

THE PEOPLE OF INDIA

NEW INDIAN POLITICS IN THE
21st CENTURY

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*To
The People of India*





1

THE NATION MAKER

SURAJ MILIND YENGDE

AMBEDKAR'S LEGACY IS complex and multifaceted. His is a name that continues to evoke dialogue and discontentment in sociopolitical movements formed in post-independent India. Yet, at the same time, Ambedkar has been intentionally ignored and strategically suppressed by history and society at large. Initially, many social and political movements did not embrace him. After the formidable resilience of his believers, who kept his memory alive and his struggle relevant, other mainstream movements piggybacked on their work, changing tracks when it directly benefited their interests. However, to condense Ambedkar's breadth of scholarship, he became a prolific face for the denouncers to uphold. It was an amenable strategy to either ignore and let die Ambedkar's scholarship or assimilate and grow. The latter was an obvious and relatively easy option to take. Political organizations with ideological underpinnings chose to select Ambedkar rather than accept him. The assimilation was a carefully crafted strategy to Brahminize and Dalitize Ambedkar.

Ambedkar was Brahminized by being made a part of India's greatness and presented as an exemplary patriot. And he was Dalitized at the same time to ensure that his place as an untouchable remained in the archive of Indian history, while he received no further credit. In either case, it was the intention of the ruling classes to control the narrative and



own the history. Brahminizing and Dalitizing form a space of conflated dualisms. They are separated by the logic of history and yet they are one. The ‘one’—a unison of neglected human fallacies that become an absolute logic of interpretation of the other from the fragile ground of the oppressor. The juxtacondition of possibilities and pain affixed alongside each other makes it a mandate of the people.¹ The two extreme possibilities of human status—one on the highest while the other is left excluded. Accretions of unasked merits define the final destiny of every human stretched in the rigid castesphere.

In this essay, I will look at the chaos over having Ambedkar in the company of everybody who stood to denounce and reject him. This includes the appropriation politics of assimilation by the Hindu right, the Hindu left, Hindu progressive and Indian liberal order. I will then chart the radical projects of Ambedkar, which include a separate settlement for untouchables—an autonomous, independent self-governing space far away from the village ecology responsible for creating havoc in the lives of Dalit. In Dalitizing Ambedkar, even the socialists who failed in their deliberate attempt to absorb Ambedkar took Dalit politics into their fold after his death. Building on this argument, the paper then shifts to the heist of Ambedkar’s ideology by the apologists of Brahminical violence in India, politically known as Hindutva, culturally as Sanatan Dharma, and historically as varnashrama dharma that combined the ruling class aspirations of various religious orders.

NOT YOUR AMBEDKAR

If there is any figure from India’s modern history who is present, alive and relevant, it is B. R. Ambedkar. No other historical figure has been resurrected so strongly as him. His colossal scholarship, along with his radical social and political interventions, have made him a deified rector of India’s political school. His public life begins during his post-matric facilitation by the local slum dwellers who recognized his achievement. Although Ambedkar played down that event as being unimportant to his public life, he does recall that it was through that event that he was introduced to the Buddha at the age of fourteen through the biography of Keluskar, a teacher at Wilson College, Mumbai.² In 1919, aged twenty-eight, his first testimonial to the Southborough Commission argued for the franchise rights of all, irrespective of status or class.

Ambedkar's oeuvre continues to expand as more literature produced by him and on him hits the bookshelves every year. The pile of scholarship crediting to Ambedkar's work in non-English languages represents the largest import of Dalit cultural production. Books on Ambedkar are sold in crores over two days commemorating Ambedkar's death anniversary at Chaityabhoomi, Mumbai, or in Nagpur commemorating the day of mass conversion to Buddhism led by Ambedkar. These bookstalls occupy an important place in the make-up of Ambedkarite gatherings. My father Milind Yengde was one such book hawker who sold books on the streets at Ambedkarite gatherings. I was his co-worker. Selling Ambedkar literature at a minimal margin of 50 paise to 2 rupees per book was still a proud moment for Milind, who ensured that the Dalit mass, which was deprived of education, would now acquire knowledge and think for itself. The investment in Ambedkar's intellectualism has given rise to a solid arc for Dalit movements.

The recent upsurge in the number of attacks on the people's constitutional rights since the Modi government's tenure from 2014 has suddenly put Ambedkar back into everyone's view.³ Protesters took the assault of the state on constitutional liberty as a sign of impending fascism.⁴ The protest against the current government and other Brahminical forces could be possible while upholding the constitutional virtues deftly laid out by Ambedkar. Thus, the inevitability of Ambedkar and his political pragmatism became a weapon for the struggling masses of the country. Every ideology acknowledged Ambedkar and embraced his uncompromising radical-humanist vision. Ambedkar is difficult to fit into canon of non-Dalit ideologies. He does not parley without putting the rights of untouchables at the centre of nationalist or civil and political rights struggles. By appropriating and iconizing him in the pantheons of the Hindu right and making him a nationalist figure fighting on the side of the Hindus, the current government took the offensive against every dissenter. The Shaheen Bagh protest of 2020 partly re-appropriated Ambedkar through its symbols and literature and through the act of carrying his photographs with a collective call of 'Jai Bhim', reclaiming his constitutional legacy to rescue him from the misappropriation of the Modi government.

Despite being a deft pragmatist and a non-dogmatic democratic socialist, Ambedkar has become the most celebrated figure across the political spectrum in India in contemporary times. Everyone tends to

display their admiration for his intellect but have a reserved appraisal of his political work. Therefore, to downplay his complicated and at times controversial vista, it is safe for the non-Dalit sphere to present Ambedkar as a sworn constitutionalist. Earlier, the caste-hegemonic discourse of India refused to grant the pedigree of India's Constitution to Ambedkar's scholarly toil. In some instances, it actively worked to denounce elements of Ambedkar's influence and politics. Arun Shourie, a liberal right-winger, is a case in point. His book *Worshipping False Gods* became a bone of contention over the authorship of India's Constitution and calling out Ambedkar for being in conversation with the British government and thus a collaborator of the Raj. The same was done by the dominant caste Hindu, Muslim, Sikh leaders of the Congress, however, they do not receive similar treatment as Ambedkar. Ironically, they are revered as nationalists. Many commentators who replied to Shourie's book commented that Ambedkar was now being 'elevated to the pantheon of nation leaders'. This means it was still unacceptable for the liberal and other non-Dalit spheres to accept him as a national figure towards the end of past century.⁵

How does Ambedkar emerge out of the debris caricatured around his totem? And how do the Dalit political and social sphere examine the growing prevalence of such an act? All this was made possible in the matter of the last decade or so. These decades were marked by frustration over the lack of redistribution of resources and failed state policies in a neo-liberal make-up on pro-rich, pro-caste Hindu policies.

However, granting the wholesomeness of the Constitution to Ambedkar alone eventually worked in favour of the ruling castes and class. They found an impeccable hero who would uphold the missives with all its positives and drawbacks. The propertied class found it appropriate to let their control on the assets go unquestioned for the articles protected their interests (Article 31).⁶ The other stories of warring groups found it objectionable to accept it as their constitution. Therefore, a new movement to overthrow constitutional principles was carried forward religiously by the deployment of Adivasi youth under the tutelage of Bengali Brahmins, Bihari Kayasthas and other dominant castes.

Therefore, we now face a few complicated hurdles. One is the adherence to Ambedkar as an individual with his merits and limitations. Another is to deify him and to stop investment in critical thinking



around his passionately curated oeuvre. Ambedkar and Ambedkarism are epochal. Ambedkarites and Ambedkarists have taken the cue from the political positioning of the Dalit's adnate co-spheres of existence. The one who believes in Ambedkar as an individual and in his artistry of uniting a huge, segregated mass under one banner and making them a political missile identifies with Ambedkarite-ness. So does the one who takes Ambedkarism as an eventual philosophy to develop progressive and broader hermeneutics in the construction of a thematic approach to problems. These thematic approaches rely on issue-based politics with a strong undercurrent of inaugurating an anti-caste politics towards the annihilation of caste dialectics. In this chapter, I will look at the confusion of including Ambedkar in the gang of everybody who stood to denounce and reject him. This includes the appropriation politics of assimilation by the Hindu right, the Hindu left, Hindu progressive and Indian liberal orders.

ACCEPTING AMBEDKAR?

Ambedkar is the most mesmerizing anti-Brahminical weapon, and no other community could produce another like him. His forthrightness in calling out the callousness of Brahminical elements woven in the Indian republic was astounding. His work takes shape in many forms. Aside from writing the destiny of his people, Ambedkar was also fighting to get their rights in place. For this, he chose every option available. He started off as a rights advocate in a social movement, later went on to petitioning the government as a lawyer and people's leader, then toyed with the idea of claiming power through mass struggle and culminated in the political apparatus bargaining for more powers. After him, Dalit politics was open to be exploited. Many political parties, from the Congress to the socialists, tried to own his legacy by promoting Scheduled Caste leadership that was not entirely attuned to his radical programmes such as a separate electorate, separate settlement and nationalization of important sectors—land and industry being the most prominent. A firm believer in socialism, Ambedkar saw State socialism as 'essential to the rapid industrialization of India'.⁷ He was confident of the incapacity of private capitalism to do this, and he observed that it would produce inequalities of wealth like it did in Europe. Ambedkar hoped to find amenable solutions to the problems the country faced.



CONDITION OF THE POST-AMBEDKAR DALIT

Dalits are the most despised and hated people in India.⁸ They continue to live a life of inequality and remain underappreciated in the grand framework of society. To elucidate this, one can look at a few notable incidents of the recent past. The cold treatment meted out to Dalit students at the University of Hyderabad's campus that provoked the suicide of a Dalit student leader, Rohith Vemula, is a case in point. The unremorseful behaviour towards the rape and murder of a Dalit female student in Hathras, where the BJP government's administration burned the corpse of the slain Dalit woman and did not even allow her family to complete the last rites is another instance. Recently published village-level data and socio-economic metrics help us grapple with the condition of Dalit constituencies across India. An average picture of Dalit ownership of resources, land and house is desperately negative. The framework of Dalit presence in India gets overpowered by the influences of political factors, discounting the rousing statistics of untouchability in India. In their edited book, Shah, Mander, Thorat, Deshpande and Baviskar highlight the persistence of untouchability in 11 states, surveying 565 villages. They identified 57 types of discrimination against Dalits.⁹ Traditional sources of occupation continues among untouchables, limiting them to ritualistically unclean and unhygienic jobs. This perpetuates the contempt over Dalit selfhood. In 2020, Thorat and Joshi published research that found that 50 per cent of Indians admit to practising untouchability (30 per cent rural and 20 per cent urban combined), with Brahmin castes leading, followed by Other Backward Class (OBC) and other forward castes.¹⁰

The 'upper-caste' in the ecology of the rural economy asserts their self through the exercise of authority on the unclean untouchables by labelling them as 'filthy' and 'uncivilized' denigrates. This contempt and hatred towards Dalits are evident in the lack of respect, dignity and compensation given in reciprocation for their services. Dalit women become the most vulnerable and affected bodies in this system of inequality and violence through five-star oppression—gender, caste, class, religion and space. In a similar vein, a study conducted in 2007 in Tamil Nadu identified fifty-nine forms of discriminatory practices against Dalits. An RTI (Right to Information) response in April 2022 revealed that 445 villages still practise untouchability in Tamil Nadu.¹¹ A 1998 study in Andhra Pradesh by the Kula Vivaksha Vyatireka Porata Sangam identified fifty-three types of

discriminatory practices. Such village-level data reminds us of Ambedkar's call to address the differences of rural Dalit social problems that were tied to the economic foundations of the nation's wealth, especially the agro-centric economy.

After Ambedkar, the condition of Dalits was quite vulnerable. They had lost their commander-in-chief, a man who was able to play on a level field with the Congress party and the socialists, and orchestrate deals that were in favour of the Dalit community. This void created fissures in Ambedkar's political movement. J. V. Pawar records that from the moment Ambedkar died, the 'second-rank' leadership was worried about taking over the reins of his legacy. Many leaders with diverse thoughts and abilities were in line to claim the seat. Some were highly educated abroad, while some had a grassroots rural base of organizing experience. The appeal was wide and conflicted.

Leaders from the Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF), Akhil Bhartiya Bouddha Mahasabha and People's Education Society were three prominent places of leadership congestion.¹² There was a Rajya Sabha seat that was also discussed.¹³ Due to Ambedkar's pan-Indian presence, regionalism cut through the dialogues and decisions in the post-Ambedkar Dalit leadership. Other organizations that Ambedkar established were also orphaned: the all-India Samata Sainik Dal, Scheduled Caste Improvement Trust, Junior Village Worker Association, Buddha Bhushan Printing Press and the *Prabuddha Bharata* newspaper.

To oversee the functioning of the above institutions, a presidium was created with seven representatives from north, south and central India that included barrister Rajabhau Khobragade, Dadasaheb Gaikwad, G. T. Parmar, A. Rajam, R. D. Bhandare, K. B. Talwatkar and B. C. Kamble. After ten months, the Republican Party of India (RPI) was launched and the presidium was made open to accommodate four more leaders, Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj, H. D. Awale, Bhagwati Prasad Maurya and Channan Ram. However, the most attention and influence were garnered by the SCF, a charismatic and politically visible organization that Ambedkar had spent fourteen years with and had been clearly defined by.

This strong association led to victories in the 1957 assembly and parliamentary elections. The SCF won nine parliamentary seats and twenty-nine regional seats, becoming the fourth national party after the Congress, Praja Socialist Party and Communist Party.¹⁴ However, after this victory, the contention among the Dalit leadership came to the fore.

It became painfully obvious that the post-Ambedkar second-generation Dalit leadership could not overcome the defeating hold of the Congress party. This resulted in divisions within the RPI leadership. Ego clashes and tokenizing of self-interests grew to toxic level. The Dalit youth in colleges and universities stood witness to this, much to their frustration at the inability of the Dalit leadership to stand up to caste atrocities and violence committed by the dominant-caste community. The Dalit students finally took upon themselves to fight caste atrocities. In Marathwada, they organized movements to counter the violence they were facing. Later, metro-based Dalit students and youth from Mumbai formed a militant organization that was to challenge the state and caste society on its own terms. The Dalit Panthers was born on 29 May 1972.

TOKENIZING OF DALIT POLITICS

The political tokenizing of Dalits began early on and was challenged only upon the arrival of Ambedkar and other radical untouchable leaders. Given the subcategories in the pan-Indian make-up of Dalit identity, it is important to note that many untouchable castes had their own vision and strategy for fighting for their rights. Each untouchable leader was committed to their local community. Their approach differed over ideologies and methods of liberation; however, this fissure was amplified by the Brahmin-dominated Congress party, which chose not to deal with the direct confrontation of ideal Dalit leaders.

Recognizing the hegemony of the Congress party after the 1952 elections, Ambedkar reassessed his political strategy. At his pragmatic best, he chose to dismiss the SCF that was formed after the dismal performance of the Independent Labour Party. The SCF was formally dismissed on 30 September 1956.¹⁵ Having worked with the scheduled caste framework, Ambedkar envisioned a separate entity that would cater to the needs of deprived untouchables who, like other minority groups, were not considered at par. The Muslims and Sikhs received political respect, while at Gandhi's insistence Ambedkar's revolutionary politics was left exposed to be exploited by the Congress machine.¹⁶ In the reconstitution of Her Majesty's Executive Council, 90 million Muslims were given five seats while six million Sikhs got one seat. However, 50 million untouchables only got one seat. Ambedkar protested against these measures, which handed 'over the fate of the Untouchables to the tender mercies of Hindu-Muslim combine'.¹⁷

As the SCF was a move towards gaining respect and political acceptability, Ambedkar envisioned a broad alliance of socialists along with Dalits after the elections in independent India. However, this alliance was not received well by Nehru, who denounced it as ‘unholy’.¹⁸ Ambedkar always saw the politics of socialists tied to his vision. Thus, in this regard he held a meeting with socialist leaders M. Harris (of the Praja Socialist Party), S. M. Joshi (known as Indian Nenni) and M. V. Donde. This resulted in Ambedkar and Jayaprakash Narayan having a pre-poll alliance. This alliance did not benefit him in the 1952 Mumbai election or 1954 Bhandara by-election. It did, however, help the socialists. He realized that such alliances were unsustainable and, despite having noble intentions, did not convert into benefiting the Dalit candidates. The impact of caste did not wane from the minds of progressive socialists and communists alike. Therefore, Ambedkar envisioned a plan to instead run as one party. Thus, the Republic Party of India (RPI) was conceived—his last masterstroke was an open challenge to the dominance of hegemonic Congress party.

WITH THE SOCIALISTS

In regard to raising a strong opposition against the Congress party, Ambedkar drafted a letter addressed to the country, inviting whosoever accepted the mandate to join the party. Through an exchange of letters with Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, he ironed out a plan.¹⁹ Under the auspices of the RPI, Ambedkar was to become the leader, Lohia to assume the charge of general secretary and Madhu Limaye as working secretary. Along with S. M. Joshi and other socialist leaders, the SCF’s leaders were to be inducted into this new experiment. Lohia, nineteen years junior to Ambedkar, had sought him out in 1955. In a letter dated 10 December 1955, Lohia invited Ambedkar to attend as a special invitee to the foundation conference of the Socialist Party, which was a break-away from the Praja Socialist Party. He also solicited an article for his journal *Mankind*. Lohia was astute to deploy Ambedkar’s sharp acumen and intelligence to his study camps. Lohia points out that he had made ‘speeches about you during the in parliamentary campaign in Madhya Pradesh’.²⁰ Yadav suggests this could be during the 1954 parliamentary election, which was fought in alliance with the SCF and Socialist Party. Lohia encouraged Ambedkar to ‘become a leader not alone of the scheduled castes, but also of the Indian people’.²¹ Lohia’s overall strategy was to utilize Ambedkar for his own political gain

and get access to the socialist political camp through his association with Ambedkar. Eventually, he was looking to leverage the partnership with Ambedkar and acquire the rural and politically organized pan-Indian Dalit and non-Dalit vote bank that supported Ambedkar. After this, Lohia could harp on the solidarity of Ambedkarites to run an ideologically rooted political mandate at the national level.²² This would give Lohia access to the inner breath of the pan-Indian base. Getting access to Ambedkar meant winning over a ready-made, committed cadre base that could be further utilized to rally for bigger wins with diverse franchises. Ambedkar was seen as the only non-Congress leader capable to lead the country.

While Lohia had plans to get Ambedkar 'into our fold', Ambedkar had already met with Lohia's colleagues, and thus a meeting to 'finally settle as to what we can do in coming together' was proposed by Ambedkar.²³ J. V. Pawar argues that Ambedkar was impatient to get the RPI's political agenda on the ground and running. Both parties were keen to meet and move their agenda forward as is seen from the Ambedkar-Lohia correspondence and the latter's colleagues meeting with Ambedkar in the last week of September 1956. Ambedkar wanted the meeting to convene at his residence in Delhi on 2 October 1956. Lohia expressed his inability to reach Delhi from Hyderabad in the given time. Therefore, he proposed instead to meet on 19 or 20 October. Ambedkar agreed and asked him to 'only telephone to fix the time'.²⁴ However, due to scheduling conflicts, the meeting never took place. Lohia sent Ambedkar a letter expressing concern about his health and urged him to take 'all necessary care'.²⁵ Ambedkar's insistence on his democratic project was so engulfing that on 5 December 1956 he finished drafting two letters to S. M. Joshi and Pralhad Keshav Atre regarding the RPI's future. This was his last day and his last political, unfinished activity.

This alliance did not take place, much to Lohia's regret. In the Ambedkarite circles, it was feared that in the presence of dominant-caste leaders of the Socialist Party such as Jayaprakash Narayan, Ashok Mehta, Lohia, S. M. Joshi, Madhu Limaye, Acharya Atre and others, the Dalit leaders would face the 'Harijan' status equivalent to the subordination in the Congress party in the RPI.²⁶ Many in the socialist circles were from the dominant caste, and Ambedkar had his suspicions. He once commented that the socialists had no roots anywhere, especially in the rural base. 'A party with no support in rural areas has no future', Ambedkar proclaimed.²⁷ The socialists of the times were mostly urban,

educated middle class people who couldn't easily connect with the rural and lower middle-class angst.

Lohia grieved Ambedkar's sudden death as a 'personal' loss. He noted to Madhu Limaye that Ambedkar was a 'man of courage and independence; he could be shown to the outside world as a symbol of upright India'. Lohia continued, 'But he was bitter and exclusive.'²⁸ This was a tribute to Ambedkar's mighty and non-compromising presence in Indian politics.

OSTRACIZED DALITS OF A SEPARATED INDIA

Ambedkar was ostracized in the very India where he had permanent domicile. His experience of exclusions and a demeaning characterization of his persona began right from childhood, trauma caused from being thrown off a bullock cart to being discriminated against in the classroom in primary school wherein he had to drag on without water for so many days.²⁹ This feeling of exclusion heaped on his young mind shaped his attitude and politics. The fear of exclusion through social boycott or ostracization has far-reaching consequences that direct the cognitive feeling of non-belonging. Any progress scheduled castes make inherently defy the norms of village-caste tradition. As a reaction to this, a collective punishment is imposed by the touchable village in unison—that of social boycott.³⁰ The All India Scheduled Castes Conference (AISC) had identified this as becoming the 'weapon' at the hands of Hindus who refused to render any service to them. Due to a closure of alternatives added to persistent untouchability, the scheduled castes are forced into a life of servitude. Given that they have no land or independent sources of production, the only market available to Dalits is the Hindu market, which doesn't accord them respect and dignity. It is averse to the idea of Dalits wearing nice clothes or sporting ornaments and opposed to them eating good food and living well.

The power to ostracize comes from political, economic and social capital. The group with marked differences compounded with humiliation describe the status of society that has thrived on the imposed insecure differences in human behaviour.³¹ To remedy the condition of violence, exclusion and ostracization, Ambedkar proposed a separate settlement formula. In his written speech to the Institute of Pacific Relations conference at Mont-Tremblant in Quebec in December 1942, Ambedkar puts the question of untouchables alongside 'Negroes' and Jews, as these

were the contested discussions at the international level. Making a case for India's untouchables, Ambedkar calls upon the world to pay attention to their problems. Ignoring them would be 'calamitous' as it had been thus far. 'The world owes a duty to the Untouchables as it does to all suppressed people to break their shackles and to set them free,' contended Ambedkar.³² In this treatise, which was later published in December 1943 by Thacker & Co, entitled *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of Untouchables*, he clearly outlines the conditions of untouchables whose fate is worse of all the oppressed groups because 'untouchability bids fair to last as long as Hinduism will last'.³³

Making political demands for untouchables, Ambedkar reiterated the resolutions that were passed by the AISCFC that was held in Nagpur in 1942. Of the many resolutions, he reproduced three: resolution II (Consent Essential to Constitution), resolution III (Essential Provisions in the New Constitution) and resolution IV (Separate Settlement).

In a memorandum submitted to the Cabinet Mission on behalf of the AISCFC on 5 April 1946, Ambedkar reiterated the demand for separate settlement as one of the most important provisions alongside separate electorate and true and adequate representation in the legislative, executive and judiciary.³⁴ Ambedkar was uncompromising and unapologetic about the demand for an independent land for the untouchables. It was a freedom charter for Dalits to claim their own nationhood far away from the torments and hegemony of landowning, majority dominant caste groups who controlled the livelihoods and freedom of Dalits. Having a separate land where Dalits are in charge of their activities and responsible for governing their affairs on equal terms was the rationale for the precipitous violence. Having an independent landmass that Dalits could populate freely without fear and intimidation gave them the right to fight back on equal terms in moments of altercation or violence. In the villages, their location on the outskirts and being in the minority worked against them, as the dominant castes could easily inflict violence without any repercussions. To remedy this, Ambedkar's AISCFC suggested an autonomous nationhood for Dalits. The current village system that existed was 'a more effective system to enforce slavery upon the untouchables' at the hands of Hindus.³⁵ The villages destined the permanency of untouchability as it did not give Dalits a chance to escape the shackles of caste. Every villager knew each other's caste and would not move beyond the defining labels.

The reason for the separate nationhood was factually supported as untouchables had no reason to live in caste India. They couldn't easily get access to water, education or the resources to own the means of production, and their social life was an apartheid with severe restrictions to free movement.³⁶ In the absence of any other option to live without anyone's forced reliance, the working committee of the AISCFC came to a conclusion after 'long and mature deliberation' that it was in their best interest for the scheduled castes to have 'separate scheduled caste villages, away from the Hindu villages'. The purpose of this was to give Dalits their fullest manhood along with economic and social security.³⁷

The working committee of the AISCFC argued that with the independence of India would dawn a 'Hindu Raj'. This would be detrimental to the welfare of scheduled castes, and separate settlements were meant to be a remedial measure to change the Indian village system. This change was expected to be brought out with the help of the Indian Constitution. Avoiding the revolutionary catastrophes that Ambedkar had seen in Russia and China, this was an effective negotiation. The Constitution was encouraged to make provisions for unoccupied cultivable government land to be distributed to Dalits through the Settlement Commission, which had constitutional authority. The commission was empowered to distribute the government land and purchase it from private owners. Here again, Ambedkar chose to let it float as a transactional method rather than snatching the land. Another reason could probably have been Ambedkar's commitment to the smooth and peaceful transition of power. Added to that there was an obvious lobby of Congress' landed-class capitalists, whom many in the Socialist Party identified as 'Hindu imperialists', who would have created barriers in accepting these provisions as constitutional measures.

DALITSTHAN?

Ambedkar's idea of separate settlement a la 'Dalitsthan' (although not his formulation yet supporting the theory of separate settlement) goes against the grain of the Brahminical Hindu *rashtra* that forces the people into the chambers of caste village republics. The franchise granted to untouchables doesn't always work in their favour because the dominant caste would like to continue to disregard the value of the vote granted to untouchables. In the absence of support from landowners or village

headmen, untouchables could not freely exercise their vote—an essential condition of electoral democracy. Looking at the blemishes of culture and its practices, Ambedkar once commented in despair, ‘I am tired of this country. But I am also aware of my responsibilities that is why staying here became essential. It’s [India’s] religion, social system, reforms and culture I am very tired of. I am at war with civilization.’³⁸ Against this backdrop there was another call by the North Indian Dalits to have their own nation separate from those of Hindus and Muslims, Acchusthistan—Land of Untouchables.³⁹ It was a concrete idea within an abstract India. Dalits were earlier considered as insignificant constituency. With this demand, they were claiming their position as ‘a third necessary part’ moving away from the binary of hegemonic Hindu and Muslim identities.⁴⁰

The intra-national conflicts over nation-building had started in America too. One of the early proponents of separate nationhood for the persecuted minorities in America was Marcus Garvey, who had led a formidable mass movement called Universal Negro Improvement Association and the African Communities League. This organization was rooted in Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism. African Americans deserve a respectable life and therefore an honoured motherland that would uphold their culture. Being a minority in the white land would not accord any permanent freedom; therefore, blacks needed to go ‘Back to Africa’—an organization he founded to promote emigration to Africa. The movement failed, as none of them could be taken to Liberia—a destined land. Later, however, movements sprouted out of the seeds Garvey sowed.

Black religious nationalism came at the hands of the Nation of Islam, through their leader Elijah Mohammad. Malcolm X, the shining star of this movement, shot to fame with his forthright opinions, which held a mirror to racist America. He wanted to ‘set up his own nation, an independent nation’,⁴¹ an independent economy created by black people inside the United States for their self-growth without reliance on white American patronage. Blacks in America were a ‘nation within a nation [that] must go from our oppressors’ declared the founder of black nationalism, Martin R. Delany, an army veteran. This was premised on race-pride that was withdrawn from the black bodies regarding their human rights. Black separatism received criticism from other African American leadership for its violent ethos; however, it did not downplay as critically as the idea of black pride and economic self-sufficiency that it offered. The ‘nation . . . of

broken people', in the American context, was about a separate nationhood that existed for black people as opposed to the Caucasians of America.⁴²

Separate nationhood works well in the forms of internal reserves safeguarded under the Constitution of India. Such experiments have worked well in America, Australia, Canada and South Africa, among others. This independent nationhood granted to the indigenous and native population gave them total autonomy over the mass of land that belonged to them. They could regulate the everyday business in the economy. By being autonomous, they negotiated with others as equals and without fear or intimidation. The primary purpose of separate settlement lay in freedom for the untouchables to 'enjoy free and full life'.

The demand for a separate nationhood continues to be important due to the unsafe environment Dalits are forced to live in. The rural record of Dalit atrocities committed by the powerful, landowning dominant castes is increasingly rising. In addition, the rate of lower performance in the health index cuts Dalit lives short. A Dalit woman has an average age of 39.5 years.⁴³ With 93 per cent of the Indian labour force still in the unorganized sector, protection and insurance at the workplace is a long shot.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

Looking at the current state of affairs in India, there is no reason for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-controlled Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to embrace Ambedkar and use the state coffers to throw parties around his birthday. What is at stake for the BJP to work with assimilated, Brahminized, Dalit Ambedkar? I argue it is twofold: 1. political calculus of a first-past-the-post system (FPTP); 2. cultural activities to shake the foundation of the Dalit consciousness.

The alliances that were envisioned by Ambedkar along with Lohia and other political options are yet to solidify. However, some in the form of the Bahujan Samaj Party–Samajwadi Party (BSP–SP) alliance and the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA)—an alliance of the backward class and other progressive forces—were recently seen in the parliamentary and assembly elections. The result was similar to Ambedkar's experience of the 1952 elections. Such alliances in current times also seem to be working against the possibility of Dalit-led politics. The VBA in Maharashtra and BSP–SP alliance in Uttar Pradesh ended up granting the alliance partners

more access to the Dalit vote base than the other way around. Prakash Ambedkar, leader of the VBA, blamed Muslims for not voting non-Muslim VBA candidates.⁴⁵ Similarly, Mayawati had identical experience with during the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections in 2022 wherein Muslim votes were not casted as expected to the BSP.⁴⁶ During the 2017 election too, Mayawati did not receive the vote from the SP vote base of Yadavs in Uttar Pradesh. She broke off the alliance with SP.

The Brahminizing of Ambedkar is an attempt of every political sphere not invested in the liberation of Dalits. The attitude of help and development of Dalits is a project of the dominant castes to ensure the subjugation of the Dalit populace. The Dalitizing of Ambedkar is again a hidden plot to undermine the universalist values that Ambedkar propounded. Depriving Ambedkar of a nationalist narrative, the dominant discourse handicapped a visionary who doesn't fit into the brackets of the ruling classes. No one appreciated Ambedkar, yet now they are carrying Ambedkar. Ambedkar is on every poster and in every popular protest. He is an icon 'cool' enough to sport on digitized banners and creative flyers. The inevitability of Ambedkar has given a new version to India's politics of the twenty-first century. His embrace is sanitized and purified to fit within the narratives of feel-good dominant caste characterization. Ambedkar stood for separate electorates and, more importantly, separate settlement. He took upon himself to lead the struggle of the rural landless through the redistribution of land for the rest of his life remains unfinished.⁴⁷ This is an ideal way of celebrating Ambedkar, or else Ambedkar is the desired son-in-law of Brahmins who so desperately want to put their stamp on his genius.



1

THE NATION MAKER

SURAJ MILIND YENGDE

AMBEDKAR'S LEGACY IS complex and multifaceted. His is a name that continues to evoke dialogue and discontentment in sociopolitical movements formed in post-independent India. Yet, at the same time, Ambedkar has been intentionally ignored and strategically suppressed by history and society at large. Initially, many social and political movements did not embrace him. After the formidable resilience of his believers, who kept his memory alive and his struggle relevant, other mainstream movements piggybacked on their work, changing tracks when it directly benefited their interests. However, to condense Ambedkar's breadth of scholarship, he became a prolific face for the denouncers to uphold. It was an amenable strategy to either ignore and let die Ambedkar's scholarship or assimilate and grow. The latter was an obvious and relatively easy option to take. Political organizations with ideological underpinnings chose to select Ambedkar rather than accept him. The assimilation was a carefully crafted strategy to Brahminize and Dalitize Ambedkar.

Ambedkar was Brahminized by being made a part of India's greatness and presented as an exemplary patriot. And he was Dalitized at the same time to ensure that his place as an untouchable remained in the archive of Indian history, while he received no further credit. In either case, it was the intention of the ruling classes to control the narrative and



own the history. Brahminizing and Dalitizing form a space of conflated dualisms. They are separated by the logic of history and yet they are one. The ‘one’—a unison of neglected human fallacies that become an absolute logic of interpretation of the other from the fragile ground of the oppressor. The juxtacondition of possibilities and pain affixed alongside each other makes it a mandate of the people.¹ The two extreme possibilities of human status—one on the highest while the other is left excluded. Accretions of unasked merits define the final destiny of every human stretched in the rigid castesphere.

In this essay, I will look at the chaos over having Ambedkar in the company of everybody who stood to denounce and reject him. This includes the appropriation politics of assimilation by the Hindu right, the Hindu left, Hindu progressive and Indian liberal order. I will then chart the radical projects of Ambedkar, which include a separate settlement for untouchables—an autonomous, independent self-governing space far away from the village ecology responsible for creating havoc in the lives of Dalit. In Dalitizing Ambedkar, even the socialists who failed in their deliberate attempt to absorb Ambedkar took Dalit politics into their fold after his death. Building on this argument, the paper then shifts to the heist of Ambedkar’s ideology by the apologists of Brahminical violence in India, politically known as Hindutva, culturally as Sanatan Dharma, and historically as varnashrama dharma that combined the ruling class aspirations of various religious orders.

NOT YOUR AMBEDKAR

If there is any figure from India’s modern history who is present, alive and relevant, it is B. R. Ambedkar. No other historical figure has been resurrected so strongly as him. His colossal scholarship, along with his radical social and political interventions, have made him a deified rector of India’s political school. His public life begins during his post-matric facilitation by the local slum dwellers who recognized his achievement. Although Ambedkar played down that event as being unimportant to his public life, he does recall that it was through that event that he was introduced to the Buddha at the age of fourteen through the biography of Keluskar, a teacher at Wilson College, Mumbai.² In 1919, aged twenty-eight, his first testimonial to the Southborough Commission argued for the franchise rights of all, irrespective of status or class.

Ambedkar's oeuvre continues to expand as more literature produced by him and on him hits the bookshelves every year. The pile of scholarship crediting to Ambedkar's work in non-English languages represents the largest import of Dalit cultural production. Books on Ambedkar are sold in crores over two days commemorating Ambedkar's death anniversary at Chaityabhoomi, Mumbai, or in Nagpur commemorating the day of mass conversion to Buddhism led by Ambedkar. These bookstalls occupy an important place in the make-up of Ambedkarite gatherings. My father Milind Yengde was one such book hawker who sold books on the streets at Ambedkarite gatherings. I was his co-worker. Selling Ambedkar literature at a minimal margin of 50 paise to 2 rupees per book was still a proud moment for Milind, who ensured that the Dalit mass, which was deprived of education, would now acquire knowledge and think for itself. The investment in Ambedkar's intellectualism has given rise to a solid arc for Dalit movements.

The recent upsurge in the number of attacks on the people's constitutional rights since the Modi government's tenure from 2014 has suddenly put Ambedkar back into everyone's view.³ Protesters took the assault of the state on constitutional liberty as a sign of impending fascism.⁴ The protest against the current government and other Brahminical forces could be possible while upholding the constitutional virtues deftly laid out by Ambedkar. Thus, the inevitability of Ambedkar and his political pragmatism became a weapon for the struggling masses of the country. Every ideology acknowledged Ambedkar and embraced his uncompromising radical-humanist vision. Ambedkar is difficult to fit into canon of non-Dalit ideologies. He does not parley without putting the rights of untouchables at the centre of nationalist or civil and political rights struggles. By appropriating and iconizing him in the pantheons of the Hindu right and making him a nationalist figure fighting on the side of the Hindus, the current government took the offensive against every dissenter. The Shaheen Bagh protest of 2020 partly re-appropriated Ambedkar through its symbols and literature and through the act of carrying his photographs with a collective call of 'Jai Bhim', reclaiming his constitutional legacy to rescue him from the misappropriation of the Modi government.

Despite being a deft pragmatist and a non-dogmatic democratic socialist, Ambedkar has become the most celebrated figure across the political spectrum in India in contemporary times. Everyone tends to

display their admiration for his intellect but have a reserved appraisal of his political work. Therefore, to downplay his complicated and at times controversial vista, it is safe for the non-Dalit sphere to present Ambedkar as a sworn constitutionalist. Earlier, the caste-hegemonic discourse of India refused to grant the pedigree of India's Constitution to Ambedkar's scholarly toil. In some instances, it actively worked to denounce elements of Ambedkar's influence and politics. Arun Shourie, a liberal right-winger, is a case in point. His book *Worshipping False Gods* became a bone of contention over the authorship of India's Constitution and calling out Ambedkar for being in conversation with the British government and thus a collaborator of the Raj. The same was done by the dominant caste Hindu, Muslim, Sikh leaders of the Congress, however, they do not receive similar treatment as Ambedkar. Ironically, they are revered as nationalists. Many commentators who replied to Shourie's book commented that Ambedkar was now being 'elevated to the pantheon of nation leaders'. This means it was still unacceptable for the liberal and other non-Dalit spheres to accept him as a national figure towards the end of past century.⁵

How does Ambedkar emerge out of the debris caricatured around his totem? And how do the Dalit political and social sphere examine the growing prevalence of such an act? All this was made possible in the matter of the last decade or so. These decades were marked by frustration over the lack of redistribution of resources and failed state policies in a neo-liberal make-up on pro-rich, pro-caste Hindu policies.

However, granting the wholesomeness of the Constitution to Ambedkar alone eventually worked in favour of the ruling castes and class. They found an impeccable hero who would uphold the missives with all its positives and drawbacks. The propertied class found it appropriate to let their control on the assets go unquestioned for the articles protected their interests (Article 31).⁶ The other stories of warring groups found it objectionable to accept it as their constitution. Therefore, a new movement to overthrow constitutional principles was carried forward religiously by the deployment of Adivasi youth under the tutelage of Bengali Brahmins, Bihari Kayasthas and other dominant castes.

Therefore, we now face a few complicated hurdles. One is the adherence to Ambedkar as an individual with his merits and limitations. Another is to deify him and to stop investment in critical thinking



around his passionately curated oeuvre. Ambedkar and Ambedkarism are epochal. Ambedkarites and Ambedkarists have taken the cue from the political positioning of the Dalit's adnate co-spheres of existence. The one who believes in Ambedkar as an individual and in his artistry of uniting a huge, segregated mass under one banner and making them a political missile identifies with Ambedkarite-ness. So does the one who takes Ambedkarism as an eventual philosophy to develop progressive and broader hermeneutics in the construction of a thematic approach to problems. These thematic approaches rely on issue-based politics with a strong undercurrent of inaugurating an anti-caste politics towards the annihilation of caste dialectics. In this chapter, I will look at the confusion of including Ambedkar in the gang of everybody who stood to denounce and reject him. This includes the appropriation politics of assimilation by the Hindu right, the Hindu left, Hindu progressive and Indian liberal orders.

ACCEPTING AMBEDKAR?

Ambedkar is the most mesmerizing anti-Brahminical weapon, and no other community could produce another like him. His forthrightness in calling out the callousness of Brahminical elements woven in the Indian republic was astounding. His work takes shape in many forms. Aside from writing the destiny of his people, Ambedkar was also fighting to get their rights in place. For this, he chose every option available. He started off as a rights advocate in a social movement, later went on to petitioning the government as a lawyer and people's leader, then toyed with the idea of claiming power through mass struggle and culminated in the political apparatus bargaining for more powers. After him, Dalit politics was open to be exploited. Many political parties, from the Congress to the socialists, tried to own his legacy by promoting Scheduled Caste leadership that was not entirely attuned to his radical programmes such as a separate electorate, separate settlement and nationalization of important sectors—land and industry being the most prominent. A firm believer in socialism, Ambedkar saw State socialism as 'essential to the rapid industrialization of India'.⁷ He was confident of the incapacity of private capitalism to do this, and he observed that it would produce inequalities of wealth like it did in Europe. Ambedkar hoped to find amenable solutions to the problems the country faced.



CONDITION OF THE POST-AMBEDKAR DALIT

Dalits are the most despised and hated people in India.⁸ They continue to live a life of inequality and remain underappreciated in the grand framework of society. To elucidate this, one can look at a few notable incidents of the recent past. The cold treatment meted out to Dalit students at the University of Hyderabad's campus that provoked the suicide of a Dalit student leader, Rohith Vemula, is a case in point. The unremorseful behaviour towards the rape and murder of a Dalit female student in Hathras, where the BJP government's administration burned the corpse of the slain Dalit woman and did not even allow her family to complete the last rites is another instance. Recently published village-level data and socio-economic metrics help us grapple with the condition of Dalit constituencies across India. An average picture of Dalit ownership of resources, land and house is desperately negative. The framework of Dalit presence in India gets overpowered by the influences of political factors, discounting the rousing statistics of untouchability in India. In their edited book, Shah, Mander, Thorat, Deshpande and Baviskar highlight the persistence of untouchability in 11 states, surveying 565 villages. They identified 57 types of discrimination against Dalits.⁹ Traditional sources of occupation continues among untouchables, limiting them to ritualistically unclean and unhygienic jobs. This perpetuates the contempt over Dalit selfhood. In 2020, Thorat and Joshi published research that found that 50 per cent of Indians admit to practising untouchability (30 per cent rural and 20 per cent urban combined), with Brahmin castes leading, followed by Other Backward Class (OBC) and other forward castes.¹⁰

The 'upper-caste' in the ecology of the rural economy asserts their self through the exercise of authority on the unclean untouchables by labelling them as 'filthy' and 'uncivilized' denigrates. This contempt and hatred towards Dalits are evident in the lack of respect, dignity and compensation given in reciprocation for their services. Dalit women become the most vulnerable and affected bodies in this system of inequality and violence through five-star oppression—gender, caste, class, religion and space. In a similar vein, a study conducted in 2007 in Tamil Nadu identified fifty-nine forms of discriminatory practices against Dalits. An RTI (Right to Information) response in April 2022 revealed that 445 villages still practise untouchability in Tamil Nadu.¹¹ A 1998 study in Andhra Pradesh by the Kula Vivaksha Vyatireka Porata Sangam identified fifty-three types of

discriminatory practices. Such village-level data reminds us of Ambedkar's call to address the differences of rural Dalit social problems that were tied to the economic foundations of the nation's wealth, especially the agro-centric economy.

After Ambedkar, the condition of Dalits was quite vulnerable. They had lost their commander-in-chief, a man who was able to play on a level field with the Congress party and the socialists, and orchestrate deals that were in favour of the Dalit community. This void created fissures in Ambedkar's political movement. J. V. Pawar records that from the moment Ambedkar died, the 'second-rank' leadership was worried about taking over the reins of his legacy. Many leaders with diverse thoughts and abilities were in line to claim the seat. Some were highly educated abroad, while some had a grassroots rural base of organizing experience. The appeal was wide and conflicted.

Leaders from the Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF), Akhil Bhartiya Bouddha Mahasabha and People's Education Society were three prominent places of leadership congestion.¹² There was a Rajya Sabha seat that was also discussed.¹³ Due to Ambedkar's pan-Indian presence, regionalism cut through the dialogues and decisions in the post-Ambedkar Dalit leadership. Other organizations that Ambedkar established were also orphaned: the all-India Samata Sainik Dal, Scheduled Caste Improvement Trust, Junior Village Worker Association, Buddha Bhushan Printing Press and the *Prabuddha Bharata* newspaper.

To oversee the functioning of the above institutions, a presidium was created with seven representatives from north, south and central India that included barrister Rajabhau Khobragade, Dadasaheb Gaikwad, G. T. Parmar, A. Rajam, R. D. Bhandare, K. B. Talwatkar and B. C. Kamble. After ten months, the Republican Party of India (RPI) was launched and the presidium was made open to accommodate four more leaders, Rao Bahadur N. Sivaraj, H. D. Awale, Bhagwati Prasad Maurya and Channan Ram. However, the most attention and influence were garnered by the SCF, a charismatic and politically visible organization that Ambedkar had spent fourteen years with and had been clearly defined by.

This strong association led to victories in the 1957 assembly and parliamentary elections. The SCF won nine parliamentary seats and twenty-nine regional seats, becoming the fourth national party after the Congress, Praja Socialist Party and Communist Party.¹⁴ However, after this victory, the contention among the Dalit leadership came to the fore.

It became painfully obvious that the post-Ambedkar second-generation Dalit leadership could not overcome the defeating hold of the Congress party. This resulted in divisions within the RPI leadership. Ego clashes and tokenizing of self-interests grew to toxic level. The Dalit youth in colleges and universities stood witness to this, much to their frustration at the inability of the Dalit leadership to stand up to caste atrocities and violence committed by the dominant-caste community. The Dalit students finally took upon themselves to fight caste atrocities. In Marathwada, they organized movements to counter the violence they were facing. Later, metro-based Dalit students and youth from Mumbai formed a militant organization that was to challenge the state and caste society on its own terms. The Dalit Panthers was born on 29 May 1972.

TOKENIZING OF DALIT POLITICS

The political tokenizing of Dalits began early on and was challenged only upon the arrival of Ambedkar and other radical untouchable leaders. Given the subcategories in the pan-Indian make-up of Dalit identity, it is important to note that many untouchable castes had their own vision and strategy for fighting for their rights. Each untouchable leader was committed to their local community. Their approach differed over ideologies and methods of liberation; however, this fissure was amplified by the Brahmin-dominated Congress party, which chose not to deal with the direct confrontation of ideal Dalit leaders.

Recognizing the hegemony of the Congress party after the 1952 elections, Ambedkar reassessed his political strategy. At his pragmatic best, he chose to dismiss the SCF that was formed after the dismal performance of the Independent Labour Party. The SCF was formally dismissed on 30 September 1956.¹⁵ Having worked with the scheduled caste framework, Ambedkar envisioned a separate entity that would cater to the needs of deprived untouchables who, like other minority groups, were not considered at par. The Muslims and Sikhs received political respect, while at Gandhi's insistence Ambedkar's revolutionary politics was left exposed to be exploited by the Congress machine.¹⁶ In the reconstitution of Her Majesty's Executive Council, 90 million Muslims were given five seats while six million Sikhs got one seat. However, 50 million untouchables only got one seat. Ambedkar protested against these measures, which handed 'over the fate of the Untouchables to the tender mercies of Hindu-Muslim combine'.¹⁷

As the SCF was a move towards gaining respect and political acceptability, Ambedkar envisioned a broad alliance of socialists along with Dalits after the elections in independent India. However, this alliance was not received well by Nehru, who denounced it as ‘unholy’.¹⁸ Ambedkar always saw the politics of socialists tied to his vision. Thus, in this regard he held a meeting with socialist leaders M. Harris (of the Praja Socialist Party), S. M. Joshi (known as Indian Nenni) and M. V. Donde. This resulted in Ambedkar and Jayaprakash Narayan having a pre-poll alliance. This alliance did not benefit him in the 1952 Mumbai election or 1954 Bhandara by-election. It did, however, help the socialists. He realized that such alliances were unsustainable and, despite having noble intentions, did not convert into benefiting the Dalit candidates. The impact of caste did not wane from the minds of progressive socialists and communists alike. Therefore, Ambedkar envisioned a plan to instead run as one party. Thus, the Republic Party of India (RPI) was conceived—his last masterstroke was an open challenge to the dominance of hegemonic Congress party.

WITH THE SOCIALISTS

In regard to raising a strong opposition against the Congress party, Ambedkar drafted a letter addressed to the country, inviting whosoever accepted the mandate to join the party. Through an exchange of letters with Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, he ironed out a plan.¹⁹ Under the auspices of the RPI, Ambedkar was to become the leader, Lohia to assume the charge of general secretary and Madhu Limaye as working secretary. Along with S. M. Joshi and other socialist leaders, the SCF’s leaders were to be inducted into this new experiment. Lohia, nineteen years junior to Ambedkar, had sought him out in 1955. In a letter dated 10 December 1955, Lohia invited Ambedkar to attend as a special invitee to the foundation conference of the Socialist Party, which was a break-away from the Praja Socialist Party. He also solicited an article for his journal *Mankind*. Lohia was astute to deploy Ambedkar’s sharp acumen and intelligence to his study camps. Lohia points out that he had made ‘speeches about you during the in parliamentary campaign in Madhya Pradesh’.²⁰ Yadav suggests this could be during the 1954 parliamentary election, which was fought in alliance with the SCF and Socialist Party. Lohia encouraged Ambedkar to ‘become a leader not alone of the scheduled castes, but also of the Indian people’.²¹ Lohia’s overall strategy was to utilize Ambedkar for his own political gain

and get access to the socialist political camp through his association with Ambedkar. Eventually, he was looking to leverage the partnership with Ambedkar and acquire the rural and politically organized pan-Indian Dalit and non-Dalit vote bank that supported Ambedkar. After this, Lohia could harp on the solidarity of Ambedkarites to run an ideologically rooted political mandate at the national level.²² This would give Lohia access to the inner breath of the pan-Indian base. Getting access to Ambedkar meant winning over a ready-made, committed cadre base that could be further utilized to rally for bigger wins with diverse franchises. Ambedkar was seen as the only non-Congress leader capable to lead the country.

While Lohia had plans to get Ambedkar 'into our fold', Ambedkar had already met with Lohia's colleagues, and thus a meeting to 'finally settle as to what we can do in coming together' was proposed by Ambedkar.²³ J. V. Pawar argues that Ambedkar was impatient to get the RPI's political agenda on the ground and running. Both parties were keen to meet and move their agenda forward as is seen from the Ambedkar-Lohia correspondence and the latter's colleagues meeting with Ambedkar in the last week of September 1956. Ambedkar wanted the meeting to convene at his residence in Delhi on 2 October 1956. Lohia expressed his inability to reach Delhi from Hyderabad in the given time. Therefore, he proposed instead to meet on 19 or 20 October. Ambedkar agreed and asked him to 'only telephone to fix the time'.²⁴ However, due to scheduling conflicts, the meeting never took place. Lohia sent Ambedkar a letter expressing concern about his health and urged him to take 'all necessary care'.²⁵ Ambedkar's insistence on his democratic project was so engulfing that on 5 December 1956 he finished drafting two letters to S. M. Joshi and Pralhad Keshav Atre regarding the RPI's future. This was his last day and his last political, unfinished activity.

This alliance did not take place, much to Lohia's regret. In the Ambedkarite circles, it was feared that in the presence of dominant-caste leaders of the Socialist Party such as Jayaprakash Narayan, Ashok Mehta, Lohia, S. M. Joshi, Madhu Limaye, Acharya Atre and others, the Dalit leaders would face the 'Harijan' status equivalent to the subordination in the Congress party in the RPI.²⁶ Many in the socialist circles were from the dominant caste, and Ambedkar had his suspicions. He once commented that the socialists had no roots anywhere, especially in the rural base. 'A party with no support in rural areas has no future', Ambedkar proclaimed.²⁷ The socialists of the times were mostly urban,

educated middle class people who couldn't easily connect with the rural and lower middle-class angst.

Lohia grieved Ambedkar's sudden death as a 'personal' loss. He noted to Madhu Limaye that Ambedkar was a 'man of courage and independence; he could be shown to the outside world as a symbol of upright India'. Lohia continued, 'But he was bitter and exclusive.'²⁸ This was a tribute to Ambedkar's mighty and non-compromising presence in Indian politics.

OSTRACIZED DALITS OF A SEPARATED INDIA

Ambedkar was ostracized in the very India where he had permanent domicile. His experience of exclusions and a demeaning characterization of his persona began right from childhood, trauma caused from being thrown off a bullock cart to being discriminated against in the classroom in primary school wherein he had to drag on without water for so many days.²⁹ This feeling of exclusion heaped on his young mind shaped his attitude and politics. The fear of exclusion through social boycott or ostracization has far-reaching consequences that direct the cognitive feeling of non-belonging. Any progress scheduled castes make inherently defy the norms of village-caste tradition. As a reaction to this, a collective punishment is imposed by the touchable village in unison—that of social boycott.³⁰ The All India Scheduled Castes Conference (AISC) had identified this as becoming the 'weapon' at the hands of Hindus who refused to render any service to them. Due to a closure of alternatives added to persistent untouchability, the scheduled castes are forced into a life of servitude. Given that they have no land or independent sources of production, the only market available to Dalits is the Hindu market, which doesn't accord them respect and dignity. It is averse to the idea of Dalits wearing nice clothes or sporting ornaments and opposed to them eating good food and living well.

The power to ostracize comes from political, economic and social capital. The group with marked differences compounded with humiliation describe the status of society that has thrived on the imposed insecure differences in human behaviour.³¹ To remedy the condition of violence, exclusion and ostracization, Ambedkar proposed a separate settlement formula. In his written speech to the Institute of Pacific Relations conference at Mont-Tremblant in Quebec in December 1942, Ambedkar puts the question of untouchables alongside 'Negroes' and Jews, as these

were the contested discussions at the international level. Making a case for India's untouchables, Ambedkar calls upon the world to pay attention to their problems. Ignoring them would be 'calamitous' as it had been thus far. 'The world owes a duty to the Untouchables as it does to all suppressed people to break their shackles and to set them free,' contended Ambedkar.³² In this treatise, which was later published in December 1943 by Thacker & Co, entitled *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of Untouchables*, he clearly outlines the conditions of untouchables whose fate is worse of all the oppressed groups because 'untouchability bids fair to last as long as Hinduism will last'.³³

Making political demands for untouchables, Ambedkar reiterated the resolutions that were passed by the AISCf that was held in Nagpur in 1942. Of the many resolutions, he reproduced three: resolution II (Consent Essential to Constitution), resolution III (Essential Provisions in the New Constitution) and resolution IV (Separate Settlement).

In a memorandum submitted to the Cabinet Mission on behalf of the AISCf on 5 April 1946, Ambedkar reiterated the demand for separate settlement as one of the most important provisions alongside separate electorate and true and adequate representation in the legislative, executive and judiciary.³⁴ Ambedkar was uncompromising and unapologetic about the demand for an independent land for the untouchables. It was a freedom charter for Dalits to claim their own nationhood far away from the torments and hegemony of landowning, majority dominant caste groups who controlled the livelihoods and freedom of Dalits. Having a separate land where Dalits are in charge of their activities and responsible for governing their affairs on equal terms was the rationale for the precipitous violence. Having an independent landmass that Dalits could populate freely without fear and intimidation gave them the right to fight back on equal terms in moments of altercation or violence. In the villages, their location on the outskirts and being in the minority worked against them, as the dominant castes could easily inflict violence without any repercussions. To remedy this, Ambedkar's AISCf suggested an autonomous nationhood for Dalits. The current village system that existed was 'a more effective system to enforce slavery upon the untouchables' at the hands of Hindus.³⁵ The villages destined the permanency of untouchability as it did not give Dalits a chance to escape the shackles of caste. Every villager knew each other's caste and would not move beyond the defining labels.

The reason for the separate nationhood was factually supported as untouchables had no reason to live in caste India. They couldn't easily get access to water, education or the resources to own the means of production, and their social life was an apartheid with severe restrictions to free movement.³⁶ In the absence of any other option to live without anyone's forced reliance, the working committee of the AISCFC came to a conclusion after 'long and mature deliberation' that it was in their best interest for the scheduled castes to have 'separate scheduled caste villages, away from the Hindu villages'. The purpose of this was to give Dalits their fullest manhood along with economic and social security.³⁷

The working committee of the AISCFC argued that with the independence of India would dawn a 'Hindu Raj'. This would be detrimental to the welfare of scheduled castes, and separate settlements were meant to be a remedial measure to change the Indian village system. This change was expected to be brought out with the help of the Indian Constitution. Avoiding the revolutionary catastrophes that Ambedkar had seen in Russia and China, this was an effective negotiation. The Constitution was encouraged to make provisions for unoccupied cultivable government land to be distributed to Dalits through the Settlement Commission, which had constitutional authority. The commission was empowered to distribute the government land and purchase it from private owners. Here again, Ambedkar chose to let it float as a transactional method rather than snatching the land. Another reason could probably have been Ambedkar's commitment to the smooth and peaceful transition of power. Added to that there was an obvious lobby of Congress' landed-class capitalists, whom many in the Socialist Party identified as 'Hindu imperialists', who would have created barriers in accepting these provisions as constitutional measures.

DALITSTHAN?

Ambedkar's idea of separate settlement a la 'Dalitsthan' (although not his formulation yet supporting the theory of separate settlement) goes against the grain of the Brahminical Hindu *rashtra* that forces the people into the chambers of caste village republics. The franchise granted to untouchables doesn't always work in their favour because the dominant caste would like to continue to disregard the value of the vote granted to untouchables. In the absence of support from landowners or village

headmen, untouchables could not freely exercise their vote—an essential condition of electoral democracy. Looking at the blemishes of culture and its practices, Ambedkar once commented in despair, ‘I am tired of this country. But I am also aware of my responsibilities that is why staying here became essential. It’s [India’s] religion, social system, reforms and culture I am very tired of. I am at war with civilization.’³⁸ Against this backdrop there was another call by the North Indian Dalits to have their own nation separate from those of Hindus and Muslims, Acchustistan—Land of Untouchables.³⁹ It was a concrete idea within an abstract India. Dalits were earlier considered as insignificant constituency. With this demand, they were claiming their position as ‘a third necessary part’ moving away from the binary of hegemonic Hindu and Muslim identities.⁴⁰

The intra-national conflicts over nation-building had started in America too. One of the early proponents of separate nationhood for the persecuted minorities in America was Marcus Garvey, who had led a formidable mass movement called Universal Negro Improvement Association and the African Communities League. This organization was rooted in Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism. African Americans deserve a respectable life and therefore an honoured motherland that would uphold their culture. Being a minority in the white land would not accord any permanent freedom; therefore, blacks needed to go ‘Back to Africa’—an organization he founded to promote emigration to Africa. The movement failed, as none of them could be taken to Liberia—a destined land. Later, however, movements sprouted out of the seeds Garvey sowed.

Black religious nationalism came at the hands of the Nation of Islam, through their leader Elijah Mohammad. Malcolm X, the shining star of this movement, shot to fame with his forthright opinions, which held a mirror to racist America. He wanted to ‘set up his own nation, an independent nation’,⁴¹ an independent economy created by black people inside the United States for their self-growth without reliance on white American patronage. Blacks in America were a ‘nation within a nation [that] must go from our oppressors’ declared the founder of black nationalism, Martin R. Delany, an army veteran. This was premised on race-pride that was withdrawn from the black bodies regarding their human rights. Black separatism received criticism from other African American leadership for its violent ethos; however, it did not downplay as critically as the idea of black pride and economic self-sufficiency that it offered. The ‘nation . . . of

broken people', in the American context, was about a separate nationhood that existed for black people as opposed to the Caucasians of America.⁴²

Separate nationhood works well in the forms of internal reserves safeguarded under the Constitution of India. Such experiments have worked well in America, Australia, Canada and South Africa, among others. This independent nationhood granted to the indigenous and native population gave them total autonomy over the mass of land that belonged to them. They could regulate the everyday business in the economy. By being autonomous, they negotiated with others as equals and without fear or intimidation. The primary purpose of separate settlement lay in freedom for the untouchables to 'enjoy free and full life'.

The demand for a separate nationhood continues to be important due to the unsafe environment Dalits are forced to live in. The rural record of Dalit atrocities committed by the powerful, landowning dominant castes is increasingly rising. In addition, the rate of lower performance in the health index cuts Dalit lives short. A Dalit woman has an average age of 39.5 years.⁴³ With 93 per cent of the Indian labour force still in the unorganized sector, protection and insurance at the workplace is a long shot.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

Looking at the current state of affairs in India, there is no reason for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-controlled Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to embrace Ambedkar and use the state coffers to throw parties around his birthday. What is at stake for the BJP to work with assimilated, Brahminized, Dalit Ambedkar? I argue it is twofold: 1. political calculus of a first-past-the-post system (FPTP); 2. cultural activities to shake the foundation of the Dalit consciousness.

The alliances that were envisioned by Ambedkar along with Lohia and other political options are yet to solidify. However, some in the form of the Bahujan Samaj Party–Samajwadi Party (BSP–SP) alliance and the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA)—an alliance of the backward class and other progressive forces—were recently seen in the parliamentary and assembly elections. The result was similar to Ambedkar's experience of the 1952 elections. Such alliances in current times also seem to be working against the possibility of Dalit-led politics. The VBA in Maharashtra and BSP–SP alliance in Uttar Pradesh ended up granting the alliance partners

more access to the Dalit vote base than the other way around. Prakash Ambedkar, leader of the VBA, blamed Muslims for not voting non-Muslim VBA candidates.⁴⁵ Similarly, Mayawati had identical experience with during the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections in 2022 wherein Muslim votes were not casted as expected to the BSP.⁴⁶ During the 2017 election too, Mayawati did not receive the vote from the SP vote base of Yadavs in Uttar Pradesh. She broke off the alliance with SP.

The Brahminizing of Ambedkar is an attempt of every political sphere not invested in the liberation of Dalits. The attitude of help and development of Dalits is a project of the dominant castes to ensure the subjugation of the Dalit populace. The Dalitizing of Ambedkar is again a hidden plot to undermine the universalist values that Ambedkar propounded. Depriving Ambedkar of a nationalist narrative, the dominant discourse handicapped a visionary who doesn't fit into the brackets of the ruling classes. No one appreciated Ambedkar, yet now they are carrying Ambedkar. Ambedkar is on every poster and in every popular protest. He is an icon 'cool' enough to sport on digitized banners and creative flyers. The inevitability of Ambedkar has given a new version to India's politics of the twenty-first century. His embrace is sanitized and purified to fit within the narratives of feel-good dominant caste characterization. Ambedkar stood for separate electorates and, more importantly, separate settlement. He took upon himself to lead the struggle of the rural landless through the redistribution of land for the rest of his life remains unfinished.⁴⁷ This is an ideal way of celebrating Ambedkar, or else Ambedkar is the desired son-in-law of Brahmins who so desperately want to put their stamp on his genius.

18. The weakening of India's independent institutions or its democratic backslide has been a key concern in the past years. This has led India to be classified as an 'electoral autocracy', which draws attention to the state of institutions beyond the electoral exercise (there are many references on this). See <https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/62-special-issue/the-challenge-of-indias-democratic-backsliding/>.
19. Craig Jeffrey, 'Introduction', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 40(2), 2017, pp. 272–3, at p. 272.
20. Craig Jeffrey and John Harris, *Keywords for Modern India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 2.
21. Jeffrey and Harris, *Keywords for Modern India*, p. 6.
22. 'The Keywords Issue', *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 12(1–2), June 2021, pp. 9–13, at p. 9, available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/09749276211040141>.
23. Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (University of Chicago Press, 1980 [1966]).
24. See https://www.jnu.ac.in/sites/default/files/notices/PressRelease_07-02-2022.pdf.

Chapter 1: The Nation Maker

1. Suraj Yengde, *Caste Matters* (Gurgaon: Penguin Random House, 2019), p. 49.
2. Ambedkar's speech on the occasion of 2,500 years of Buddha's death anniversary at Nare Park, Mumbai on 24 May 1956. Pradeep Gaikwad (ed.), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkaranchi Samagra Bhashane*, Vol. 10 (Nagpur: Kshitij Publications, 2016 [2003]), 8th edition, p. 99.
3. An effective demonstration of this could be seen during the CAA–NRC protest of 2020, wherein Ambedkar was a figure every community looked up to.
4. The arrests in the Bhima Koregaon protests of young Dalit activists in Maharashtra. In addition to this, there were rampant cases booked by the government against Dalit protestors who were protesting the government's move to 'dilute' the SC/ST Act. See <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/dalit-protests-5-000-booked-32-arrested-for-rioting-in-ghaziabad/story-8XR54FaMh82euysDRvPQoI.html>. Crimes against Dalits and Adivasis are the highest in the BJP-ruled states. The crimes against Dalits and Adivasis in general have increased to '281.75% and

- 575.33%, respectively, from 2009 to 2018', Prudhviraaj Rupavath, 'Crimes against Dalits and Adivasis Increasing in a Worrying Trend: Report', *Newslick*, 15 September 2020, available at <https://www.newslick.in/crimes-dalits-adivasis-increasing-worrying-trend-report>; 'Crimes against Dalits High in BJP-Ruled States', *The Hindu*, 5 May 2018, available at <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/crimes-against-dalits-high-in-bjp-ruled-states-shinde/article23777832.ece>.
5. Ashok Malik, 'Book Review: Arun Shourie's "Worshipping False Gods"', *India Today*, 30 June 1997, available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/society-the-arts/books/story/19970630-book-review-of-arun-shourie-worshipping-false-gods-830268-1997-06-30>, accessed on 23 March 2022.
 6. Ambedkar denounced this article in his speeches and held his unhappiness over this article, calling it a 'very ugly thing, something which I do not like to look at'. He clarified in Parliamentary debates on the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Bill, 1954, regarding Article 31 'which I, and the Drafting Committee, can take no responsibility whatsoever . . . That is not our draft. The result was that the Congress Party, at the time when Article 31 was being framed, was so divided within itself that we did not know what to do, what to put and what not to put. There were three sections in the Congress party'. B. R. Ambedkar, 'Parliamentary Debates', *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 15 (2004 [1997]), p. 948.
 7. Dhananjay Keer, *Dr Ambedkar: Life and Mission* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2016), p. 391.
 8. This can be evaluated through the scourge of manual scavenging heaped on Dalits. One Dalit life is lost every fifth day to the dangers of manual scavenging. In addition, according to the government's data, 10 Dalit women are raped per day. Besides, the structural and institutional discrimination against Dalits makes their life of most vulnerable due to the hegemonic religious environment in India. See NCRB data, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/magazine/2019/aug/18/crying-shame-an-india-where-a-crime-is-committed-against-a-dalit-every-15-minutes-2019524.html>. See also Suraj Yengde, *Caste Matters* (Gurgaon: Penguin, 2019).
 9. Ghanshyam Shah, Harsh Mander, Sukhadeo Thorat, Satish Deshpande and Amita Baviskar, *Untouchability in Rural India* (New Delhi: Sage, 2006).

10. Amit Thorat and Omkar Joshi, 'The Continuing Practice of Untouchability in India', *Economic and Political Weekly* 55(2), 11 January 2020, p. 39.
11. Nithya Pandian, 'Untouchability in Tamil Nadu Outrageously High, RTI Reveals: Madurai Top of List', *The News Minute*, 11 May 2022.
12. J. V. Pawar, *Ambedkarottar Ambedkari Chalwal*, Vol. 1, 1956–1959 (Mumbai: Asmita Communications, 2002 [2012]), 4th edition, p. 35.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
14. Election Commission of India, *General (2nd Lok Sabha) Election Results India*, available at <https://www.elections.in/parliamentary-constituencies/1957-election-results.html>, accessed on 23 March 2022.
15. Pawar, *Ambedkarottar Ambedkari Chalwal*, Vol. 1, 1956–1959, p. 53.
16. Ambedkar expounded on this in his book *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables* in Vasant Moon (ed.), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches*, Vol. 9 (New Delhi: Dr Ambedkar Foundation: 2004 [1991]).
17. 'Proposal for the Representation of Scheduled Castes in the Executive Council', in Hari Narke, M. L. Kasare, N. G. Kamble and Ashok Ghodghate (eds), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches*, Vol. 17(2) (Mumbai: Education Dept., Maharashtra, 2014 [2003]), p. 169.
18. Keer, *Dr Ambedkar*, p. 439.
19. 'Correspondence with Dr. Ambedkar', in Ram Manohar Lohia, *The Caste System* (Hyderabad: Navhind, 1964), pp. 31–2.
20. Letter dated 10 December 1955, *ibid.*, p. 29.
21. Yogendra Yadav, 'Ambedkar and Lohia: A Dialogue on Caste', *Seminar*, available at https://www.india-seminar.com/2012/629/629_yogendra_yadav.htm, accessed on 23 March 2022.
22. Lohia cautioned his colleagues Vimal and Dharmavir to 'not depart from the lines' as he felt Ambedkar was ideologically affiliated with the Atlantic camp. Lohia encouraged his friends to pursue 'ideological discussion' with Ambedkar. The ideological loyalty remained thinly contested. In his letter to his colleague Madhu Limaye, Lohia had emphasized on the ideological meeting points with Ambedkar and

- not just organizationally. See 'Letter to Madhu Limaye', dated 1 July 1957, Hyderabad, in Lohia, *The Caste System*, p. 36.
23. 'Correspondence with Dr. Ambedkar', letter dated 24 September 1956, in Lohia, *The Caste System*, pp. 31–2.
 24. 'Dr. Ambedkar's Letter', in Lohia, *The Caste System*, p. 34.
 25. Letter to Dr Ambedkar, sent from Hyderabad, dated 1 October 1956, in Lohia, *The Caste System*, p. 32.
 26. Pawar, *Ambedkarottar Ambedkari Chalwal*, Vol. 1, 1956–1959, p. 55.
 27. Keer, *Dr Ambedkar*, p. 453
 28. 'Letter to Madhu Limaye', dated 1 July 1957, Hyderabad, in Lohia, *The Caste System*, p. 36.
 29. 'Accept the Buddha's Dhamma', in *Prabuddha Bharat—Ambedkar Buddha Diksha Visheshank*, 27 October 1956 reproduced in Gaikwad, *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkaranchi Samagra Bhashane*, Vol. 10, p. 141.
 30. B. R. Ambedkar, *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables* (Jalandhar: Bheem Patrika Publications, 1943).
 31. Kipling D. Williams, *Ostracism: The Power of Silence* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2012).
 32. B. R. Ambedkar, *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of Untouchables*, in *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches* (Mumbai: Education Dept., Maharashtra, 1991 [2014]), Vol. 9, p. 401.
 33. Ambedkar, *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of Untouchables*, p. 401.
 34. 'All India Scheduled Caste Federation Memorandum submitted by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to the Cabinet Mission on 5th April 1946', in Narke, Kasare, Kamble and Ghodghate (eds), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings & Speeches*, Vol. 17(2), p. 173–4.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
 38. 'Dr. Ambedkar's Guidance to Students', Presidential address delivered at Untouchable Student's Conference, 12 December 1938, printed in *Janata*, 17 December 1938, in Pradeep Gaikwad (ed.), *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkaranchi Samagra Bhashane*, Vol. 3 (Nagpur: Kshitij Publications, 2007 [2001]), 3rd edition, p. 77.
 39. Vijay Prashad, *Untouchables Freedom: A Social History of a Dalit Community* (New Delhi: LeftWord, forthcoming).

40. Ambedkar quoted in Gyanendra Pandey, 'The Time of the Dalit Conversion', *Economic and Political Weekly* 41(18), 2006, pp. 1779–88.
41. Malcolm X, 'Message to Grassroots', speech delivered on 10 November 1963, available at <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/message-to-grassroots/>, accessed on 23 March 2022.
42. For details on this, see Nell Irvin Painter, 'Martin R. Delany: Elitism and Black Nationalism', in Leon Litwack and August Meier (eds), *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 155.
43. Express News Service, 'On Average, a Dalit Woman Dies 14 Years Younger Than One from Upper Caste: UN Report', *The Indian Express*, 16 February 2018, available at <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/on-average-a-dalit-woman-dies-14-years-younger-than-one-from-upper-caste-un-report/>, accessed on 23 March 2022.
44. For more on this, see Suraj Yengde, 'Dalitality: Labour Laws and the Muffled Voices of 93%', *The Indian Express*, 31 May 2020, available at <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/labour-laws-and-the-muffled-voices-suraj-yengde-6435024/>.
45. 'Ambedkar Blames Muslims for VBA's Failure in Lok Sabha Polls', *Hindustan Times*, 5 June 2019, available at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/ambekar-blames-muslims-for-vba-failure-in-lok-sabha-polls/story-1BsTs6y5YbzuZcxAp7GfQN.html>, accessed on 23 March 2022.
46. 'Mayawati Blames Muslim Vote Shift to SP for Dismal Show', *Hindustan Times*, 11 March 2022, available at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/elections/uttar-pradesh-assembly-election/mayawati-blames-muslim-vote-shift-to-sp-for-dismal-show-101647018716415.html>.
47. Gaikwad, *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkaranchi Samagra Bhashane*, Vol. 10.

Chapter 2: Rashtrapita

1. See, for this, Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).
2. See, for this, Avital Ronell, *Loser Sons: Politics and Authority* (Urbana and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

3. M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony J. Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 82–3.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 85–6.
6. M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography, or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, translated by Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Trust, 2009), p. 8.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 23–4.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
9. See Manubehn Gandhi, *Bapu—My Mother*, trans. Chitra Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 2007), p. 5.
10. See, for example, Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, *Gandhi's Prisoner? The Life of Gandhi's Son Manilal* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007).
11. See Chandulal Bhagubhai Dalal, *Harilal Gandhi: A Life*, translated by Tridip Suhrud (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2007).
12. M. K. Gandhi, 'Speech at A.I.C.C. Meeting', *Harijan*, 1 January 1942, in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Electronic Book), (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), Vol. 81, pp. 430–1.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 432–3.
14. For a remarkable interpretation of the relationship between Gandhi and Godse, see Ashis Nandy, 'Final Encounter: The Politics of the Assassination of Gandhi', *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).
15. Nathuram Godse, *Why I Assassinated Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Surya Bharati Prakashan, 1998), p. 111.
16. Godse, *Why I Assassinated Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 114.
17. Cited in Aga Khan, *The Memoirs of Aga Khan* (London: Cassell and Co., 1954), p. 227.
18. M. K. Gandhi, *The Bhagvadgita* (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1980), p. 84, parenthesis mine.
19. Gandhi, *The Bhagvadgita*, p. 49, parentheses mine.

Chapter 3: The Statue

1. Karunanidhi's choice of an atheist Tamil poet reflected both his own atheism and the DMK's political agenda of promoting Tamil language and culture against the north Indian imposition of Hindi.