B R Ambedkar as Visionary Educator

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Abstract (approximately 150-250 words)

“We are because he was.” This common phrase referring to Bhimrao Ambedkar among social justice advocates illustrates Ambedkar’s powerful leadership. An outspoken critic of rigid Brahminical structures that excluded large groups of citizens from participating in many public spaces, Ambekdar championed education for all people including those who were historically outcast or disenfranchised. One of the most influential drafters of India’s Constitution, Ambedkar enshrined therein the principles of freedom and non-discrimination. The Constitution laid the groundwork for reservations, India’s sole affirmative action policy. It provided for a future system that through amendments would eventually reserve seats in legislatures, government jobs and education for scheduled castes (SCs) (formerly called untouchables) and scheduled tribes (STs) (indigenous formerly nomadic groups). Ambedkar established inclusive educational initiatives including learn while you earn options and overseas education scholarships for historically marginalized groups who could not dream of accessing these opportunities prior to this time. He fought tirelessly to raise the status of women and free them from encumbrances standing in their way so that they could have all the rights and opportunities of male citizens. More than pointing people in a direction, he helped people see they could think beyond accepting miserable conditions and instead plan a way of life rooted in dignity.
Keywords (please provide around 4-8 keywords)

India; caste system; education; equality; women’s education; social movements; Bahujan feminism

Introduction

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956) is known by many in India as a primary architect of the Indian Constitution which in 1950 established the country’s legal framework and defining ethos. He and Mohandas K. Gandhi both began work in emancipating Indian citizens in the early 1920s, but in contrast with Gandhi, Ambedkar sought to radically revolutionize India’s social structures. Ambedkar, often referred to with the honorific Babasaheb (Respected Father), is a folk hero to the common people, and there are more statues of him in India today than of Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Ambedkar was driven to reform Indian society, specifically the ancient caste system that still remains influential today. His ceaseless work to give voice to the most non-privileged citizens of India and his vision of a caste-free India ought to have made him a global name in education, alongside the contributions of Mohandas K. Gandhi. Without Ambedkar’s relentless critique of the rigid Brahminical structures that were impeding widespread and quality education for all citizens, India’s sole affirmative action policy, reservations, would not have been established in the Constitution. This guarantee for opportunity created reservations for scheduled castes (SCs), formerly called untouchables, and scheduled tribes (STs), indigenous formerly nomadic groups. After the recommendations of the Mandal Commission in 1980, reservations were available for these groups as well as Other Backward Castes (OBCs) in employment in 1990 and in higher education in 2006. Eventually even India’s premiere centers of higher education, Indian Institutions of Technology, regarded as India’s temples of modernity, began to implement reservations starting in 2011.

Ambedkar was born a Mahar, an untouchable or scheduled caste group in Maharashtra. His family’s economic place in the world had substantially changed owing to British policy that allowed people of all castes to become officers in the army. First his grandfather was permitted to serve in the army, and then later his father became an officer and was thereby able to insist his son be formally educated. Ambedkar became the first person of his local caste community to graduate from high school. At the time of his birth, the community’s conditions betrayed centuries of ostracism. As his biographer Dhananjay Keer describes, the touch, shadow and voice of suppressed caste people and outcaste people were deemed by Hindus of the four main castes to be polluting (Keer 1991). Thus they had to move far away at the approach of Hindus outside their own community. As a group they “were forbidden to keep certain domestic animals, to use certain metals for ornaments, were obliged to wear a particular type of dress, to eat a particular type of food, to use a particular type of footwear and were forced to occupy the dirty, dingy and
unhealthy outskirts of villages and towns habitation where they lived in dark, in sanitary and miserable smoky shanties or cottages” (Devi 2005). In school Ambedkar experienced discrimination at an early age in repeated episodes: he was frequently denied a chance to drink water from the communal tap, and he learned that if he approached the blackboard he was immediately accused contaminating the food in their nearby lunchboxes. Though he suffered innumerable insults and exclusions, he gained a BA in Economics and Policy at Bombay University. While there, he gained the attention of the maharaja of Baroda, who financially sponsored his further education. Thus 1913 at age 22 he went on to complete an MA and PhD, studying first at Columbia University and then the London School of Economics. Although his studies were interrupted by World War I, he later also completed his legal training at Gray’s Inn in the United Kingdom.

During the 1920s Ambedkar worked to help Dalit (oppressed caste) people unite and circulate their voice: he created Dalit newspapers, attended conferences and attempted to found political parties. In the 1930s Ambedkar disputed British rule yet also had repeated arguments with the National Congress party and Gandhi over how to address the long standing difficulties of the oppressed castes. While the British government granted separate electorates to the oppressed communities in 1932 through the Communal Award, Gandhi perceived this as permanently dividing Hindus and began a fast unto death as a protest. Ambedkar was compelled to give up this matter, and he and Gandhi continued to clash over whether the caste system could be reformed or should outright be rejected.

Ambedkar was named the country’s first minister of Law and Justice, a special achievement for a person with clear disagreements with the ruling Congress party. As Christopher Jaffrelot has described, Babasaheb became a key leader in editing and clarifying the content of the proposed Constitution and was a frequent defender of various propositions as they were debated in the Constituent Assembly.

Influences and Motivations

Ambedkar was influenced by a variety of prominent thinkers from both East and West. The writings and actions of Gautama the Buddha were a primary influence, grounding Ambedkar in ancient philosophical principles, historical precedent and moral authority to question Brahmanical Hindu principles. Through the Buddha’s teachings on the importance of anicca (ephemerality) and anatta (non-self or egolessness), Ambedkar was able to study the principles of peacebuilding and the potential for uniting people on the basis of universal values. He recognized Buddhism as a philosophical and spiritual framework that directly rejected several key components of Hindu thought: the caste system itself as a benign way to maintain order, the infallible sacredness of the Vedas, the importance of offering gifts to Brahmans to perform
ritualistic sacrifices, and the idea that one’s present stage of life is a byproduct of karma (I.A. Ray 2012). Ambedkar endeavored to persuade the common citizenry, both members of the lowest rung of the caste pyramid and members outside the caste system, to reject a pattern of using ancient Hindu scriptures as an authority of contemporary life. A milestone moment within the battle against untouchability occurred on December 21st, 1927 when Dr Ambedkar publicly burned a copy of the ancient legal work where so much of the stigma of untouchability was articulated, the sacred text of the Manusmriti [Laws of Manu]. He also identified Manusmriti as the “source of the anti-woman ideology pervasive in orthodox Brahminical culture. Burning the Manusmriti became a very important symbolic act of protest against religious orthodoxy” which for so long had reinforced harsh divisions of caste and gender (Vajpeyi, 2016).

Ambedkar’s desire and plan of action to replace a birth-based society with a value-based one (emphasizing justice, equality, and fraternity as articulated in the Preamble of the Constitution) was further inspired by 19th century social reformer Jyotirao Phule (1827-1890) and Justice R B Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901), a founding member of the Indian National Congress party. Ambedkar dedicated his book Who were the Shudras? to Phule, saying he was one of the “greatest Shudras of modern India who made the lower classes…conscious of their Hindu slavery to the higher classes and who preached the gospel that for India, social democracy was more vital than independence from foreign rule” (Kumar 2020). Phule had no reverence for Hindu scriptures or customs and was very concerned to educate an entire half of society that was being neglected — women. He opened India’s first school for women in 1851 and formed a society to uproot social inequalities and exploitation, the Satya Shodhak Samaj. He and his wife Savitri Phule were revolutionaries of their time. The influence of Justice Ranade on Ambedkar is apparent with reference to Ranade’s blunt speech and legal arguments. Ranade stated that blind adherence to the Hindu religion entrapped women and directed society to see superstition and ritualistic practices as continuing merely for the sake of tradition rather than based on benefit for society. Ambedkar was attracted to his practicality. As I. A. Ray notes, Ambedkar’s persistence in negotiating terms for the empowerment of the non-privileged citizenry likely was strengthened by Ranade’s example and words to the effect that within the political sphere, one must not settle for a patchwork offer, but instead one should be ruled by “what is possible.”

Ambedkar’s education in the West exposed him to liberal ideas and professors such as Harold Laski, Edwin Seligman and, most of all, John Dewey. According to many scholars such as Elleanor Zelliot and Arun P. Mukherjee, Ambedkar’s time at Columbia University studying under Dewey enabled him to gain a pragmatic approach to education. One of the most quoted and esteemed books in Ambedkar’s library is the heavily annotated Democracy and Education. Scholar Scott P. Stroud provides abundant evidence Ambedkar lived out Dewey’s ideas about education through his belief in mobilizing the masses through communication or transmission. This can be seen in Ambedkar’s untiring call in the 1920s and 30s for temple integration and intercaste marriage. Ambedkar carried out another example of effective mass communication
near the end of his life in 1956. Knowing how important spiritual matters were amongst India’s citizenry, he led 380,000 followers to publicly convert to Buddhism. He intended for this action demonstrate to his followers and critics alike that oppressed people would and could not rise within Hinduism’s exclusionary practices.

Dewey’s influence can also be seen in Ambedkar’s belief that society’s shift to a more just framework depends on connecting community ideals with individual habits. From Dewey, Ambedkar advocated building Democratic communities through generating interest towards a shared end and making that interest habitual among a group of citizens. Dewey’s influence can be seen in one of Ambedkar’s most important works, *The Annihilation of Caste*, a speech and pamphlet intended for a group of moderate Hindu leaders in which he sought to persuade people that a Brahmanical Hindu illness — caste-based superiority — had spread like a contagion and was putting all Indian citizens at risk. Rather than associating caste with tradition, Ambedkar instead called it a habit: “Caste is a notion, it is a state of mind. The destruction of Caste does not therefore mean the destruction of a physical barrier. It means a notional change” (Ambedkar 1946, Sec 20, Para 8).

**Key Contributions**

As a leader of the oppressed castes, Ambedkar promoted education for the common citizenry owing to his social-philosophical views valuing egalitarianism, equality, social justice, fraternity, human dignity, and self-respect. Rather than providing exhaustive coverage, three advances led by Ambedkar will be discussed here. Ambedkar’s advocacy

- establishes educational institutions such as The People’s Education Society and initiatives such as National Overseas Scholarships
- ensures that India’s Constitution gives equal rights to all Indians and adds articles to the Constitution guaranteeing all children both free and compulsory education
- Uplifts the status of women

**People’s Education Society:**

Dr. Ambedkar had a strong vision for empowering the marginalized masses through knowledge accrual and capacity building. To work on his vision he founded the People’s Education Society in 1945 in order to emphasize respect for reasoning and advanced argumentation. He was convinced that the only way to make the adversity-laden Indian masses aware of their rights as human beings was via education. The Society developed colleges and a wide range of social and educational institutions that were formerly inaccessible to SCs and ST’s including high schools, diploma institutions and welcoming hostels (living quarters). Today the University runs 12 University-affiliated colleges such as Milind College (1950) and Siddhartha College (1946). The
latter was revolutionary for providing early morning classes for working youth (men and women) who could learn while they earn, a process rarely considered or implemented before this time. Additionally, from the beginning, Ambedkar did not leave women out of the conversation, insisting they be recognized as equal learners and full participants in society.

Eventually in 1954 Ambedkarites established a landmark scholarship, the Ambedkar Overseas Vidya Nidhi, which has allowed SC and ST and other minority students1 to get fully funded scholarships in order to pursue higher education and conduct research in all fields in universities around the world. This meant the expanding of horizons for marginalized people beyond national boundaries.

The scholarship covers the overall cost of a full academic year; that way SC and ST scholars can fully focus on academics and have no burden of finance during their entire education. To apply, students must prove their parents income was not greater than $10K per year. Many marginalized students have gone on to excel through these opportunities. Unfortunately, in 2022 the current BJP proudly pro-Hindutva government has brought a new change, excluding these students from studying “topics/courses concerning Indian culture/heritage/history/social studies in India” (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry). Overseas scholars producing information that question the presence of the caste system in India are perceived as a threat; thus there has been a limitation placed on this scholarship program.

Reservation in Higher Education for Dalit and Tribal communities:

In 1932, Ambedkar negotiated with Gandhi in the famous “Poona Pact” for a separate electorate for depressed classes or SCs and STs. The lengthy negotiations, however, resulted only in a single electorate body with SCs having political seats reserved within it. The same pact also promised representation of these groups in public service and educational grants for their upliftment. This was the root of the world’s largest affirmative action program launched much later in independent India. Due to Ambedkar’s persistence and the struggle of his adherents, today India has a reservation of 15% higher education seats for SCs, 7.5% for STs and 27% for OBCs (Other Backward Classes). Today this affirmative action program assists students from these disadvantaged backgrounds to gain opportunity and serve as representatives for future generations from this community.

Ambedkar believed an effective citizenry was an educated citizenry, as per the Constitution’s Article 45, which states, “The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.” It is well known that in 1964, as the deadline had

1 This would include Muslim and Jain people along with Sikhs, Christians, Zoroastrians and Buddhists.
passed, the government was chided by the then the education minister, MC Chagla: "Our Constitution fathers did not intend that we just set up hovels, put students there, give untrained teachers, give them bad textbooks, no playgrounds, and say, we have complied with Article 45" (Know your RTE).

Fortunately in 2002 Article 21 (A) was inserted to the Indian Constitution (87th Amendment). It enshrines “free and compulsory education for children from the age 6 to 14 years as a fundamental right in such a manner as the state may, by law, determine” (Right to Education). The government then passed the Right to Education Act in 2009 which provided a necessary structure for implementation of this right.

**Hindu Code Bill and the ability of women to occupy public space and public roles:**

Ambedkar was the first liberal feminist thinker to advocate for a more equal society. He was a supporter of both political and social democracy, valuing egalitarianism above all (Halli, Shridhar and Mullal, 2016). During his time, women from nearly all sections of society were not allowed to make their own decisions, set up their own households, talk freely, or gain jobs on their own without approval from their family members. He wanted this to change and for women to be able to hold a wide variety of jobs. To this end, he drafted the Hindu Code Bill, pertaining to personal laws such as marriage, divorce, adoption, guardianship and inheritance — crucial items to improve women’s position in society.

This series of bills proposed in the 1950s not only aimed to empower Hindu women but to model dignity and respect for all life as there was such an entrenched centuries-long tradition of Brahmanical Hindu heteropatriarchy. The major bills Ambedkar sought to pass were The Special Marriage Act (1954), Hindu Marriage Act (1955), Hindu Succession Act regarding inheritance of widows (1956), and Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (1956). Unfortunately, orthodox Hindu opposition and the Opposition parties’ delaying tactics kept the bill from becoming an Act (Halli, Shridhar and Mullal, 2016). The Bill was watered down and took 10 years of struggle before it passed in 1956.

All the rights he wished to provide through the Hindu Code Act were owing to his imagining full liberation for all women. Receiving these rights would free women to pursue their education and become active in every sphere as full citizens. These in turn later inspired additional key pieces of legislation to improve women’s lives such as The Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), The Maternity Benefit Act (1961), The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971), The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act (1976), The Contract Labor (Regulation) Act (1978) and The Commission of Sati (prevention) Act, 1987.
New Insights
Ambedkar’s philosophy galvanized the development of universal compulsory and quality education for the masses across India. From 1976 onwards, the funding of public education was shared between federal and state agencies, and this made for a vast array of differences across the 29 states and Union territories. Of high urgency, the states were constantly constrained by finances from providing universal education. The RTE Act obligates the government to establish mandatory admission, attendance and completion of schooling for children of age 6-14 (with more recent provisions under consideration to begin with preschool and proceed up to 10th grade). It prescribes minimum standards for toilets, classrooms and drinking water. Significantly, the act altered the proportionate share of school financing, holding the Central government more responsible, and some increased school attendance resulted. Unfortunately, long-term problems in the public schools of absentee teachers, corruption and poor quality of infrastructure and English language teacher training still enshroud public institutions; thus many low income parents seek to put their students into nominal cost private schools instead. One part of the the Act puts a public-private partnership grant in place with a state reimbursement plan that mandates that private schools (except for minority religious institutions such as madrasas) reserve 25% of seats for suppressed caste children.

RTE is a crucial step forward. Certainly infrastructure such as toilet facilities and water supply have improved, and the number of students moving beyond grade 6 has improved. Since so many births are not registered in India, however, accurate statistics about percentage of potential to actual enrollment are difficult to come by. It is estimated that the share of disadvantaged students has risen by 4% in both private and public schools from 2009-2017 (Vasu). Avoiding student drop outs is an ongoing concern. As some, such as Maninder Kaur Dwivedi, have pointed out, it is the state’s lack of teachers and therefore the required Pupil-Teacher-Ratio (PTR) that curbs true progress. From 2017 onwards the teacher-pupil ratio has been interpreted in such a way as to shut down single teacher schools in rural areas, leading to, for instance, a loss of a third of the students who were redirected to more distant schools in Rajasthan. For the purpose of this short essay, we will focus on two current examples that embody the kind of reform Ambedkar envisioned: the sweeping changes brought about by the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (a government of Telangana initiative) and the Foundation course, a bridge to University, offered by Nalanda Academy in Wardha, Maharashtra (a private foundation initiative).

Nalanda Academy:

The core principle of Nalanda academy is to provide quality education to the students of rural first generation learners so that they may later enroll in quality higher education institutions in India and abroad. The Academy began in 2013 with 22 students and now has helped more than
800 SC and ST students from very low income backgrounds to make up for lost time and eventually enroll in top 25 Indian Universities and 12 foreign universities. The founder, Anup Kumar, influenced by Ambedkar’s writing, created a unique 10-month Foundation Course to prepare marginalized students from non-English speaking and rural backgrounds to truly ramp up their skills to gain admittance to top institutions of higher education. The Academy, which also sets up scientific labs and libraries as part of its outreach to inculcate curiosity at a young age, most recently has created Digital Nalanda serving over 12,000 pupils, an online learning platform to assist with the long gaps in classroom teaching caused by the COVID pandemic. Plans are underway to construct the Nalanda Abhiyan Campus, a residential facility for 300 students, by 2024.

Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TSWREIS):

TSWREIS in the state of Telangana is a network of public schools and colleges providing education mainly for SCs, STs and OBCs. This system was massively upscaled and strengthened during the tenure of RS Praveen Kumar, a dedicated and talented Ambedkarite who had served in the Indian Police Service and is currently the party leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party in the state. As the Secretary from 2013-2021, he oversaw 268 social welfare schools providing free education, food and clothes to nearly 1.5 lakh children from Class 5 to undergraduate college courses (Apparasu). The institutions provide a high quality of education and inculcate democratic values. By deliberating inculcating self-assertion, confidence and pride in being determined students from humble origins, and by heightening English language proficiency and increasing competition opportunities, large numbers of students from vulnerable backgrounds have been able to attend premiere institutions like IITs, All India Medical Institutes and Central Universities. For example, in 2020, 432 students from these colleges qualified for the Joint Entrance Exam for IIT’s Mains. Since 2014, these institutions' students have secured 310 Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery/Bachelor of Dental Surgery seats, 126 in IITs, and 214 in National Institutes of Technology. One of the achievements that gained international prominence was that of Malavath Poorna, a tribal student from a remote village who became the youngest girl in the world to climb Mount Everest. Careful planning by Mr. Kumar and others has led to a sustainable model: with the help of alumni of these schools, a global SWAERO (Social Welfare Hero) network has been formed aiding students from these institutes to navigate overseas education starting from applications to managing financial assistance.

Legacies and Unfinished Business

1. The adoption of an anti-caste pedagogy
The Indian education system needs an anti-caste and feminist pedagogy to motivate administrators and teachers to formulate and carry out an equitable environment for learning. After all, in a typical public school in an Indian town, a suppressed caste child struggles to develop confidence and the desire to take intellectual risks in an atmosphere of derision, social exclusion and outright verbal or physical violation. The curriculum itself needs reform: social studies and history instructors must actively strive to keep their own biases from slanting the information. Anti-caste movement work needs to be studied so that all students comprehend the history of the emergence of caste, the configurations of power amongst castes, the ways that non-dominant castes experienced slavery and continue to participate in bonded labor and the ways colonial rulers’ divide-and-conquer strategy interacted with already existing casteism and sexism in the social fabric.

2. **The adoption of a Buddhist way of life**

Ambedkar famously declared, “I am born a Hindu, but I will not die a Hindu, for that is in my power” (Ambedkar 1926). His own conversion to Buddhism, along with 380,000 of his followers was an attempt to counter the acceptance of hierarchical arrangements including the caste system. Ambedkar did not think people were attracted to the pure rationality of atheism and feared that without an alternative structure to Hinduism, there would be insufficient groundswell for change. His idea of Buddhism was as a daily practice based on Buddhist values, rather than a religion that makes the Buddha a god causing supernatural events. He felt the conscious adoption of Buddhism as a way of life would help people to put democratic ideals into action in both the state and inside the family. Unfortunately the mainstream Indian and Hindu interpretation of Ambedkar’s embrace of Buddhism is as a choice of religious belonging. While Ambedkar’s last book on *The Buddha and his Dhamma* was meant to help liberate people from superstition, instead over time a form of Sanskritization has occurred, with the converts’ adopting religious practices similar to Hindu worship though placed in a Buddhist context.

3. **Dalit women’s empowerment and coalition building**

Dr. Ambedkar always stood up for women and for their education. He famously said, “I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved” (Tanvi 2021). He also said, “I strongly believe in movements run by women…In the past, they have played a significant role in improving the conditions of weaker sections and classes” (Tanvi 2021). Many women from suppressed castes are triply challenged, by caste, gender and class. They are also simultaneously victims of caste from dominant caste men and women but also from men of their own communities. Ambedkar’s legacy needs to be understood correctly: true Ambedkarites are not only working for a caste-free society but one in which gender is not a limitation.
In practice, patriarchal power and dominant caste power are intertwined. Given the commandments laid out in the *Manusmriti*, their ideological underpinnings are difficult to separate. Ambedkar thus said one solution to eroding caste was rejecting endogamous marriage practices and preferring intermarriage, a fusion that would gradually foster more pan-Indian unity. In 2013, to encourage this step and to decrease honor killings, the UPA government led by Congress began the Dr Ambedkar provision or scheme for social integration through inter-caste marriage, in which each state may provide a gift of money to assist a couple breaking this traditional social taboo. Recently the BJP government has put no cap on the incentive. Much work remains to be done, however, as even this scheme is still not widely publicized and barriers remain for couples seeking to avail themselves of it.

While feminist movement building has formerly been quite fissured by caste and class, the past decade has brought more intercaste, interclass and inter-religious coalition building as riots and violence have erupted over the Citizenship Amendment Bill (2016) altering practices relating to the National Register of Citizens and deeming some long term Muslims citizens of India potentially stateless. As one example, new relationships were forged at the thousands-strong Shaheen Bagh protest in Delhi (2019) which grew out of an earlier protest in which unarmed, innocent students and faculty who gathered at Jamia Millia Islamia University to protest against this bill were brutally attacked and beaten by police. Nevertheless, these coalitions can be fragile to maintain. As Dalit feminist theorist Kanchana Mahadevan has discussed, feminist dominant caste women in the public realm depend on Dalit women’s labor: their non-privileged counterparts clean their homes and cook their food in a context of traditional servitude that may in many cases normalize humiliation. Thus, successful long-term feminist organizing must rethink the idea of “women’s work” and closely listen to the lived experience of Dalit women, expecting conflicts of interest in the process of collaboration and cultivating leadership from people of every background.

Finally, as radical inclusion is central to Ambedkar’s philosophy, the status of sexual minorities and their access to a bias-free education is an ongoing and pressing need to fulfill Ambedkar’s vision. Without reserving places for sexual minorities in education, government services and political spaces, the needs of this community will go unmet.

**Conclusion**

*An ongoing finale: Educate, Agitate and Organize*

A pragmatist to the end, Dr. Ambedkar's final words were to encourage people to "Educate, Agitate, and Organize," a slogan that continues to inspire those seeking educational reform.\(^2\) The

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\(^2\) Ambedkar first used this slogan in Nagpur, India at the All India Depressed Classes Conference in 1942.
first word of the slogan, educate, springs from the essential connection between freedom and education. Ambedkar believed the non formally educated person may not have a sufficient foundation to make good decisions. Without skill in critical thinking, the rational and non-rational appear similar. The second phase, agitate or struggle, does not imply taking up weapons; rather, engaging in a conceptual revolution. People should start agitating psychologically and after gaining knowledge, we can better start a mental revolution in the larger citizenry. Reshuffling accepted concepts in our minds lays the groundwork for effective and efficient organizing. This last step, organize, prepares the group to speak in one voice and get policies passed that provide equitable conditions for all. Educated and agitated minds now can help the less developed members of the community unite and fight for a common goal, specifically eradicating caste hierarchy and hidden operationalizations of caste bias from society.

It seems appropriate to give the last word to an Ambedkarite social activist. Recently Gaurav Pathania has asked the public to consider the following question: “When India has launched 129 satellites into space in service to the country, why can’t we launch our own masses of deprived people on an educational path towards dignity, rationality and a more sustainable livelihood?”

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