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1. Discuss the role of B R Ambedkar in the rise of Dalit

Structure of the Answer

- Discussion of Ambedkar as a prophet of Dalits in India
- Contributions to Dalit Consciousness
- Scholars' views and contemporary relevance
- Conclusion
- According to Dhananjay Keer, Ambedkar is among the foremost leader of Dalits in India and played a key role in raising the dalit consciousness, bringing their issues at fore and making it a part of freedom struggle.
- Ambedkar wanted to emancipate the untouchables and liberate them from the slavery of upper castes. This required the rise of consciousness among Dalits to fight against discrimination and incorporate the notion of a modern, egalitarian India.
- In 1920 after his return for USA, he organized the first All India Conference of the Depressed Classes in Nagpur, where he argued that the emancipation of the depressed classes was possible only through their own initiative- which is why argues M. Ayoob, instead of Gandhi's passive terminology of 'harijan', he preferred the concept of Dalit to both, describe the reality of oppression and to galvanise his people to challenge and change the status quo.
- By 1927, Ambedkar launched full-fledged movements for Dalit rights. He demanded public drinking water sources open to all and right for all castes to enter temples and openly criticized Hindu scriptures.
- Movements to occupy public places at Kalaram temple in Nashik, public tank in Mahad and the opposition faced revealed how the meta-narrative of national movement veiled India's internal oppressions. His annihilation of caste and conversion to Buddhism sought to rid Dalits of social and psychological oppression of Brahmins.
- Ambedkar asserted political consciousness among Dalits to make them equal partners in independent India, an effort he took on since his participation in the RTC as well as founding of Independent Labour Party, which transformed into the All India Scheduled Castes Federation.
- The making of Indian Constitution formulated on foundations of substantive quality, socio-economic justice as well as political democracy tries to fulfill this dream of a liberated Dalit in contemporary India.
- However, even 72 years have India became a republic, Ambedkar's influence on Dalit consciousness continues to grow. The persisting issues of untouchability, discrimination and violence epitomized by incidents like Hathras, Balrampur etc. underline the continuing need for Dalit activism.
- IN 2020 NCRB point to a 7% increase in violence against Dalits from 2009 to 2018. However there are certain issues such as intra-Dalit differences, rivalry among Dalit leaders and inability to create pan Dalit unity that need to be confronted to be able to ensure not just political and social equality, but self-respect and human dignity to Dalits in India.