



## **Ambedkar in Statues: An Alternative Iconology**

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### **Abstract**

Collective memories of the past are always in the process of revision, subjected as they are to the socio-political cultural forces of the present. Ambedkar's statues, their strategic locations and their proliferation suggest towards a possibility of an alternative discourse of iconology in the Indian context. The study of Ambedkar's statues in the realm of the state and the subaltern/dalit masses provides a frame of juxtapositional poetics and politics. Although Ambedkar warns his admirers against making a cult of his personality, a move that starts in his home state of Maharashtra even before his death, the statue, perhaps inevitably, becomes a tool for political mobilization after he dies. The little blue statue put in 1962, at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, of Ambedkar wearing a three-piece suit and holding the Indian constitution has since then been standing as a differing species to another statue, in bronze, of his own put in front of the Parliament by the state as a gesture of conformation to Dalit agenda, in 1966. The present paper will focus on the political capacity of this symbol for Dalits and the difference apparent in the statues of Gandhi and Ambedkar. The form, material, colour, posture and location and surroundings will form the corpus of the comparative study, leading to the unknotting of the political dilemma over the concept of nation.

**Keywords:** Ambedkar, Statue, Dalit, Iconology, Posture, Politics

### **I**

For it is obvious that historians of philosophy or sculpture are concerned with books and statues not in so far as these books and sculptures exist materially, but in so far as they have a meaning. And it is equally obvious that this meaning can only be apprehended by re-producing, and thereby, quite literally, "realizing," the thoughts that are expressed in the books and the artistic conceptions that manifest themselves in the statues. (Panofsky 14)

The statues of Ambedkar constitute a unique kind of iconopraxis<sup>1</sup> in itself. It is not surprising that in the massive work accomplished in the domain of visual culture in India, specifically around Indian political iconography, the statue of Ambedkar invites very little or no critical academic attention at all<sup>2</sup>. It is interesting to note how for the longer period after Independence the statues of Ambedkar erected in the public spaces<sup>3</sup> have been “rendered the “other” in the public” (Komath 2). The journey of an outcaste, i.e., Ambedkar, from being an untouchable to an unvisitable<sup>4</sup> to an invisible<sup>5</sup> has quite a strong expression to be ignored in the post-Independent India. It is interesting to note here on the side-lines that Ambedkar personally was against the whole idea of iconization. He, therefore, in a letter proposed a memorial in the form of a public library in memory of Sir Pherozshah Mehta, whose statue was proposed in front of Municipal office. This letter may be found instructive and guiding even to-day to the Indian people who have craze for erecting statues of illustrious personalities<sup>6</sup> (Ambedkar 218).

Post-Independent India has seen a surge in the proliferation of nationalist icons<sup>7</sup>. Along with the statues of the nationalist icons, sculpted in both metal and stone, there has been a gallery<sup>8</sup> of regional cultural-political-historical-religious icons<sup>9</sup>(Yengde 87). Hero-worship<sup>10</sup>, in Indian context, is an overwhelming emotional truth; *diversity* of all nature and *democracy* are the second and third truths. Ambedkar, in this context, writes: “God has become attached to a community, and the community had become attached to their God. God had become the God of the community and the community had become the chosen community of the God”<sup>11</sup> (15). Thus, India, essentially, is a nation of idol-worshippers. Hugo Gorringer<sup>12</sup> emphasizes the fact that hero worship is the political culture in India (332). The paper investigates the emergence of Ambedkar’s statue in public spaces, which Gopal Guru says, “...are closed and rigid (reversal of the platonic cave) and their conversion into open spaces – provide an epistemological precondition for the

successful deployment of concepts that emerge as alternatives to the one that is treated as sovereign” (80).



**Figure 1. Harsul, Maharashtra.**

The first<sup>13</sup> statue (see figure 1) of Ambedkar was erected and installed in 1960s. It is also important to mention that the followers of Ambedkar have started to raise cemented statues of Ambedkar during his life time itself. But the statues, as Tartakov shares, were not so much a result of an aesthetic pursuit rather were raised as purely symbolic and un-aesthetic marks manifesting

the reverence his followers had for him.

The paper looks into the ways and manners in which the *svarna* (implying national) and non-*svarna* (implying subaltern) iconographies contest one another. It explores how significant it is ‘to be seen’ and ‘to be visible’. It also establishes the essential place of public art in the formulation of a national pictorial discourse which ultimately depicts the essence of a particular nation in its pictoriality<sup>14</sup> and seduces the spectator into believing that public art is one way to know the history of a nation. M. Shirin Rai<sup>15</sup> states, “In a multiparty, multiethnic, religious and linguistic country like India, the politics of portraiture is a sensitive arena; it is also an arena where politics is played out as well as where it is shaped” (19). Following Rai, Tartakov also posits, “What the Dalits— as Ambedkar’s followers have called themselves most recently— discovered was that this public celebration of popular cultural heroes could be turned into yantras of political empowerment available even to those at the bottom of the social ladder” (89).

The paper discusses the variety of postures that Ambedkar's statues have come about to assume after the first statue of Ambedkar had been unveiled in 1962<sup>16</sup>. Regardless of an overwhelming presence and participation of Ambedkar in innumerable roles in Indian history or in the making of modern Indian nation, little or no notice has been paid to the close connection between the popular success of Ambedkar's icon and propagandist dissemination employed during the three stages demarcated by Kancha Illaiah in his essay "Towards the Dalitization of the Nation". The provisional tabulation of Illaiah's division is formulated in the table below. A fourth stage for a more updated and deeper understanding of the project of iconization has been consciously added after BSP's thumping victory in 2007 state legislative assembly elections in UP.

	<b>Phase</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1	Ambedkarite phase	1930-1956
2	Post -1956 Dalitist phase	1956-1990
3	Mandalization phase	1990-2007
4	Mayawati phase	2007- onwards

Here, it becomes pertinent to highlight a few questions which arise to validate the discursive exercise undertaken to investigate the trajectory of Ambedkar's icon in Indian visual culture. Why have these statues been installed? What do state, political parties and people seek to represent through such public-art? Why do they occupy the space they do? And what do they tell us about both the past and the present politico-socio-psycho- cultural status of the Dalits? Last but not the least, how do they agitate and mobilise Dalits towards *dalitization of nation*?

## II



**Figure 2.**

From being a representative of untouchables in his life time, Ambedkar, in his most recent form, has become a symbol of protest against all kinds of

oppression. The proximity of the portraits of Gandhi and Ambedkar along with other *svarna* nationalist leaders at the CAA protests (see figure 2) and the ongoing farmer's agitation however, has not been replicated in the sculpted art yet.

In other words, he is the leader of all who have “suffered together”<sup>17</sup> (Renan 1882). Dalits wish ‘to be seen’ in public and through the installation of Ambedkar’s statue in public, the visibilising democracy is empirically validated against the invisibilising caste-system. The investigation leads to an inference that statue is a component of public art which participates in the processes of nation building though both its materiality and symbolism. But the question arises whether the statue of Ambedkar, an untouchable, has the agency to participate in the making of the nation or not. It further establishes what Sukhdev Thorat hints at in his forward to Tartakov’s “Dalit Art and Visual Imagery”, and Tartakov himself explains regarding the practice of privileging one set of icons over the other:

I was surprised to discover how little has been written previously on the subject of India’s visual imagery in relation to the caste system... though Indian tradition has preserved a vastly extensive repertoire of brahminical visual imagery, I could recognize no obvious images of Dalit there. (158)

Major art historians are of the opinion that Ambedkar lacks both agency and the aura to be considered as a component of the

national pictorial discourse. This indifference to or exclusion of Ambedkar's icon, questions the legibility of the very [*svarna*] idea of nation itself. It is important to highlight that Indian national visual imagery is constituted by the images of the *svarna* national leaders. Ambedkar sharing the space of a poster with Jawahar Lal Nehru and Dr. Rajendra Prasad is the only instance in the history of Indian visuality. In his iconic speech "Annihilation of caste," Ambedkar writes, "As a rule, I do not like to take any part in a movement which is carried on by the Caste Hindus. Their attitude towards social reform is so different from mine that I have found it difficult to pull on with them" (27, Vol.1). Apparently, this alienation manifests itself in the space, i.e., Indian visual culture.

Precisely, the paper proposes to study Ambedkar's representations in statue genre in Indian visual culture, and how have these statues brought about the Dalitization of the nation. It also makes an inquiry into how have the varieties of socio-political and cultural spaces maneuvered the formal diversity of the statues of Ambedkar. While elucidating the features and properties of visual culture, Mirzoeff and Mitchell mark it to be more explicit, open accessible and democratic. Indian visual culture, however, contradicts it. And, the present investigation has been undertaken to disprove Mirzoeff's and Mitchell's claims regarding the nature of visual culture. Thus, it is the diverse spatiality and formality of Ambedkar's statues which visually narrate, a socio-political and cultural history contesting the *svarna* socio-political and cultural history represented by Gandhi. The paper asserts that the Ambedkar's statue, being an artefact, occupying the public space, is a part of public art. Here, it is interesting to understand that in Indian context the public sphere is constituted by the caste. Here, it is valid to mention Gopal Guru's assessment of "(in) equality in the public sphere" in India. He argues that the "inclusion of the former untouchables (now called Dalits) into constitutional arrangements has not brought about equal citizenship for this section of Indian society. It, instead, faces internal exile, because the Indian public sphere is based on mutually exclusive social

groups, and, for the Dalits, characterised by the Hindu “purity-pollution logic” (205-206).

**Figure 3. On the Madame Cama Road, Mumbai.**



Thus, it is quite pertinent to ask whether a statue of a *svarna* icon in public space will gather the same public response as a statue of someone who, already, is an untouchable. It amounts to another question whether the installation of a statue only is enough to make of an untouchable icon visible to the public. The first statue, which apparently was the first one to be created by a professional sculptor, unlike the one mentioned before as an un-aesthetic depiction, was commissioned, by the mayor of Bombay along-with Ambedkar’s second wife Dr. Savita Ambedkar, to the sculptor Mr. Brahmesh Wagh<sup>19</sup> (see figure 3). It is ironical to notice that Ambedkar’s statue stands in public spaces only as a Dalit icon not as a national icon. So, in this sense, the statue becomes a component of Dalit art and not public art. It again is ironical to know that even when the sculptor of Ambedkar’s statue is a non-Dalit it still is considered a component of “Dalit art” (Tartakov 235-237). So, it is in the body of Ambedkar, an untouchable, that Dalit-ism is embodied. It is the visible (the statue) that is untouchable which further justifies its invisibility in public spaces by being perceived as Dalit art in public spaces and not public art in public spaces. Hugo Gorringer argues, “At its most basic level it changes the look and feel of social space by introducing a Dalit figure into public space” (333). Tartakov also claims that, “Art and visual imagery is not purely an aesthetic medium rather it is an instrument for changing the world” (269).

The presumption that visual culture is more explicit, accessible and democratic is contestable. Here, it is important to understand Mirzoeff's visuality which is governed by certain complexes<sup>20</sup> and Carlyle's visuality<sup>21</sup> which is governed by idiom of hero-worship. It is this cultural idiom, hero-worship in the alleged democratic structure of Indian polity, that gets transformed into the processes of iconization. The mechanical production of icon – minus its philosophical import – merely towards achieving political objectives is the essence of the project of iconization. More so, it can be said that in the present media age icons are not born rather they are produced. The present investigation highlights an imaginative extravagance that forms the very basis of iconization. The imaginative extravagance of iconization has propelled an opposition versus the unquestionable fixity of the *svarna* nationalist iconization. Gail Omvedt, in her introduction to *Ambedkar: The Enlightened India* echoes the presence of an alternate iconographic discourse in Indian context against the national discourse that breathes of Gandhian values and ideals. Ramchandra Guha, in one of his journalistic writings published in a national daily, too communicates about the adventurous schemes suggested from various corners regarding naming India as Gandhistan to erecting a Gandhi Shikhar on the top of a hill overlooking all of Mumbai. Post-1947, the very India was replaced by Gandhian and Nehruvian ideas of India. These two ideas have componential and functional synchronicity with the *svarna* nationalist ideology.

Gradually, with the emergence of Om Parkash Valmiki and Sharan Kumar Limbale in the domain of Dalit aesthetics and autobiography, the possibilities of an alternate Dalit literature evolved in the Indian context. Along with this simultaneity in the domain of literary art, the struggle to exist and co-exist evolved in the visual culture. Consequentially, an irresistible desire for Ambedkarite brand of iconography steamed in the works and aspirations of the Dalits. The status of the Dalit iconography as delineated by Tartakov is that it is continuously emerging and consolidating itself in the form of public art

versus the *svarna* nationalist [public] art. Partha Chatterjee, in his introduction to *Wages of Freedom*, states how the dream of modern Indian nation was impregnated in the consciousness of the Indian masses. The dream was served in the Gandhian gear, i.e., *dhoti, danda, charkha*, and *panchayat* model of governance. The centrality of Gandhi in all the discourses which constitute the *svarna* nationalist ideology has been unquestionable. An online referendum<sup>23</sup> on the question of the greatest Indian after Gandhi placed Nehru at the fourth spot with Sardar Patel at third and Dr. A P J Kalam at second after Ambedkar. In one such comparison Anand Teltumbde puts forth an analogy and asserts, “What the Communist Manifesto is to the Capitalist World, Annihilation of Caste is to India” (202).

### III

The paper argues that there is a difference in the experience of Dalits and non-Dalits as they look at the statues of Ambedkar. A Dalit perceives the *sight* and *site* of statue as matter of assertion both as a *right to look* and right to stand, i.e., *holding itself in public space*. On the other hand, the non-Dalit reckons it as an intrusion. At most instances, it is this feeling of intrusion that results in the incidents like Khairlanji. Thus, Dalit visuality or Ambedkarite visuality is a disruption of the authority and violation of honour of the non-Dalits in the totality of visual culture. It can also be concluded that the non-Dalits thus assume a privilege of the ‘right to not-look’ (emphasis added) at the sight of an untouchable body and site occupied by an untouchable. The autonomy claimed by ‘the right to look’ is essentially dialectical. The right to look, thus, acts as an agency to counter-visibility, somehow supplementing or rendering to the idea of panopticon. It is apparent how the very significance of the icon of Ambedkar stands transformed into a deliberative space where different, sometimes antithetical, ideological strategies are negotiated, often simultaneously. Hence, the viability of icon [the sign] which consistently remains under surveillance and multiple variants are born giving rise to a complex of visuality or counter-visibility to the dominant visuality, which claims that the nation can or could only be seen

through the icon. By multiple variants, it is meant that there is a multiplicity of location, form and style or postures in which Ambedkar's statues stand all across. The multiplicity has created a variety of realist formats impregnated with a deep cultural politics as explicated in national identity, popular culture and everyday life.

#### IV

Figure 1 is the first full length statue of Ambedkar – with a book – erected at Harsul, Maharashtra, sculptured in concrete and cement by Ramachandra Bandu Sasamkar in 1962 (Tartakov284). Tartakov also hints at the possibility of one or two statues made in cement too-but not with a book, around 1962. The semiotic investigation of the posture of Ambedkar underlines a persona of an educated man. The materiality of the statue constituted by the cement also signifies the lack of resources which the followers of Ambedkar confronted at that moment. The book signifies the emphasis Ambedkar laid on modern education and its agency towards emancipation. The statue is perceived, as a mark of reverence and as an attempt at the memorialization of his legacy, for Ambedkar's followers. This is the world's first statue of Babasaheb Ambedkar, inaugurated on 7 December 1950.



**Figure 4: Hansi Chowk, Hisar, Haryana, 2014.**

Figure 4, shows a statue, which was erected with the efforts of the people at Hansi, a town in Haryana. The statue symbolises an attempt, by the local MLA, towards appropriating the votes of the followers of Ambedkar in the constituency. The figure is created in the conventional blue colour with Ambedkar carrying a book close to his heart establishing Ambedkar not justas a scholar but a very unique individual who

happens to be the creator of the constitution of Indian nation-state. This particular formality of the statue with a book has facilitated the process of consecration of the constitution of India for Ambedkar's followers, i.e., making the constitution of India a sacred book for his followers.

Post-1990s Ambedkar's icon gets transformed and intensified both politically and socially. During these times an experiment started with the gestures and postures of the statue. Even the material used has improved again symbolising the economic growth of those who stand represented in the statue. The Chandra Shekhar led Janata Party government announced *Bharat Ratna* for Dr. Ambedkar on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1990. The statue seems to be disseminating not merely the image of Ambedkar rather it is also disseminating the announcement which co-opts Ambedkar as a son of the Indian nation (*Bharat Ratna*). This is an acknowledgement of Ambedkar as a national leader and not merely a leader of a particular caste. It is apparent that out of all the versions of Ambedkar's statues the one with a book is the master signifier. The variations are attempted in the angle and tilt of the raised right arm and the index finger. There are versions which have distinct locations, material, and colour. The statues are not mere aesthetic artefacts. They have ideological agency as well.



**Figure 5. Ambedkar's statue erected in a village**



**Figure 6. At Tank- Bund Road, Hyderabad. in Uttar Pradesh.**

So far as the significance of location is concerned, a statue of Ambedkar in the precincts of Parliament of India is concerned; it communicates a national recognition for his philosophy. In case the statue occupies any public space such as the public road or any institution, it communicates the recognition of his services for the masses by the state. In addition, it also signifies the claiming of the public space by the marginalised sections of the society constructing not only a counter public but also a home or pilgrimage site for the followers of Ambedkar. Further, the statues of Ambedkar which are located in the local spaces manifest the reverence of people for their leader. The statues erected with the help of political parties reinforce the iconization of Ambedkar for political purposes. The statues also act as unifiers for the people who have suffered together.



**Figure 7. At the Parliament of India, New Delhi**

**Figure 8. At the Legislative Assembly, Trivandrum.**

In most of the standard official statues, Ambedkar is shown with a finger pointed towards the invisible audience in the persona of a preacher and sermonizer. It is important to note that in many statues the finger of Ambedkar is raised in the manner of Krishna's *sudarshan* finger. Such attempts merely signify the hinduisation of the Ambedkar's aura and objective. Such statues

are manifestations of Dalit's nostalgia with Hinduism (see figures 5, 6, 7, 8)

Formation of 'The all India Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation' abbreviated as *BAMCEF*, the rise of the militant *Dalit Panther* driven *Namantar Andolan*<sup>24</sup>, and the symbolic assertion and formation of 'Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti' abbreviated as DS-4 or DSSSS in 1981 led to the consolidation of Dalit political culture. The formation of BSP in 1984 and its gaining power in the state for the first time in 1993 resulted in the proliferation of Ambedkar's statues, specifically in UP indicating a conquest of public space and thus extending its visibility in Indian pictorial discourse. The post-2007 Mayawati phase saw a major transformation in the semiotics of the Ambedkar statue as public art claiming the spaces at monumental scale. Two places stand out: *Samajik Parivartan Parteek Sthal* (Ambedkar Park Memorial), Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, and *Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal and Green Garden* (National Dalit Inspiration Place and Green Garden) memorial in Noida, both in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. Some of the statues of Mayawati-phase evince a different kind of semiotics.



**Figure 9. At *Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal*, Noida, Uttar Pradesh**

The artefact (Figure 9) showing Ambedkar, his descendant as well as his wife is a family portrait intending to inculcate family values in a bid to nourish the cultural values in the hopeless depressed classes. The visual life narrative in sculpted form communicates the vital role education has towards emancipation from the dehumanizing caste oppression. The presence of his wife, Rama Bai in the artefact signifies the principle of equality Ambedkar battled for all his life. The dog, in the sculptured narrative, is an evidence of the revolt against the diktats of past which prohibited the untouchable *to possess*.



**Figure 10. At Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal, Noida, Uttar Pradesh.**

Figure 10 represents a bronze statue showing Ambedkar sitting like a *king of the ghetto* as Arundhati calls him, in her introduction to “Annihilation of Caste”. The statue intends to rebuild and rekindle the long-lost pride and self-identity of the Dalits. It is a sign of his victorious king. The political victory secured by BSP in 2007 seems to have carved out a lost homeland for the Dalits. This model imitates the Lincoln sculpture by Daniel Chester French which is installed at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC. It also signifies that BSP government looked for an international inspiration to create a new statute signifier of Ambedkar for his people.



**Figure 11. At Rashtriya Dalit Prerna Sthal, Noida, Uttar Pradesh.**

The statue with a book in his hand, raised arm, pointed finger in Figure 11 is the most specific appropriation attempted by Bahujan Samaj Party is that the icon is sculptured in bald-Buddhist style again aggressively teaching the liberation out of Hinduism. As the statue is placed at a height like a king addressing the people (*praja*) from over, making them believe in the fact that attaining the power to govern is their constitutional right and this is their motherland, their own nation. The message is that ‘We belong here’ emanating the sense of being the natives (*mulniwasi*). Also, the elephants on both the sides of the statue signify the king’s carrier. The wonderful bronze statue of Dr. Ambedkar has been visited by hundreds of thousands of people. The image shows Babasaheb Ambedkar walking with great purpose and determination emanating an outlook of a Buddhist. His kindness and wisdom are clear in his face, reminding visitors of the extraordinary life and vision of this man who brought Buddhism back to the country of its origin, i.e., India.



**Figure 12. Nanak Rao Park, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh**



**Figure 13. A Spiritual Reformer**



**Figure 14. The Dandi March Statue, New Delhi. Buddha Vihar, Gulbarga, Karnataka, India**



**Figure 15. Statues of Ambedkar and his followers**



**Figure 16. At Nagaloka Buddhist centre**

Ambedkar's stone statue, in blue *achkan*, mounted on a tall marble, with two hands resting on the walking stick without constitution which is a common sight in Ambedkar's popular imagery, was inaugurated by defence minister Jagjivan Ram who projected himself as an heir to Ambedkar's legacy despite the fact that he had been pitted by Congress after the second round table conference. This iconographic representation appropriates Ambedkar signifying his reconciliation with the Congress (though it was brief and partial), and his wisdom and respectability (old age signified by the walking stick), rather than his role as a radical leader of the depressed classes. The statue in a Nehruvian suit (*achkan*) is a constant reminder of the strategic harmony between Nehru and the Dalit crusader (see figure 10). The imitation or the visualization of both Gandhi and Ambedkar in the fashion as depicted in figures 11, 12, 13, 14 is quite comfortably a consequence of Congress party's attempt to co-opt Ambedkar; with Ambedkar portrayed in Gandhian robe and stick. A very fine balance has been maintained in appropriating through the number of followers sculpted behind him.



**Figure 17. Stalinified Image of Ambedkar<sup>27</sup>**

Communists too attempted to apply themselves to Ambedkar to initiate the mobilization of depressed castes as a class. Following this wish of appropriating Ambedkar, they visualised Ambedkar with a long Lenin over-coat (see figure 17) and dynamically moving forward but with a book in his left hand.

## V

In all these varied forms and styles, the icon performs not merely a decorative function but an ideological one. The paper has attempted to show that for Dalits, national identity is 'located' and 'experienced' solely at the renowned symbolic sites and ultimately these sites are 'Ambedkar-ed'. They converge as a political assemblage to serve democracy well in tune with state and it is at these very sites that the politics of iconization is performed and sustained. Thanks to the symbolic layering of significance, i.e., from being shown as a spiritual guide, social reformer, an intellectual political radical leader to a crusader of the depressed, the statue was turned into a highly effective tool of ideological indoctrination through the four stages. This is how Ambedkar became an inevitable element of the visual and political culture but the growth been recorded at a very 'strategic' pace. The visual ubiquity of the statues, combined with the power attached to the political and personal prestige of Ambedkar in the eyes of Dalits, contributed to the creation of a feeling of religious adoration not just towards the person, but towards the image itself, which began to express itself in the godlike nature of its referent.

As a consequence of this inevitability and success of Ambedkar's icon, it was appropriated by nearly all the political parties towards nationalist goals. It can be concluded that the varied forms of formal expressions of the Ambedkar's statues

evoke different kinds of responses: the forms erected by the followers tend to symbolise their respect, devotion and gratitude for Ambedkar, the ones erected by the politically motivated Dalits tend to symbolise their claim to the public spaces; The third kind of form, however, signifies recognition by the state that Dalits have been moving towards the centre from the margin, that they cannot be pushed out of sight and that they have turned quite capable of manifesting themselves through the icon.

#### **End Notes:**

1. See Kajri Jain's *Gods in the Times of Democracy*.
2. Prominent Indian semioticians and visual critics have worked on the subject of the cultural and political efficacy of the statues in India. Ambedkar's statue could not find a single mention in most of the critical scholarship accomplished in India from Pinney to Brosius etc.
3. Public space in India is strictly if not overtly distributed on the basis of *varna* ideology. The spaces wherever the statues of Ambedkar were erected by the Dalits or by the state were considered as *unvisitable* spaces threatening the very purity of the *svarna*. *Unvisitable* also for the reason that post-Independence the followers of Ambedkar started celebrating Ambedkar's *jayanti* and for a long period the affair was exclusively a Dalit affair. There was very less or rather no presence or participation of any *svarna* population in these functions or gatherings etc.
4. The very practice of erecting Ambedkar statues in the public space is a multifaceted socio-political problem that, above all, is perceived as a threat to the dominant caste's hegemony in India. It is this threat that transforms the icon of Dalit pride into a symbol of clashes in India. See Rajesh Komath.
5. Despite of the visibility of Ambedkar's statues in public places their presence is ignored in the public discourse rendering it, thus, *invisible*.
6. Ambedkar Vol. 17 Part 1, pp. 218.
7. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru Subhash Chandra Bose, Sardar Patel, Bhagat Singh etc.

8. Sunil Khilnani in his book *The Idea of India* says about Indian nationalism: "... its diversity was emblematically incarnated in the gallery of characters who constituted the national pantheon, a pantheon whose unageing, cherub-like faces are still on display, painted with garish affection on calendars and posters or moulded into just recognizable statues and figures, in tea-shops and at cross roads across the country."
9. Shivaji, Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, Rana Pratap etc.
10. See Vol. I of *Dr. Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches* (pp. 205-242).
11. See *Philosophy of Hinduism* in Vol.III of *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*.
12. Hugo Gorringe's article "Ambedkar Icon: Whys and Wherefores" in *The Radical in Ambedkar: Critical Reflections*, edited by Suraj Yengde and Anand Teltumbde.
13. See G. M. Tartakov's Introduction to *Dalit Art and Visual Imagery*.
14. Pictoriality – is the sum total of the visual material - replaceable with the term visuality.
15. See Shirin M. Rai "Political Aesthetics of the Nation: Post/Colonial Architecture and Art in the Indian Parliament".
16. See Tartakov's *Dalit Art and Visual Imagery*, p. 90.
17. See Ernest Renan's *What is a Nation? and other Political Writings*
18. The modern citizen of India would not or could not believe as concretely as they do that Dr. Ambedkar walked this land and played the central role in constructing its modern constitution, if Brahmesh V. Wagh had not recorded his likeness as a finely in that image beside the oval maidan in Mumbai, that has been reproduced, or archived, so many times over the years. pp. 284 in Tartakov's *Dalit Art and Visual Imagery* (2012).
19. See p. 481 in Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "The Right to Look."
20. See Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, p.3.
21. The idea of a 'Dalit literature' emerged in the 1950s, but it was not until the founding of the Dalit Panthers in 1972 (a militant and revolutionary political formation inspired by the rise of the

- Black Panthers in the United States in the 1960s) that Dalit literature became a force to reckon with.
22. See <http://prabuddha.us/index.php/pjse/article/download/14/10/>
  23. See [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bust\\_of\\_Dr.\\_Babasaheb\\_Ambedkar\\_at\\_Bindu\\_Chowk\\_in\\_Kolhapur.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bust_of_Dr._Babasaheb_Ambedkar_at_Bindu_Chowk_in_Kolhapur.jpg)
  24. West Bengal Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi with Justice Shyamal Sen offering tribute at the statue of Baba Saheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on the occasion of his `Mahaparinirvan Diwas` in Kolkata on Dec. 6, 2014. Photo clicked by Anant Kuntal/IANS

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