

## Celebration of 135th Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Jayanti, Organized by Department of Anthropology, Sikkim University



The Department of Anthropology, Sikkim University, commemorated the 135th birth anniversary of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar on 13th April 2026. The programme commenced with Sikkim University's invocation song and the ceremonial lighting of the lamp as a mark of respect to the eminent Social Reformer and Principal architect of the Indian Constitution. Thereafter, an introductory presentation on the life and legacy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was presented highlighting the comprehensive overview of his historical and political trajectory, highlighting his remarkable educational accomplishments, his persistent struggle against caste-based discrimination, and his transformative contributions toward the upliftment of marginalized communities in India.



In the opening remarks, Prof. K.R. Rama Mohan, Head, Department of Anthropology, Sikkim University who formally welcomed the distinguished guests, including Chairperson for the event Prof. N.K. Paswan, Dean, Student's Welfare, Sikkim University, and invited speaker Dr. Suditya Sapcotta, Head, Department of Sociology, Sikkim Manipal University, Faculty members, Scholars and students from Sikkim University and other distinguished guests. In his address, Prof. Mohan underscored the intellectual depth and contemporary relevance of Dr. Ambedkar's writings. He particularly emphasized Dr. Ambedkar's critical engagement with the structural foundations of Hindu society, along with his contributions on Social fabric, occupation, affirmative action, and social justice from anthropological studies.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Suditya Sapcotta under the theme "Scholar-Warrior: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Struggle for a Just India." He presented a nuanced analysis of Dr. Ambedkar's role in nation-building, portraying him as both a global intellectual and a committed grassroots reformer. Drawing upon Dr. Ambedkar's lived experiences, including his struggle for access to public water resources, Dr. Sapcotta highlighted the symbolic and political significance of such acts of resistance. He further elaborated on key historical developments such as the Poona Pact, the abolition of untouchability, and the conceptualization of minority rights. He also discussed the importance of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules in ensuring autonomy for Adivasi and tribal communities. Concluding his address, he emphasized the continued relevance of Dr. Ambedkar's ideas in contemporary India, particularly in addressing issues such as social discrimination, inequality, and injustice, and reiterated Dr. Ambedkar's assertion that the progress of a society is best measured by the status of its women.

The Chairperson of the programme Prof. N.K. Paswan, who shared powerful reflections drawn from his lived experiences as a member of a marginalized community. He vividly recounted instances of caste-based discrimination during his formative years, offering a poignant perspective on the persistence of social hierarchies. He also highlighted Dr. Ambedkar's contributions to economic thought, particularly referencing his seminal work, *The Problem of the Rupee*.



The second session of the event included a special lecture by Prof. N. Sudhakar Rao titled “Graded Inequality and the Fragmented Self: An Existential Reading of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.” In his lecture, he engaged with the critical question of the impact of caste on human existence, exploring themes such as purity and pollution, social mobility, untouchability as an existential rupture, and the philosophical principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

In the final session presentation made by the scholars and students of Sikkim University on Dr. B.R Ambedkar’s ideology and contributions by offering diverse and thought-provoking perspectives. Ms. Pradipta Roy opened the session by reflecting on the idea of social democracy, emphasizing the importance of living a life of dignity. She also drew attention to the growing role of Artificial

Intelligence and how it intersects with questions of equity and social justice. This was followed by Ms. Upasana Lohar, who began by sharing her lived experiences as a member of a marginalized community. She spoke about the presence of Dr. Ambedkar’s photograph in her home during her childhood and her curiosity about it and describing it as a deeply symbolic and personal connection.



She also highlighted Ambedkar’s powerful call to action: “Educate, Agitate, Organize”. The final speaker, Ms. Enamlu Draï, addressed the theme of gender and development, offering critical insights into the intersections of identity and structural inequality.

The session concluded with closing remarks by Dr. Suditya Sapcotta, who

emphasized the importance of understanding one’s positionality while participating in feminist movements. He underscored the need for careful allyship urging individuals to remain conscious, responsible, and mindful not to occupy spaces that should amplify marginalized voices. This was followed by audience participation and discussions on how other castes perceive, and how does a scholar from a marginalized community navigate his/her/their space if they want to study aspects of other castes. Overall, the session was deeply insightful, fostering critical reflection on social justice, identity, and collective responsibility.