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CONTENTS

➤ Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi launches the Project of 'Home for one thousand widows' at Vrindavan	2
➤ 'Nari Shakti Puraskar-2015' conferred by the President	4
➤ Dr. B.R.Ambedkar : Architect of our Constitution	7
Dr. Shankar Chatterjee	
➤ Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts on Caste System	10
Praveen Ghodeswar	
➤ A Pathetic Story of - Gender Equity	12
Ashish Jaiswal	
➤ B A M B O O - Nature's Fascinating Gift	16
Dr. I Satya Sundaram	
➤ These Young Men Are Ready For Responsible Family Planning	17
Bishnoi	
➤ Women Health Workers Get 'Smart', Tech Savvy	19
Abha Sharma	
➤ What's On The Menu? Feel-Good Foods To Stay Healthy	21
WFS	
➤ Fighting Vitamin A and D Deficiencies With Fortified Food	23
Aditi Bishnoi	
➤ Get Inspired, Get Off That Couch	25
WFS	
➤ Yo-Yo Diets Can't Promise Health	27
WFS	
➤ Showing Women Easy Ways To Track Maternal Health	29
Ajitha Menon	
➤ Healthy, Nutritious Food Needn't Be Icky!	31
WFS	
➤ Do You Get That Sinking Feeling? Don't Ignore It Anymore	33
Surekha Kadapa-Bose	
➤ In Bihar, Elected Grassroots Women Follow Feminist Strategies	35
Saadia Azim	
➤ Jharkhand's Task Force That Sings And Counsels Young Mothers On Health	37
Ajitha Menon	
➤ Farewell to Sh. S.S. Bhopale	39
➤ International Women's Day Celebrated at Kot Bhalwal Jail	39
➤ MWCD News	42
➤ "Mahila e-Haat", an online marketing platform for women launched by Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi	43

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Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts on Caste System

• Praveen Ghodeswar

“People will not be able to imagine the trials and tribulations; I had to undergo in my life. If there were to be anyone else in my place, I am afraid that he would have been destroyed completely”, said by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and this is very much true. Dr. Ambedkar's whole life is the continuous, unending and courageous struggle he had to make against social injustice and inhuman, unequal treatment. The people who love cats and dogs, pamper them into no limit in our own society, are not to offer simple rights of ordinary humanity to many of us! This was the smoldering pain in the heart of the Dr. Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar was, par excellence, a spokesperson of the ignored community i.e. the workers, small peasants, landless labourers and women. He expressed the sorrows of the untouchables and tried sincerely to channel the activities of the depressed classes. In mobilizing them, he created sense of self respect and pride in them. He dedicated his life to the cause of removal of untouchability and completely identified himself with the socially segregated section of the Indian society. He launched a lifelong crusade for liberating them from their centuries old enslavement and ostracism. He was born an untouchable and therefore he had an intense yearning to see that the untouchables are better placed in social, political and economic fields. He rejected social reforms received as charity and accommodation. He wanted social reforms as right. He was not so much for peripheral social reforms in Hindu society like widow remarriage and abolition of child marriage. He was for a total reorganization and reconstruction of the Hindu society on two main principles i.e. equality and absence of casteism.

The socially progressive values that Dr. Ambedkar cherished were the basis of his social and political life. Though he was born in the Mahar community, he never represented his own community but represented all those communities which were socially and economically downtrodden. He has been variously described as a crusader for the rights of the depressed classes of India. He was a literary genius, an eminent educationalist, a political philosopher and an able parliamentarian. He was an indefatigable activist who by virtue of his formidable intellectual attributes started a movement for attainment of self respect for the untouchables as well

as depressed classes. He carried on a relentless struggle against the social, political and economic segregation of these communities.

Dr. Ambedkar's mind was preoccupied with the social amelioration, political enlightenment, economic well being of the downtrodden. He had a deep faith in fundamental human rights, in the equal rights of man and woman, in the dignity of individual, in the promotion of better standards of life and above all, in peace and security in spheres of human life. He was totally committed to the annihilation of the caste system. According to him, caste system is not merely division of labour but a division of labours. It is hierarchy in which the division of labours is graded one above other. This division labour is based on neither natural aptitude nor choice of the individual concerned. It is therefore, harmful in as much as it involves the subordination of person's natural powers and inclinations to the exigencies of social rules. Ambedkar reiterated, the caste system prevents common activity and by preventing it, it has prevented the Hindus from becoming a society with unified life and consciousness of its own being.

Ambedkar's great vision enjoined the abolition of casteism in every shape and form, since he was opposed to all divisive forces and aimed at strengthen the impulse of national integration. The greatly cherished ideals of fraternity and equality were the cement with which he wanted to bind together a totally cohesive nation. His philosophy was self respect and human dignity was of paramount importance in a free republic. He espoused the noble cause of equality of status and opportunity to every Indian, assuring the dignity of the individual and unity of the nation. He was not merely a learned man, but also an intellectual who sacrificed his life for the dignity and uplift of the poorest of the poor of the world. His aim was not communal and not limited to personal benefit but it was essentially social and human, related to all who suffered from slavery, injustice, tyranny and exploitation. Dr. Ambedkar's principle was not to fight against the particular persons who created a frustrating situation for him and his fellow sufferers because the cause of the situation was not these persons but the social philosophy which supported a social system of inequalities. His long range response was a direct attack against the root cause.