institute Journal*, 931.

<sup>2</sup>. This was the first Indian medal issued by the British for the Armies in India of the East India Company.

<sup>3</sup>. It was during the Persian War that the first Victoria Cross of the Indian Army was won by Capt. J. A. Wood of the 20th Bombay Native Infantry (120th Rajputana Rifles). Subedar-Major Mohammad Shareef and Sepoy Bheer Bhut, both of the 20th Bombay Native Infantry, were also recommended for the award but it was not given to them as Indian soldiers were not entitled, till October 1911, to receive the Victoria Cross.

a Mahar soldier again won high renown for his outstanding bravery which recalled the intrepidity, tenacity, and dauntlessness of the Mahars at Koregaon. Sep. Sonnak Tannak gave proof of gallantry of the highest order, as is recorded on a tablet on the Waudby Road in Bombay. The inscription reads: "This road is named after Major Sidney James Waudby who with Private Elahi Bux and Private Sonnak Tannak, all of the 19th Bombay Infantry, fell on the 16th April 1880, in defence of the Dabrai post in Afghanistan which, when warned that an attack in force was imminent, they refused to abandon and most gallantly held for three hours against three hundred of the enemy, many of whom were slain. Eventually, when all their ammunition was expended they dashed into the midst of their foes and died fighting. In honour of their heroism this tablet is placed by the Regiment."<sup>1</sup>

While describing the social status of Mahar community under the rule of the Peshwas prior to 1818, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar said, "under the rule of the Peshwas in the Maratha country the Untouchable was not allowed to use the public streets if a Hindu was coming along lest he should pollute the Hindu by his shadow. The Untouchable was required to have a black thread either on his wrist or in his neck as a sign or a mark to prevent the Hindu from getting themselves polluted by his touch through mistake. In Poona, the capital of the Peshwa, the Untouchable was required to carry, strung from his waist, a broom to sweep away from behind the dust he treaded on lest a Hindu walking on the same should be polluted. In Poona, the Untouchable was required to carry an earthen pot, hung in his neck wherever he went, for holding his spit lest his spit falling on earth should pollute a Hindu who might un-knowingly happen to tread on it."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> : Forefront For Ever-The History of the Mahar Regiment, by V. Longer, Pp. 12-15.

<sup>2</sup> : Writings and Speeches Vol. 1, P. 39.

## THE VALUE OF A MAN IS AXIOMATIC, SELF-EVIDENT

"On 18th January 1928, a meeting was convened by the Depressed Classes at Trymbak, near Nasik, which 'is a place of pilgrimage of the Hindus, to. consider a proposal for building a temple in the name of their great saint, Chokhamela. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was specially invited to preside over the meeting. Mr. B. K. Gaikwad, Bhalerao, Punjaji, Navsaji Jadhav etc. addressed the meeting. In addition to these Mr. Datar Shashtri from Nasik, Mr. Marathe editor 'Swarajya', and Mr. Vadekar, Mr. Thorat and Mr. Chaudhary from Jalgaon also addressed the gathering."<sup>1</sup>

The meeting, after a full discussion, decided that the real memorial of the saint consisted in devoting themselves with unflagging energy rather to the removal of the blot of Untouchability than to the erection of a temple. The fact was that firstly, Dr. Ambedkar was in the innermost recesses of his heart against the idea of separate temples ; secondly, the building expenses would have been a financial burden; and thirdly, Dr. Ambedkar was more of a utilitarian than an idol worshipper.

It was Dr. Ambedkar's view that the saint-poets of Maharashtra (1300-1600) belonging to Bhagavat Dharma did not preach directly against the Caste System which stood for the domination of one caste over others, for social inequality and social injustice. The efforts of these saint-poets were directed to establishing equality, not between a Brahmin as an individual and a Shudra as an individual, but between a Brahmin and a Shudra devotee of God. In this struggle the saints succeeded, and the Brahmins had to accept the superiority of the devotee irrespective of caste. Lastly Dr. B. R. Ambedkar addressed the meeting as the President. In his address he stated " Yet from the view point of the annihilation of caste," "the struggle of the saints did not have any effect on society. The

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<sup>1</sup> : Bahishkrit Bharat, dated 3rd February 1928.

value of man is axiomatic, self-evident; it does not come to him as the result of the gilding of *Bhakti*. The saints did not struggle to establish this point. On the contrary, their struggle had a very unhealthy effect on the Depressed Classes. It provided the Brahmins with an excuse to silence them by telling that they would be respected if they also attained the status of Chokhamela. "As the followers of different cults of *Bhakti* were themselves filled with caste prejudices, Dr. Ambedkar proceeded, they not only turned a blind eye to their message of equality, justice and humanitarianism, but also described their incredible miracles with utmost exaggeration.

As regards the cult of Ramdas, he said that his followers were notorious for their caste prejudices since its inception, and their founder himself was obsessed with the ideas of Brahmin superriority. According to Ramdas, even a fallen Brahmin was superior to men of other castes in heaven and on earth ; nay, a Brahmin was one to whom even the gods made an obeisance."<sup>1</sup>

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" Democracy is quite different from a Republic as well as from Parliamentary Government. The roots of democracy lie not in the form of Government, Parliamentary or otherwise. A democracy is more than a form of Government. It is primarily a mode of associated living. The roots of Democracy are to be searched in the social relationship, in the terms of associated life between the people who form a society.

What dose the word ' Society ' connot ? To put it briefly when we speak of 'Society,' we conceive of it as one by its very nature. The qualities which accompany this unity are praiseworthy community of purpose and desire for welfare, loyalty to public ends mutuality of sympathy and co-operation.

Are these ideals to be found in Indian Society ? The Indian Society does not consist of individuals. It consists of an innumerable collection of castes which are exclusive in their life and have no common experience to share and have no bond of sympathy. Given this fact it is not necessary to argue the point. The existence of the Caste System is a standing denial of the existence of those ideals of society and therefore of democracy " .

—(P. No. 519-520)

— Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.