

**Speech of Ambassador at the celebration of 125<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2016**

Dear friends,

I welcome you all this evening to celebrate the 125th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar. As you saw in the documentary, Babasaheb was an outstanding leader of our freedom struggle and a staunch crusader for the rights of the oppressed sections of our society. He was a born genius, an outstanding scholar, visionary, educationalist, philosopher, legal luminary, social reformer, political leader and above all the chief architect of India's Constitution.

Dr. Ambedkar's life is an illustration of courage and conviction. He dedicated himself to the pursuit of knowledge overcoming all the obstacles posed by his oppressed caste and economic hardships. He outshone as a scholar. His PhD thesis of 1923 titled "*The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India*" provided the academic basis for the Finance Commission of India which was subsequently established through Article 280 of the Constitution. Similarly, the Reserve Bank of India was conceptualized based on the guidelines presented by Dr. Ambedkar to the "*Royal Commission on Indian Currency & Finance*" in 1925. Dr. Ambedkar's book "*The Problem of the Rupee- Its Problems and Its Solution*" is an invaluable reference tool for a central banker. The Central Legislative Assembly eventually passed the guidelines contained in the book as the RBI Act 1934.

You might be surprised to know that it was Dr. Ambedkar, who successfully led the struggle for reduction of work from 12 hours a day to 8 hours in 1942. He contributed the idea of setting up of Employment Exchanges in India. He was almost single handedly responsible for establishing the Central Technical Power Board, the National Power Grid System and the Central Water Irrigation and Navigation Commission.

After his return to India, Dr. Ambedkar became the voice of the depressed classes and started many organisations to promote their cause. Himself a voracious reader, Dr. Ambedkar saw education as a tool for the liberation of the socially backward from illiteracy, ignorance and superstition. He founded the People's Education Society in 1945 with the aim of advancing the educational interests of weaker sections of society. He said, "Cultivation of mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence".

Dr. Ambedkar was also a crusader for gender equality and fought for equal rights for women in inheritance and marriage. He said, "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved". He resigned from the Cabinet in 1951 when his draft Hindu Code Bill failed to receive the support of the Parliament.

However, Dr. Ambedkar's biggest and most important contribution to the whole nation was his role as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution of India. He was an obvious choice being one of the most learned Indians of that time. With his tremendous foresight and erudite scholarship, Dr. Ambedkar wisely piloted the draft through the Constituent Assembly expounding the philosophy and wisdom behind each of its provisions.

