



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the contribution of Ambedkar in awakening Dalit consciousness. (150 words)

06 Jan, 2020 GS Paper 1 History

Approach:

- Briefly introduce about Ambedkar and his works.
- Elaborate the contribution of Ambedkar in awakening Dalit consciousness.
- Give conclusions.

Introduction

- Dalit consciousness in India is an outcome of the great works done by Dr. Ambedkar for the rights of Dalits and untouchables.
- Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, popularly known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, was a jurist, social reformer and politician. He is also known as the Father of Indian Constitution. A well-known politician and an eminent jurist, his efforts to eradicate social evils like untouchability and caste restrictions were remarkable.
- Throughout his childhood, Ambedkar faced the stigmas of caste discrimination. Hailing from the Hindu Mahar caste, his family was viewed as “untouchable”.
- In the 20th century, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar sharpened the consciousness of the oppressed classes and groomed them to be a powerful constituent of the present-day political system. His political and literary contribution to the awakening of the Dalit Consciousness is immense and he is universally accepted as the father of the Dalit Consciousness. He not only gave a voice of the voiceless people of India but also a political identity.

Body

Contribution of Ambedkar in awakening Dalit consciousness:

- Ambedkar launched full-fledged movements for Dalit rights during the 1930s. He demanded public drinking water sources open to all and right for all castes to enter temples. He openly condemned Hindu Scriptures advocating discrimination and arranged symbolic demonstrations to enter the Kalaram Temple in Nashik.
- He adopted various means to safeguard Dalit rights. Ambedkar launched a movement against Dalit discrimination by creating public opinion through his writings in several periodicals such as Mook Nayak, Vahishkrit Bharat, and Equality Janta, which he started for the protection of Dalit rights.
- Ambedkar had been closely involved in the struggle to give Scheduled Caste people solid statutory safeguard. He was a delegate at the Round Table Conference in London, where he asked for separate electorate for Dalits.
- In 1932, the Poona Pact was signed between Dr. Ambedkar and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya to ensure reservation of seats for the untouchable class in the Provincial legislatures, within the general electorate. These classes were later designated as Scheduled Classes and Scheduled Tribes.
- In 1936, Ambedkar founded the Independent Labor Party which later transformed into the All India Scheduled Castes Federation.

- He linked nationalism with the social and political aspiration of the untouchables.
- According to Ambedkar what British imperialism was to India, Hindu imperialism was to the untouchables. He was against injustice and imperialism in any form and any part of human society.
- He encouraged the Dalits to embrace Buddhism to liberate their own selves from Hindu subjugation.
- He saw that the Dalit movement lacked philosophical justification. So he wrote about the French revolution ideas of fraternity, liberty and equality.
- Being the chairman of the drafting committee of Indian Constitution, Dr B.R. Ambedkar provided certain constitutional provisions to protect the rights of Dalits in social, economic, educational, employment, and political fields, in the form of positive discriminations or preferential treatments or reservation policy.
- Ambedkar's efforts brought educational awareness among Dalits who became socially conscious about the circumstances and social problems of untouchability and caste discrimination meted out to them.
- Ambedkar launched the social liberation movement for social rights and opportunities of the deprived and downtrodden section of society.

Conclusion

- The period from 1920 to 1956 was influenced by the writings and political activities of Dr. Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar. He argued the case of the untouchables from the boundaries of the villages to the Round Table Conferences.
- The Dalit movement in India is a legacy of the multiple streams of Ambedkar's efforts to bring equality and to make systemic changes to the social order.

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