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An insight into Dr. Ambedkar's vision of national integration and nation building

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Abstract

Dr. Ambedkar's vision of national integration still lacks adequate intellectual consideration by historians and scholars in India. With the aim to discuss the amazing and outstanding performance and contribution of Dr. Ambedkar towards the nation building, this paper is an attempt to critically analyze the self-generated vision of Dr. Ambedkar in developing national integration and shaping modern India.

Keywords: Dr. Ambedkar, Babasaheb, national integration, nation builder

Introduction

Dr. Bhim Rao Ramji Ambedkar "Babasaheb", is remembered as a multifaceted personality who is well-renowned and acknowledged for his remarkable contributions and eminent roles as a social thinker, as a champion of the depressed class (Dalits), as a jurist, as a politician, as an economist, as a scholar, as a great patriot, as a philosopher, as the constitution maker, as a feminist & philosophical writer, and a nation-builder. His efforts to eliminate social evils such as untouchable castes and caste restrictions were remarkable. He can undoubtedly be regarded as a magnificent personality who contributed immensely to direct "independent India" in becoming "modern India". For his immense contributions in "National Integration of Modern India", he was awarded the "Bharat Ratna" in the year 1990.

He got highlighted on the political canvas of India in the early 1920s. Since then, he has always been at the forefront of the country's transformation from a shackled nation to an independent and united nation. He was keen to reshape India and was determined to achieve this established goal. He believed that the annihilation of castes is an important step to make India truly a nation. He was honored to have laid the foundation for freedom and democracy in India and believed that the Indian government can take welfare measures for the benefit of the weaker groups in society. As the architect of the Indian Constitution, he advocated democracy in all fields of politics, society, or economy. He particularly emphasized the freedom, dignity, unity, and rights & duties of all citizens as stipulated in the Constitution.

Dr. Ambedkar sincerely believed in a vibrant and cohesive society. He firmly believed that if the weaker sections of Indian society are mainstreamed and the discriminatory traditions are abolished, the process of ethnic integration can widely be promoted. Naik, Nayak, & Rane (2016)^[5] put forward their view that "Dr. Ambedkar's message, work, and life are a constant reminder of the outstanding Constitution, strong democracy and effective, independent institutions, the nation has inherited from its founding fathers" (p.17). His vision is reflected in the preamble of our Constitution, in which every Indian citizen is given equal opportunity and status, thus promoting the brotherhood and thereby promoting the nation-wide integration.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to gain an insight into the vision of Dr. Ambedkar regarding the integration of States and Provinces to shape modern India. Further, the paper attempts to critically analyze and evaluate the role of Dr. Ambedkar in developing national integration.

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Research Approach

The present research study, "An Insight into Dr. Ambedkar's Vision of National Integration" adopts historical approach. It is entirely based on secondary sources, i.e. books, published journals, and research papers, which are referenced at the end of the paper.

Dr. Ambedkar's vision regarding National Integration and Nation Building

The idea of "Nation" has been conceptualized in various ways. Benedict Anderson, for instance, has theorized "Nation" as an "imagined community," a socially constructed group, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of it. Mahatma Gandhi, on the other hand, theorized the concept by deriving it from Indian mythology, using the ideology of "Ram Rajya", i.e. a nation driven by morality. Dr. Ambedkar's writings and speeches "on Building of Nation and its Democracy" provides a fascinating insight into his concept of an ideal nation and his vision in building a nation, thereby clarifying his identity as a true nation-builder. This collection particularly demonstrates that Dr. Ambedkar, who was greatly influenced by Buddhism, a religion that manifests democratic principles in its organizational structure, held necessary the participation of all classes in the Government. Nation-building may be considered to be a posh phenomenon as it incorporates the overall development of the country, that is, economic development, socio-demographic development, the increase in literacy rate, mass media development, and increase in military strength. Before independence, nation-building represented a technical and economic task performed by government agencies (such as railways, structural departments, etc.). Nation-building may be an ongoing process because it seeks perfection, which is a constantly changing phenomenon. Dr. Ambedkar's major contribution to nation building and integration lies in his direct involvement and significant role in formulating various developmental legal plans and policies.

Dr. Ambedkar served as a policymaker in the Minister of Law in the Union Cabinet of Independent India from 1947 to 1951. Later, he served being a member of the Governor's Council, where he was given the charge of labor, power, and irrigation portfolios. He was a well-known economist and the first Indian to write a detailed economic research report that included both theoretical and practical issues. His ideas on economic policy, regional autonomy, administration, and basic concerns of Indian citizens like inequality, agricultural stagnation, poverty, and unemployment, as well as distortions of industrialization are outstanding. Dr. Ambedkar's claim that injustice, disequilibrium, and social abuse are pervasive in all cultures and societies, and also that the socio-economic and political phenomena are interconnected, still has practical significance.

On various occasions, he advocated the abolition of landlordism and addressed the issues of landless laborers, collective farming, small holdings, and land revenue. He expressed his views and concerns related to the taxation issues, social equality, socialism, nationalization of industries, and food problem. Halakeri (2019) ^[4] remarks that "he approached and examined the issues with such a foresight that his analysis and treatment of a number of them seems to be extremely relevant even today" (p.36).

Dr. Ambedkar opposed the country's North-South divisions on various grounds. His views were very pragmatic and completely different from others. He believed that India can be united horizontally through a sense of sub-region. This can be achieved by reorganizing the states. He suggested that, for a region with larger language community, a single large state should not be formed, since in the long run, a single ethnic group will develop an independent identity, and if a single larger language community splits into too many states, there would be no possibility to develop the region into a single dominant group. By establishing smaller states, a collective sense of nationality will be formed, and a single dominant country will not challenge the centers or advantages of smaller countries. Therefore, he suggested that a smaller scale should be adopted in more states than the scale advocated by the Indian state restructuring committees.

Analyzing the views of Dr. Ambedkar, he advocated fulfillment of several conditions for nation building and the success of democracy. First, "there must be a balance of economic and social status in society. The disequilibrium of economic and social status in society results in social cleavages and violent revolutions." Second, "democracy should be supported by a multi-party system and should have a robust opposition." Third, "there shouldn't be any scope for the tyranny of the majority over the minority in a democratic nation. The perspectives of the minority should be respected. He distinguished between the political majority and therefore, the notion of communal majority. The member of the political majority is liberal to take any political action which he finds suitable, whereas a member of a communal majority takes only those political actions, which are determined by his community." Further, he considered the class structure as the major hindrance in making India a democratic society. He remarked that failure to ensure balance or equality in economic and social life will result in the political democracy not to survive for long. As Halakeri (2019) ^[4] remarks, "to bring about social integration across the country, Dr. Ambedkar went on the quest of social justice and his philosophy can be visualized in the ideals and policies of the Indian constitution" (p.36).

His vision and perspective regarding nation building possessed great foresight. The concerns he raised about the future of India have proved correct. He raised an argument in a speech before the Constituent assembly that constitutional methods should only be adopted for protest. He cautioned the use of non-constitutional methods of non-cooperation, direct action, or any other sort of Satyagrah advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. Further, he argued that the power of the people to disapprove of the policies by the government was the ultimate failure of democracy in India. He also cautioned against the social tendency to involve in leader worship. He advocated that the political leaders should have deep belief in the legal machinery and the national democratic system. He suggested that the political democracy should be further broadened to get an overview of the thought of political orientation, thereby supporting the principles of freedom, fraternity, and equality.

Dr. Ambedkar stressed on the problems of every sect and society of the nation and put forward the solutions to alleviate their problems, keeping in view the achievement of the ultimate goal of national integration. He tried to alleviate the problems and improve the status of depressed section in society. Even, he never ignored the plight of women from

his thinking and drafted many policies to improve & enhance the status of women. Dr. Ambedkar advocated the achievement of national integration through liberal democracy, which he believes is an effective means of liberating the citizens. Dr. Ambedkar believed that democracy not only incorporates political theory, but also the socio-cultural theory. In a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural nation like India, democracy may be considered as the best technique to achieve national integration.

Role of Dr. Ambedkar in Developing National Integration

Dr. Ambedkar played varied roles in the Indian public life. Starting as a leader of the Dalits, he rose to be a great nation-builder. From a practicing lawyer, he elevated himself to the enviable position of the principal architect of Indian Constitution. In the "Draft Constitution", he stipulated a single judicial institution, a single citizenship, and the unification of the basic law for integration of Indian society. Indian society is not only multi-caste and multi-class society but also multi-religions, multi-lingual, multi-traditional, and multi-cultural society. Therefore, a strong Government is essential for maintaining administrative discipline and territorial integrity. However, in the "Draft Constitution", he proposed to accept Hindi as the national language of the nation. Further, when it was finally set to divide India into two independent nations, India and Pakistan, he called for the separation of Punjab and Bengal and the expansion of the territory to India.

As a core pragmatist, Dr. Ambedkar believes that if Indian society lacks in socio-economic justice, the political independence will be insufficient to bring social unity or ethnic integration. He believes that "it is entirely wrong to concentrate all our attention on the political independence of our country and to forget the foremost significant issue of social and economic independence. It's disastrous to imagine that political independence necessarily means real all-sided freedom". He advocated the abolition of privileges that are based on social status or caste and fights for personal freedom and dignity. At the same time, he also has a strong force in advocating national reunification. Dr. Ambedkar tried to achieve these goals by incorporating the following six essential principles into the Indian Constitution:

1. Make the Indian Constitution feasible, flexible, and strong enough to unite India in times of peace and war.
2. Provide special guarantees to ethnic minorities and certain classes that are backward in terms of social and educational background.
3. While advocating the preventive detention and emergency access powers of the President of India, the exceptions and qualifications of FR are taken into consideration.
4. To incorporate the principle of one person, one value, and one person, one vote.
5. Eliminate untouchable and forced labor. Make all people equal before the law; ensure that every citizen is provided with equal legal protection, as well as professional freedom and equal opportunities.
6. Incorporate the right of constitutional relief to make this right a reality.

Dr. Ambedkar suggested various policies for unity, integrity, and sustainable development of the nation. He had

the ability to study the problems and requirements of India from various perspectives, therefore, able to reach correct solutions, right direction to build India into a strong and secure nation.

Dr. Ambedkar as a nation builder has still more laurels to his name. The text "First Proposal on Central Irrigation and Waterways Advisory Board" bears testimony to Dr. Ambedkar's earnest efforts as a member of the central cabinet during 1942-46, to establish the Central Irrigation and Waterways Advisory Board which would set the road map of India's post-independence irrigation development. This dedication he had for framing India's irrigation policy is further manifested in the texts "Control and Utilize the Mahanadi to the Best Advantage" and "Flood-control Use of Atomic Power".

Apart from irrigation, he also had a deep understanding of the foreign policy of the nascent republic as evident in "USA inclined towards Pakistan", where he freely expressed his concerns about America's public opinion being more favorable for Pakistan than India. In "No use about Independent Foreign Policy without Striking Power", he unequivocally blames Prime minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru for "dragging India head and long to ruin" ("on Building of Nation and its Democracy", p.383). In the text, "One Man's Traffic in Public Affairs", he makes prominent his uncompromising attitude, criticizing flaws of the Nehru regime.

As an economist, he propounded ideas for economic development, rapid growth, and all around development. He demanded land reforms and industrialization. Dr. Ambedkar's views on nationalization of industries, Banking sector, and Insurance sector showed his long-term outlook for nation building through economic development of India. A newly independent country should have more consortium efforts to build its industrial base in a short span of time and that private entrepreneurship should not be totally taken for granted from the viewpoint of national security and even for the social security of the down trodden section of the society.

He stood for all cultural, political, and social actions to achieve the harmony and human happiness in the diverse nature of our nation. In various ways, he tried to unite all Indians, and played significant role "in creating not just a political democracy, but also a social and economic one" (Bhatt, 2018, p.19)^[3].

Criticism on Dr. Ambedkar's views on National Integration

But ironically, few of his convictions seem to be prone to criticism. Owing to the trauma of the partition, when most of the country's thinkers were having the opinion that creation of states on the lines of language would cause obliteration of national integrity, Dr. Ambedkar pushed for the creation of linguistic states which today bear testimony to India's unity in diversity. But Dr. Ambedkar, who led India on her march towards becoming a true multilingual country, himself opposed the march when he wrote that linguistic states should use Hindi as their official language just like the centre. The reason for this gets reflected in his text "Thoughts on Linguistic States", first published in 1955, where he argued that the way to prevent the country from becoming "the medieval India consisting of a variety of states indulging in rivalry and warfare" was to deter a state from using its mother tongue as official language

(p.145). This necessitates pondering whether Dr. Ambedkar unwittingly had sown seeds of the suppression of diversity and glorification of a certain language carried on by some political forces today.

Another view of Dr. Ambedkar that is prone to criticism is his idea of introducing compulsory military training for the entire population of the country belonging to a certain age group. India, being home to the world's largest youth population, training so many people simultaneously throughout the country will incur a staggering expenditure. If that amount is rather spent on up gradation of artillery, defense technology, and advanced training of existing soldiers, better results can be obtained. Apart from that, it is fundamentally against the spirit of democracy to make someone undergo military training without his will.

Despite these apparent contradictions, the texts included in "On Building of Nation and Its Democracy" bear testimony to the fact that Dr. Ambedkar had an earnest will to reshape India as a nation for which upliftment of the lower castes was indispensable. He and the Congress had different ideas of nationalism. That is why, when Gandhi scrapped the Cripps Mission and called for an intense movement, Dr. Ambedkar protested against his decision. Additionally, Dr. Ambedkar was not a staunch adversary of the partition and even though India had got national status, he insisted upon reverting back to dominion status. These facts indicate the impression of Dr. Ambedkar being peripheral in the "national movement".

Arun Shourie, in his "*Worshipping False Gods: Ambedkar and the Facts which Have Been Erased*" criticized Dr. Ambedkar for not participating in the freedom struggle and being unable to rise beyond caste considerations. But what Shourie's arguments lack is the understanding that so long as a large section of the society remains plunged in deprivation and atrocities, Independence in its truest sense will remain unachieved. During a time when the desire for political independence had gained precedence over the need for social reforms, Dr. Ambedkar could firmly demand the annihilation of the caste system because unless all the classes get rid of their shackles, the nation would not be able to fight unitedly against its colonizers.

Conclusion

Dr. Ambedkar lived a short lifespan of 65 years, but his life was the most outstanding one. He stood up from the lowest level of society, from being treated as worse as animals to becoming "the father of the Indian Constitution". Dr. Ambedkar is indeed a multifaceted and eminent personality, who is well-renowned as a great political philosopher, a great national leader, as a champion of the depressed class (Dalits), and most importantly, a great humanitarian, with no similarities with his contemporary. All these aspects of Dr. Ambedkar's personality have a strong humanistic foundation. His vision and teachings, popularly known as Ambedkarism, are closely related to Indian society, in terms of eliminating inaccessibility, achieving social justice, and establishing equality, freedom, and true democracy.

To conclude, it can be said that this research study provides more in-depth analysis and insights for Dr. Ambedkar's vision, and provides answers to the question of whether we Indians achieved true democracy, human equality, religious tolerance, and social freedom. According to Dr. Ambedkar's political philosophy, respecting gender in society, having social justice and communal harmony will always guide the

country on the path of equality, freedom, and socio-economic justice. However, Dr. Ambedkar not only vividly demonstrated a vision of unified and integrated nation, but also made it a reality through his carefully analyzed and drafted policies. Therefore, it could be maintained that Dr. Ambedkar is one of the most important personalities to build modern India. In fact, Dr. Ambedkar is the designer and national leader of our country, not just a Dalit leader or a depressed class leader. Dr. Ambedkar revealed to India and worked towards eradicating the root causes of what is preventing India from becoming a great nation again. Even in a country with multiple cultures and languages like India, it is not easy to visualize the concept of national integration. Today, we are united, largely due to Dr. Ambedkar's vision for nation-building and national integration.

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