
Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Muslims in India: A Historical and Philosophical Analysis
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Abstract: This paper examines Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's multifaceted engagement with the Muslim question in India through a historical and philosophical lens. While Ambedkar is widely recognised for his advocacy of Dalit rights and social justice, his nuanced positions on Muslim identity, representation and constitutional safeguards remain underexplored. The paper critically analyses Ambedkar's writings, speeches and political interventions to uncover a coherent vision rooted in strategic pluralism, asymmetrical citizenship and a redefinition of minorityhood. Drawing on original texts and contemporary scholarship, it situates Ambedkar's insights within both the political realities of his time and ongoing debates around secularism, majoritarianism and democratic pluralism in India. The study concludes that Ambedkar's engagement with Muslims was neither sectarian nor merely tactical — it was foundational to his broader democratic project.

Key words: B. R. Ambedkar, Muslims in India, minority rights, asymmetrical citizenship, secularism, pluralism, Indian Constitution.

Introduction:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's intellectual legacy has been widely acknowledged for its foundational role in shaping modern Indian democracy, particularly in relation to caste abolition, constitutionalism and social justice. However, one of the least explored dimensions of his work remains his engagement with the Muslim community in India. The present paper seeks to analyse Ambedkar's reflections on Muslims not merely as political commentary but as part of a broader philosophical and historical discourse on minority rights, democratic pluralism and state morality.

This paper aims to bridge historical and philosophical methodologies to understand how Ambedkar theorised the Muslim predicament within a Hindu-majority India. His political writings, constitutional proposals and critical assessments of communal dynamics reflect a sustained concern with questions of recognition, representation and structural justice. In doing so, Ambedkar moved beyond the simple binaries of communalism versus nationalism or secularism versus religiosity, offering a more intricate account of coexistence and power asymmetry.

While most scholarship on Ambedkar focuses on his critique of caste and his contribution to Dalit liberation, his nuanced positions on the Muslim question remain marginalised. Works by Jaffrelot (2005), Omvedt (2004) and Rodrigues (2002) have touched on this theme, but few have treated it with the philosophical seriousness it demands. Ambedkar's interventions — ranging from his analysis of Muslim political demands in "Pakistan or the Partition of India" to his constitutional safeguards for minorities — reflect a consistent effort to rethink democracy in heterogeneous societies.

In an era where the rights of minorities face increasing threats from majoritarian ideologies and cultural nationalism, revisiting Ambedkar's reflections becomes both urgent and necessary. This paper proposes that Ambedkar's approach to Muslims was not episodic but structurally embedded in his normative commitments to justice, equality and moral constitutionalism. Through a close analysis of his texts, speeches and the socio-political context in which they emerged, this study offers a historically grounded and philosophically robust examination of Ambedkar's engagement with Muslims in India.

The paper unfolds in eight sections following this introduction. Section 2 contextualises the historical moment of Ambedkar's Muslim discourse. Section 3 explores his key writings and speeches on Muslim issues. Section 4 identifies central philosophical themes in his thought, while Section 5 examines relevant case studies and debates. Section 6 surveys the critical reception of his Muslim discourse. Section 7 outlines the novel theoretical contributions this reading yields. Section 8 assesses the contemporary relevance of Ambedkar's thought on minority rights, and Section 9 concludes with final reflections and future directions for research.

This investigation contributes to political philosophy, Indian constitutional history and minority studies by recovering a dimension of Ambedkar's thought that speaks powerfully to the democratic challenges of our time.

Historical and Political Context:

Ambedkar's engagement with the Muslim community must be situated within the broader historical turbulence of colonial India between the early 1920s and the framing of the Constitution in 1950. The period witnessed the rise of communal politics, the formation of the Muslim League as a dominant voice of Muslim representation, the collapse of Congress-League negotiations and the Partition of British India. Against this volatile backdrop, Ambedkar emerged not only as a Dalit leader but as an original political theorist grappling with the idea of justice in a plural society.

Two critical developments shaped Ambedkar's understanding of the Muslim question. First, the Communal Award of 1932 and the Poona Pact forced him to reconsider the logic of separate electorates as a means of guaranteeing minority rights. Though the Pact pertained to Dalits, the broader principle of differentiated representation would return in his treatment of Muslims (Ambedkar 2014, 129–134). Second, the gradual polarisation between the Congress and the Muslim League highlighted for Ambedkar the dangers of assuming a homogenous national identity. He saw in the Muslim demand for separate nationhood both a reaction to Hindu majoritarianism and a symptom of deeper institutional failings (Ambedkar 1945, 135–158).

In his 1945 treatise "Pakistan or the Partition of India", Ambedkar examined the Muslim case with empirical precision and philosophical detachment. He criticised both Hindu and Muslim communalism but refused to equate their political expressions. Unlike Hindu majoritarianism, Muslim separatism arose from an existential fear of cultural annihilation under a Hindu-dominated polity (Ambedkar 1945, 156). Ambedkar did not endorse partition as an ideal solution but treated it as a possible resolution to an otherwise irreconcilable conflict between two socio-political imaginaries (Jaffrelot 2005, 92–95).

The Constituent Assembly Debates (1946–1949) further illuminate Ambedkar’s pragmatic shift from community-based representation to universal citizenship coupled with strong minority safeguards. As Chairman of the Drafting Committee, he embedded protections for religious and cultural rights in Articles 25 to 30 of the Indian Constitution (Austin 1999, 105–110). His goal was to ensure that numerical minorities would not become permanent political minorities under a system governed solely by majoritarian logic (Rodrigues 2002, 250–252).

Ambedkar’s political realism acknowledged the fragility of inter-community trust. At the same time, his constitutional idealism sought to construct institutional mechanisms for enduring pluralism. His thought evolved alongside historical shifts — from separate electorates to constitutional fraternity, from minority demands to shared sovereignty and from communal cleavages to democratic accommodation (Keer 2016, 321–328).

In short, Ambedkar’s views on Muslims did not emerge in isolation but were forged in response to a complex web of colonial policies, nationalist ideologies and structural inequalities. Understanding this context is essential for interpreting his reflections not as sectarian opinion but as a form of historical reasoning oriented toward justice (Zelliot 2013, 177–180).

Ambedkar’s Writings and Speeches on Muslims:

Ambedkar’s treatment of the Muslim question is most systematically articulated in his 1945 work, “Pakistan or the Partition of India”, where he dedicated entire sections to analysing the logic and implications of Muslim separatism. His arguments were constructed through rigorous historical scrutiny and a deep engagement with constitutional theory. Ambedkar examined not only the political aspirations of the Muslim League but also the socio-cultural rationale underlying Muslim fears of Hindu domination in an independent India (Ambedkar 1945, 136–152).

A central aspect of Ambedkar’s position was his acknowledgment of the Muslims as a distinct and historically rooted community with its own collective consciousness. He argued that religious minorities were not simply scattered individuals but constituted social groups with specific rights that could not be adequately protected through generic civil liberties. In his words, “The Muslims are a society with a religion of their own, with a culture of their own, with a script of their own, with a language of their own, with a history of their own, with laws of their own, with a moral code of their own, with heroes of their own, with holidays of their own” (Ambedkar 1945, 153).

Ambedkar’s speeches in the Constituent Assembly further clarify his vision. Though he did not advocate separate electorates for Muslims in the post-partition context, he consistently supported robust constitutional safeguards for religious minorities. Articles 25–30 of the Constitution, drafted under his leadership, guarantee freedom of religion, cultural rights and minority-run educational institutions (Austin 1999, 118–121). These provisions emerged not from a liberal pluralist impulse alone but from a deeper political commitment to equal moral recognition.

Ambedkar also engaged in public debate through journalistic writings and political

pamphlets. In “Thoughts on Linguistic States” (1955), although focused primarily on regionalism, he reiterated his concern about religious and cultural majoritarianism overwhelming minorities unless countered by strong constitutional mechanisms (Ambedkar 2014, vol. 1, 217–219). Similarly, his speeches at the All India Scheduled Castes Federation often invoked solidarity with other oppressed communities, including Muslims, advocating for shared resistance to upper-caste hegemony and state neglect.

His lesser-known speech at the Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal in 1936 (which was later turned into the essay “Annihilation of Caste”) included sharp criticism of Hindu orthodoxy’s failure to accommodate difference, setting the tone for his later endorsement of institutional pluralism (Ambedkar 2014, vol. 1, 49–52).

Together, these writings and speeches constitute a consistent and evolving body of work. They demonstrate Ambedkar’s attempt to formulate a theory of minority protection that combines constitutionalism with social justice, while also recognising the psychological and cultural vulnerabilities of religious minorities in a majoritarian democracy.

Philosophical Themes:

Ambedkar’s approach to the Muslim question cannot be understood without unpacking the deeper philosophical concerns that shaped his political reasoning. His reflections on minority rights were embedded in a larger ethical vision concerned with justice, fraternity and moral equality.

The first theme is the idea of justice as structural recognition. Ambedkar distinguished between formal equality and substantive justice. He held that minorities, particularly religious ones, required not just equal treatment under the law but recognition of their distinctiveness. His emphasis on “group rights” or “collective safeguards” was grounded in the belief that treating unequals equally perpetuates injustice (Ambedkar 2014, vol. 2, 94–96).

Second, Ambedkar introduced a concept of asymmetrical citizenship. Drawing upon his critique of the Hindu social order and the limitations of liberal individualism, he proposed a citizenship model that allows differentiated rights for vulnerable communities. His argument parallels, though predates, later developments in multicultural political theory by scholars like Will Kymlicka, who similarly emphasise group-differentiated rights as integral to democratic justice (Kymlicka 1995, 6–10).

Third, Ambedkar’s reflections on fraternity as a democratic virtue were crucial to his minority philosophy. In his closing speech to the Constituent Assembly, he warned that equality and liberty, without fraternity, would be meaningless. For Ambedkar, fraternity meant not sentimental brotherhood but a civic virtue essential to sustaining pluralism. Without this affective bond, minorities would remain perpetually alienated (Ambedkar 1995, 1224–1226).

Fourth, Ambedkar’s critique of majoritarian nationalism was rooted in his fear of cultural homogenisation. He viewed Indian nationalism as dominated by upper-caste Hindu cultural values, which he believed were incapable of fostering genuine inclusion. His

preference for constitutional morality over cultural nationalism allowed space for the coexistence of multiple religious and cultural identities within the Indian nation-state (Jaffrelot 2005, 108–110).

Finally, Ambedkar's thoughts anticipate the idea of intersectionality. His framing of Muslim issues often acknowledged the internal diversity of the Muslim community — class, caste and gender hierarchies within Islam were not ignored. He was particularly concerned with the status of Muslim women and criticised aspects of personal law that denied them agency. This shows a complex engagement with minority rights that was never uncritical (Ambedkar 2014, vol. 2, 77–81).

These philosophical themes elevate Ambedkar's discourse on Muslims beyond a mere political commentary. They place him within a larger canon of thinkers wrestling with the dilemmas of diversity, recognition and justice in modern democratic societies.

Case Studies:

To further illustrate Ambedkar's practical approach to Muslim issues, this section analyses three critical moments of institutional and ideological intervention. Each case highlights a unique dimension of his thought: strategic pluralism, constitutional design and social reform coalitions.

Case Study 1: The Muslim League and the Poona Pact While the Poona Pact of 1932 is most often discussed in terms of Dalit political representation, its aftermath saw Ambedkar critically reassessing the principle of communal representation. His subsequent writings on the Muslim League reveal an effort to understand Muslim political demands not as sectarian ambition but as a claim to structural security. In "Pakistan or the Partition of India", Ambedkar explicitly stated that the demand for Pakistan stemmed not from fanaticism but from a rational political calculus by a minority seeking protection (Ambedkar 1945, 136–153). Ambedkar's sympathy with the logic of this claim, even as he disagreed with its separatist conclusion, shows his capacity to differentiate between surface-level political rhetoric and deeper social anxieties.

Case Study 2: Constitutional Safeguards for Minorities During the Constituent Assembly Debates, Ambedkar took a pragmatic stance by rejecting separate electorates but insisting on strong cultural and educational safeguards for minorities. Articles 25–30 of the Indian Constitution — dealing with religious freedom and minority educational rights — were outcomes of this negotiation. In response to conservative critiques that such articles would "balkanize" Indian identity, Ambedkar replied that the health of democracy rested on the trust of its minorities, which could not be built through assimilationist pressures (Austin 1999, 107–111). His emphasis on individual conscience as the basis of religious liberty shows a liberal constitutionalism deeply rooted in pluralist ethics.

Case Study 3: The Scheduled Castes Federation and Inter-Minority Solidarity Ambedkar's political party, the Scheduled Castes Federation (SCF), experimented with building alliances with Muslims during the 1940s. In the 1946 elections, SCF

candidates campaigned in Muslim-majority regions of Bengal and Punjab, sometimes in collaboration with Muslim leaders. Though these alliances were not always electorally successful, they point to Ambedkar's long-term vision of a horizontal solidarity among India's oppressed groups. As Chandra (1989) notes, Ambedkar's political correspondence reveals attempt to construct a broader "minority bloc" to challenge the dominance of both Congress and Hindu traditionalists.

Each of these case studies reflects an enduring tension in Ambedkar's thought: how to defend the integrity of minority identities while sustaining a shared constitutional framework. He rejected both the assimilationist models of the Congress and the exclusivist agendas of separatist politics. Instead, he envisioned a state structure that institutionalises difference without endangering unity. This balancing act remains one of the most sophisticated attempts at theorising pluralism in the Indian context.

Ambedkar's engagement with Muslim questions thus moved across political, legal and social terrains. His interventions were not limited to rhetorical posturing but shaped actual institutional outcomes. The enduring value of these cases lies in their demonstration of how philosophical insight can translate into constitutional architecture and political alliances aimed at justice.

Critical Reception:

The critical reception of Ambedkar's engagement with Muslim issues has been ambivalent, shaped by the broader trajectory of Ambedkar studies and the changing contours of Indian political discourse. While many scholars acknowledge his profound insights into minority rights and democratic pluralism, others argue that his views have been under-theorised or selectively interpreted.

Christophe Jaffrelot offers one of the most comprehensive political readings of Ambedkar's approach, particularly his role in designing constitutional protections for minorities. Jaffrelot sees Ambedkar as a "radical democrat" who viewed the Muslim predicament through the lens of structural inequality rather than communal identity alone (Jaffrelot 2005, 94–96). For Jaffrelot, Ambedkar's strength lay in his refusal to romanticise any community and in his insistence on the necessity of institutional checks against majoritarianism.

Akeel Bilgrami, in contrast, critiques Ambedkar's sometimes instrumental view of religion. While Bilgrami praises Ambedkar's moral realism, he finds his treatment of Islam as occasionally reductive, especially when contrasted with his deeper philosophical engagement with Buddhism (Bilgrami 2012, 160–165). Nonetheless, he acknowledges that Ambedkar's understanding of Islamic communalism was far more nuanced than most of his contemporaries.

Sudipta Kaviraj and Rajeev Bhargava, both political theorists, focus on Ambedkar's contribution to secularism. Kaviraj argues that Ambedkar's constitutional secularism was "agonistic" rather than liberal, based not on abstract neutrality but on managing deep social antagonisms (Kaviraj 2010, 191–193). Bhargava extends this to show that Ambedkar's framework allows for a more context-sensitive model of secularism suited to

the Indian polity, one that preserves religious autonomy without sacrificing civil equality (Bhargava 2006, 45).

Anand Teltumbde has been critical of attempts to separate Ambedkar's Muslim discourse from his anti-caste radicalism. According to him, Ambedkar's engagement with Muslims was part of a broader project to construct "Bahujan" alliances and should not be isolated from his materialist critiques of Hindu social order (Teltumbde 2018, 78–83). He warns against reading Ambedkar as a minority-rights theorist in abstraction from the larger dynamics of class and caste-based exclusions.

Other scholars, such as Gail Omvedt and Eleanor Zelliot, have underscored Ambedkar's forward-thinking constitutionalism. Omvedt emphasises that his vision of fraternity was always political, designed to bind communities without erasing their differences (Omvedt 2004, 143). Zelliot stresses that Ambedkar's willingness to engage with Muslim leaders — even while disagreeing with them — showed a rare openness among India's early modern thinkers (Zelliot 2013, 187).

In popular discourse, Ambedkar's position on Muslims has often been either mischaracterised as communal appeasement or overlooked entirely. His critiques of Muslim personal law, for instance, are frequently cited without acknowledging his equal critique of Hindu law. In this way, the reception of his Muslim discourse reflects the political anxieties of contemporary India rather than the complexity of his actual thought.

Nevertheless, as scholarship on Ambedkar grows in scope and depth, his engagement with Muslims is receiving renewed attention. Recent volumes like "Revisiting Ambedkar" (edited by Sudhir Chandra) and journals such as *Economic and Political Weekly* have featured essays reassessing his minority politics in light of new theoretical frameworks, including intersectionality, postcolonial secularism and comparative constitutionalism (Chandra 2015, 44–48).

The critical reception thus mirrors the tensions in Ambedkar's own thought: between political realism and moral idealism, between institutional design and philosophical critique. It is this unresolved, dialectical character of his engagement with Muslims that makes Ambedkar an enduring figure in both political theory and constitutional thought.

Novel Contributions:

Ambedkar's engagement with Muslim questions in India represents a set of novel contributions that continue to shape contemporary political theory, constitutional practice and minority discourse. These contributions are not merely historical insights but frameworks of thought that anticipate many later developments in democratic pluralism and rights-based discourse. This section outlines four significant philosophical and institutional innovations.

1. Asymmetrical Citizenship as Justice Ambedkar's model of minority protection did not insist on formal equality alone but proposed an asymmetrical structure of citizenship. He argued that certain communities, due to historical disadvantage, required institutional accommodations beyond what majoritarian

equality could provide. This idea prefigures what later liberal theorists such as Will Kymlicka called “group-differentiated rights” (Kymlicka 1995, 110–115). However, Ambedkar’s view was rooted not in multicultural affirmation alone but in historical reparations for structural injustice. His emphasis on constitutional safeguards—such as Article 30 for minority educational rights—illustrates a model of asymmetrical justice designed to repair civil imbalances without creating permanent segregation.

2. Bridging Identity and Justice without Essentialism Ambedkar rejected both essentialist notions of community identity and the liberal demand for a purely individualistic public sphere. He acknowledged the enduring power of group affiliations such as caste and religion, while simultaneously insisting on their transformation through constitutional morality. In his analysis of Islam, he praised its egalitarian ethos while critiquing patriarchal or exclusivist tendencies. His framework allows for a nuanced engagement with identity—one that affirms group rights without reifying cultural essentialism (Ambedkar 1945, 220–229).

3. Recasting the Idea of the Minority Ambedkar’s theory of minority was based not on numerical criteria but on access to power and dignity. He distinguished between a numerical majority and a cultural or structural majority. For instance, Hindus were not simply the majority in population but also controlled the symbolic, economic and legal frameworks of Indian society. Muslims, though numerous in certain provinces, remained politically vulnerable due to their disempowerment in pan-Indian institutions. This reframing echoes later theories by Iris Marion Young, who advocated understanding oppression through structures rather than identities alone (Young 1990, 39–45).

4. Strategic Pluralism as a Political Practice Rather than advocating for a single model of inter-communal cooperation, Ambedkar promoted what may be called “strategic pluralism”. He supported separate electorates at one historical juncture and joint electorates with safeguards at another, not out of inconsistency but in response to changing socio-political contexts. This flexibility was grounded in his belief that no single formula could resolve the complex relations among caste, religion and state. Strategic pluralism, then, becomes not a compromise but a mode of resilient coalition-building (Rodrigues 2002, 175–177).

These contributions reveal Ambedkar as a thinker who was simultaneously a political strategist and a moral philosopher. His approach to Muslim questions was neither doctrinaire nor populist but rooted in a deep engagement with justice, democracy and institutional design. The originality of his interventions lies in their refusal to reduce complex questions of identity, citizenship and representation to binary logics. In the age of resurgent majoritarianism and identity-based polarisation, Ambedkar’s pluralist vision continues to offer a radical democratic alternative.

Contemporary Relevance:

The contemporary relevance of Ambedkar’s insights on Muslims in India has grown

substantially in light of current political developments, particularly the rise of majoritarianism, the marginalisation of religious minorities and the crisis of secularism in the Indian Republic. Far from being a figure rooted only in historical discourse, Ambedkar's framework remains instructive for understanding how justice, citizenship and pluralism can be reconfigured in a deeply stratified society.

One of Ambedkar's most enduring contributions was his conception of fraternity as the moral basis of democracy. In the context of increasing communal polarisation and lynching of Muslims under the guise of cow protection, his warning that democracy in India must rest on a foundation of social fraternity, not just legal equality, gains renewed salience (Ambedkar 1948, 121). Without shared moral commitment to the dignity of all communities, constitutional guarantees risk becoming hollow.

In recent years, reports like the Sachar Committee (2006) have revealed systematic socio-economic exclusion of Muslims across sectors—education, employment, housing and access to credit. Ambedkar's critique of majoritarian democracy anticipated these trends. He warned that a permanent majority, if unchecked, would reproduce structures of domination rather than ensure the inclusion of all citizens (Ambedkar 1945, 156–160). The marginalisation of Muslims, both structurally and symbolically, is therefore not simply an administrative failure but a constitutional crisis of the kind Ambedkar foresaw.

The debate around the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) underscores the continued pertinence of Ambedkar's constitutional vision. While some defenders of the CAA cite religious persecution in neighbouring countries, critics argue that it violates the secular and equal foundations of Indian citizenship. Ambedkar's insistence that religion should not determine political rights finds sharp resonance here. He had asserted that the state must uphold individual dignity irrespective of religious identity — a vision contradicted by contemporary exclusionary measures (Austin 1999, 115).

Moreover, Ambedkar's opposition to Hindu Raj and his critique of political Brahminism provide a vital lens to interpret the ideological shifts in contemporary governance. His description of Hindu Raj as antithetical to democracy and modernity remains prophetic in the face of present-day state-sponsored majoritarian cultural policies (Ambedkar 1945, 358). He called for a "State in which one man has one value", not one in which numerical dominance could translate into cultural or political hegemony.

There is also renewed academic interest in Ambedkar's pluralist constitutionalism among scholars of comparative politics and minority rights. Authors such as Niraja Gopal Jayal and Madhav Khosla have explored how his thought can inform global debates on citizenship and group rights (Jayal 2013, 206–210; Khosla 2020, 92). His approach offers an alternative to both assimilationist and separatist models, envisioning a shared civic space without denying the legitimacy of group identities.

Ambedkar's writings on Islam, especially his recognition of its egalitarian principles and institutional discipline, provide an opening for dialogues between Dalit and Muslim social movements. In an era where identity politics often leads to fragmentation, his vision of "graded solidarities" — coalitions based on common experiences of oppression — suggests the possibility of building transformative alliances across difference.

In sum, Ambedkar's engagement with Muslim questions is not an artifact of the past but a resource for future democratic renewal. His ideas challenge contemporary India to confront its foundational contradictions and to reimagine a polity where pluralism is not merely tolerated but institutionally nourished and morally affirmed.

Conclusion

This study has explored the multifaceted engagement of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar with the question of Muslims in India through a historical and philosophical lens. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Ambedkar did not view the Muslim question as a mere political inconvenience or a communitarian issue to be managed through electoral compromises. Instead, he recognised the Muslim predicament as emblematic of deeper questions about minority rights, structural justice and the ethics of democratic coexistence in a caste-ridden and communally fractured society.

Ambedkar's thought offers a powerful framework for negotiating the paradoxes of Indian democracy. His commitment to social justice extended beyond caste and was inclusive of religious minorities, whom he saw not simply as cultural entities but as political subjects demanding equal respect and institutional safeguards. His interventions in the Constituent Assembly, his writings such as *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, and his political initiatives all reflect a coherent, if evolving, vision that was rooted in constitutionalism, moral realism and strategic pluralism.

By advancing concepts such as asymmetrical citizenship, redefined minorityhood and graded solidarities, Ambedkar laid the groundwork for an inclusive yet critically robust democratic theory. His refusal to adopt essentialist understandings of either Hinduism or Islam and his belief in the transformative potential of constitutional morality, set him apart as a thinker whose legacy transcends the immediate crises of his time.

In the present moment — marked by religious polarisation, erosion of secular institutions and rising marginalisation of Muslim communities — Ambedkar's insights are not only relevant but essential. His critique of majoritarian rule and his insistence on fraternity as the foundation of democracy remain a clarion call for those seeking to rebuild India on the principles of justice, equality and pluralism.

Ambedkar's engagement with Muslims was not confined to abstract theorisation or tactical alliances. It was a sustained attempt to articulate a vision of Indian democracy that could accommodate deep differences without sacrificing universal values. As such, revisiting his thought is imperative for any project that seeks to renew India's constitutional promise in our own turbulent times.

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