

Dr B R Ambedkar and His Contribution to the Nation



This year's [Dr B R Ambedkar Birthday Lecture](#) (and the seventh in the series) was delivered by Dr (Ms) P Selvie Das, MP. Dr Selvie Das spoke on Dr B R Ambedkar and his contribution to the nation.

As always, the Dr B R Ambedkar Birth Centenary function was very well-attended and the S R Valluri Auditorium wore a festive and vibrant look. The proceedings

(compered by Mr M R Narasimha Swamy, Head, TS in his inimitable style) opened with the observation of a one-minute silence in the memory of the veteran national leader, and a former Governor of Kerala, Mr B Rachaiah.



Dr T S Prahlad, Director, NAL, then formally welcomed the gathering. Describing Dr Ambedkar as a peerless national leader, Dr Prahlad said that his impact on the Indian nation had been immense. He also briefly explained the many initiatives taken by NAL to "positively support the SC/ST community".

After formally garlanding Dr Ambedkar's portrait, and lighting the ceremonial lamp, Dr Selvie Das (whom Dr Prahlad introduced as a "very distinguished academic person") began her Dr B R Ambedkar Birthday Lecture. "I have often been invited by SC/ST Associations to speak at functions commemorating Dr Ambedkar", she said, "but I feel particularly delighted that today's function has been organised by NAL as a whole".

Dr Selvie Das's lecture proved to be masterly. Weaving her speech around a chronological narrative of Dr Ambedkar's life, Dr Selvie Das talked of his experiences as a child ("born in the Mahar community which was required to live in the outskirts of the city"), as a student (who "educated himself against all odds" benefiting from the patronage of the Maharaja of Baroda), as a post-graduate and doctoral student in the US ("where his reputation as a scholar prompted Lala Lajpat Rai to invite him to join his fold"), of his return to India (and his propensity to keep resigning because of the humiliation he was subjected to), of his differences with Mahatma Gandhi (and the compromise arrived with the Poona Pact), of his formation of the Labour Party (and how he proved his mettle in the Bombay Assembly), of his landmark labour legislations in Bombay, of his decision to embrace Buddhism (with half a million followers), of his drafting of the Constitution etc.

Dr Selvie Das's lecture also had several flashes of ironical humour ("my colleagues in the UPSC once asked: 'the young man is so handsome, how can he be of the SC/ST community?"), of anguish (at the sorry state of Employment Exchanges) and wisdom ("there's only one religion: the religion of love!").

The function ended with the distribution of cash awards to Sc/ST students scoring high marks in science subjects, a well-articulated vote of thanks by Mr M A Venkataswamy and a warm function to greet NAL, COA, Mrs Saroja Rajagopal on the eve of her retirement.

Srinivas Bhogle