

Timeline of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar



Dr. Ambedkar as a student



Dr. Ambedkar as a barrister



Dr. Ambedkar speaking at an event



Dr. Ambedkar with President Rajendra Prasad and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru



Dr. Ambedkar as India's first Law Minister



Dr. Ambedkar with his wife Ramabai



Dr. B R Ambedkar's Memorial in New Delhi

Birth and Childhood

- B R Ambedkar was born on 14 April, 1891 in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh.
- His father's name was Ramji Maloji Sakpal. He was a Subedar in the Indian Army and posted at Mhow cantonment, Madhya Pradesh.
- B R Ambedkar's father was a strict and pious man. He believed in the importance of education, and made sure that all his children enrolled in the Army schools. Along with his children, he often sang devotional songs composed by Namdev, Tukaram, Moropant and Mukteshwar, and read stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.
- Ambedkar's mother's name was Bhimabai Murbadkar Sakpal. B R Ambedkar was the fourteenth and last child of his parents.
- His family was of Marathi background from the town of Ambavade, in the Ratnagiri district of modern-day Maharashtra. His family was economically disadvantaged and since they belonged to a backward caste, they were subjected to socio-economic discrimination.
- Ramji Sakpal retired in 1894 and the family moved to Satara two years later. Shortly after their move, Ambedkar's mother died. The children were cared for by their paternal aunt Meerabai, and lived in difficult circumstances. After a while, his father remarried and the family shifted to Mumbai.

Early Education

- Both Ambedkar's father and grandfather worked with the army of the British East India Company. This ensured a good education for Ambedkar in the army-run schools. Education would have otherwise been denied to him by the virtue of his caste.
- Although able to attend the Army School, Ambedkar and other children from similar backward castes, were not allowed to sit inside the class and given little attention or assistance by the teachers. Ambedkar was required to sit on a gunny sack which he had to take home with himself.
- Even if they needed to drink water, someone from a higher caste would have to pour that water from a height as they were not allowed to touch either the water or the vessel that contained it. This task was usually performed for the young Ambedkar by the school peon, and if the peon was not available then he had to go without water.
- After his retirement, Bhimrao's father settled in Satara, Maharashtra and Bhimrao was enrolled in the local school. Here, he had to sit on the floor in one corner in the classroom and teachers would not touch his notebooks.
- Bhimrao was an average student. When many of his classmates left for good jobs in Bombay, he too longed to be independent. He realized that if he ever were to be successful, he would have to concentrate more on his studies. He became interested in reading, and read not just the prescribed books in school, but much more.
- In 1897, Ambedkar's family moved to Mumbai. Ambedkar became the only student from a backward caste, to enroll at the Elphinstone High School. Even there, he had to face caste prejudice and discrimination.
- In 1906, his marriage was arranged with nine-year-old Ramabai. Ambedkar passed his matriculation examination in 1907.
- The following year he entered Elphinstone College, which was affiliated to the University of Bombay, becoming the first from his community to do so.

Higher Education

- By 1912, he obtained his degree in economics and political science from Bombay University, and prepared to take up employment with the Baroda state government. Very soon however, he had to return to Mumbai to see his ailing father, who died on 2 February, 1913.
- The same year, he was awarded a Baroda State Scholarship by the Gaekwad of Baroda – Sayaji Rao III, and Ambedkar went to Columbia University in America, for his post-graduate education. For the first time in his life, Ambedkar did not face any discrimination on the basis of his caste. He passed his M.A. exams in June 1915, with a major in Economics.
- From America, Ambedkar proceeded to London to study economics and political science. In 1917, his scholarship came to an end and the Baroda government called him back. The Maharaja of Baroda appointed Ambedkar as his 'Defense Secretary'. Despite his education, once again Ambedkar faced resistance and prejudice because of his caste.
- Ambedkar returned to Bombay in November 1917. He tried to earn his living as a private tutor and an accountant. He even started his own consultancy, which failed because people would not give him any work because of his caste. Finally, Ambedkar began working as a Professor of Political Economics at the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics.
- With the help of Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur, a sympathizer of the cause for the upliftment of the backward castes, he started a fortnightly newspaper, the 'Mooknayak' (Dumb Hero) on January 31, 1920. The Maharaja also convened many meetings and conferences of people from the backward castes which Ambedkar addressed.
- In September 1920, after accumulating sufficient funds, Ambedkar went back to London to complete his studies. He completed his Masters in Economics in 1921 and became a barrister and got a Doctorate in Science in 1923. In 1927, he was awarded a PhD from the Columbia University in America.

Work and Political Career

- Upon returning to India, Ambedkar started practicing law at the Bombay High Court. Side by side, he continued working for the upliftment of the backward castes. His first organized attempt to achieve this was the creation of the 'Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha' in 1924. This organization intended to promote the educational status and socio-economic welfare of the backward castes.
- In 1932, British announced the formation of separate election mechanism for the backward castes. While Ambedkar was in favour of the same, Gandhiji opposed it saying that such an arrangement would divide the Hindu community into two groups. On 25 September 1932, an agreement known as 'Poona Pact' was signed between Ambedkar (on behalf of the backward castes among Hindus) and Madan Mohan Malaviya (on behalf of the other Hindus). The agreement gave reserved seats for the backward castes, within the existing election system.
- In 1935, Ambedkar was appointed principal of the Government Law College, Bombay, a position he held for two years. Settling in Mumbai, Ambedkar oversaw the construction of a house, and stocked his personal library with more than 50,000 books. His wife Ramabai died after a long illness in the same year.
- In 1936, Ambedkar founded the 'Independent Labour Party', which contested in the 1937 Bombay election to the Central Legislative Assembly for the 13 reserved and 4 general seats and securing 11 and 3 seats respectively.
- Ambedkar published his book 'Annihilation of Caste' in the same year. It spoke strongly against the caste system.
- All through this time, Ambedkar continued to work towards the upliftment of people belonging to the backward castes. For example, he played a key role in the creation of some specific legal provisions for the abolishment of exploitative employment practices.

Work and Political Career

- Ambedkar transformed his political party into the 'All-India Scheduled Castes Federation' and in 1946, participated in the elections held for the 'Constituent Assembly of India'. However, they could not perform very well.
- Upon India's independence on 15 August 1947, the new Congress-led government invited Ambedkar to serve as the nation's first Law Minister, which he accepted. On 29 August, he was appointed Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee and charged by the Constituent Assembly to write India's new Constitution.
- On 15 April 1948, Dr. Ambedkar married Dr. Sharda Kabir in Delhi. Ambedkar was now diabetic and increasingly ill, and she took care of him for the rest of his life.
- In November 1948, the Draft Constitution with its 315 articles and 8 schedules was formally introduced to the Constituent Assembly. In November 1949, the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution.
- Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet in 1951 and contested an election independently to the Lok Sabha, in 1952. He was however defeated in the Bombay (North Central) constituency by a little-known Narayan Sadoba Kajrolkar. He was appointed to the Rajya Sabha in March 1952.

Death and Legacy

- In 1956, from June to October, Ambedkar was bedridden at his Delhi residence. His eyes were failing and he suffered from the side effects of the drugs he was given for his diabetes. On 6 December 1956, Dr. B R Ambedkar passed away at his home in Delhi.
- A memorial for Dr. Ambedkar was established at his Delhi house at 26 Alipur Road. His birthdate is celebrated as a public holiday known as 'Ambedkar Jayanti' or 'Bhim Jayanti'.
- Dr. B R Ambedkar is looked upon as one of the greatest political leaders of our country. He dedicated his life to the upliftment of the backward castes. As a recognition of his efforts in the making of our Constitution, he is known as the 'Architect of the Indian Constitution'. He has left behind a great body of work in the form of his writings. There is no doubt that his life and legacy, will continue to inspire generations of Indians to come.
- In order to mark his tremendous contribution to the Indian nation, in 1990, Dr. B R Ambedkar was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna.