



■ Students researching Dr BR Ambedkar's work photographed at the London School of Economics and Political Science, where they were given access to archival resources related to their projects.

A memorable visit to LSE, Babasaheb's alma mater

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For 25 postgraduate Indian students researching the life and work of the architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr BR Ambedkar; and on social injustice, it was a memorable trip to the United Kingdom. They got a chance to visit Dr Ambedkar's alma mater, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) as part of celebrations to mark Babasaheb's 125th birth anniversary.

Dr Ambedkar studied at LSE during 1916 and 1923 and was awarded a master's and PhD in economics. During their visit, which took place from November 21-28, the students were also given access to the LSE library and archival resources linked to their research.

About the trip, Mohammad Hifz-ur Rahman, a doctoral fellow from the International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, says, "I wanted to be a part of the exciting journey and witness minute details that transformed Dr Ambedkar into one of the greatest leaders of our country to propagate the prophetic values

of equality and justice."

The ministry of social justice called for applications this June for a study tour to LSE and Columbia University (USA), from research scholars with a family income of less than ₹4.5 lakh working on the theme of social justice and equality. An Indian citizen with at least a graduate degree and pursuing research on Dr Ambedkar or subjects related to social justice was eligible to participate. As criteria, 50% of participating students had to be female. The selections were done on the basis of merit and the relevance of their studies to the programme while gender balance and regional distribution were also taken into account. The application process was handled by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the programme was funded by the ministry.

For Chotta Bairwa, a PHD scholar in political science at the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, "The tour was a good opportunity because we saw live documents of Babasaheb and earned precious knowledge. I saw the respect bestowed on an Indian, especially a Dalit, a so-called untouchable, in London. It was

all a result of Dr Ambedkar's hard work."

Bairwa's research topics are gender and education. She is also working with several city-based NGOs and societies to implement her ideas practically. As a part of the study tour, the students visited Westminster, the British Library, Oxford and Dr Ambedkar's house on King Henry Road in north London, which for Rahman was "a moving experience".

The students also attended lectures by Lord Meghnad Desai, emeritus professor of Economics at LSE, on the Indian Constitution and by LSE Fellow Dr Lisa McKenzie, on social inequality in Britain. "Dr McKenzie presented her ideas in an easy-to-understand language. The credit for Britain's success, she said, went to the working class and also explained various policies of the British government for homeless people," says Bairwa.

Talking on the issue of social inequality in India, Bairwa says, "there is inequality based on caste, religion, gender, colour, etc. However the educated class in India is trying to eliminate these."