

I AM A MAN OF CHARACTER

“Subhedar Ramji Maloji, father of Bhimrao Ambedkar passed away on February 2, 1913. Bhimrao Ambedkar was now left to stand on his own feet. His insatiable thirst for knowledge and the spur of ambition made him restless. He was now in no mood to return to his job in Baroda. His short stay there had been unhappy. At last another chance came his way in June 1913. The Maharaja of Baroda*, at this juncture, thought of sending some students to the U.S.A for higher studies at Columbia University.”¹

“While H. H. Maharaja was at Bombay, Bhimrao met him at the Malbar Hill Palace in order to apprise him of the inconvenience faced by him in service and residential facilities while at Baroda. H. H. Maharaja was already knowing almost everything about Bhimrao. Without mentioning a single word about the inconvenience faced by Bhimrao, H. H. Maharaja was discussing various subjects with him. Bhimrao gave his considered opinion on whatever questions the H. H. Maharaja asked. After about half an hour discussion the H. H. Maharaja asked him to come tomorrow at the same time. Since H. H. Maharaja did not speak anything about the complaints Bhimrao had made felt unhappy.

The Next day, H. H. Maharaja asked which subject would he like to study. Bhimrao replied, Sociology, Economics and especially Public Finance.

H. H. Maharaja : What will you do by studying these subjects ?

Bhimrao : The study of these subjects would give me clues for improving the depressed condition of my society and I shall undertake the work of social reforms on those lines.

H. H. Maharaja : (Laughingly) But you are going to serve us, isn't it ? Then how are you going to study, serve and also do the social service ?

* His Highness Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad was born on March 1, 1863. His coronation took place on December 28, 1881. The Maharaja breathed his last on February 6, 1939, at his Jai Mahal Palace in Bombay.

¹: Keer, Pp. 24-26.

Bhimrao : If H. H. Maharaja gives me due opportunity, I shall manage to do all the things.

H. H. Maharaja : I have been thinking on the same lines. I am thinking sending you to America will you go?

Bhimrao : Yes Sir.

H. H. Maharaja : Now you can go. Send an application of foreign proposed study to our Academic Officer asking for a scholarship and inform me accordingly.”¹

“He advised him to apply for one of the scholarships which his State had advertised. He did so, and the Maharaja decided to send Bhimrao along with three other students for higher education. Bhimrao was called to Baroda. On June 4, 1913, he signed an agreement before the Assistant Minister for Education of the Baroda State, agreeing to devote his time to studying the prescribed subjects and to serve for ten years the Baroda State after completion of his studies.”²

The Memorandum of Agreement is as follow:

“Memorandum of Agreement made the fourth of June 1913, between the Government of His Highness the Gaekwad of Baroda, on the one part, and Mr. Bhimrao R. Ambedkar, B. A., an inhabitant of Baroda* on the other part.

It is agreed between the Government of His Highness the Maharaja Gaekwad and Bhimrao R. Ambedkar as follows :—

(1) Mr. Ambedkar Bhimrao R. undertakes to proceed to America to be trained up Finance and Sociology in the Columbia University, New York, and to obtain the Master’s degree in Economics, Finance and Sociology, staying there for a period of two years or more as may be hereafter considered necessary. During the period he shall stay under general supervision of Dr. H. C. Pumpus.

¹: Khairmode, Vol. I, Pp. 63-64.

²: Keer, P. 26.

* Should be ‘Bombay’ See Appendix VII for other details also.

(2) Mr. Bhimrao Ambedkar will not devote any time to the study of other subject or subjects to the detriment of his study of those mentioned in the agreement without the consent of His Highness' Government.

(3) He shall submit quarterly reports of his conduct and progress to the Minister of Education, Baroda State, through the Educational Authorities under whom he may be studying or through Dr. H. C. Pumpus under whose care he may be placed and shall abide by the insrtuctions that may be sent to him from time to time.

(4) He will receive before departure Rs. 500 for his outfit.

(5) For his onward journey from Bombay to America His Highness' Government will provide second class passage by a French or German Steamer. He will also be provided with the same for the return journey, if he returns after successfully finishing the subject or subjects as mentioned in clause I or if he is compelled by sickness to return, under a Medical Certificate, before the completion of his studies. He will also receive second class railway and boat fare and actual expenses for bona-fide journeys made in connection with his studies.

(6) Mr. Ambedkar will receive from the date of his starting from Bombay an allowance of £ 230 (two hundred and thirty pounds) per annum, and in addition the Government will pay all expenditure.

—*Incomplete—one Page missing*—

A. C. Joshi

Bhimrao R. Ambedkar

(on Eight Annas Stamp)

Signed and attested before me this day on fourth of
June 1913.

G.M. Shah

Assistant Minister of Education,

Baroda State.

On behalf of Government.”¹

¹: Rattu : Little known facts of Dr. Ambedkar, Pp. 227-228.

“Expenditure incurred on behalf of Mr. B. R. Ambedkar*

IN AMERICA

Rs.	As. P.	
1,373	12-0	Outfit, 3 month's scholarship from 15-6-13 and Railway fare from Baroda.
5900-0		Passage
3,828	0-0	Scholarship from 15-9-13 to 14-6-14 and books, fees, etc. Bill No. 843/25-4-14
6,912	3-7	Scholarship from 15-6-14 to 14-9-15 and books, fees, etc. Bill No. 898/28-7-16
3,651	7-10	Scholarship from 15-9-15 to 14-6-16 and books, fees, etc. Bill No. 1831/31-3-18

IN ENGLAND

4,078	9-8	Scholarship from 15-6-16 to 14-6-17 Bill No. 1831/31-5-18 educational expenses and passage.”
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20,434-0-6

“The Baroda State officials in their flaming zeal to guard the interests of the Maharaja and to control the finances of the State, took extraordinary steps in insisting on the repayment of the scholarship amount of Rs. 20,434.05p.² by Dr. Ambedkar, without, however, the knowledge of Maharaja.

Dr. Ambedkar was, no doubt, committed to repay the money the Baroda State had spent on his behalf for prosecuting studies abroad but situated as he was he had not sufficient money to live on much less to spare anything to his credits. Under the circumstances he expressed his inability to return the money spent by the State much as he wished to do. As such he humbly requested the Baroda State Government officials to give him time till he was in a position to pay

* For other details, see Appendices VII, VIII and IX

¹: Rattu: Little known facts of Dr. Ambedkar, P. 229

²: Slight difference between two figures-Editors.

Dr. Ambedkar's letter to Mr. Pandit, on the Baroda State Government's move to file a suit for the recovery of the amount. Written in his own magnificent way and style give a very interesting reading. The same is reproduced verbatim :

Private

Damodar Hall.

B. R. Ambedkar

Parel, Bombay

9-12-1924

Dear Mr. Pandit,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 6th instant. I have very carefully noted the contents of the same. If you had seen my previous correspondence with the Baroda Government you would not have found much necessity to remind me of my obligations to the State. For, I have written to them many a times that whatever be the legal relations between me and the Baroda State I hold myself bound to pay the money the State has spent on my behalf. And believe me that if I had the money with me here and now I would have discharged my obligations without a moment's delay. For I long to feel that I am free to say that I want to say regarding the treatment the Baroda Government has given to me and of which you seem to be entirely unaware. But situated as I am I have not sufficient to live on much less to spare anything to my credits. You say that I am now "established" in Bombay and that you don't see any difficulty why I should not fulfil my obligations. It is rather difficult to understand what you mean by the word "established". If you mean that I am earning by heaps I am sorry to tell you that you are entirely mistaken. You seem to forget that I am only a Barrister struggling to get work. First of all there is the fact that I am only year old in practice. Secondly there are all the caste prejudices which are rampant in this profession and which I have to face at every step in my onward march. The struggle

for me is the bitterest possible and I am therefore obliged to take things lying very low indeed. Under the circumstances I am for the present unable to return the money spent by the State much as I wish to do. If the Baroda Government interprets my inability to pay as an unwillingness to pay then the way for them is to go to Court, get a decree and execute it if they think that it will be really to their advantage. It may be true that if matters go to court then the name of the community will suffer. On the other hand it is my belief that if the community were to know as it will in the course of the suit the way in which I have behaved towards the Baroda Government, I am sure there will be nothing which it shall have to be ashamed of on my account. On the other hand I have no doubt that in the mudslinging that will follow the contemplated suit some mud will stick to His Highness and to the Baroda State of which both shall have to be ashamed.

Of course it will be better if all this were avoided. But the only way in which it can be avoided is by the Baroda Government giving me time till I am in a position to pay. The Baroda Government don't seem to know me sufficiently well. I have once shown them that I am a man of character. If I had not had sufficient character I would never have returned at Baroda. I had immeasurable offers to enter British service who would have thrown them away except by a man of character ? They only know me as an independent fellow. But they forget it is only a man of character who can be independent.

Be that as it may I hope you will understand that I am most anxious to meet my obligations to the State and if I cannot do it immediately it is only because I am hard up. The moment I am in easy circumstances you may depend upon it that I will commence to repay. More than this I cannot for the present say or do. My real object which I have disclosed to repay it to the University of Bombay and to request the University to

establish Scholarships for Depressed Class boys out of that sum in the name of the Maharaja of Baroda. The money was spent on me as a member of the Depressed Classes and in my view it should not go to the private use of the State but should be utilized for the benefit of the Depressed Classes. But as the State has been acting in such a commercial way I submit I do not think it would appreciate my plan.

With this I leave it to you to judge between me and the Baroda State.

I have not misunderstood the spirit in which you have written to me and I trust you will not misunderstand the spirit in which I have replied to you.

Hoping to hear from you occasionally.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

(B. R. Ambedkar)¹

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¹: Rattu : Little known facts of Dr. Ambedkar, Pp. 21-24.