

# Ambedkar a Role Model for Dalits Upliftment in India: A Social Consciousness

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## Introduction

*“So long as you do not achieve social liberty, whatever freedom is provided by the law is of no avail to you.”*

**-Dr. B.R. Ambedkar**

The term *Dalit* owe its genesis from a Sanskrit root “dal” which also means broken or downtrodden. The hindu caste system has been divided into four basic parts namely Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. During ancient times each caste was for a particular purpose like *brahmins* for performing religious ceremonies, *kshatriyas* were considered to be the warriors and rulers. Likewise, the *Vaishyas* were basically involved in the trade and agriculture. Then comes the *Shudras* who were basically considered to be the slaves of the upper caste and involved in doing all odd services for them. The Dalits are seen as marginalised who do not belong to the conventional Hindu four-caste system. Unfortunately, since they were usually considered to be impure as well as untouchables, they were physically and socially isolated from the rest of society. They were completely neglected from all the social, cultural and economical, strata for about two millennia. The term *Dalit* in current scenario has been attributed by the great reformer **Mahatma Jotirao Phule**, who basically used this term for the untouchables who were most suppressed and exploited one.<sup>1</sup> D.R Ambedkar, the emerging leader for Dalits during that period of time has also considered *Jotirao Phule* as his third guru<sup>2</sup> after Buddha and Kabir.

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1 Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany, *The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India* 4 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988).

2 Eleanor Zelliot, “Ambedkar’s life and his Narayana Buddhism” Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary India* 362 (Routledge Press, New York, 2016).

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