CASTE, GENDER AND DEMOCRACY: REFRAMING AMBEDKARITE FEMINISM IN A TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's reputation as jurist, social revolutionary, and chief architect of India's Constitution is well established. Yet, his engagement with the "question of women"—particularly Dalit women—has only recently drawn sustained attention. Ambedkar cannot be reduced to merely a leader for the oppressed castes but also a critcal feminist thinker who recognized that caste, class, and gender oppression were intricately intertwined. Bhattacharya

In this light, this paper critically examines Ambedkar's feminist vision by engaging underexplored dimensions of his thought and situating it within transnational feminist debates. It draws on close readings of his speeches and writings, alongside scholarship from Dalit and global South feminist traditions, to foreground how women's emancipation shaped his politics. The analysis is organized at at attempt around formulating three frameworks: (A) Ecocriticism and Women's Labor, which considers Ambedkar's interventions in environmental justice and women's occupational health; (B) Transnational and Comparative Feminist Theory, which places Ambedkar in dialogue with Black, intersectional, and decolonial feminist thought; and (C) Affect, Trauma, and Intergenerational Memory, which explores how caste patriarchy produces psychic injury and how Ambedkarite movements have addressed or neglected these experiences.

By re-examining Ambedkar through these lenses, the paper argues that his feminist vision was simultaneously radical and partial: rooted in the specificity of caste apartheid while resonating with global struggles against patriarchy and racial-colonial oppression.

ECOCRITICISM, LABOR AND THE BODY: AMBEDKARITE FEMINISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Ambedkar's fight against caste was a fight for human dignity, often centered on basic resources, living conditions, labor and dignity. Though he wrote before "ecofeminism" or "environmental justice" were academic terms, his interventions on water, sanitation, and Dalit women's labor reveal a proto-ecocritical vision linking environment and bodily integrity to social justice.

An example that highlights his radical position is the Mahad Satyagraha of 1927, where Ambedkar led Dalits in claiming the right to drink water and for their personal use from a public tank. The campaign concerned itself about much more than thirst. As one scholar notes, "an assertion of their rights as humans" against a caste ecology that treated them as pollutants (Faiad 120). Women's participation signaled that denying water—the most basic environmental resource—was both caste oppression and an environmental justice violation.

Ambedkar also connected Hindu scriptures to social ecology and gender. In *The Rise and Fall of the Hindu Woman*, he alleged with textual acuity of the *Manu Smriti* for women's "debauched status," citing Manu's injunction that "women have no right to study the Vedas" (Ambedkar 110). Denial of religious knowledge justified social exclusion and exploitative labor divisions. His critique of Gandhi's valorization of sanitation labor made a similar point.

Gandhi had praised manual scavengers as noble workers. However, Ambedkar condemned this as an appeal to "the pride and vanity of manual scavengers in order to induce them only to continue" in degrading work (Faiad 121). For him, the problem was structural: caste assigned "uncleanness" by birth, and dignity could come only from abolishing hereditary waste labor.

The stakes are clearest in manual scavenging, which has historically fallen disproportionately on Dalit women. Today, an estimated 1.3 million Dalits, mostly women, still clean dry latrines or sewers by hand (Pillay 477). They face toxic conditions—skin diseases, musculoskeletal disorders, respiratory damage—along with extreme stigma. Navi Pillay, the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, emphasized that scavenging "is not a career chosen voluntarily but forced and conditioned upon these people because of the stigma attached to their caste locations and historical vocational associations. The nature of the work itself then reinforces that stigma" (Pillay 483). Ambedkar's lifelong struggle to abolish such practices—through satyagrahas, legal reform, and advocacy for modern sanitation—exemplifies what we might call eco-social feminism. In contrast to leaders who spiritualized scavenging, Ambedkar demanded material solutions: modern infrastructure, legal abolition, and dignified livelihoods. His approach resonates with today's intersectional environmentalism, highlighting how minority women disproportionately bear the risks of toxic labor (Faiad 125).

As Labour Minister (1942–46), Ambedkar made these commitments law. He introduced the eight-hour workday, replacing fourteen-hour shifts that weighed heavily on women, and advanced equal pay, maternity leave, and insurance provisions (Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 18, 147). He established the Employees' State Insurance scheme for medical care and accident relief and strengthened labor unions. Importantly, he piloted the Mines Maternity Benefit Act and the Women and Child Labour Protection Act, which prohibited women from working in underground coal mines and provided maternity benefits. These measures recognized women's bodies as disproportionately vulnerable to environmental and occupational hazards, foregrounding reproductive health and workplace safety as rights guaranteed by the state.

Seen through an ecocritical lens, Ambedkar consistently linked caste oppression to environmental degradation. His struggles for access to water and freedom from waste labor were two sides of the same demand: the right to live without being treated as society's pollutants. His acute emphasis on modernity and scientific rationality carried a feminist-environmental dimension and aiming to release Dalits from degrading "traditional" interactions with nature, such as being forced to drink from polluted ponds or scrape sewage by hand. Ambedkar sought to break the link between caste and environmental degradation by advocating modern water systems and industrial reforms. At times, he privileged large-scale technological solutions—dams, electrification—that later ecologists would critique, but his overriding goal was to reduce human drudgery and inequality.

Ambedkar famously described caste as a system that rendered Dalits permanently "impure" (Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 18, 97). This pseudo-ecological justification, posed by societal injunctions and for segregation reinforced both social and environmental exclusion. To counter it, he advanced what might be called an environmental human rights approach: clean water, safe workplaces, and legal protection from harm were entitlements for all, including Dalit women. This framework prefigured later feminist links between ecology, health, and justice.

Ambedkar's modernist orientation also had limits. His industrial development agenda paid little attention to ecological conservation or displacement caused by large projects, themes later central to postcolonial ecofeminists. Yet his stance on feminism remained materialist pragmatist, insisting that women were not symbols but stakeholders in reform and in 1942, he urged women to "help the men and also to reform the women," warning that Hinduism had taught them to see their only duty as

service to husbands, a "thought of slavery" to be discarded (Pawar and Moon 178). He believed education and organization would enable women to reject oppressive traditions, such as confinement to domestic labor or ritualized prostitution like the *devadasi* system (Pawar and Moon 180). Dalit women activists influenced by Ambedkar campaigned against practices such as *muralis* (temple slavery) and restrictive dress codes—assertions of bodily autonomy that resonate strongly with feminist-environmental concerns.

Ambedkar anticipated environmental justice by linking caste oppression, degraded labor, and women's bodily vulnerability. Whether fighting for access to water, and abolishing "dirty jobs," or instituting protections for women workers, he placed Dalit women's dignity at the center of social progress. His reforms established a material basis for justice, connecting land, water, sanitation, and labor questions. Though his faith in modernization often times overlooked ecological sustainability, his insistence that environmental and caste exploitation were mutually reinforcing made his feminist politics strikingly relevant to current struggles for climate justice and workers' rights.

TRANSNATIONAL DIALOGUES: AMBEDKARITE FEMINISM IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Ambedkar's feminist vision, though forged in the context of caste apartheid in India, resonates with global feminist traditions, especially Black, intersectional, and decolonial thought. Reading Ambedkar from a comparative perspective reveals both convergences and divergences and highlights the distinctive contributions of Ambedkarite feminism to global theory.

Ambedkar and Intersectionality

Before even Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term it was Ambedkar that analyzed and framed caste as a gendered system with historical evidence. In *Castes in India* (1916), he argued that caste endured through endogamy and the control of women's sexuality. Practices like sati, enforced widowhood, and child marriage, he noted, were mechanisms to regulate reproduction and preserve caste boundaries (Rege 161). Sharmila Rege describes this as "a feminist take on caste" (Rege 163). His insight parallels Black feminists' analyses of "double" or "triple jeopardy," showing that Dalit women's oppression cannot be separated from caste, class, and gender.

Brahmanical Patriarchy and Savarna Feminism

Ambedkar diverged sharply from mainstream upper-caste feminism. While reformers romanticized a Hindu golden age, he denounced scriptures, especially *Manu Smriti*, as instruments of misogyny (Ambedkar 110). In 1927, he publicly burned the text, a radical gesture of feminist rejection. His Hindu Code Bill, which sought to legalize divorce and grant women equal property rights, was stalled by conservative opposition. Resigning from Nehru's cabinet, he warned that leaving "inequality between class and class, between sex and sex, which is the soul of Hindu Society untouched… is to make a farce of our Constitution and to build a palace on a dung heap" (Ambedkar, *On the Hindu Code Bill* 133). Ambedkar's insistence was that true democracy required caste and gender equality aligned with global feminist demands that liberation begin with the most marginalized women.

Black–Dalit Solidarities

Angela Davis has highlighted parallels between slavery and untouchability, noting a "collective predicament" of Black people and Dalits (Press Trust of India 2). Ambedkar himself studied the "Negro problem" and corresponded with W. E. B. Du Bois. This exchange of ideas laid the fundamental groundwork for solidarities that emerged later. The Dalit Panthers of the 1970s modeled themselves on the Black Panthers, carrying Ambedkar's legacy into radical internationalism (Teltumbde 55). The Combahee River Collective's claim that no one is free until the most marginalized are free resonates with Ambedkar's insistence that Dalit women's progress measures democracy itself.

Caste and Feminist Epistemologies

Ambedkar's resolute refusal to allow Indian womanhood to congeal into any homogenized or universalized abstraction stems from the recognition, borne out in the testimonies of Dalit feminist thinkers such as Pawar and Moon. They believe that Dalit women have been subjected not only to the patriarchal domination inscribed within their own marginalized communities, but also to the ever-present threat (and often, grim reality) of sexual exploitation wielded by dominant-caste men; thus, these women are doubly inscribed and indeed, forced, into the most intimate circuits of subordination, their social existence articulated at the intersection where caste and gender hierarchies entangle (Pawar and Moon 175). The resulting fragmentation of subjectivity and solidarity among Indian women, far from being a merely local or contingent phenomenon, in fact somberly reflects—if not outright echoes—Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí's trenchant critique of the Western imposition of universalizing gender categories, themselves historically constructed rather than ontologically given. Here, one is further reminded of Cherríe Moraga's "theory in the flesh," where knowledge is irreducibly embedded in and produced through the matrix of lived, bodily oppression, and it is precisely at this conjuncture that Dalit women's narratives attain their world-historical importance: as lived theory—feminism materialized and enacted.

For example, Sulochanabai Dongre, when addressing the 1942 women's conference, invoked the maxim that "the girl of today is the mother of tomorrow," and explicitly linking the stakes of education to the horizons of empowerment and the project of national progress (Pawar and Moon 182). Such public interventions did not merely anticipate, but in fact actively constituted, a Dalit women's feminist politics that centered marginalized subjects decades before the mainstream international feminist discourse had even begun to acknowledge, let alone champion, their pivotal role.

Literature and Testimony

Ambedkar inspired Dalits to write their lives, laying the foundation for Dalit literature and it is here women's autobiographies, such as Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke* and Bama's *Karukku,* serve as counterparts to Black feminist life writing like Audre Lorde's essays. These texts reveal how caste-gender oppression is lived and resisted, turning personal testimony into theory. Scholars argue that these narratives carry "an underlying strand of Ambedkarite values" (Rege 170). They enrich transnational feminist theory by foregrounding caste as a category of analysis alongside race, class, and sexuality.

Neo-Buddhism and Decolonial Feminism

Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism in 1956 can also be read as a decolonial feminist act. He rejected Brahmanical Hinduism, reclaimed an indigenous tradition grounded in equality, compassion, and critical reason. He often cited the Buddha's decision to establish an order of nuns as proof of women's dignity in Buddhist ethics. His move parallels other decolonial feminist recoveries of indigenous knowledge, whether Maori women reviving their language or womanist theologians drawing on African spirituality. Ambedkarite feminism thus models a dialogue between spiritual liberation and radical politics.

Gaps and Differences

While Ambedkar was far ahead of his time, his feminism did not explicitly address queer or non-heteronormative identities, which later Black and decolonial feminisms have taken up. His style was legalistic and statistical, unlike the narrative or autobiographical forms of Lorde or Moraga. Yet Dalit women's post-Ambedkar autobiographies have bridged this gap, producing life writing that parallels women of color's "theory in the flesh."

Distinctive Contributions

Ambedkarite feminism offers a global theory with three key tools. First, it makes caste central to feminist analysis, exposing hierarchies invisible to

Western frameworks, and second, it elevates law and constitutional morality as instruments of feminist transformation, resisting cultural relativism that excuses patriarchy. Third, it models bottom-up organizing: Dalit women in Ambedkar's movement held conferences, ran federations, and demanded education and political representation (Velivada 3). This history demonstrates that oppressed women can lead feminist struggles and not merely be represented by elites.

AFFECT, TRAUMA, AND MEMORY: THE EMOTIONAL LIVES OF CASTE-GENDER OPPRESSION

Ambedkar's writings and activism offered a structural critique of caste and a program for social reform and, yet, herarely engaged directly with the psychological or affective toll that caste patriarchy imposed on Dalit women. In his time, the language of trauma, intergenerational suffering, or mental health was absent from reformist discourse. Still, the experiences of grief, humiliation, and resilience lie between the lines of Ambedkarite history. Reading him through trauma studies and affect theory highlights both what his vision implied and what it overlooked. At the same time, contemporary Dalit feminists have extended his legacy by narrativizing pain and memory as part of justice.

Intergenerational Trauma and Ambedkar's Experience

Caste oppression is inherently traumatic, producing cumulative injuries passed across generations and this is what feminist scholars describe. Ramaiah termed caste "India's hidden apartheid," creating a "soul wound" akin to racial trauma in the U.S. A grandmother's memories of violence may instill anxiety in her descendants and echoing Holocaust studies on "second-generation trauma." Ambedkar himself lived this pain: in *Waiting for a Visa*, he recounted being denied water by a cartman and shunned by teachers. He did not frame this as psychological trauma but as injustice demanding structural change. He aimed to externalize suffering into a collective struggle rather than private grief.

Affective Gestures in Ambedkar's Politics

Though not couched in psychological terms, Ambedkar's politics carried affective weight. His fury at Hindu society as a "hell" producing "degradation" revealed deep reservoirs of empathy. His declaration, "I was born a Hindu, but I will not die a Hindu," and expressed disgust, defiance, thereby introducing hope to the psyche and the 1956 mass conversion to Buddhism was a collective catharsis, vows to reject Hindu gods symbolized the casting off of caste trauma. Such ritualized renewal created positive collective memory, countering humiliation with dignity which also includes annual Ambedkar Jayanti celebrations and pilgrimages to Chaitya Bhoomi serve as "sites of memory," transforming grief into pride. In this sense, Ambedkar recognized trauma symbolically, even if he did not theorize its psychological contours.

Dalit Women's Trauma and Sexual Violence

Ambedkar condemned the sexual exploitation of Dalit women by dominant castes, framing it as the worst caste atrocity, and yet he approached it primarily as a legal and moral issue, not as a psychological wound. Contemporary Dalit feminist scholarship fills this gap. Bharti argues that women's memoirs reveal cultural trauma and "partial privilege," where some escape while others remain trapped. Studies of Dalit literature note how pain "penetrates the inner life" beyond bodily harm, which makes such scholarship important that builds on Ambedkar's insights but extends into affective realms he left implicit.

The trauma of sexual violence continues to mark Dalit women's lives. Atrocities like Khairlanji (2006) and Hathras (2020) produced what psychologists call "everyday PTSD," where ordinary acts—walking past an upper-caste neighborhood—trigger anxiety. Ambedkar in his time responded by organizing protests and demanding punishment, but today activists also foreground healing and testimony. Collectives such as #DalitWomenFight

use social media to break silences around rape and echoing global #MeToo movements while rooted in Ambedkar's call for Dalits to reclaim their "human personality."

Memory, Postmemory, and Testimony

Memory transmission plays a crucial role in sustaining trauma and resistance. Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke* documents and portrays women cradling infants, weeping that their fates would be the same, rendering their affective inheritance (Kamble 34). Another way Kamble recounts her grandmother's famine stories, which instilled sorrow and defiance, shaping her political resolve. Ambedkar appears in such narratives as a figure of hope, transforming despair into dignity. One scholar notes that his "vigor infuses Dalit consciousness and leads Mahar women to discover a new life instead of one with tears". His image functioned as a psychological symbol, akin to how Martin Luther King Jr. or Nelson Mandela embodied healing for oppressed communities.

Yet Dalit grief often lacked recognition. Without spaces to mourn, trauma lingered silently. Contemporary initiatives, and these platforms, like the Dalit Memory Archive create rituals of remembrance, echoing Ambedkar's insistence that "we also made history" (Pawar and Moon 183). Writing, documentation, and testimony become forms of healing, ensuring trauma is recorded rather than erased.

Internalized Oppression and Mental Emancipation

Ambedkar consistently, with political acuity, urged women to discard completely the "thoughts of slavery." In his 1942 address, he guided Dalit women and instructed them to shed customs such as ornate jewelry, ritual seclusion, which he saw as markers and associations of inferiority (Moon 178). He exhorted women and men to reform themselves, signaling awareness of internalized oppression. Leaders like Indirabai Patil echoed this, declaring that the task was to remove "Hindu religious thoughts of slavery from the minds of our sisters" (Pawar and Moon 181). Such statements reveal an early recognition that liberation requires psychological and material change.

In Dalit women's songs, speeches and folksy utterances converted grief into strength and these folk songs surely lamented on the conditions but pledged loyalty to Ambedkar, embodying the Audre Lordesque notion of anger as a resource for radical resistance. The 1942 Nagpur women's conference, attended by 25,000, exemplified this catharsis: public testimony broke the silence, transforming trauma into mobilization.

Contemporary Extensions: Healing and Art

Dalit feminists have extended and expanded Ambedkar's rationalist legacy with trauma-informed activism. Scholars frame Dalit testimonies as *testimonios*, akin to Latin American traditions of narrating oppression to heal Campaigns in Dalit Women Fight abroad created effective solidarity, breaking isolation through international recognition.

Art and literature have also become vehicles for healing. This recalls Toni Morrison's use of novels to narrativize Black trauma. Ambedkar encouraged Dalits to produce literature and journalism; though he did not speak of art therapy, Dalit feminist cultural production fulfills this vision by turning memory into empowerment.

An affective reading of Ambedkarite feminism underscores its dual character: profoundly empowering yet incomplete. Ambedkar thoroughly with his usual panache externalized this trauma into collective struggle, inspiring pride and dignity, but left untheorized the psychological afterlife of oppression. Contemporary Dalit feminists address these silences by weaving Ambedkar's rationalism with memory, testimony, and healing practices. Justice, they argue, must be both material and emotional—the right not only to jobs and education but to safety, healing, and dignity. Ambedkar's legacy thus evolves: from social democracy rooted in law to a trauma-informed feminism attentive to affect, memory, and care.

CONCLUSION: LEGACIES OF AMBEDKARITE FEMINISM AND THE HORIZONS OF CASTE-GENDER JUSTICE

Revisiting "Ambedkar and the question of women" in the 21st century reveals a remarkably forward-looking legacy and a globally resonant one. Ambedkar's feminist vision as we have seen, was multifaceted, as it encompassed the material realities of women's labor and health, the structural intersections of caste with gender and class, and – even if more implicitly – the psycho-social dimensions of dignity and self-worth. Engaging Ambedkar through ecocritical, transnational, and affect-focused frameworks has allowed us to uncover new layers and pose fresh questions. One clear finding is that Ambedkar pioneered centering the most oppressed women (Dalits) as key agents and indicators of progress. Long before "intersectionality" became a buzzword, Ambedkar had crafted an analysis and practice that treated caste, gender, and class as intricately interwined and bound by historical bondage and baggae, a contribution that comparative feminist theory is only beginning to fully acknowledge (Rege 163). The payoffs of adopting an Ambedkarite approach in feminist discourse are significant. It challenges any feminism that remains blind to caste (or analogous hierarchies) and insists on a truly inclusive liberation politics. It also provides rich historical lessons: for instance, the Dalit women's campaigns under Ambedkar's leadership illustrate how grassroots women's organizing can flourish in tandem with a male ally/leader – a model of feminist male mentorship or allyship that is uncommon but valuable (Pawar and Moon 178). Ambedkar did not speak for women in a vacuum; he nurtured women leaders, incorporated their voices, and indeed, the post-Ambedkar Dalit feminist movement "made history" precisely by claiming his legacy as their own (Pawar and Moon 183).

By situating Ambedkar in global conversations, we also glean the unique tools his thought offers. Ambedkarite feminism's emphasis on law and social structure complements feminist cultural theory: it reminds us that cultural change may flounder without concrete rights and representation. Ambedkarr drafted laws (like the Hindu Code Bill) decades ahead of their time to recognize women as equal individuals under the law (Ambedkar, *On the Hindu Code Bill* 133). His frustration at the shelving of the Hindu Code Bill, which he himself considered a litmus test of India's commitment to gender equality, underscores a lesson still salient today: legal frameworks matter for women's freedom, and resistance to legal equality often hides under cultural or religious arguments (Ambedkar, *On the Hindu Code Bill* 135). Ambedkar's approach offers a robust secular feminist politics, rooted in the idea of conmorality, that can engage dialogues about religion, personal law, and women's rights not only in Indin India but also applying with multiculturalism and gender justice.

Conversely, examining and analysis Ambedkar's thought through the lenses of ecocriticism and trauma also highlights certain limits or areas of underdevelopment in his approach, which current and future scholars can address. Ambedkar was a modernist rationalist; thus, some eco-spiritual or eco-centric feminist insights (like valuing the environment for its own sake, or integrating indigenous ecological knowledge) are absent in his writing (Faiad 125). This could limit the application of Ambedkarite thought to contemporary issues like climate justice, unless we creatively extend his principles of justice to non-human contexts. Similarly, the affective gap – the lack of direct discourse on healing trauma – means that an Ambedkarite framework might initially seem to underplay the intimate personal realm. However, as argued, this gap is now being bridged by Dalit feminist praxis that remains Ambedkarite. One might say Ambedkar planted seeds of agency, self-respect, and community that are now blooming as therapeutic and cultural expressions among Dalit women.

The ongoing debates about caste, gender, feminist futures in India often orbit and are

circumscribed around a central question, which can be articulate as 'can mainstream Indian feminism shed its savarna (upper-caste) bias and truly embrace the anti-caste agenda as feminist per se?' Ambedkar's work makes the answer clear: it must. Any feminism that does not fight caste is, in his own words, building a palace on dung – superficially attractive but rotten at base (Ambedkar, *On the Hindu Code Bill* 136). The rise of Dalit feminism(s) as an autonomous and agentic movement since the 1990s (with slogans like "Dalit women's assertion is Dalit community's assertion") with the the increasing visibility of Dalit women in academia, literature, and politics (e.g., the election of Dalit women like Mayawati as leaders) indicate that Ambedkar's ideals are being carried forward (Guru 254). However, caste patriarchy is far from annihilated, sexual violence, labor discrimination, and social exclusion persist in new forms, sometimes exacerbated by neoliberal economics (Teltumbde 77). The frameworks used in this paper suggest that a comprehensive approach, one that includes environmental justice (for livelihoods and health), legal-institutional reform, transnational solidarity, and healing justice – is needed for the feminist future Ambedkar envisaged.

Finally, Ambedkarite feminism offers a hopeful vision for feminist futures beyond caste. Ambedkar did not just aim for incremental reform; he dreamed of a society where caste and gender hierarchies would be completely obliterated, replaced by what he often called "liberty, equality, fraternity" as a way of life (Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 1, 15). In one of his speeches, he warned that India had achieved only political democracy, not social democracy, and that liberty would be in peril without equality and fraternity (Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 17, 320). This warning rings true today globally, where we see formal legal equalities that mask deep social inequalities. Ambedkar's solution then was moral as well as radical: "Educate, Agitate, Organize": educate to overcome the conditioned mindset of inferiority/superiority, agitate to claim rights and disrupt unjust norms, and organize to build new communities of resistance and belonging (Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 17, 322). Dalit women have exemplified this motto, turning their experiences into knowledge (educating others about caste gender issues), turning their pain into protest (agitating through campaigns and art), and turning their marginalization into solidarity (organizing collectives and transnational networks).

In a way, it can be argued that, Ambedkarite feminism, as it has evolved, provides a prototype for intersectional feminist movements elsewhere. It shows how to keep the most marginalized at the center, how to blend materialist politics with identity affirmation, and how to sustain a movement across generations through memory and cultural renewal. The transnational context, whether comparing Dalit women with Black women, or caste with race, indicates that Ambedkar's insights can travel and inform broader theories of oppression and liberation. Scholars are now exploring, for example, how the idea of "graded inequality" (Ambedkar's term for caste hierarchy as an ascending scale of reverence and descending scale of contempt) can illuminate other social hierarchies, or how the notion of "untouchability" might parallel the treatment of certain immigrant or refugee groups globally (Teltumbde 82). These comparative inquiries keep Ambedkar's thought dynamic, and ever evolving, drawing from the roadmap he himself designed.

In closing, "Ambedkar and the question of women" is not a static topic confined to history; it is a living dialogue that extends from 20th-century India to the present and across continents. Ambedkar's feminist vision, then retrieved and reinterpreted earnestly, stands as a powerful testament to the idea that true democracy begins in the home, also in the streets, and very much so in the concern of who has water to drink and who cleans the latrines, in whose voices are heard and whose grief is acknowledged. In honestly and actively engaging with Ambedkar through novel frameworks then, we must pay homage to his legacy, equip ourselves with a richer analytical arsenal to tackle the intertwined oppressions. As

Ambedkar himself said in 1942, in words that still galvanize: "The world is changing fast. If we are to survive, we too must change with it" (Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 17, 342). The task of our generation is to carry forward the change he and his feminist compatriots began to truly ensure that the progress of our communities is measured by the progress of the women who have been left farthest behind (Kalyani 2). That, ultimately, is the emancipatory promise that Ambedkarite feminism holds for India and for the world.

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