



Research Paper

## Ambedkar's Pursuit of Education: A Morale to Contemporary Youth

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**ABSTRACT:** *There is a saying that "Student life is golden life", because student life is the most precious period of human life. It is a period of pure bliss because the young minds are free from all worries of a grown-up life. During this time, the character of students is built. Therefore, it is called as a formative period of human life. Hence, every student should try his best to make use of his student life. The primary duty of a student is to learn and to acquire knowledge. As an educationist, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar opines that education must be related to human interests and for human development. He says that the cultivation of mind must be the major concern of education because mind represents the superior element in human being. If the mind is controlled, the individuals' social life can be peaceful and harmonious. For a humanist like Ambedkar, the most sublime human values are intellectual things of the mind. The exercise of one's intellectual powers through education should be highest priority to students. This article exemplifies the struggles and hardships of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as a young student during his career for acquiring knowledge, as an epitome to the youth of the present time to focus on learning as students in their career with reference to his biography "Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Life & Mission" by Dhananjay Keer.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Student life, education, cultivation of mind, knowledge, career building.*

*Received 28 August, 2023; Revised 06 Sep., 2023; Accepted 08 Sep., 2023 © The author(s) 2023.  
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### I. INTRODUCTION

A very few lives in history illustrates so eloquently how one should build up one's future and personality during student life. One can also observe that how difficulties shape the minds of a great man. Long hours of hard working, intense cultivation and high thinking alone have accomplished with glorious fame in the world. One such great example is the life of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and his struggles for learning education as a student during his college days. His long laborious industry, iron will as a learner made him as the most revered intellectual and reached to great heights in his career.

In everyone's life being a student is the most turning point of career. The life as a student should be fruitful to attain great heights in the full span of life. Therefore, to understand the importance education in shaping the careers of students, one should revisit the life of Ambedkar as a student and the prominent role of education in shaping his career. The way he moulded his life and the hardships he went through as a young student are so much thought provoking and inspiring. He was so keen on gaining knowledge and skills during his student days. For the sake of better future he strived hard and kept all his interest in education. During his learning days, the most of the time he spent in learning and cultivation of mind rather than spoiling his time in unnecessary activities.

### II. AMBEDKAR'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION IN SHAPING LIFE

B.R. Ambedkar has given great importance to the reading and writing. The role of literacy in promoting freedom and civilization has not been properly contemplated by any other contemporary Indian philosophers. For him, it is not only a means of securing social justice but also spreading of knowledge of among masses plays a key role in solving the problem of unemployment. It also brings awareness among the downtrodden people about their contributions in the progress of the nation and the return which they are benefited out of it. In his opinion, for the success of any democracy a minimum level of education is mandatory. Ambedkar realized the significance of literacy in evolving a rational and just society because he belonged to a class which was deprived of the basic rights of reading and writing since the time immemorial. In realizing the role of education in self-preservation he commented as below:

*"Everyone must have education. Everyone must have means of defense. These are the paramount requirements of every man for his self-preservation". (Tomar, 62)*

In his view that the more widespread the education then the more would be the chances for progress and greater would be the opportunity for betterment of the people. He inspired the people through his core principle "Educate, Organize and Agitate". Among Ambedkar's three principles, education occupied not only the top priority by chance but it generates reason and through education only people can be self-enlightened. Education initiates and instigates the common people as said by Ambedkar here below:

*"Education is that which make men fearless, teach unity, make understand their birth rights and teach them to struggle and fight for the freedom". (Tomar, 57)*

In the view of Ambedkar that is not education which do not make capable, do not teach equality and morality. But the true education is that which safeguards the interests of the humanity, provides bread, knowledge and feeling of equality in the society. Hence, true education really creates life in the society. Whether the education cannot serve these purposes then such education is a dead one and better it should be burnt. Through education he wanted to develop the qualities of justice, equality, fraternity, freedom and fearlessness. He considered that education is mandatory for him to establish a moral order in society. Ambedkar believed that for harnessing a moral order in society, morality as a goal of education must be given due importance.

### **III. AMBEDKAR'S PURSUIT OF EDUCATION AS A STUDENT**

During the school life, Bhim was fostering a spirit of patience in his character. Bhim did not like the thought of another woman replacing his mother when Ambedkar's father planned to remarry. Bhim then made the decision to stop relying on his father for support and set out to get a job. He therefore desired to work as a winding lad in a Bombay mill. He then intended to steal the purse of his cherished aunt, in whose presence he slept on the floor, in order to obtain the money necessary to travel to Bombay. He felt as:

*"For three successive nights I tried to remove the purse tucked up at the waist of my aunt, but without success. On the fourth night I did get hold of the purse, but to my disappointment I found only half an anna in it. And in half an anna, of course, I could not go to Bombay. The four nights' experience was so nerve racking that I gave up the idea of collecting money in this shameful manner and I came to another decision- a decision that gave an entirely different turn to my life. I decided that I must study hard and get through my examinations as fast as possible, so that I might earn my own livelihood and be independent of my father". (Keer, 15-16)*

Bhim, like Tilak and Savarkar and many other contemporary intellectuals, became passionate about reading when he was young. He had an insatiable desire to acquire books. He had a strong interest in reading other books rather than studying the textbooks. All scholar-politicians and scholar-statesmen build the basis for their future prominence and leadership in their early lives by putting effort into their studies. A vast range of reading, in-depth knowledge, and historical perspective lend prestige and toning to their maturing lives. They are more concerned with creating the information base that will support their future eminence in the nation than they are with their rank in the classroom.

Bhim worked hard in school at Elphinstone High School in Bombay. He shared the same one-room flat in Parol's old chawl. There was no way of providing a study, and the notion of hiring a tutor was impossible to think about. The small room was crammed with household items and kitchenware. It was busy and smoky. There was a fireplace in one corner and a place to keep firewood above the head in another. The room functioned as a kitchen, parlour, lying-in room, and study- all in one! The issue of his son's education was resolved by the Subhedar in his own way. He asked his son to go to bed early. The father of Bhim stayed up all night until two in the morning, and then awoke his son for study and retired. Bhim studied until early in the morning under the light of a kerosene oil lamp.

He had his lighter moments too as a schoolboy. He occasionally played cricket and football as well as led teams. Despite the afflictions and intolerable insults inflicted by narrow-minded bigots, his father urged him to strive for a high position in life, and he was encouraged by broadminded individuals. Bhim continued his studies and eventually passed the Matriculation examination from Elphinstone High School in 1907. Bhim received 282 out of 750 points, with his top score in Persian.

Bhim obtained a scholarship to study higher education from Maharaja of Baroda Sayaji Rao Gaekwad. Prof. Muller of Elphinstone College helped Bhim Rao when he was in college. He offered him books and clothes, but no professor in India seemed to be able to capture his intellect. Furthermore, the demeaning environment and pitiful images of the oppressed must have added to his unrest.

Bhim Rao Ambedkar prepared for the exams by studying. However, reading was his greatest joy in life. It was aimed at accomplishing something in life. His goal was to arm himself with every possible missile, to become a master of repository of knowledge, and to build the power of his mind in order to prepare himself for higher attainments and an exciting future that would open the doors and possibilities of a brilliant career.

His thoughts were distracted for a time at Columbia University in the United States, but he quickly woke up to his obligations and resolved to engage in his studies with great diligence and thoroughness. There

was no time for delightful leisure or the filling of the academic life that the sons of wealthy families were accustomed to. He had no intention of going to the play, nor did he spend his time wandering or sight-seeing in the city of New York. He had an extreme appetite, but he satiated it with a cup of coffee, two muffins, and a single meat or fish dish for a dollar and ten cents. He had to remit some money from his stipend every month, so he had to keep his spending low. His college friends were proud of how Ambedkar used every spare moment to study, which he said was an opportunity of a lifetime. His ambition was to become not only a holder of the greatest academic degrees, but also a Master of Science, politics, sociology, and economics. In India, he earned a B.A. in English and Persian, but currently he took up political science, Moral Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology, and Economics.

The unrelenting digging for knowledge went on for eighteen hours a day and this carried on for months. After two years of labour, success finally arrived with great vigour. In 1915, Ambedkar received his M.A. for his thesis "Ancient Indian Commerce." His ardent hunger for knowledge remained unquenched. He spent his leisure time wandering and perusing the city's second hand book stands. With the enthusiasm of a bibliophile, he purchased approximately 2,000 ancient books in New York and entrusted his friend with transporting them to India.

Ambedkar's mantra was "hard study and spare diet" in order to complete his studies. Ambedkar spent as much time as he could in the Museum often from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Time was very essential to him. He would forego lunch to save money and time. Ambedkar ran to the Museum in the early morning and was nearly the first person to enter. Then, he began his daily reading at the British Museum for long hours without a break. Following this, the second round of reading commenced at his home. Around ten o'clock at night, the fire in the stomach seemed to inhibit the fire in the head, causing him to wriggle.

Ambedkar lived so frugally that he subsisted on only eight pounds per month, and he was healthier in both mind and body! In the vast metropolis, he rarely spent money on clothes or transportation, and he walked from place to place. There is no money or time for restaurants, feasts, trips, or going to the theatre!

#### **IV. HIS EDUCATION LIFE IS INSPIRATION TO PRESENT YOUTH**

The life of Ambedkar as a student is the most inspirational journey. The way he moulded his life and the struggles he faced as a young man are so much thought provoking and motivational. He was so keen on gaining knowledge and skills during his student days. For the sake of better future he strived hard and kept all his interest in education. During college days the most of the time he spent in learning and cultivation of mind rather than spoiling his time in unnecessary activities.

In the present times students are not giving proper attention on attainment of knowledge and skills. Instead, they are giving more important to have amusement, entertainment, fun, chit-chatting with friends and family members. In addition to these, even technology also supporting them to spoil their valuable time of student's life. Because of social media like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, Share chat, YouTube and so on, students are deviated from their studies and neglecting in building career. Even in the attraction online games such as Freefire, Ludoking, Pub-G, etc., are also wasting the energy of the young minds. At this age of life, students must give top priority of widening the horizons of their mind. Whereas, the majority of the students are thinking that it is a time for having fun and enjoyment during college days. Therefore, instead of wasting time and energy of youth in extravagance during college days, they should give utmost priority on career building and erudition.

Just like Ambedkar, how he spent his precious time in reading and learning during college days either at Sydenham College, Mumbai or Columbia University, USA, the youth of the present time also must focus on shaping their minds with knowledge. If they concentrate on learning at least 3 to 4 years with strong dedication and commitment of having high goal to reach, the student, who does, will conquer a wonderful life with all satisfaction of having done hard work. If students don't concentrate on career goals during college days, then they face many problems later in their life. If one observes any life of great personalities, such as Ambedkar, that they strived hard during their young years and later attained a commendable position in the society. In such a manner, the present generation youngsters also should understand that those who strive first, they lead happy life, those who neglects first, they need to struggle later.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

Student life is a formidable period for career development. During the period, just like Ambedkar, the students must imbibe steadfastness character for acquiring knowledge and updating the skill to reach great heights. They should give up the idea of sparing time on all social media and other diversions. If they do so, then they will excel in their academics as well as achieve their desirable dreams. The way Ambedkar's father encouraged Ambedkar to pursue his education, similarly, the parents of the students also should play a key role in shaping and cultivating the young minds by telling them the hardships they are going through in order to provide a good life to them. The parents should make their children to realize the responsibilities and

significance of their sufferings to lead a better life. Along with parents, even the teachers, like Ambedkar's teachers, also play a prominent role in inspiring the students to reach their goals. Through this the youth of the present day should focus on their enriching knowledge, capacity building, and developing new skills and plan an appropriate career, just as Ambedkar, and accomplish the well-deserved life.

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