

## **NAGPUR ALS „ZENTRALER ORT“ DES NEO-BUDDHISMUS**

Am 13. Oktober 1935 hatte Dr. Ambedkar erstmals erklärt (AHIR 1988:104), daß er nicht als Hindu sterben werde: „Unfortunately, I was born a Hindu. It was beyond my power to prevent that, but I solemnly assure you that I will not die a Hindu.“

Den endgültigen Entschluß, sich 1956 in dem weltweit als „Buddha Jayanti“ gefeierten 2500. Jahr nach dem Eingehen Buddhas ins Mahaparinirvana (gemäß Theravada-Tradition im Vollmond des Mai im Jahr 544 v. Chr.) ganz formell zum Buddhismus zu bekennen und öffentlich „Zuflucht“ zu nehmen, faßte Dr. Ambedkar 1954 in Mandalay, das er anlässlich seiner Teilnahme an der „Third Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists“ in Rangoon besuchte. Als Termin wählte er den 14. Oktober, „Vijaya Dashmi „ (AHIR 1988:106):

This day was chosen as it was the auspicious day of ‘Dhamma Vijaya’, the day on which Asoka the Great had embraced Buddhism in B.C. 262 and had declared that henceforth he would conquer the people by love and persuasion instead of by force.

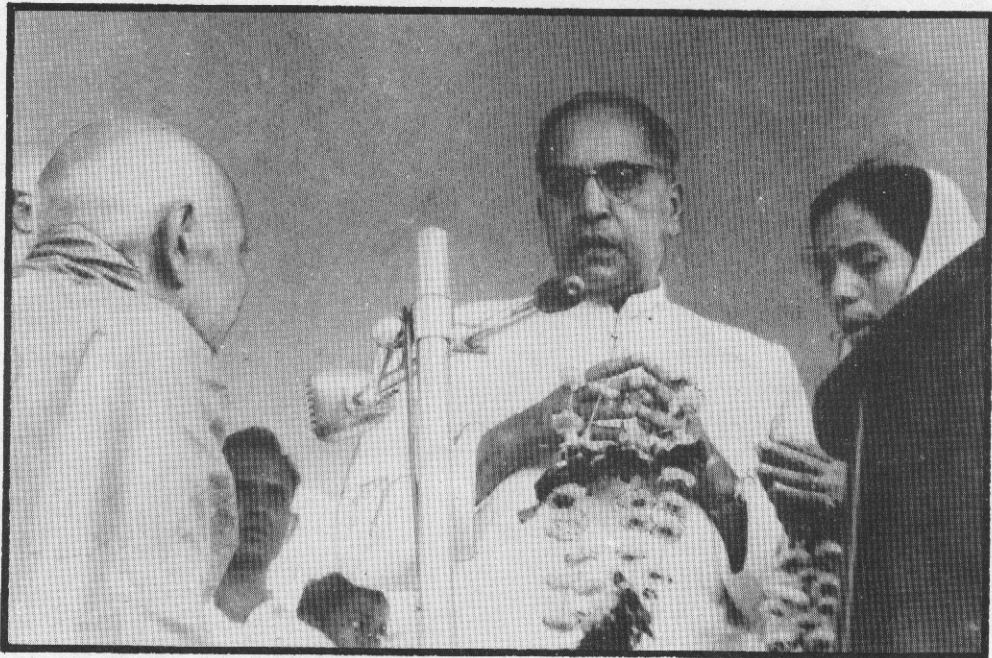
Nagpur als Ort des historischen Ereignisses wurde gewählt, weil die „Nagas“ nach Meinung Ambedkars diejenigen waren, die den Buddhismus in Indien am nachhaltigsten verbreiten halfen. Dazu sagte er (AHIR 1988:107):

Those who have studied the Buddhist history of India know that the people who worked in the beginning for the propagation of the religion of Buddha were the ‘Nagas’. It were the Nagas who spread the religion of the Buddha throughout the world. These people were predominantly the inhabitants of Nagpur. Through the soil of this city there flowed a river named the ‘Nag’. It appears that the Nagas lived on the banks of this river. This is mainly the reason for selecting Nagpur for this great occasion.

SANGHARAKSHITA hat uns eine detaillierte Analyse der Zeremonie und des Umfeldes gegeben (1986:127-144). Ich folge hier jedoch dem knappen Bericht eines anderen Augenzeugen, der sie so beschreibt (AHIR 1989:145/46):

On the bright morning of Sunday, 14 October 1956, lakhs of people, men and women, who had been pouring into the Nagpur city by train

**Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayak Gana  
and Bahujan Hitay celebrate  
DR. AMBEDKAR CENTENARY YEAR  
APRIL 14th, 1990 – APRIL 14th, 1991**



**Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism in 1956**

Angeleitet von U Chandramani nehmen Dr. Ambedkar und seine Frau  
Zuflucht zu Buddha, Dhamma und Sangha

and bus from all parts of Maharashtra or had trekked on foot hundreds of miles, prepared themselves for the ceremony wearing white clothes. Procession after procession of white clad men and women with Buddhist flags in their hands made their way to the Deeksha Bhoomi or the Initiation Ground. By 9 a.m. they had reached the site and turned into a vast ocean of humanity.

When Babasaheb Ambedkar, accompanied by his wife, and N.C. Rattu, his private secretary, reached the pandal, the vast crowd lustily cheered their uncrowned king. Wearing the white silk dhoti and white coat, he was seated at the dias next to Venerable U Chandramani Maha Thera, the oldest and seniormost Buddhist monk in India. Seated in the second row were Devapriya Valisinha, General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, Venerable monks, and some leading members of the Buddhist Society of India founded by Babasaheb. About four lakhs people witnessed the auspicious ceremony which began at 9.40 a.m. The 80 year old Ven. U Chandramani of Kushinagar administered in Pali to Dr. Ambedkar and his wife, the Tisarana (Triple-Refuge). Standing solemnly before the shining image of Lord Buddha, they recited three times „Buddham saranam gacchami, Dhammam saranam gacchami, Sangham saranam gacchami.“ The three Refuges were followed by the Five Precepts (Panca-Sila). They repeated the same in Marathi. Then they vowed thrice with clasped hands before the Buddha image and offered white lotus flowers before it. With this, the conversion ceremony was over. When Dr. Ambedkar's entry into Buddhism was announced, the vast concourse of humanity gathered there gave thunderous applause and raised full-throated cries of 'Victory to Lord Buddha', 'Victory to Babasaheb Ambedkar'. Thereafter, Dr. Ambedkar was profusely garlanded by D. Valisinha and other dignitaries present there.

The historic Nagpur ceremony marked the end of a pilgrim's journey. Addressing the vast gathering, Dr. Ambedkar, now a Buddhist, said in an emotional voice: „I started the movement of renouncing the Hindu religion in 1935 and since then I have been continuously struggling. This conversion has given me enormous satisfaction and pleasure unimaginable. I feel as if I have been liberated from hell.

Nach der öffentlichen Zufluchtnahme von Ambedkar und seiner Frau folgte die „Massen-Konversion“: Mehrere Hunderttausend standen auf und wiederholten die von Ambedkar vorgeschene Dreifache Zuflucht und die Fünf Sila; sodann aber sprachen sie auch noch die

zweiundzwanzig Gelübde nach, die Ambedkar verfaßt hatte (vgl. hier Seite 7 f.), um deutlich zu machen, daß für ihn und seine Nachfolger die Hinwendung zum Buddhismus zunächst (und vor allem?) eine Abwendung vom Hinduismus bedeutet.

Am nächsten Tag, dem 15. Oktober 1956, folgten nochmals mehr als einhunderttausend Menschen, die am Vortag nicht rechtzeitig für die Zeremonie Nagpur erreicht hatten, ihrem „Babasaheb“ und sprachen die Zufluchtnahme und die zweiundzwanzig Gelübde ihm nach. In einer anschließenden, mehr als dreistündigen freien Rede (englische Übersetzung in Auszügen bei AHIR 1997:115-133) markierte Ambedkar für sich und seine Kasten-Brüder und -Schwestern den Leidensweg, den sie und alle anderen „Unberührbaren“ Hindus hatten gehen müssen, bevor sie jetzt endlich als Buddhisten „neu geboren“ wurden.

Vier Wochen nach der spektakulären Massenkonversion nahm Dr. Ambedkar an der 4. Konferenz der World Fellowship of Buddhists vom 15.-21. November in Kathmandu teil und sprach zu den Delegierten, von denen er stürmisch als Neubegründer des Buddhismus in Indien gefeiert wurde, über das mitten im „Kalten Krieg“ so aktuelle Thema „Buddhism and Communism“ (Text bei AHIR 1997:135-143). Auf dem Rückweg besuchte er als buddhistischer Pilger am 23.11.56 erstmals Bodh Gaya, fuhr aber von dort noch am gleichen Abend mit der Bahn weiter nach Sarnath. Dort blieb er drei Tage, besuchte die buddhistischen Gedenkstätten und die Mulagandhakuti Vihara, und ermahnte mehr als 150 zu seinem Besuch versammelte Mönche aus verschiedenen Ländern Asiens, sich ihrer neuen Aufgabe als Vermittler des Dhamma in Indien bewußt zu werden. Von Sarnath flog er am 27.11. nach Gorakhpur und besuchte von dort aus den Mahaparinirvana-Tempel in Kushinagar. Am 29.11. kam er zurück nach Delhi, wo er am frühen Morgen des 6. Dezember 1956 starb. Sein Leichnam wurde nach Bombay überführt und dort nach buddhistischem Ritual am 7. Dezember eingeäschert (AHIR 1989: 150/51):

More than 500,000 people joined the funeral procession, the biggest such procession ever seen in the city of Bombay, and it took nearly four hours to cover a two mile distance from Rajgraha, his residence,

in Dadar to the local burning ghat, near Shivaji Park. Babasaheb had planned a mass conversion ceremony in Bombay on 16 December. To fulfill this wish, about 100,000 people insisted that they be admitted into the fold of Buddhism. Hence, an impromptu conversion ceremony was organised at the cremation ground, and they were administered the Three Refuges and Five Precepts on the spot by Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan.

Schon bald nach seinem Tod forderten die neo-buddhistischen Anhänger Ambedkars, daß in Nagpur eine Gedenkstätte für ihn und zur Erinnerung an das historische Ereignis der Massenkonversion errichtet werden solle. Am 30. Mai 1961 übergab Yashwant Rao Chavan, der Ministerpräsident von Maharashtra, das zwölf Acre große Gelände der damaligen Zeremonie an das „Dr. Babasaheb Smarak Samiti“ von Nagpur, so daß mit den Arbeiten an der Gedenkstätte begonnen werden konnte (AHIR 1998:192/93):

In 1963, a bust of Dr. Ambedkar was installed at the historic site standing where he had embraced Buddhism, and given a clarion call to his people to do so. The grand Memorial Stupa which had been under construction at Deeksha for more than 30 years has since been completed, and is the greatest land mark in the architectural heritage of Nagpur. Dr. Babasaheb Memorial College established at Deeksha Bhoomi in 1964 has since become a premier educational institution.

The Deeksha Bhoomi also has a Buddha Vihara, Bhikkhu Niwas, and a flourishing Bodhi Tree, all established by Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan, a Punjabi Buddhist monk, who stayed at Deeksha Bhoomi from 1969 to 1982, and greatly made Deeksha Bhoomi a living religious centre.

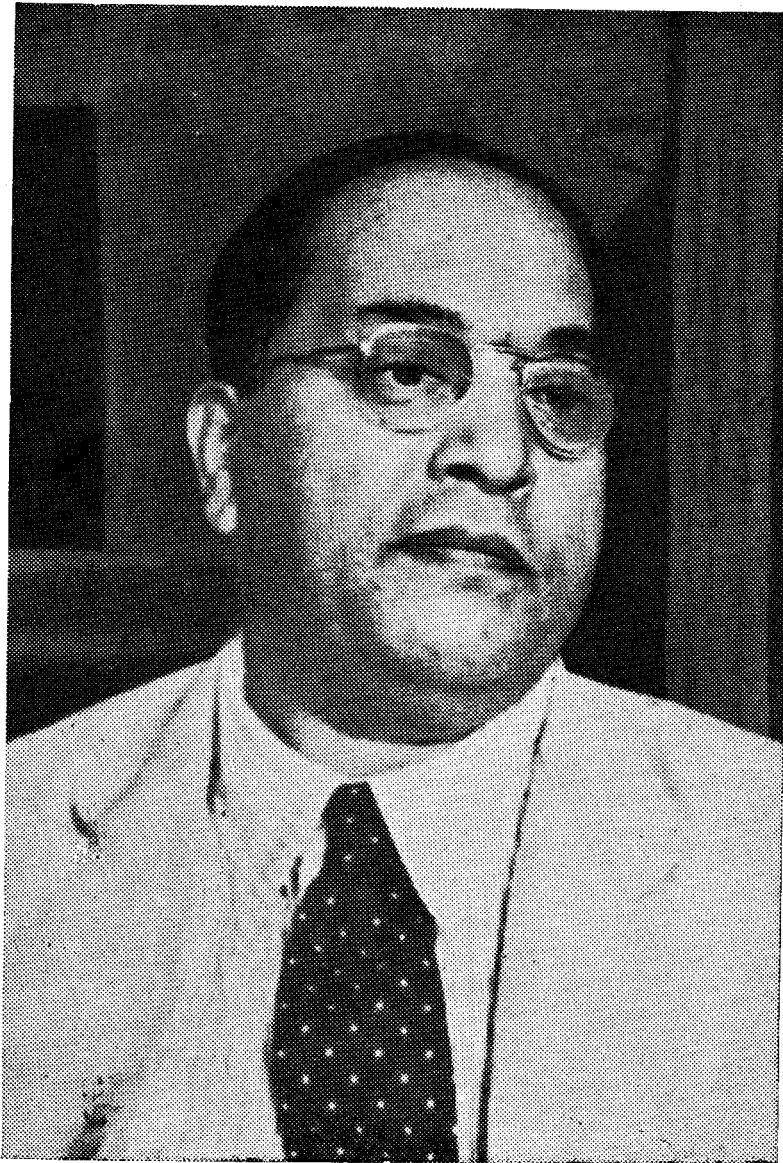
Nagpur, the capital of neo-Buddhist movement initiated by Dr. Ambedkar in 1956, has now over 40 Buddha Viharas.

So wurde Nagpur zum „zentralen Ort“ der neobuddhistischen Bewegung und es ist rückblickend verständlich, warum Buddhisten aus Maharashtra - und nur dort sind ja „Buddhisten in Indien heute“ in nennenswerter Zahl überhaupt anzutreffen - eher selten bis ins ferne Bodh Gaya im Bundesland Bihar fahren: Ein Land, in dem es unter 86,3 Millionen Einwohnern 1991 nur sage und schreibe 3518 Buddhisten gab (1971 waren es wenigstens noch 4806 gewesen, vgl. S. 4); ein Land, das zwar mit seinem Namen noch an die Zeit der vielen

---

**Birth Centenary  
of  
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar**

**Founder, People's Education Society, Bombay**



**14th April 1891**

**14th April 1991**

Photo Dr. Ambedkar, etwa aus dem Jahr 1954

Viharas erinnert, heute aber als Inbegriff für Rückständigkeit und Korruption gilt, und in dem Schlägertrupp der das Land beherrschenden „landed gentry“ immer wieder zu massiven Vergeltungsmaßnahmen gegen „Unberührbare“ ausholen können, falls die es wagen, legale Rechte einzufordern: So etwa am 1. Dezember 1997 im Massaker von Laksmanpur-Bathe, als dort die Quartiere der „Unberührbaren“ in einer Nacht-und-Nebel Aktion niedergemacht und mehr als siebenzig Personen getötet wurden (DALIT, Vol. 3, No. 1, Februar 1998). Ein Land also, in dem es nicht ratsam ist, nach Einbruch der Dunkelheit zu reisen, und in dem daher der große Bahnhof von Gaya oft einem Notaufnahmelager gleicht, weil Passagiere der frühen Morgenzüge vorsichtshalber schon am Vorabend eintreffen und nachts auf den Perrons schlafen.

Nein, das ist wahrhaftig kein bevorzugtes Reisegebiet für Inder aus ungleich wohlhabenderen Regionen von Zentral- und Süd-Indien: Kommen sie das erste Mal mit der Bahn in den hohen Norden der „Hindi-Speaker“ und „Bihari“, sind sie oft noch mehr über die so offensichtliche Armut, den Schmutz und Staub entsetzt als die gelegentlichen Touristen, für die solche „Zustände“ ja „im Preis inbegriffen“ sind und mitgebrachte Klischees bestätigen. Gewiß, Bodh Gaya wird als „heiliger Ort“ des Buddhismus generell verehrt, doch das Zentrum ihrer neuen religiösen Identität als Neo-Buddhisten liegt in Nagpur: Von hier aus nahm in der Nachfolge von „Babasaheb“ ihre „Neugeburt“ ihren Anfang und die Bildungseinrichtungen der 1945 von Dr. Ambedkar gegründeten „People’s Education Society“ ermöglichten ihnen den sozialen Aufstieg.

Die eindrucksvolle Gründungs- und Erfolgsgeschichte der „PES“ wird von D.L. RAMTEKE (1983:221-226) und neuerdings auch Jayashree GOKHALE (1993:195-205) beschrieben. Ich verweise hier auf die kurze Selbstdarstellung, die R.R. BOLE als Präsident der PES anlässlich der Jubiläumsfeiern zum einhundertsten Geburtstag von Dr. Ambedkar 1991 im „Milind College of Science“ auf dem „Nagasena Vana“ genannten Campus der „Milinda Mahavidyalaya“ (Universität) in Aurangabad gab (vgl. S. 104 und 105).

Nach Schaffung der ersten Bildungseinrichtung zur gezielten Förderung von Angehörigen der „Backward Classes“ und „Scheduled Castes“ in Bombay hatte sich Ambedkar für Aurangabad als neues Zentrum für die Bildungsarbeit der PES entschieden. Nicht nur daß es in einer damals als besonders „backward“ geltenden Region der ehemaligen Herrschaft des Nizzam von Hyderabad lag, sondern vor allem auch deswegen, weil es ein Zentrum der „glorious past“ des Buddhismus in Maharashtra ist: Zu den weltberühmten Felstempeln von Ellora und Ajanta ist es nicht weit, und nur drei Kilometer nördlich der Stadt künden zwölf weniger bekannte, aber deswegen nicht weniger eindrucksvolle Felsklöster aus dem 2. bis 7. Jhdt. n.Chr. vom einstmaligen Einfluß des Buddhismus (AHIR 1988: 56/58) im Umland.

Der Grundstein für die „Milinda Mahavidyalaya“ - so genannt nach dem Griechenkönig Milinda, dessen skeptische Fragen an den buddhistischen Mönch Nagasena zum klassischen Pali-Kanon gehören: Im gleichen kritischen Geist sollten auch die Studenten der neuen Universität auf dem „Nagasena-Campus“ erzogen werden (vgl. MILINDAPANHA 1985) - wurde am 1. September 1951 durch Rajendra Prasad, den ersten Staatspräsidenten des unabhängigen Indien, gelegt. In seiner Fest-Ansprache machte Dr. Ambedkar deutlich (RAMTEKE 1983:223/224), welche zentrale Rolle der Erziehungssektor für die Vermittlung von Aufstiegschancen habe:

Coming as I do from the lowest order of the Hindu Society, I know what is the value of education. The problem of raising the lower order is deemed to be economic. This is a great mistake. The problem of raising the lower order in India is not to feed them, to clothe them and to make them serve the higher classes as the ancient ideal of this country. The problem of the lower order is to remove from them that inferiority complex which has stunted their growth and made them slaves to others, to create in them the consciousness of the significance of their lives for themselves and for the country, of which they have been cruelly robbed by the existing social order. Nothing can achieve this purpose except the spread of higher education. This is in my opinion the penance of our social troubles.

„Babasaheb Ambedkar“ wird von seinen Anhängern heute als ein BODHISATTVA verehrt, auch auf dem Campus der „Milinda Maha

पीपल्स एज्युकेशन सोसायटी (मुंबई) चे  
संस्थापक



भारतरत्न बोधिसत्व डॉ. बाबासाहेब आंबेडकर

M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc. (London), L.L.D. (Columbia), D.Litt. (Osmania), Barristor-At-Law.

जन्म

१४ एप्रिल १८९१

महापरिनिर्वाण

६ डिसेंबर १९५६

Bharatratna Bodhisatva Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar,  
geboren 14. April 1891, Parinirvana 6. Dezember 1956

vidyalaya“ (vgl. S. 101). Doch vielleicht noch wichtiger als seine Anleitungen zur religiösen Emanzipation von den Fesseln des Hinduismus ist für Professoren und Studenten die Botschaft des „EDUCATE, AGITATE AND ORGANIZE“ (vgl. S. 106 und 107).

Ganz in diesem Sinne feierte auch das „Offizielle Indien“ Dr. Ambedkar: 1990 wurde ihm als „chief architect of the Indian constitution“ der höchste Staatsorden „Bharat Ratna“ posthum verliehen und an seinem 100. Geburtstag am 21. April 1991 eine lebensgroße Büste im Plenarsaal des Parlaments in New-Delhi enthüllt. Eine aus diesem Anlaß später dann herausgegebene Broschüre des Ministry of Information and Broadcasting vermittelt, wie Dr. Ambedkar „integriert“ wurde in die offiziöse Geschichtsschreibung (vgl. S. 108-117): Seine besondere Herausforderung als Stifter einer religiösen Bewegung gerät so in den Hintergrund. Wie aber sah er selbst die zukünftige Rolle des Sangha, wie ist er heute verfaßt, und inwiefern werden seine Mitglieder den neuen Aufgaben gerecht, die Ambedkar ihnen zuschreiben wollte?



BABA SAHEB DR. AMBEDKAR, FATHER OF FREE INDIA'S CONSTITUTION, DEDICATES IT TO THE NATION.

Publisher & Distributors  
The Rashtriya Samiti of India (Rajni) | Delhi State  
Bultha Vihar, Ambedkar Bhawan, New Delhi-110055 (INDIA)  
Phone : 011-7613754

© SHANTI SWAROOP BAUCH  
Art Work  
Chitrangal  
Printed in India

Dr. Ambedkar übergibt die Verfassung des unabhängigen Indien  
an Staatspräsident Rajendra Prasad

**MR. R. R. BHOLE,**  
**Chairman,**  
**PEOPLE'S EDUCATION SOCIETY, BOMBAY.**

**Till 1956**

At the time when Babasheb passed away in 1956 our Society was conducting the following Institutions and building the Foundation of the Democratic and Socialistic set up our country by making the unprivileged aware of their self respect, human rights and liberties.

1. Siddharth College of Arts & Science, Bombay.
2. Siddharth College of Commerce and Economics, Bombay
3. Siddharth College of Law, Bombay.
4. Milind Mahavidyalaya Aurangabad.
5. Milind Multipurpose High School, Aurangabad.
6. Siddharth Night High School Bombay.
7. Sant Gadge Maharaj Vidyarthi Vasthigana, Pandharpur.

**After 1956 Institutions and our own Buildings**

After 1956 our Society continued its activities to the weaker and Backward people of our country and has now added more Institutions all over Maharashtra as well as at Bangalore and other places. Colleges in many buildings controlled by us of many faculties, Vocational

of Courses, High Schools, Hostels, Labor force, Libraries and

has also purchased large areas of Land for the purpose at different places. After the death of Dr. Babasheb we have, among other assets, added after purchase construction at high cost of the followings:

1. Siddharth College of Communication, Bombay
2. Siddharth Institute of Languages and Administration, Bombay.
3. Dr. Ambedkar College of Commerce and Economics, Wadala, Bombay.
4. Dr. Ambedkar College of Law, Wadala, Bombay
5. Siddharth English School, Wadala, Bombay.
6. Siddharth Vihar, Hostel, Wadala, Bombay.

**New Bombay**

1. Dr. Babasheb Ambedkar Public School in an acquired high cost building.
2. PES's Jr. College of Education.
3. PES's Marathi Medium Secondary School, in another acquired high cost big building.
4. RES's Marathi Medium Primary School.

Bildungseinrichtungen der People's Education Society

## Aurangabad

Where Baba wanted the Capital to be because it is Central and more secure :

1. Milind College of Science
2. Laboratory Building for Milind College of Arts
3. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Arts and Commerce, Aurangabad : Constructed is Hostel Library and Canteen buildings and Residential Quarters for its staff members.
4. Hostel for Working Women
5. Dr. Ambedkar College of Law
6. College of Physical Education with all Gymkhana arrangements.
7. Matoshri Ramabai Ambedkar High School after acquiring large area of land and constructing a building :
8. College Girls Hostel
9. Rang Bhavan Auditorium
10. Milind Primary School

## Mahad

Where Baba burnt to ashes Manusmriti, which enslaved the untouchables; and where Baba first fired the gun for struggle of human liberty for Untouchables by drinking water in the common tanks :

1. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Arts, Science and Commerce with its Hostel building

2. Subedar Sawakar Vidyarthi Ashram.

## Pune

Where Baba signed the Poona Pact with Mahatma Gandhi which were then recognised for first time the Scheduled Castes as a separate entity, and their right to separate seats reserved in Legislature first time in thousands of years in Federal India. :

1. Dr. Ambedkar College of Arts and Commerce
2. P.E.S.'s Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary School

## Nanded

1. Nagsen Vidyalaya and Jr. College
2. Nagsen Primary School

## Pandharpur

Blessings from Ghatge Maharaj.

1. Gautam Vidyalaya

## Bangalore

Where Baba decided to establish Buddhist Seminary and Institute for spreading Buddhism in India.

1. Nagasena Vidyalaya
2. Seminary and Institute of Research ( Foundation laid )

Although considerable facilities were provided to the cause of Baba by us with the active and devoted assistance of all the heads of the institutions and their staff.

## An Appeal

April the 14th, 1891 will remain a GOLDEN LETTER DAY in the annals of Indian history. It was on this day that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, popularly known to millions as Dr. Babasahab Ambedkar was born to give the millions of oppressed masses of India a new vision of self-respect, self-reliance and self-identity which was denied to them for centuries.

A political leader, a social revolutionary, a religious evangelist. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar has left the impress of his powerful personality on several spheres of activity. As the first Law Minister of Free India, he was the architect of the Constitution of India which is a permanent monument to his legal genius.

He played many important parts on the stage of life. His popular image as an iconoclast represented only a part of his personality; for he was also a constructive statesman, who regarded education as a nation-building activity.

With the true vision of a sage, he founded the People's Education Society on the 8th of July 1945, the purpose of which he set out is as follows :

"The People's Education Society's objective is not merely to give education, but to give education in such a manner as to promote intellectual, moral and social democracy. This is what modern India needs and this is what all well wishers of India must promote."

He firmly believed that education was the only effective lever for the uplift of the down-trodden.

As an educationist, Babasaheb has carved an abiding niche for himself in the temple of fame. He firmly believed that it was only through education the suffering Indian masses could be made conscious of their rights as human beings. He said to his people :

|| "My final words of advice to you is educate, agitate and organise, have faith in yourself. With justice on our side, I do not see how we can lose our battle. It is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of the human personality."

Under its well-spread umbrella, People's Education Society runs 12 University affiliated Colleges, 6 of which are affiliated to the University of Bombay, 5 to the Marathwada University and one to University of Pune imparting University education to as many as 30,000 students of whom over 15,000 belong to the under privileged Classes. Besides these, the Society runs many High Schools, Diploma Institutes and Hostels.



Das Vermächtnis in Hindi als Postkarte



**Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb  
Dr. BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR**  
Architect of Social Justice

Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar

## **Bharat Ratna Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar**

In 1990, the Bharat Ratna was presented to late Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, chief architect of the Indian Constitution. The same year Dr Ambedkar's life-size portrait was also unveiled in the Central Hall of Parliament. The period from 14th April, 1990 to 14th April, 1991 was observed as 'Year of Social Justice' in the memory of 'Babasaheb', the champion of the poor and downtrodden.

### **Genius Par Excellence**

Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar was born on 14th April, 1891 in Mahu Cantt in Madhya Pradesh. He was the fourteenth child of his parents. Young Bhimrao's father, who was serving in the Indian Army at the time, constantly encouraged his children, specially Bhimrao to pursue his studies.

The life of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar was marked by struggles but he demonstrated that every hurdle in life can be surmounted with talent and a firm determination. The biggest barrier in his life was the caste system of Hindu society for which the family in which he was born was considered as 'untouchable'.

In the year 1908, young Bhimrao passed the Matriculation examination from Bombay University with flying colours. It was a unique and rare accomplishment for an 'untouchable' child, which led to his being felicitated at a public meeting.

Four years later, he graduated in Political Science and Economics from Bombay University and got a job

in Baroda. Around the same time his father passed away. Although in a sad state of mind, Bhimrao decided to accept the opportunity to go to U.S.A. for study at Columbia University for which he was awarded a scholarship by the Maharaja of Baroda. This achievement was unprecedented but he did not let matters rest there. He was of the firm view that knowledge was power and without this power he could not break the shackles which forced millions of 'untouchables' to live in virtual slavery. By this time he had personal experience of this and had realized that these shackles were quite formidable.

Bhimrao remained abroad from 1913 to 1917 and again from 1920 to 1923 and when he finally returned to India he was thirty two years old. During this period he had established himself as an eminent intellectual. Columbia University had awarded him the Ph. D for his thesis which was later published in a book form under the title "The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India". But his first published article was "Castes in India - Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development." He presented this paper at a seminar on Anthropology. During his sojourn in London from 1920 to 1923, he also completed his thesis titled "The Problem of the Rupee" for which he was awarded the degree of D.Sc. Before his departure for London he had taught at a college in Bombay and also brought out a Marathi weekly whose title was, 'Mook Nayak' (meaning 'Dumb Hero').

By the time he returned to India in April 1923, Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar had equipped himself fully for waging a war against the practice of untouchability on

**Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar**

---

behalf of the 'untouchables' and the downtrodden. In the meanwhile the political situation in India had undergone substantial changes and the freedom struggle in the country had made significant progress. From then onwards till the achievement of Independence in 1947, Dr. Ambedkar's life is intricately linked to the history of modern India.

### **Saviour of the downtrodden**

While Bhimrao was an ardent patriot on one hand, he was also the saviour of the oppressed, women and poor on the other. He fought for them throughout his life. In 1923, he set up the "Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha" (Outcastes' Welfare Council) which was devoted to spreading education and culture amongst the downtrodden, improving their economic status and raising matters concerning their problems in the proper forums to focus attention on them and finding solutions to them.

The problems of the downtrodden were centuries old and difficult to overcome. Their entry into temples was forbidden. They could not draw water from public wells and ponds. Their admission in schools were prohibited. Between 1927 and 1932 Dr Bhimrao launched a non-violent but resolute movement to secure the right of entry into places of worship and for drawing water from public wells and ponds. Two of these agitations were noteworthy. In 1927, he led the Mahad march at the Chowdar Tank in Colaba, near Bombay, to give the 'untouchables' the right to draw water from the public tank where he burnt copies of the "Manusmriti" publicly. This marked the beginning of

als Architekt sozialer Gerechtigkeit aus regierungsamtlicher Sicht

---

the anti-caste and anti-priest movement. The temple entry movement launched by Dr. Ambedkar in 1930 at Kalaram Temple, Nasik is another landmark in the struggle for human rights and social justice.

In the meantime, Ramsay McDonald announced the 'Communal Award' as a result of which in the following year several communities including the 'depressed classes' were given the right to have separate electorates. This was a part of the overall design of the British to divide and rule. Gandhiji wanted to defeat this design and went on a fast unto death to oppose it.

On 24th September, 1932 Dr Ambedkar and Gandhiji arrived at an understanding which became the famous Poona Pact. According to this pact, in addition to the agreement on electoral constituencies, reservations were provided for 'untouchables' in Government jobs and legislative assemblies. The provision of separate electorates was dispensed with. Commenting upon the circumstances under which he had to accept this compromise Dr. Ambedkar said in one of his books, "I had two options before me. One was to protect the 'untouchables' and the rights granted to them by the British Prime Minister, Ramsay McDonald in the Communal Award and the other was to save the life of Mahatma Gandhi as a member of human society. I accepted the voice of humanity and saved the life of Mahatma Gandhi by agreeing to such modifications in the Communal Award as would satisfy him". Despite this, Dr. Ambedkar was misunderstood and maligned by both supporters and detractors of the Communal Award.

Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar

---

Thus the Communal Award was modified by the Poona Pact which carved a clear and definite position for the downtrodden on the political scene of the country. It opened up opportunities of education and government service for them and also gave them the right to vote.

Dr Ambedkar criticised British rule and made relentless efforts to remove social, economic, educational and legal bottlenecks for the benefit of the downtrodden. He was convinced that the interests of the downtrodden can be protected only by creating separate constituencies even if it was only for a limited period. This was the cause of his conflict with Gandhiji and the Congress party. In 1932 these differences came into the open and were eventually resolved in the Poona Pact.

Dr Ambedkar attended all the three Round Table Conferences in London and, always, forcefully projected his views in the interests of the 'untouchables'. He exhorted the downtrodden sections to raise their living standards and to acquire as much political power as possible. He was of the view that there was no future for 'untouchables' in the Hindu religion and they should change their religion, if need be. In 1935, he publicly proclaimed "I was born a Hindu because I had no control over this but I shall not die a Hindu". He, thus, hinted at his desire for conversion to Buddhism. The same year he was appointed principal of Government Law College, Bombay. It was also the year that he lost his wife.

### **Formation of Independent Labour Party**

After a while Dr Ambedkar organised the

als Architekt sozialer Gerechtigkeit aus regierungsamtlicher Sicht

---

Independent Labour Party, participated in the provincial elections and was elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly. During these days, he stressed the need for abolition of the 'Jagirdari' system, pleaded for workers' right to strike and addressed a large number of meetings and conferences in Bombay Presidency. In 1939, during the second world war, he called upon Indians to join the army in large numbers to defeat Nazism which, he said, was another name for Fascism.

In 1947, when India became independent, the first Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, invited Dr Ambedkar, who had been elected as a member of the Constituent Assembly from Bengal, to join his cabinet as Law Minister. The Constituent Assembly entrusted the job of drafting the Constitution to a Committee and Dr. Ambedkar was elected Chairman of this Drafting Committee. While he was busy with drafting the Constitution, India faced several crises: The country had been partitioned and Mahatma Gandhi had been assassinated.

### **Architect of Constitution**

In the beginning of 1948 Dr Ambedkar completed the draft of the Constitution and presented it before the Constituent Assembly. In November 1949 this draft was adopted with very few amendments. Many provisions have been made in the Constitution to ensure social justice for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and backward classes. In this context Articles 15, 16, 27, 46, 332, 335, 338 and 340 are significant.

Dr Ambedkar was of the opinion that traditional religious values should be given up and new ideas be

**Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar**

adopted. He gave special emphasis on dignity, unity, freedom and rights for all citizens as enshrined in the Constitution.

Dr Ambedkar advocated democracy in every field: social, economic and political. For him social justice meant maximum happiness to the maximum number of people. He gave utmost importance to individual dignity in his concept of democracy.

Dr Ambedkar wanted more powers to be given the Centre to strengthen the unity and sovereignty of the country. He wanted to safeguard the territorial integrity of India. He said that Indian society is divided not only by castes and communities but, also, there are regional, linguistic, traditional, cultural and ideological differences. Therefore, for territorial integrity and administrative discipline, a strong Centre is absolutely essential.

Dr Ambedkar favoured small linguistic states as opposed to multi-lingual states. He wanted the creation of linguistic states to be governed by certain conditions like (1) there should be only one language in the state, (2) linguistic states should be economically viable, (3) the official language of every state should be Hindi and as long as Hindi is not capable of attaining this status English should continue.

In the pages of history Dr Ambedkar is remembered as the chief architect of the Constitution. His life size statue in Parliament would always keep his memory alive in this role.

### **Re-exponent of Buddhism**

Dr Ambedkar had differences of opinion with the

als Architekt sozialer Gerechtigkeit aus regierungsamtlicher Sicht

Government over the Hindu Code Bill which led to his resignation as Law Minister. On 24th May, 1956 on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti, he declared, in Bombay, that he would be ordained into Buddhism in October. On October 14, 1956 he embraced Buddhism along with many hundred thousands of his followers. The same year he completed his last writing "Buddha and his Dhamma". He devoted many years to the writing of this book and studied numerous scriptures on Buddhism. In this book he presented the teachings of Buddhism in their original form in a scientific way. This book has been translated and published in several Indian and foreign languages.

In a detailed analysis of the caste system Dr Ambedkar observed that it is neither based on the principle of division of labour nor on natural talents. Caste allocated work to people according to birth and not on the basis of their training and abilities. Caste of a person is determined by birth and the social status of the parents. The obnoxious principles on which the caste system is based breeds prejudice which inhibits change of vocation according to changing circumstances and, consequently, it generates unemployment. It also fosters the wrong notion that destiny is supreme and progress through hard work is impossible. He gave solid arguments to prove that the four 'varnas' and the caste system has handicapped a very large segment of India's population.

Dr Ambedkar's patriotism started with the uplift of the downtrodden and poor. He fought for their equality and rights. His ideas about patriotism were

Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar

not only confined to the abolition of colonialism, but he wanted freedom for every individual. For him, freedom without equality means democracy is incomplete and equality without freedom could lead to absolute dictatorship. Therefore, he wanted a system that offered guarantee of both equality and freedom.

On 6th December, 1956 Baba Saheb Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar attained 'Mahaparinirvan'.



---

Designed and produced by the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity,  
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India,  
Printed at Gowardhan Kapur & Sons, New Delhi-110 064

No. 1/41/93 - PP III

English 20,000

Nov. '93

als Architekt sozialer Gerechtigkeit aus regierungsamtlicher Sicht