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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# GAURA GURUJI AS A FOLLOWERS OF DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR

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### ABSTRACT

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is recognized as one of the most influential figures in history and commands a substantial following. Two prominent elements pay tribute to India's heritage. The Battle of Koregaon fought in January 1818, stands out as a pivotal moment in the struggle of Dalits who allied with Bajirao Peshwa II and the British in their fight against entrenched inequalities within Indian society. Of the 30,000 soldiers serving under Peshwa II, only 500 Mahar soldiers demonstrated remarkable courage and ultimately achieved victory over the Peshwa's forces. The Dalits exhibited heroism and resilience in their quest for self-respect, striving to dismantle the remnants of caste culture.

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## INTRODUCTION

Upon discovering the history of his ancestors, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar honoured them by visiting Koregaon annually in January throughout his life. This tradition has earned Koregaon the designation "Bheema Koregaon" in Indian history. Even today, millions of Dr.Ambedkar's followers journey from villages across India to pay their respects. The legacy of Dr. Ambedkar's followers stands as a testament to his influence. Another significant milestone occurred on October 14, 1956, when Dr. Ambedkar introduced a socio-religious dimension to Indian history. On this date, the "Nagpur Buddhism Initiation Ceremony" took place, witnessing the conversion of 500,000 followers—making it one of the largest gatherings of its kind in global history. It is remarkable that no event in any country has matched such a large following. Consequently, Dr Ambedkar can be regarded as a unique historical figure worldwide, celebrated for having the most substantial number of followers. Moreover, Dr Ambedkar's followers continue to grow daily, driven by his ideological foundations, scientific worldview, and cosmopolitan approach, which have collectively enriched the narrative of his legacy.

**Followers of Dr. Ambedkar in Karnataka:** It is widely acknowledged that Dr Ambedkar has had a significant and lasting influence on numerous followers across India's history. This sentiment is particularly evident in Karnataka, where a strong contingent of his admirers resides, especially in the Mumbai region. The list of notable followers further illustrates this point. Among them is Shri Shankarananda Shastri from Dharwad, a close friend and devoted supporter of Dr Ambedkar; Shri Datta Katti, a Member of

Parliament from Belagavi; and Shri Balavantha Hanamanta Rao Varale, a former MLA from Mumbai Karnataka. The impact of Dr Ambedkar's followers throughout India's history is undeniable. This impact is particularly strong in Karnataka, especially within the Mumbai region, where a robust community of dedicated followers exists. A closer examination of this community reveals key figures such as Shri Shankarananda Shastri from Dharwad, a close associate and steadfast supporter of Dr Ambedkar; Shri DattaKatti, a prominent Member of Parliament representing Belagavi; and Shri Balavantha Hanamanta Rao Varale, the former MLA from Mumbai Karnataka. Their dedication exemplifies Dr.Ambedkar's enduring legacy in the region. The influence of Dr.Ambedkar's followers throughout India's history is irrefutable, with a powerful presence in Karnataka, especially within the Mumbai region, where a vibrant community of devoted adherents can be found. A prominent figure and contemporary follower of Dr Ambedkar, Dalit patriarch DevarayaIngala hails from Ingali village in the Chikkodi region. His notable contemporaries were Sadalgara, Mr Peddanna, Mr Parasurama P. Hegde, Ratnaprasuryavanshi, LakshanaKamble, and barrister Mr S. N. Mane. Other key figures included Mr M. B. Kambale, NingappaVarale, Kadakalatar, Mr M. D. Kambale, a steadfast supporter of Examba, Mr V. D. Manege (a retired teacher), Mr M. G. Devarushi, and Mr M. B. Chitale. Mr M. B. Nadkarni from Galatag and Dr Male from Benadi village were notable adherents of Dr Ambedkar. Additionally, Mrs.SiddavvaMetri from Belgaum, Mrs.Jigan B. Patel from Karoshi, and Sonabai from Athani contributed to the movement. The following regions—Belgaum, Chikkodi, Nippani, Kadakalata, Sadalaga, Galataga, Exemba, Kadapura, Nirli, Gavanala, Benadi, Karoshi, and Athani—witnessed a significant presence of Dr.Ambedkar's followers in Belagavi district.

**Followers of Dr. Ambedkar in Bijapur District:** To shed light on the followers of Dr. Ambedkar in Bijapur district, Bijjargi village holds a significant place in history. The contribution of Bijjargi village to the

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legacy of Dr Ambedkar's followers is considerable, and the village today stands as a testament to that historical influence. Among the notable followers from this region were Mr AllappaAvadi, Mr Ramachandra Avadi, Mr Bhimanna Jolly, Mr GurappaKyatanavar, Mr. SL Gonasagi, Mr. L. S. Mukyala, Mr. L. K. Sandimani, Mr. Lakkappa Thoravi, Mr. L. K. Chinchalakara, Mr. L. R. Nayaka (Lakshmana Ramappa Lamani), Mr. Shivappahavinala, and Mr. Shivanagi from Indi taluk. Significant figures such as Shri Chandrasekhara Hosamani, Shri GS Aidale (Legislators), Mr Revappa Kale (legislators), Mr Goura Guruji, and Mrs Y. G. Goura also played essential roles in this movement.

**Historical History of Gaura Village:** Gaura village, home to a population of around one thousand, is known as the birthplace of GauraGuruji. It is situated in the Afazalpur Taluk of Gulbarga District. The area has a rich history that dates back to ancient times, evident from the abundance of waste soil. The term "honour" translates to "white" and signifies holiness. It is believed that the village derived its name from Gaviur, which evolved into Gavoor and ultimately became Gaura. Approximately six miles from Gaura village lies Afazalpura in Bhimathira, which served as the capital of Afazal Khan, a chieftain of the Bijapur dynasty. Afzal Khan, who stood seven feet tall, was a towering figure known for his bravery. He played a significant role in defending Gulbarga from the Bahmani kings who sought to invade Bijapur. Historically, the king of Bijapur sent Afzal Khan to Pratapgad to eliminate Shivaji. In preparation for his departure, Afzal Khan tragically killed his queens and cast their bodies into the river. However, Shivaji ultimately slain him at Pratapgad. The remnants of Afzal Khan's palace still stand as a testament to this historical narrative. While Gaura village was not widely recognized for its reasons, it gained historical significance through the movements led by the followers of Dr. Ambedkar, who were associated with GauraGuruji.

**Gaura Guruji's Childhood Life:** GauraGuruji was born as the fourth son of Malakappa and Nagavva, receiving the name Gurappa. His birth occurred on a Thursday, and his father hailed from Gobburu. Interestingly, his mother's birth date aligns with his school enrollment, as his parents were illiterate. School records indicate that he was enrolled on 11-03-18, reflecting the cultural practices of the time. Child marriages were prevalent in his community, and GauraGuruji was not exempt from this tradition. At the age of three, he married his brother-in-law's six-month-old daughter, Ratna, through a ceremony that involved tying a sacred thread to her cradle. His older sister, Bangarevva, married her brother-in-law, Chandrappa, in Budihala village in Sindagitaluk. Unfortunately, he passed away, leaving Bangarevva as a child widow without remarrying. The family and Gaura Guruji eventually settled in Buditala when he was eight years old.

**Gaura Guruji's curious to look at the school:** In GauraGuruji's village, the school is a common situation in all the villages of Mogalal. The children of the GowSahukar'srni and Sahukar families would travel to town to learn to read and write in Urdu and Marathi. Gaura Guruji had never seen a school, but he was astonished to witness the students reading, writing, and singing at the school across from the temple. A Brahmin teacher named Ganesha Kulkarni, who stood by the window, noticed GauraGuruji and inquired about his identity. Gaura Guruji replied that he had come from Bhava'sava's house from Gaura. BhagamaAnnaram VIO was well-known in the area for regularly attending the monthly Pura program in Budihal village. Additionally, she owned a copy of the 'Jaimini Bharat' book, which she would read to literate guests she often invited to her home. Consequently, Bhimaji's suence of Bhimaji was widely recognized in Budihala village. After learning Kulkarni's teacher, Jivani Ganesh Kulkarni encouraged GauraGuruji to bring his grandmother. Once Gaura Guruji brought Bhimaji, the teacher informed her that her grandson was immensely talented and should be sent to school.

**Admission to Gaura Guruji School:** Malakappa, Gaura Gu Guruji's father, kept an old pot to be someone else's and enrolled his son in school. However, untouchables were not permitted inside. To

accommodate GauraGuruji, his father brought a hollowed-out tree trunk to place outside the school door, allowing him to sit comfortably. This trunk remains in front of the school, and in his autobiography, Sri GouraGuruji expressed that he would "enjoy seeing it" even when it turns to ashes. Once GauraGuruji was admitted, he took up the potty when the teacher set it down outside the teacher's window to recedid'tetry. His classmates refrained from touching him, yet Gaura Guruji generously shared images and stories of the fifth Charja Badshah, symbolizing the school years of 1917, 1918, and 1960, when he was in first grade. During that time, he attended school twice a week, as his grandmother had advised. Gaura Guruji worked diligently and passed every academic year with distinction. His teacher deeply admired him, often telling the other students they should feel ashamed of the preseGuruji'such intelligence. GauraGuruji's wisdom stood as a testament to his capabilities. It was Guruji's honour for his teacher to witness the exceptional student he had become. After becoming a teacher, he went to Korahallschool, where he bowed to Guruji's feet and received blessings. The Guru predicted a bright future for him, and the fruits of his blessings have come to pass. In his autobiography, GauraGuruji described his immense respect for his mentor. In 1928, Guruji successfully passed the Mulki examination.

**GauraGuruji Police Recruitment:** GauraGuruji's grandmother and elder sistefaujadar inspired him to become a Faujadar, a position the villagers highly regarded. They recognized that the role of a Faujadar was esteemed, with more tremendous respect afforded to him than to any other employee. Although Shivilingappa from Alameda was considered an archenemy, he had amassed considerable wealth and earned a reputation as a formidable warrior. The khaki-clad police co Bharti's exemplified courtesy, leading GauraGuruji to vow to pursue a career in law enforcement. During the 1930s, Ambedkar's Congress was fervently promoting an aspirational movement, while the British government initiated efforts to expand the police force through Bharti's work.

**GauraGuruji Appointed as Teacher:** Dr. Ambedkar's movement spread from village to village across India. At the time, issues of caste and colour were prevalent, and Dr Ambedkar dedicated himself to addressing these challenges. He had a strong determination to become a born fighter. Consequently, Ambedkar'sheb Ambedkar sought to advance his movement beyond each village, reaching cities, districts, states, and eventually the national and international levels. His influence was particularly notable throughout Karnataka, especially in the Bijapur district (now known as Vijayapura). His followers, who embraced Dr Ambedkar's principles, initiated movements in his name, making his legacy memorable and commendable. Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, visited Bijapur. Ambedkar's historic city has also been a destination for other notable leaders, highlighting its significance from a historical perspective. A large segment of the Dalit population in India became followers of Ambedkar, and his movement played a crucial role in shaping the socio-political landscape of the Bijapur district in Karnataka. Before 1950, the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwad, and Karwar were part of the Mumbai Presidency. Dalit activists and leaders in these regions recognized that they were integral to the formation of Karnataka. The Dalit movement, which originated in India, also found its foothold here. The contributions made by Karnataka, distinct from Maharashtra, are noteworthy, as the Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar-led Dalit movements began in North Karnataka, particularly in Bijapur, during the 1930s. Therefore, it is fitting to consider the 1930s a significant period of opportunity for the Dalits of Bijapur district.

**Zilla Harijan Parishad:** Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar accused Mr Soman Gowda of Belagali of murder, and he was travelling to Bijapur to oversee the trial. When Mr Andanappa, a lawyer, visited Mumbai, Dr Ambedkar indicated that Revap Ambedkar'suld would be excluded from the party for the upcoming elections. In line with Dr Ambedkar's statements, Mr GouraGuruji, moved by his words, emphasized that all of Dr Ambedkar's followers should undertake the tasks he outlined without error. The Zilla Harijan Parishad requested Dr. Babasaheb to

assume the presidency, and he agreed to visit Bijapur on May 31, 1937. This marked Dr. Ambedkar's first visit to Bijapur, generating significant anticipation among his followers throughout the district. Consequently, advertisements featuring his portrait were circulated to every village in the area to promote his visit, reflecting the excitement surrounding Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's arrival.

**Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Advent to Bijapur:** Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar addressed the agenda of the Zilla Harijan Parishad and the case concerning the murder of Mr. Soman Gowda, affirming that Bijapur would warmly welcome him. On May 30, 1937, at 10 a.m., Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar arrived at the Bijapur railway station by train. A large gathering of his followers and admirers awaited him for darshan. Gaura Guruji presented garlands on behalf of the district Har Andanappa'sad. Mr. Andanappa, a lawyer, was also introduced. Hundreds of supporters formed a guard of honour. As he waved to the crowd, he expressed his appreciation with the enthusiastic chants of "Ambedkar Zindabada" ringing out. He then proceeded to the tourist temple by car.

**Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Argument in Court:** There were murder charges brought against Soman Gowda of Belagi, with the police having gathered Gowda's evidence to substantiate these charges. Mr. Gowda's lawyer, Mr. Andanappa Angadi, took the case documents to Mumbai, seeking the expertise of Mr. Nariman's lawyer, Mr. Nariman. However, Mr. Nariman's legal team was ultimately successful in the case. They found the lack of supporting documentation problematic and remarked that it would not be beneficial even if the matter were brought to Bijapur. Despite these challenges, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was persuaded to take on the case. After thoroughly reviewing the details for a day, he agreed to travel to Bijapur. The public was abuzz with curiosity about the proceedings. Dressed in a gown, Dr. Ambedkar, accompanied by lawyer Mr. Gaura Guruji, made his way to the court. The courtroom was crowded with judges and spectators eager to witness the unfolding drama. When the time came, Dr. Ambedkar stood ready to present his case, drawing upon the evidence from numerous courts to underscore Mr. Soman Gowda's innocence. After an hour and a half of arguments, the case concluded with Soman Gowda being acquitted. This outcome clearly illustrated Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's fundamental commitment to providing social justice for scholars and ordinary people.

**Visit of Historic Places:** Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar stayed at Bijapur on 31-05-1937 for the program of Zilla Harijan Parishad. Along with Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, his followers and Vidhan Sabha members Mr. Revappa Kale, Mr. Aidale and Gaura Guruji all visited the historical places in the early morning.

**Zilla Harijan Parishad Programme:** The untouchables from the Bijapur district began arriving early in the morning to have a darshan with Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The stage was set at Ranibagicha, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Stadium in Vijayapur. People also travelled from the Solapur districts to attend the event. At 5 p.m., the act of Ambedkar's arrival organized by the Zilla Harijan Parishad commenced, drawing approximately 50,000 participants. This turnout demonstrated Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's popularity as a leader. Mr. B.H. Varare, a dedicated worker and Member of the Legislative Assembly for Belgaum District presided over the council. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar took to the platform to deliver his speech. Notably, Mahamedhavi, a renowned orator, spoke for nearly two hours, expressing his frustration over the dire conditions faced by Dalits and their systemic exclusion. He recounted his long-standing efforts in the social and political struggle against untouchability, aligning himself with Gandhiji's movement. Addressing the impact of the Poona Agreement, he passionately highlighted the injustices faced by Dalits. Declaring his commitment to bringing equality to Dalits and other marginalized communities through the reservation, he inspired a sense of urgency among his followers.

The power of his speech ignited a vigilant movement among the crowd, resulting in a strong show of support. This visit by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar to Bijapur marked both a significant moment and his first and last visit to "the area."

**Gaura Guruji's Contributions to the Movement of Followers of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar:** Gaura Guruji is a prominent follower in the Bijapur district and holds the distinction of being the first Dalit poet in the area. He served as a teacher in B'juntouchables' profoundly influenced by the prevailing atmosphere of untouchability among the upper caste, particularly during an elephant event. In response, Gaura Guruji initiated a social transformation movement from Bijapur, focusing on eradicating pressing issues such as the devada Guruji's vice among the so-called 'untouchables' and the consumption of dead cattle. During school holidays, he took the initiative to visit nearby villages, delivering speeches to raise awareness and instil a sense of vigilance among the people. He emphasized the importance of education and encouraged families to send their children to school. Gaura Guruji's practical efforts as a devoted follower of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar are noteworthy. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar published significant works such as *Mookanayak* in 1920, *Bhaishikrat Bharat* in 1927, and *Janata Marathi* in 1930 to promote public awareness. Inspired by Ambedkar's revolutionary speeches and writings, Gaura Guruji adopted his ideologies and began disseminating information through the *Janata News* during Ambedkar's lifetime; he organized campaigns in villages to celebrate Ambedkar Jayanti on April 14, gathering the marginalized community in eighteen villages in Bijapur, engaging followers, and bestowing honour upon this occasion within their society. Shri Gaura Guruji's immense contributions to the movement, influenced by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's principles, testify to Ambedkar's followers' ongoing legacy and highlight the often-overlooked local history within this research narrative.

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