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Ambedkar's Legacy: Charting the Course for Social Justice, Neo-Buddhism, and Transformative Sociopolitical Dynamics in India

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Academic Review Articles

Ambedkar's Legacy: Charting the Course for Social Justice, Neo-Buddhism, and Transformative Sociopolitical Dynamics in India

Phramaha Chakrapol Acharashubho Thepa^{1*}

Abstract

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, also known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, was a visionary leader who devoted his life to the pursuit of social justice and equality in India. His contributions to Indian society are multifaceted, and their impact is still palpable today. This essay aims to explore the profound spirit of Dr. Ambedkar and his steadfast commitment to establishing a just and equitable society for all. Dr. Ambedkar's spirit was characterized by a deep sense of empathy and compassion for the marginalized communities of India, particularly the Dalits. He recognized the systemic discrimination and oppression faced by Dalits and other marginalized groups, dedicating his life to advocating for their rights and dignity. He firmly believed that social justice could only be achieved through the eradication of caste-based discrimination and the establishment of a genuinely democratic and inclusive society. The contributions of Dr. Ambedkar to the Indian Constitution stand as a testament to his profound spirit. He played a significant role in drafting the Constitution, which enshrines the principles of democracy, secularism, and social justice. He championed for the inclusion of provisions for affirmative action and reservations for Dalits and other marginalized communities, acknowledging the necessity for special measures to address historical injustices and provide equal opportunities. Dr. Ambedkar's enduring spirit continues to inspire millions of people in India and around the world. His legacy serves as a reminder of the significance of empathy, compassion, and perseverance in the pursuit of social justice and equality. As we grapple with ongoing issues of discrimination and inequality in our societies, we can draw inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar's unwavering commitment to creating a better world for all.

Keywords: Ambedkar; Social Justice; Neo-Buddhism; Transformative; Sociopolitical

Introduction

The essay is directed towards highlighting the remarkable spirit of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, who profoundly impacted Indian society through his analytical prowess. Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar devoted his life to the pursuit of social, economic, and political justice for the underprivileged. His life unfolds as an epic narrative of struggles, compromises, and conflicts (Ambedkar, 2011: 12). As a student, professor, social thinker, and political leader, he encountered formidable obstacles, assaults, and public humiliation. Since childhood, he endured the tyranny of caste, neglect, persecution, and unbearable agony. Throughout every stage, Ambedkar resisted and fought against these pernicious and morally reprehensible aspects of Hindu society. His fortitude, commitment, restraint, hard work, profound research, education, standard adoration, devotion, selflessness, and self-sacrifice empowered him to convey the message of the Messiah to the oppressed and disadvantaged people in the country.

Even after 2500 years since Buddha Jayanti, his voice resonated faintly, awakening millions of unconscious individuals on the Indian subcontinent. His guidance served as a powerful message to the impoverished and defenseless public, urging them to cast off their constraints and eliminate obstacles. Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar spearheaded humanitarian nonviolent resistance movements, advocating three key principles: education, organization, and agitation. Clearly, the first principle contributes to rational discourse, the second to inner resilience, and the third to a determination to protect human rights, irrespective of gender.

The paper will specifically examine Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's impact on society in three dimensions: Society Evaluating Spirit, Religion Engaging Spirit, and Educational Spirit. This forms the focal point of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's remarkable life, substantiated by evidence derived from literature, history, and extensive sociological data.

Perception of Indians toward Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar in Society

After 'Buddha,' Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar stands out as the sole Indian scholar who, much like a 'Philosopher,' raised questions about social conservatism and complacency. Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, recognized as a progressive liberal, aimed to carve out a public space for Dalits in medieval India. The conversion of Dalits to Buddhism played a significant role in positioning them as a minority outside the realm of Hinduism. Ambedkar's commendable efforts to bring about change among Dalits, encouraging their conversion to Buddhism and striving for their equality through eligibility for state assurances, underscore his noteworthy contribution. Thus, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's essential role lies in shaping the politics of Dalit emancipation and creatively envisioning political progressivism to confer upon Dalits the status of a minority group. Both Lord Buddha and Ambedkar became symbolic figures for Dalits, representing their rejection of Hinduism and their assertion of the right to a distinct public identity.

This representational ideology, intertwining ordinary life with politics, became a crucial aspect of Dalit authenticity post-colonialism. Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's diverse interests, including works like "The Untouchables: A Thesis on the Origin of Untouchability," "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India," "The Buddha and His Dhamma," "Buddha or Karl

Marx," etc., made him a well-known figure nationwide, influencing a broad spectrum of individuals. Beyond viewing democracy merely as a mechanism for governing, he perceived it primarily as a way for people to coexist and share their experiences, rooted in the fundamental principles of treating others with reverence and admiration.

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, a prominent social reformer, jurist, economist, and politician in 20th-century India, is widely acknowledged as the father of the Indian Constitution. His invaluable contributions to Indian society are highly esteemed. While the Dalit community reveres him as their champion, viewing him as an advocate for their rights, other segments of society may harbor skepticism and suspicion towards his legacy (Teltumbde, 2020: 13). Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar vehemently criticized the caste system, perceiving it as a deeply rooted form of social inequality and oppression in India. His advocacy for the rights of Dalits and marginalized groups, coupled with his tireless efforts for their social, economic, and political empowerment, faced significant opposition from upper-caste members. This opposition manifested in violent clashes and protests, subjecting Dr. Ambedkar to personal attacks and vilification. Despite these challenges, his work and legacy are celebrated by many Indians today. His pivotal role in drafting the Indian Constitution (Narayan, 2021: 65), groundbreaking contributions to social reform, and unwavering commitment to justice and equality have secured him an esteemed place in India's history and the hearts of its citizens (Rathore, 2020: 20-21).

Society Evaluating Spirit

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar advocated for a system of separate electorates, aiming to allow the Depressed Classes to choose their representatives in elected assemblies, mirroring the system adopted by Muslims since 1909. However, due to pressure, he eventually compromised, accepting a system of reserved seats that did not empower Untouchables to directly elect their representatives. Instead, specific electoral districts were allocated for Untouchable candidates, yet they never constituted a majority in any constituency, as all eligible voters could vote for any candidate. Ambedkar's philosophy critically examines Hinduism and proposes an alternative through Buddhist conversion, challenging both the caste system and the oppressive casteism of higher castes (see Ambedkar, 1982–1990). In 1936, when he established his initial political party, the Independent Labour Party, he vehemently opposed the Industrial Disputes Bill in the Bombay Assembly in 1938, arguing against its prohibition of the right to strike for workers (Roy, 2017: 5).

Being the first untouchable politician to meticulously critique the caste system, Ambedkar rejected the racial theory underlying its origins. According to his account, Untouchables were not descendants of subjugated natives by Aryan invaders, as per conventional beliefs. Instead, he presented a narrative of invasions by tribes perceived as more powerful than the indigenous ones. Ambedkar aimed to provide Untouchables with a distinct Buddhist identity and a prestigious culture, leading to his own conversion to Buddhism and encouraging others to follow suit. Widely recognized as a pivotal figure in Indian history, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's contributions to social reform and the empowerment of marginalized communities continue to resonate. His spirit of resilience, courage, and determination inspires people in India and beyond. Ambedkar's unwavering efforts to secure the rights of Dalits, women, and other marginalized

groups have garnered admiration and respect. His vision for a more just and equal society, coupled with his commitment to social justice and human dignity, remains relevant today.

In contemporary India, where issues of caste, gender, and religious discrimination persist, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's ideas hold significance (Naik, 2003: 45). His call for abolishing the caste system, advocating for women's rights, and emphasizing education and social empowerment serve as inspiration for new generations of social reformers. Despite facing formidable opposition during his lifetime, Dr. Ambedkar stayed true to his principles, and his legacy stands as a beacon of inspiration for individuals worldwide who believe in the transformative power of social justice and the capacity of every human being to effect positive change.

Religion Engagement Spirit

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, born into a Hindu family and raised in that faith, underwent a conversion to Buddhism later in life. This transformation was driven by his extensive studies of various religions and his perception of Hinduism as a deeply caste-based religion fostering inequality and discrimination. Dr. Ambedkar's embrace of Buddhism served as a resolute rejection of the caste system, which he deemed a fundamental injustice requiring eradication. Through this conversion, he aimed to discard Hinduism's hierarchical social structure and embrace a more egalitarian and inclusive societal vision.

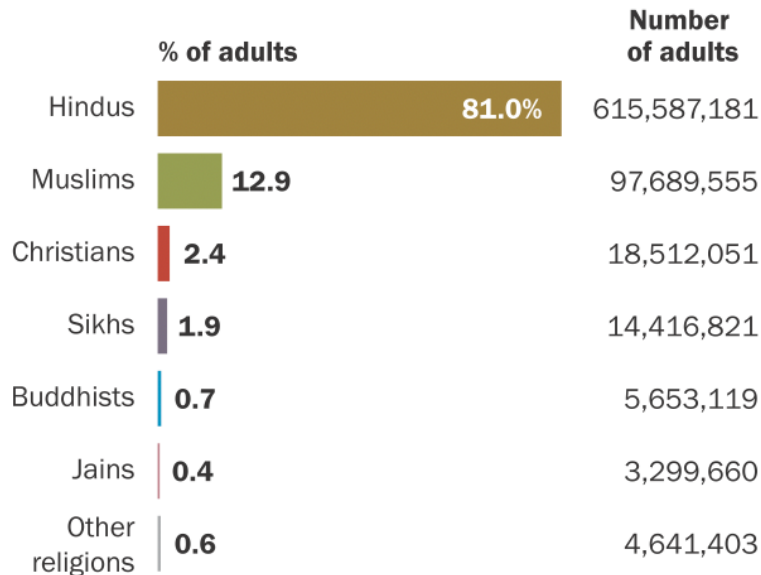
Dr. Ambedkar's interaction with religion was intricate and varied. While he disavowed numerous aspects of Hinduism, he found merit in certain elements of Buddhist philosophy and practice. Viewing Buddhism as a tool for advancing social equality, personal liberation, and moral renewal (Loftus, 2022: 16), he also expressed a profound interest in other religions such as Islam and Christianity. These religions were seen by him as potential sources of moral and spiritual inspiration, and he delved into their teachings and practices. Dr. Ambedkar perceived religion not as an end in itself but as a means to foster a more just and compassionate society, driven by his commitment to social justice and his belief in the capacity of religion to champion human dignity, equality, and liberation.

In recent decades, India has witnessed a rapid decline in its fertility rate. Presently, the average Indian woman is projected to have 2.2 children in her lifetime, surpassing many economically developed nations like the United States (1.6) but significantly lower than in 1992 (3.4) or 1950 (5.9). This decline is observed across all religious groups in the country, encompassing Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains. For instance, the total fertility rate among Indian Muslims has decreased from 4.4 children per woman in 1992 to 2.6 children in 2015.

While Muslims constitute 14.2% of India's population, the remaining 6% is mainly comprised of Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains. Between 1951 and 2011, the percentage of Muslims in India increased by approximately 4 percentage points, while the percentage of Hindus decreased by approximately 4 percentage points. Other religions experienced relatively stable demographic patterns. The higher fertility rates among Muslims contribute to their relatively faster growth rate compared to other religious groups.

India is majority Hindu, but religious minorities have sizable populations

India's adult population by religion (2011 census)



Note: Based on adults ages 18 and older, excluding the union territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep.

Source: Census of India, 2011.

"Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 1 Religion in India (Pew Research Center, 2021)

Buddhism is a minority religion in India, with approximately 8.4 million Buddhists, or 0.7% of the total population, according to the 2011 Indian census. The majority of Buddhists in India live in the northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland, as well as in Maharashtra, West Bengal, and the union territory of Ladakh. Buddhism has a long history in India, introduced by Emperor Ashoka in the third century BCE, and believed to have reached its zenith during his reign. However, it has been on the decline in India since the 12th century AD.

Table 1 Buddhist Population in India (Population Census, 2011)

Buddhist Population in India					
No.	State	Total Population	Buddhist Population	Buddhist %	Significance
1	Sikkim	610,577	167,216	27.39 %	Significant
2	Arunachal Pradesh	1,383,727	162,815	11.77 %	Significant
3	Mizoram	1,097,206	93,411	8.51 %	Significant
4	Maharashtra	112,374,333	6,531,200	5.81 %	Significant
5	Tripura	3,673,917	125,385	3.41 %	Minority
6	Himachal Pradesh	6,864,602	78,659	1.15 %	Negligible
7	Jammu and Kashmir	12,541,302	112,584	0.90 %	Negligible
8.	Nagaland	1,978,502	6,759	0.34 %	Negligible
9.	Meghalaya	2,966,889	9,864	0.33 %	Negligible
10.	West Bengal	91,276,115	282,898	0.31 %	Negligible
11.	Madhya Pradesh	72,626,809	216,052	0.30 %	Negligible
12.	Chhattisgarh	25,545,198	70,467	0.28 %	Negligible
13.	Manipur	2,855,794	7,084	0.25 %	Negligible
14.	Assam	31,205,576	54,993	0.18 %	Negligible
15.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	343,709	634	0.18 %	Negligible
16.	Karnataka	61,095,297	95,710	0.16 %	Negligible
17.	Uttarakhand	10,086,292	14,926	0.15 %	Negligible
18.	Punjab	27,743,338	33,237	0.12 %	Negligible
19.	Delhi	16,787,941	18,449	0.11 %	Negligible
20.	Chandigarh	1,055,450	1,160	0.11 %	Negligible
21.	Uttar Pradesh	199,812,341	206,285	0.10 %	Negligible
22.	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	380,581	338	0.09 %	Negligible
23.	Daman and Diu	243,247	217	0.09 %	Negligible
24.	Goa	1,458,545	1,095	0.08 %	Negligible
25.	Gujarat	60,439,692	30,483	0.05 %	Negligible
26.	Andhra Pradesh	84,580,777	36,692	0.04 %	Negligible
27.	Puducherry	1,247,953	451	0.04 %	Negligible
28.	Orissa	41,974,218	13,852	0.03 %	Negligible
29.	Jharkhand	32,988,134	8,956	0.03 %	Negligible
30.	Haryana	25,351,462	7,514	0.03 %	Negligible
31.	Bihar	104,099,452	25,453	0.02 %	Negligible
32.	Tamil Nadu	72,147,030	11,186	0.02 %	Negligible
33.	Rajasthan	68,548,437	12,185	0.02 %	Negligible

Buddhist Population in India					
No.	State	Total Population	Buddhist Population	Buddhist %	Significance
34	<u>Lakshadweep</u>	64,473	10	0.02 %	Negligible
35	<u>Kerala</u>	33,406,061	4,752	0.01 %	Negligible

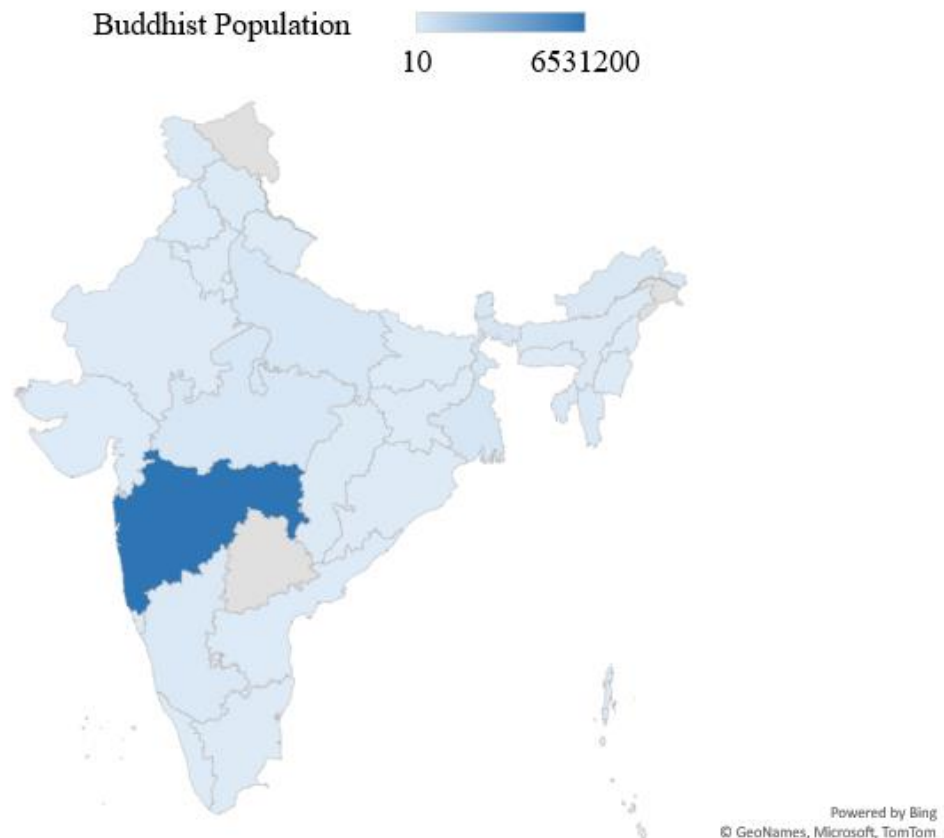


Figure 2 Illustration of Graph of Buddhist Population in India

The graph illustrates that Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of followers, followed by Maharashtra and Bihar as the second and third states with the most significant Buddhist population. Conversely, the three states with the lowest numbers were less popular among Buddhists, namely Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's connection with Buddhism is a well-documented facet of his life and legacy, extensively explored in scholarly research, as demonstrated by the academic article titled "Caste and Politics: Identity Over System" (Gupta, 2005). This article provides a comprehensive analysis of Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism and its broader implications for his social and political activism. The central argument posits that his adoption of Buddhism was fueled by his rejection of the caste system, a perceived fundamental injustice deeply entrenched in Hinduism. Dr. Ambedkar aimed to repudiate Hinduism's hierarchical social

structure and embrace a more egalitarian and inclusive societal vision through his embrace of Buddhism (Edelglass, 2023: 635-649).

The egalitarian doctrine of Buddhism provided a compelling ideological basis for questioning the subordinate status imposed by the caste system. Convinced that his caste brethren should abandon Hinduism due to its inherent perpetuation of oppression, Dr. Ambedkar advocated for their political cause. In 1956, a few months before his demise, he converted to Buddhism along with thousands of followers, primarily from his caste, the Mahars, marking the genesis of the first Dalit revolt (Mahad). Concurrently, he established a new political party, the Republican Party of India (RPI). Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's adoption of Buddhism involved renouncing Hinduism on the grounds that its philosophy perpetuated the caste system, social inequality, and hierarchy. This strategic move aimed at social emancipation based on the promise of equal opportunity for all (Jaffrelot, 2005: 119–120).

The article delves into the nuanced aspects of Dr. Ambedkar's version of Buddhism and its distinctions from traditional Buddhist teachings. It highlights that Dr. Ambedkar's interpretation emphasized the social and political dimensions of Buddhism, prioritizing them over its spiritual or metaphysical aspects. The authors argue that his vision of Buddhism was molded by his dedication to social justice and belief in religion's potential to advance human dignity and liberation. The enduring significance of Dr. Ambedkar's engagement with Buddhism is underscored, influencing subsequent generations of social reformers and activists. The authors posit that his legacy as a Buddhist leader and thinker constitutes a crucial chapter in the broader history of Buddhism in India and worldwide.

Educational Spirit

The iconography of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar statues, featuring the distinctive portrayal with two pens in the front pocket of the suit and a book, served as a recognizable symbol for educated Dalits. The pen, affixed to the shirt's pocket, became emblematic of their distinctive attire, signifying their educational achievements and social status in the contemporary world. This icon served as an effective educational tool for conveying Ambedkar's message to their less-educated Dalit counterparts. The artistic representation of Ambedkar, consistently depicted in a three-piece suit rather than traditional Indian attire, portrayed him as a figure of international stature. His attire symbolized both his educational and political excellence. Rather than dismissing Ambedkar due to cultural alienation or false consciousness, understanding how Dalits appropriated and transformed him into a symbol of their assertion becomes crucial. By rejecting degrading customs such as Jhutha and adopting respectable attire, the younger generation challenged the caste-based inferiority imposed upon them (Nithiya, 2012). The iconic representation of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, symbolizing Dalit pride, became a public expression of these assertions. Dr. Ambedkar tirelessly advocated for education, recognizing its indispensable role in empowering and uplifting marginalized communities in India. He understood that education was pivotal in breaking the cycle of poverty and discrimination, dedicating a significant part of his life to promoting education and literacy among Dalits and other oppressed groups.

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar himself was highly educated, holding multiple degrees from universities in India and abroad. He perceived education as a potent tool for social and economic mobility, advocating for its expanded accessibility to all segments of society. In his efforts to promote education, Dr. Ambedkar played a pivotal role in establishing educational institutions such as the People's Education Society in Bombay, the Siddharth College of Arts and Science in Bombay, and the Mahad Satyagraha School. These institutions provided educational opportunities for Dalits and other marginalized communities, dismantling barriers that had long hindered their access to education (Nagrle, et al, 2023). Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's commitment to education extended beyond formal schooling. He emphasized the significance of self-education and lifelong learning, encouraging individuals to take charge of their own education and seek knowledge wherever available. His work in promoting education constituted a vital component of broader initiatives toward social reform and the empowerment of marginalized communities in India (Mishra, 2020). His legacy serves as an enduring source of inspiration and motivation for people in India and beyond, emphasizing the continued relevance of his vision of education as a potent catalyst for social change. Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's work toward education was multi-faceted and encompassed several different areas, including formal education, adult education, and vocational training. Here are some of the key aspects of his work:

1. Formal education: Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar believed that access to formal education was essential for the empowerment and upliftment of marginalized communities. He played a key role in establishing several educational institutions, including the People's Education Society, the Siddharth College of Arts and Science, and the Mahad Satyagraha School, which provided educational opportunities for Dalits and other marginalized groups (Banker & Bhal, 2020).

2. Adult education: In addition to formal education, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar recognized the importance of adult education, particularly for those who had been denied access to formal schooling. He established the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, an organization that provided literacy and vocational training to Dalits and other oppressed groups.

3. Vocational training: Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar believed that vocational training was essential for economic empowerment and self-sufficiency. He established the Training Institute for the Handicapped in Bombay, which provided vocational training to people with disabilities, and he also supported the development of cottage industries and small businesses as a means of creating economic opportunities for marginalized communities.

4. Scholarly work: Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was also a prolific writer and scholar, and he made significant contributions to the fields of economics, law, and social reform. His writings on education, including his influential book "Annihilation of Caste," (Ambedkar, 1945: 1; Ambedkar, 2022) continue to inspire and inform debates about education and social justice in India today.

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's work in the field of education was an integral part of his larger efforts toward social reform and the empowerment of India's marginalized communities. His legacy continues to inspire and motivate people throughout India and the world, and his vision of education as a potent instrument of social transformation is as relevant today as it was during his lifetime.

Body of knowledge

This comprehensive exploration centers on the impactful life and principles of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, popularly known as Babasaheb Ambedkar. Focused on his relentless pursuit of social justice and equality in India, the essay scrutinizes the enduring spirit of Dr. Ambedkar. His pivotal role in shaping the Indian Constitution, advocating for affirmative action, and promoting Buddhism as a means of social transformation are key components of this investigation. The study provides context to Dr. Ambedkar's life, emphasizing his commitment to social, economic, and political justice. It highlights his resilience in the face of adversity and introduces the three dimensions of study: Society Evaluating Spirit, Religion Engagement Spirit, and Educational Spirit as names "SRE" S-Society Evaluating Spirit: This section delves into Dr. Ambedkar's advocacy for separate electorates, his critique of Hinduism, and the alternative he proposed through Buddhist conversion. It examines his stance against the caste system, emphasizing the impact of his ideologies on nonviolent resistance movements.

1. **Advocacy for Separate Electorates:** Dr. Ambedkar's relentless advocacy for separate electorates is examined, shedding light on his pursuit of political representation for the Depressed Classes. This highlights his strategic vision for empowering marginalized communities through political mechanisms.

2. **Critique of Hinduism:** This section critically analyzes Dr. Ambedkar's profound critique of Hinduism, exploring the socio-religious complexities that fueled his dissent. It delves into his intellectual dismantling of the caste system within Hinduism, revealing the depth of his ideological challenges to the prevailing societal norms.

3. **Buddhist Conversion as an Alternative:** The essay meticulously unveils Dr. Ambedkar's alternative proposition – the transformative power of Buddhist conversion. It delves into the motivations behind this choice, emphasizing how Buddhism became a vehicle for Dr. Ambedkar to challenge the oppressive structures inherent in Hinduism.

4. **Stance Against the Caste System:** Dr. Ambedkar's unwavering stance against the caste system is highlighted, showcasing his commitment to dismantling deeply ingrained social hierarchies. The examination of his views on caste-based discrimination underscores the revolutionary impact of his ideologies.

5. **Impact on Nonviolent Resistance Movements:** This section explores the ripple effect of Dr. Ambedkar's ideologies on nonviolent resistance movements. It underlines how his intellectual contributions became a catalyst for societal transformation; inspiring movements aimed at achieving justice and equality.

R-Religion Engagement Spirit: The exploration of Dr. Ambedkar's religious journey, from his Hindu upbringing to his conversion to Buddhism, is a focal point. The essay navigates the complexities of his engagement with Buddhism, showcasing his rejection of caste-based Hinduism and his vision for an egalitarian and inclusive society.

1. **Religious Journey:** The essay meticulously traces Dr. Ambedkar's religious journey, from his Hindu upbringing to his transformative conversion to Buddhism. It narrates the pivotal moments and influences that shaped his evolving religious identity.

2. **Rejection of Caste-based Hinduism:** Dr. Ambedkar's rejection of caste-based Hinduism is a central theme, exploring the philosophical and social dimensions that led him to disassociate

from his Hindu roots. This rejection becomes a pivotal point in his pursuit of a more egalitarian society.

3. **Vision for an Egalitarian and Inclusive Society:** The section navigates the complexities of Dr. Ambedkar's engagement with Buddhism, emphasizing his visionary quest for an egalitarian and inclusive society. It underlines how Buddhism became a powerful tool in realizing his vision of social harmony and justice.

4. **Impact on Socio-Cultural Fabric:** The essay delves into the profound impact of Dr. Ambedkar's religious choices on the socio-cultural fabric of India. It examines how his conversion to Buddhism influenced the perception of identity and contributed to the broader discourse on religious inclusivity.

E-Educational Spirit: Dr. Ambedkar's emphasis on education as a catalyst for social change is illuminated in this section. From the iconic representation of his statues symbolizing Dalit pride to his multifaceted approach to education, including formal education, adult education, and vocational training, this part unpacks his educational philosophy.

1. **Emphasis on Education as a Catalyst:** Dr. Ambedkar's unyielding emphasis on education as a catalyst for social change is illuminated. This section explores how education became a cornerstone in his vision for the empowerment and upliftment of marginalized communities.

2. **Iconic Representation in Statues:** The essay highlights the iconic representation of Dr. Ambedkar in statues, symbolizing Dalit pride. It delves into the symbolism behind his distinctive attire, emphasizing the role of these statues as powerful tools for asserting Dalit identity.

3. **Multifaceted Approach to Education:** Dr. Ambedkar's multifaceted approach to education is unpacked, encompassing formal education, adult education, and vocational training. This section explores how he sought to break down barriers and provide diverse educational opportunities for marginalized communities.

4. **Role in Establishing Educational Institutions:** Dr. Ambedkar's instrumental role in establishing educational institutions is emphasized. The essay examines his contributions to institutions like the People's Education Society and the Siddharth College, showcasing his commitment to expanding access to education.

5. **Philosophy of Lifelong Learning:** Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy of lifelong learning is explored, emphasizing his belief in self-education and the continuous pursuit of knowledge. This aspect underscores his broader vision of education as a transformative force in society.

Perception of Indians toward Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar in Society: The essay sheds light on the diverse perceptions of Dr. Ambedkar across different societal segments. While he is revered among Dalits, skepticism exists among other communities. It discusses the opposition he faced from upper castes, his pivotal role in drafting the Indian Constitution, and his enduring impact on Indian history. His principles of social justice, rejection of the caste system, and emphasis on education stand as beacons in the ongoing struggle against discrimination and inequality. Dr. Ambedkar's life serves as a source of inspiration, underscoring the significance of empathy, compassion, and education in the pursuit of a more just and equal society.

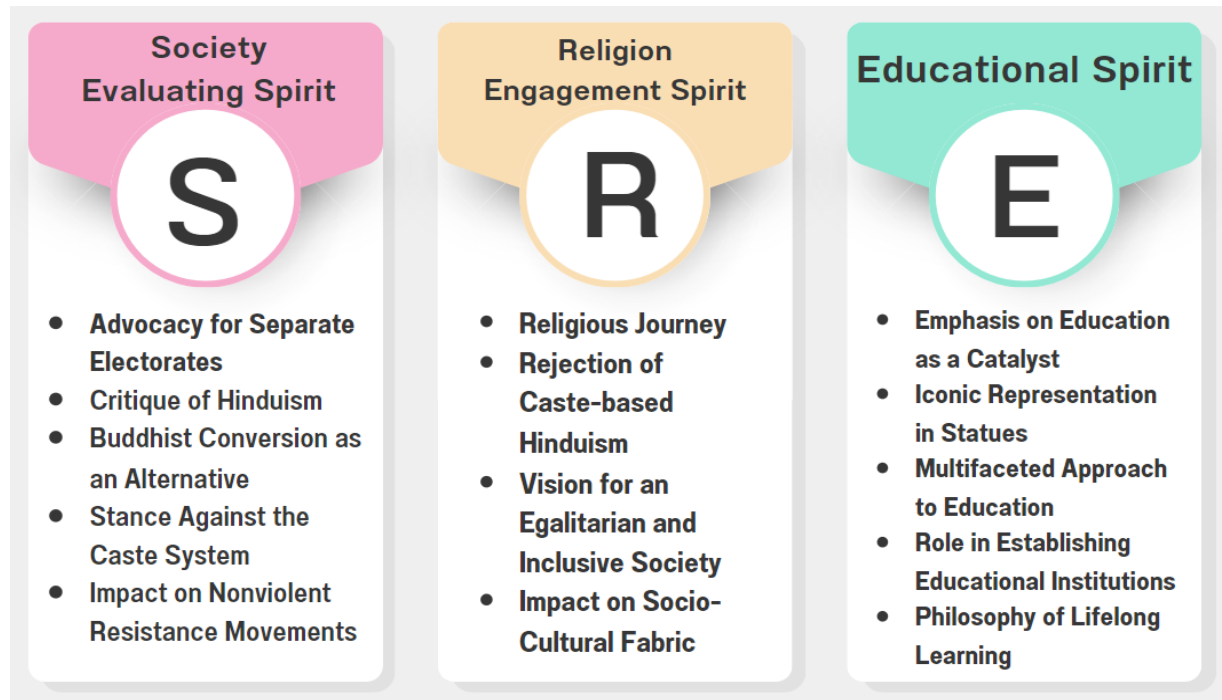


Figure 3 The three dimensions of study names “SRE” as body of knowledge of Ambedkar's Legacy: Charting the Course for Social Justice, Neo-Buddhism, and Transformative Sociopolitical Dynamics in India

Conclusion

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, also known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, was a prominent Indian jurist, economist, social reformer, and politician who worked tirelessly for the upliftment of Dalits, also known as "untouchables," and other marginalized communities in India. He is widely considered as the father of the Indian Constitution, which he played a significant role in drafting. In Indian society, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar is revered as a social reformer and an icon of Dalit empowerment. He is widely respected and admired for his tireless efforts in advocating for the rights and dignity of Dalits, and his contributions towards the Indian Constitution and the establishment of a democratic and secular India. Despite this widespread admiration, there are also some sections of Indian society that hold negative perceptions of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. Some individuals and groups, particularly those who belong to the upper castes, view him as a divisive figure who promoted casteism and separatism. They argue that his advocacy for Dalit rights and reservations in education and employment goes against the principles of meritocracy and equal opportunity. However, these negative perceptions are not shared by the majority of Indians, who continue to revere and honor Dr. Ambedkar for his significant contributions toward creating a more just and equitable society in India. His legacy continues to inspire millions of people, particularly Dalits and other marginalized communities, to fight against social injustice and discrimination. In addition to his work on the Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar was a prolific writer and scholar who made significant contributions to the fields of

economics, law, and social science. He believed that education and knowledge were essential tools for empowering marginalized communities and breaking down social barriers.

Suggestions

For the Public

1. Citizens should be educated about constitutional values such as equality, liberty, fraternity, and justice—principles strongly emphasized by Ambedkar. Public institutions and civil society organizations can organize awareness programs to improve understanding of constitutional rights and duties.

2. Public discourse on caste, reservations, and social justice should be evidence-based rather than emotionally driven. Constructive dialogue between communities can reduce misunderstandings about affirmative action policies.

3. Governments and educational institutions should continue investing in inclusive education policies to ensure marginalized communities' benefit from equal learning opportunities.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Future research can compare Ambedkar's ideas on social justice with thinkers such as John Rawls or Karl Marx, examining similarities and differences in theories of equality and structural injustice.

2. More detailed empirical research can be conducted on Ambedkar's contributions to monetary economics, labor rights, and industrial policy, which are often overshadowed by his constitutional work.

3. Future studies may analyze how caste discrimination manifests in digital spaces and whether Ambedkar's framework can be adapted to address algorithmic bias and online marginalization.

Declaration of Interests

I, Dr. Ven. Phramaha Chakrapol Acharashubho Thepa, hereby declare my interests in the research titled "Ambedkar's Legacy: Charting the Course for Social Justice, Neo-Buddhism, and Transformative Sociopolitical Dynamics in India." My academic background in Mahayana Buddhist Studies, coupled with my role as a Lecturer at the Department of Buddhism and Philosophy, the Faculty of Religion and Philosophy, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Thailand, provides me with a unique perspective to contribute to this discourse. I have no financial or personal conflicts of interest that could influence the impartiality of this study.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting this research, I affirm my commitment to the highest ethical standards. All information gathered and presented in the essay is based on rigorous academic principles, and proper citations have been provided to credit the original sources. Respecting the intellectual property rights of others, I have adhered to the ethical guidelines set forth by Mahamakut Buddhist University. Additionally, any opinions expressed are solely mine and do not represent the views of the university or any other affiliations.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

For the purpose of transparency, conflicts of interest are hereby defined for Dr. Ven. Phramaha Chakrapol Acharashubho Thepa in the context of the research on "Ambedkar's Legacy." No financial interests or personal relationships that could influence the objectivity of this study exist. The mentioned affiliations with Mahamakut Buddhist University do not involve any financial gains related to this research.

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