

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Buddhist Spiritual Pilgrimage: The Untold Cultural Study

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Abstract

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Pilgrimage is the center of Buddhist Doctrine. Walking on an outer pilgrimage also reflects an inner pilgrimage; it brings out a new identity and connects through the Buddhist doctrine. Dr. Ambedkar completed the Spiritual Pilgrimage one week before his death, as said by Buddha in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, clearly showing how important pilgrimage is, and it connects with an important chapter in the revival of the Buddhist Culture of India. Here, the missing link of Dr. Ambedkar being unwell, still with the zeal, compassion, mindfulness, and energy, completed the spiritual journey at four major places associated with the Life of Buddha, which has not been known by followers and admirers on a larger scale in the present generation. This incredible and transformative journey is highlighted in this study. The methodology used in this research is based on Pali Literature and Travelogue details, which define the importance of Buddhist pilgrimage. The exclusive result is to walk on the path of the Buddha prescribed through his teachings by taking a lifetime initiative to attend the mindful pilgrimage, which leads to spiritual self-development and self-actualization. Through this Cultural Study, more people who have faith in Dr. Ambedkar's contribution will walk on the path and get connected to the teachings of Buddha. Such a pristine and transforming Pilgrimage by an esteemed personality who has uplifted the masses carries history along with him, which needs to be re-understood with the help of Pāli literature and Buddhist Culture.

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Introduction

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar was one of the greatest Indians of the 20th century, and of his many achievements, his role in revitalizing Buddhism in India is perhaps the greatest of these. In what follows, I will focus on the sacred pilgrimage he took to most of the places associated with the Buddha's career, only a matter of weeks before his death. Ambedkar's pilgrimage began on the 20th of November after his participation in the Fourth International Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists held at Kathmandu, organized by Mahendra Vir Vikram Sahdeo, the King of Nepal, between the 14th and the 20th of November 1956. During the Conference, the acclaimed scholar Maha Pandit Rahul Sankrityayan praised Ambedkar by saying, "I have met the greatest person of Modern Universal Society." Others who accompanied Ambedkar in this pilgrimage were his wife, Mrs. Savita Ambedkar, Prof Manohar Bhikaji Chitnis, a co-founder and the first Principal of Milind College, Aurangabad, and Shri Balavantha Hanamantarao Varale, a close associate of Ambedkar and later a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the then Bombay Karnataka Constituency.

In this research, the entire Pilgrimage documentation is taken through the travelogue or a diary, which was a profound chapter to understand Dr Ambedkar's pilgrimage, considered a cultural part of Buddhist doctrine. The results will be highlighted through each day of their pilgrimage accordingly. The gap is to find why many authors have not given importance to Dr Ambedkar's pilgrimage in modern history, who was the backbone for the revival of Buddhism in India on a larger scale, which took place at Nagpur. The objective of this research is to know that everyone in their lifetime has to attend the pilgrimage for a blissful and spiritual development in life. Here, the questions will be answered why, what, and for whom Dr Ambedkar's message is to walk on the pilgrimage.

Although Ambedkar's intellectual and political contributions have been extensively studied, his pilgrimage remains relatively absent in contemporary academic discourse. Existing literature, including the writings of Balavantha Hanmantrao Varale and Savita Ambedkar, provides only fragmented and personal recollections that lack systematic reconstruction. Similarly, while *The Buddha and His Dhamma* has been studied as a philosophical and reformist text, little attention has been devoted to how Ambedkar's final pilgrimage embodied the lived practice of Buddhism. This gap highlights the need for a more critical, research-based examination of the pilgrimage as an integral aspect of his religious and cultural vision.

[Balwant Hanmantrao Varale](#), in his book, wrote about the pilgrimage of Dr Ambedkar and his memories of the time he spent with them just provide a glimpse and also the day-to-day details are overlapping which has been figured out by intensive interacting and tracing the details, in short, not elaborate, through the teachings of Buddha, which is taken care of in this research.

[Dr Savita Bhimrao Ambedkar](#), wife of Dr Ambedkar also in her diary mentioned the memories of last days of Dr Ambedkar which has open the horizon of a new chapter in Indian history, here too only the memories are mentioned by the author, Here through the teachings of buddha and his emphasis on Pilgrimage is taken care by intensive research and also highlight the unique personality who turn the entire existence of Buddhist society in India. Both the diary dates overlap each other, and some details are not precisely mentioned in the entire book, where each detail had to be read and understood while writing this research in a sequential manner.

[Dr Ambedkar's](#) book *Buddha and his dhamma* is also essential for the revival of Culture, interestingly mentioning Dhamma and the life of Buddha. Here, the entire major incidents of Buddha are taken care of, and this pilgrimage helps to trace the history through the eyes of Dr Ambedkar and how they have felt in such a blissful place through this research.

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are twofold: to reconstruct Dr. Ambedkar's 1956 pilgrimage through available diaries, travelogues, and textual references; and analyze the symbolic and cultural significance of this journey in the broader framework of modern Buddhist revival. The research therefore asks: Why has Ambedkar's pilgrimage been underemphasized in historical scholarship? What role did it play in shaping his vision of Buddhism as a lived tradition? For whom was this pilgrimage intended as a message of spiritual and cultural transformation? By addressing these questions, this paper contributes to scholarship on modern Buddhism, religious revivalism, and pilgrimage studies, offering new insight into Ambedkar's role in constructing modern Buddhist identity.

Method

Here, the research method used for this paper is by emphasizing each day of their pilgrimage, connecting with the Buddha doctrine day by day, and how the reflections of the Buddha Dhamma can be seen. Re-examining and visualising the day by seeing oneself at this juncture through their intensity and determination.

The research method used for this paper is by emphasizing each day of the pilgrimage, connecting it with the Buddha's doctrine day by day, and examining how the reflections of the Buddha Dhamma can be understood. Re-examining and visualising the journey through the lens of lived experience allows the researcher to capture both the intensity and determination of Dr. Ambedkar and his companions.

In addition, this study applies a qualitative-historical approach, particularly relying on textual analysis of primary sources such as diaries and travelogues, and secondary sources including Ambedkar's *Buddha and His Dhamma*. The analysis involves thematic interpretation, where each day of the pilgrimage is examined in relation to Buddhist doctrine and cultural practice. Triangulation of sources—including Savita Ambedkar's diary, Balwant Hanmantrao Varale's accounts, and Ambedkar's own writings—ensures reliability, while chronological sequencing provides a systematic narrative framework (Carter et al., 2014).

Furthermore, a phenomenological approach is employed to capture the lived spiritual dimensions of the pilgrimage (Sørensen & Høgh-Olesen, 2023; Gharipour & Mortazavi, 2019). Methods from the geography of pilgrimage are also applied to contextualize Ambedkar's visits to sacred Buddhist sites (Sołjan & Bilska-Wodecka, 2020). Finally, interactive qualitative analysis is used to structure emerging themes from the narratives and reflections, highlighting their doctrinal and cultural significance within the broader revival of Buddhism in India (Jyotsna & Saib, 2022).

Result and Discussion

Spiritual Pilgrimage

20th November, Day 1: Mrs. Ambedkar noted in her diary: "We all proceed to Lumbini, the birthplace of Siddhattha Gotama. Twelve miles from Lumbini, a temporary airport and a runway had been constructed specifically for our convenience. After getting off the airplane, we boarded the bus towards the Lumbini Mahamaya temple." The dusty road hampered Dr Ambedkar's already poor health, the road being in a very poor state at that time. When the party arrived, they were all taken to a nearby newly constructed guest house, where they rested and had a cup of tea. The first site they visited was the Mahamaya temple, marking the place where Prince Siddhattha (Bodhisattva) was born. Inside the temple is a much-worn nativity sculpture and marker stone depicting the actual birth, and on seeing it, Ambedkar put his hands in a gesture of reverence and did the five-point bow (*panchag pranam*).

Then he sat for a while in meditative posture, with mindfulness, feeling relaxed and composed in such a spiritual place where the 'Light of Asia' had been born. From there, the party moved to the magnificent pillar erected by Emperor Asoka 2500 years ago, and read on its inscribed polished surface: Here the Buddha Sakyamuni was born (*Hida-Budhe-jate Sakyamuni-ti*). Ambedkar approached the pillar purposefully and mindfully, then embraced it as if he and Emperor Asoka were two close friends meeting after centuries; fellow travellers, *kalyāṇamittas*, on the journey of Dhamma. Then he sat down, leaning his head

against the pillar, his heart so overwhelmed that tears trickled down his cheeks. He contemplated how Asoka had ushered in a golden age throughout India and hoped that such glory days would return with the rebirth of the Buddha's Dhamma in the land of Bharat. Dr. Ambedkar and his party spent around two hours exploring the magnificent Lumbini Buddhist Site, which is now a UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site. In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, the Buddha encouraged his disciples to visit at least the four places where the key events in his life occurred. To this he added a promise: And whosoever, Ānanda,

Buddha advised pious disciples to visit the Four Places, the sight of which will inspire faith (Saddhā) and religious urgency (saṃvega) after He was gone. LUMBINI: "Here the Tathagata was born! BODHGAYA: "Here the Tathagata attained the unexcelled Supreme Enlightenment! SARNATH: "Here the Tathagata set rolling the Wheel of Dhamma! KUSINARA: "Here the Tathagata passed away into Parinibbana. "And whosoever, Ananda, should die on such a pilgrimage, with his heart established in faith, he at the breaking up of the body, after death, will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness." Mahāparinibbana Sutta V, 16.

It is clear that Dr. Ambedkar had decided to take the Buddha's advice and that he believed the Buddha's promise, once in a lifetime, to walk in the footprints, to accumulate lots of merits through this pilgrimage.

21st November, Day 2: At 10.00 am, the party flew from Kathmandu to Patna, and from there they planned to take the train to Gaya. However, the train was three hours late, and so they were able to accept an invitation from Shri Ranganath Ramachandra Diwakar, then Governor of Bihar at Raj Bhavan, to share a home-cooked lunch with him. At 2 pm, they finally boarded the train and arrived in Gaya at 7 pm, where they were accommodated by Divisional Engineer Rathod working in the Power and Works Department allotted a stay in the VIP guest house, and we all had a good night's rest. Has it been too cold during the winter season at night? Dr Ambedkar requested and accompanied all of them to sleep in their room so that no one would be affected by the severe cold by sleeping outside on a chilly winter night. This shows a sense of caring and compassion towards its subordinates.

22nd November, Day 3: After an early morning bath and breakfast, Ambedkar and his companions hired a car to take them to Bodh Gaya, a distance of about seventy miles. As soon as they arrived, they went straight to the magnificent and holiest Mahabodhi Temple, built over the very place where Siddhattha was sitting when he attained complete Enlightenment (*Sambodhi*). On entering the temple's inner sanctum, Dr. Ambedkar knelt on his knees and, with deep faith, did a five-point prostration in front of the beautiful Buddha Statue in the shrine, and as had happened at Lumbini, his eyes filled with tears of reverence and joy (*saṃvega* and *pasada*) as he chanted some Pali verses.

After this, the party walked around looking at the other historical monuments in the area, made paper imprints from the footprint stones (*srīpāda*), took photographs, and collected leaves of the Bodhi Tree, which were stamped with the words "*Buddham Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi. Dhammam Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi. Sangham Saraṇaṃ Gacchāmi.*" They also purchased a necklace of shells from the wide and sandy *Neranjara* River. Later, they visited the Chinese temple and the Tibetan monastery, and were fascinated by both monasteries and moved by the way different cultures expressed their devotion towards the Buddha in their particular style, and adhered to the teachings of Buddha in their own unique ways. The religious cultural practice is a bond that unites everyone together through the principal teachings of

Buddha. This was witnessed by Ambedkar throughout their stay at Bodh Gaya, and so most of the conversations were about the revival of Buddha's Dhamma.

After returning to Gaya, the party departed for Banaras for the next leg of their pilgrimage. At 6 pm, the party arrived at Banaras railway station to find that a huge and enthusiastic crowd had assembled to see and warmly and anticipatively welcome their beloved hero, the torch bearer, the teacher and guide on the Buddha's path; Dr. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. Later, the party had dinner and retired to the State Bungalow for a good night's rest, which was arranged by the socialist members of the Independent Labour Party.

23rd November, Day 4: After waking up early in the morning and having a quick breakfast, the party left for *Sārnāth*, the place where the Buddha proclaimed the Dhamma for the first time. They were welcomed by Bhante Matiwela. Sangharatana, the Sri Lankan monk who had managed the Mahabodhi Society in Sārnāth for several decades. Bhante Sangharatana and Dr. Ambedkar had met before, and, years earlier, when he had announced that he was going to renounce Hinduism, Bhante Sangharatana had sent him a large number of books on various topics related to Buddhism. The monks at Sarnath had arranged a full program for Ambedkar and his party. First, they visited the *Mulagandhakuti Vihāra* and marvelled at its beautiful paintings depicting events in the Buddha's life. Then it was off to see Emperor Asoka's pillar, the ancient Mulagandhakuti, the Deer Park (*Migadāya*) with its deer, the Dhammek Stupa and Chaukandi Stupa, Maha Bodhi College, and the ayurvedic dispensary. In the afternoon, and indeed the next day also, Ambedkar and his wife spent time walking through the peaceful and well-maintained gardens laid out amongst the ruins.

During the same day, Ambedkar's slowly deteriorating health became more apparent when he had difficulties walking. Bhante Sangharatna very kindly offered them the wheelchair of Anagarika Dharmapala had used when he was old. This chair was kept in the museum, where it was venerated and had never been used by anyone except Dharmapala. In being permitted to use the wheelchair, it was as if one Bodhisattva (Anagarika Dharmapala) was handing over the baton to another Bodhisattva (Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar), which he had diligently accomplished by leading his people towards the Refuge in Triple Gems, the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha through a mass conversion Deeksha at Nagpur. Now being mobile, Ambedkar was able to visit the Sārnāth Archaeological Museum with all its sculptural treasures. He gazed in amazement at Emperor Asoka's majestic lion capital, which had become the national symbol of the reborn India, the country he had written the constitution. It must have been deeply moving for him to see the beautifully polished National Emblem of Bharat, its four lions proclaiming the Dhamma in the four directions.

24th November, Day 5: Rising early before it gets too hot, the party visited the Chinese temple, then drove into Banaras, where they did some shopping and then visited the Kashi Vishwanath temple and the Ganga ghat, and then took a boat ride down the river. Ambedkar commented on how dirty the riverbank was and how polluted the water appeared to be. He contemplated how the pristine environment of ancient times had been spoiled as the population and the cities had grown.

Benares, which was once the purest place for all rishis that is why it has a continuous history because of this sacred Ganga River; it needs to be restored, the thought which has now come to light in the form of the Namami Ganga initiative taken by the government of India. After the visit, the party returned to Sarnath to have a peaceful rest within the blissful place of the deer park.

25th November, Day 6: Dr Ambedkar was invited for an inauguration at 10 am at Kashi University, now known as Banaras Hindu University, where he delivered his speech highlighting that the impartial academic students and teachers of ancient India would find that there were two major conflicts before the advent of the Buddha. The first conflict was between the Aryans and the Nagas, and the second was between the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. And later that evening he addressed the gathering through a Special speech at Sārnāth near the Dhammek Stupa in an open courtyard, where thousands of lamps filled with yak butter were lit around the premises by Tibetan worshippers including lamas who had made a wish of 100 or 200 lamps to light for peace and harmony, reflecting as Buddha enlightening his disciples to walk on the path of Dhamma; People responded as Bodhisattva to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, all were coming near and paying respect to Dr. Babasaheb by giving Khata a traditional ceremonial scarf widely used by the Himalayan regions for honouring or welcoming the guest. Here we can see the Dana of Doctrine to make people understand the teachings easily in their simple language so that they can adhere to and transform their lives accordingly.

In their speech Dr. Babasaheb in his heavy touch tone uttered till today in the earlier religion you all were, a mere nothing, where thrown away from the mainstream society; I tried my level best to improve it with a lot of energy and determination, but the highly Sanathan people with their dogmatic trauma opposed along with their behaviour suppressed the development of the society, I feel sorry from the bottom of my heart, seeing your state of living in this religion which doesn't give freedom to think and develop. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was taken aback by seeing the condition of the depressed or deprived class and what they had to face for many years. Here, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar informed that everyone should come together the way the teachings of Buddha emphasise: "*Caratha bhikkhave cārikam̐ bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya, lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānam̐. ādikalyāṇam̐ majjhakalyāṇam̐, pariyosānakalyāṇam̐.*" The teachings of Dhamma are beneficial in all phases of life and give a new identity to breathe, which stands for love (*Mettā*) and compassion (*karuna*).

26th November, Day 7: Early morning, the party made its way to Banaras through Babatpur airport, from where they were to take an airplane to Gorakhpur and arriving at 11 am, and then drove the 35 miles to Kusinārā, the site of the Buddha's Mahāparinibbāna. They were received by India's Deputy Defence Minister, Surjit Singh Majithia's brother name Kirpal, at the airport, who had made all the arrangements for their onward journey to Kusinārā. A fleet of cars was almost ready to travel along with them for their next site visit.

On the way towards Kusinārā, they all had breakfast in Kripal's Bungalow, and also the entire party got freshened up for the further journey, where they needed to cover the travel distance of thirty-five miles. On the way to Kusinārā, they stopped for lunch at a farmhouse, which was cooked by the host, and had a good time exploring the sugarcane fields. At their Bungalow, they had a visitor book to make a note of their visit of their journey. Finally, in the evening, we reached the site of Mahāparinibbāna. Arriving at Kusinārā, Ambedkar and his wife were met and welcomed by Venerable U Chandramani, the famous Burmese monk who, over many years, had been responsible for transforming Kusinārā from a neglected place into a vibrant centre of Buddhist activities. They had planned to stay for three days and during which time they were accommodated in the local Public Works Department Guest House bungalow.

27th November, Day 8: Perhaps Dr. Ambedkar wished to spend more time in the final footsteps place where the Buddha had passed away because he sensed that his life too was soon to end. He realised that Birth and Death go hand in hand, so do the best and accumulate merits, which will certainly help in transforming lives. With his companion in this spiritual journey, they visited firstly the Mahāparinibbāna Stupa premises, Nirvana Temple, with there is a reclining Buddha image, the only one from ancient times of the Gupta period ever found in India. Unfortunately, he had great difficulties climbing the stairs to the temple, and the ordeal caused him so much pain that he had to give it up. He was, however, able to see the Mukutbandhan Caitya or also known as Ramabhar Stupa, marking the place where the Buddha had been cremated, along with Matha Kuar Shrine, where Buddha gave his last teachings, and some of the other ruins in the adjoining area. To enter the Mahāparinibbāna temple needs to climb five steps, but Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar had tremendous and unbearable pain and couldn't climb those stairs on that particular day.

28th November, Day 9: The party visited the *Mahāparinibbāna* temple again, and this time Dr. Ambedkar, with devotion and a strong determination, an *additthana*, managed to climb the stairs leading to the temple entrance. The party tried to hold Ambedkar from both ends so that they could enter the Temple with ease. On entering and seeing the beautiful 20-foot reclining statue of the Buddha, he kneeled before it and did *panchang pranam* three times, then, with his wife beside him, he recited the *Tisarāṇa* and the *Pancha Sīla* as tears of joy and devotion flowed down his cheeks. At that moment, he and the others were completely absorbed in the Dhamma and all its aspects, *Mettā* and *karuna*, concentration and mindfulness, all that would help to build a better world for all humanity. In those moments, Dr. Ambedkar was able to put aside all his physical pain and struggles, his disappointments and accomplishments be at peace. He felt he had fulfilled his life's mission, as he was able to recollect the entire journey of his life from where to what he had achieved in this life and how much amount of zeal and energy with wisdom he had invested to revive the teachings of Buddha within his people. This entire journey of Pilgrimage had opened a new chapter in the golden history of India and shown the path to the coming generation to adapt the dhamma, which certainly transforms human behaviour and nature as a whole. At this moment, this shows the fruit of liberation was really achieved, seeing the intensity of his journey. Here it reflects the Khanti he had to wait till the end of his time to see the Buddha directly through the history of those places where once Buddha walked and preached in the land of Aisa, where he has now revived Buddhist Culture after thousands of years. The amount of pain and agony he had to go through to meet the Buddha after a long time was a turning point in the entire chapter of Indian history.

29th November, Day 10: On this day, Dr. Ambedkar visited a high school now known as Buddha Inter College run by the Majithia Singh family, where he gave a short speech to the students about education and ethics, along with felicitated students for their academic performance. He always used to say that education is the only way through which we can transform and make a place in society. The importance given to essential students is to develop wisdom of knowledge through education and lift up the life in society.

30th November, Day 11: Early Morning, while returning from Kusinārā to Gorakhpur, the whole party visited Venerable Sayadaw U Chandramani Mahasthvir's monastery. This was a wonderful opportunity for Sayadaw and Ambedkar - the teacher (*Ācariya*) and his disciple (*Antevāsika*) to meet once again; a memorable event for both great personalities who had contributed on a grand scale to the propagation and revival of Buddhism in India.

Chandramani Bhanteji, in gesture for their completing Buddhist Pilgrimage, gave them tokens of gifts such as an umbrella, a traditional Burmese fan, and a mala to Dr Ambedkar, and a single piece of peacock feather and a mala to the entire party. The weary but spiritually fulfilled pilgrims returned to Gorakhpur airport and from their air route journey towards Delhi, arriving at 6 pm at their residence.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of Ambedkar’s Pilgrimage

No	Day & Site	Activity / Event	Doctrinal / Cultural Meaning	Emergent Theme
1	Day 1 Lumbini	Prostration, meditation, embracing Asokan pillar	Samvega (spiritual urgency), pasāda (faith), continuity with Emperor Asoka	Spiritual devotion and historical continuity
2	Day 2 Patna to Gaya	Shared room with companions to protect them from cold	Karuṇā (compassion), kalyāṇamitta (spiritual friendship)	Compassionate leadership
3	Day 3 Bodh Gaya	Five-point prostration, chanting Pali verses, collecting Bodhi leaves, visiting Chinese & Tibetan temples	Encounter with Buddhist diversity, affirmation of the Triple Gem	Religious pluralism and cultural adaptability
4	Day 4–5 Sārṇāth & Varanasi	Lectures at Mulagandhakuti, acceptance of Dharmapala’s wheelchair, critique of Ganga pollution	Linking reformist legacy, critique of ritualism, concern for environment	Reformist vision and social justice
5	Day 7–9 Kusinārā	Struggled with physical pain to venerate reclining Buddha; reflection on impermanence	Anicca (impermanence), khanti (forbearance), acceptance of mortality	Mortality awareness and determination
6	Day 10–11 Gorakhpur & Return	Speech on education and ethics; symbolic gifts from Ven. U Chandramani	Paññā (wisdom), transmission of Dhamma, continuity of leadership	Education and legacy transmission

Note. Data synthesized from Savita Ambedkar’s diary, Balwant Hanmantrao Varale’s accounts, and Ambedkar’s writings, supported by secondary literature.

As shown in Table Ambedkar’s pilgrimage can be interpreted as a multidimensional journey that intertwined spiritual devotion, compassion, reformist ideals, and cultural renewal. Each site visit not only carried personal significance for Ambedkar but also embodied doctrinal principles of Buddhism such as samvega, karuṇā, and anicca. The pilgrimage thus functioned as both a spiritual practice and a cultural statement, affirming Ambedkar’s role as a modern Bodhisattva who sought to revive Buddhism in India. Furthermore, the themes that emerged spiritual devotion, compassionate leadership, religious pluralism, reformist vision, mortality awareness, and legacy transmission demonstrate how his final journey encapsulated his life’s mission: to integrate Buddhist values into the social and cultural fabric of modern India.

Thus, Ambedkar’s pilgrimage narrative is not merely a record of travel but a spiritual enactment of the Buddha’s path in modern times. His reverence at the Four Sacred Sites reflects a deep internalization of the qualities of saddhā (faith), sīla (moral discipline), and samādhi (mindfulness and meditation), which together shaped his journey into both an

outer and inner transformation. The tears shed, the mindful reflections, and the compassionate gestures throughout the pilgrimage illustrate how the experience transcended physical movement to become an embodied realization of the Dhamma.

This interpretation resonates with the understanding that a *Cetiya* is to be undertaken with mind and body united, allowing the journey to transform the pilgrim holistically. In Ambedkar's case, each step symbolized an act of faith, moral responsibility, and spiritual urgency, aligning with the *Pāramitās* such as *dāna*, *sīla*, *khanti*, *mettā*, and *bhāvanā*. The socio-political dimension of reclaiming Buddhist heritage further amplifies the pilgrimage as a historical and cultural milestone, linking personal devotion with collective transformation. By embodying these principles, Ambedkar's pilgrimage not only reconstructed a lost spiritual path for India but also revitalized the Buddhist identity of the nation. In this sense, the journey stands as a momentous act of Applied Buddhism, wherein the Dhamma is lived, enacted, and transmitted for both personal liberation and communal renewal.

The findings of this study reveal that Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's Buddhist pilgrimage cannot be reduced to a mere personal journey of devotion, but must be understood as a cultural, doctrinal, and socio-political phenomenon. By retracing his steps day by day, several thematic layers emerge which collectively shape the meaning of this pilgrimage.

1. Doctrinal Engagement and Spiritual Reflection

Each site visited by Ambedkar during his pilgrimage represented more than a geographic point; it became a medium of dialogue with the Buddha's teachings. Through phenomenological reflection, the pilgrimage days showed how Ambedkar internalized core Buddhist doctrines such as *Dukkha*, *Anicca*, and *Anatta*, translating them into his vision of a just and equal society. This layer of engagement confirms that the journey was not only about cultural revival but also a reaffirmation of doctrinal authenticity.

2. Historical Reconstruction and Cultural Continuity

Using diaries, travelogues, and primary writings, this study reconstructs the pilgrimage in a chronological sequence. This reconstruction highlights how Ambedkar's journey was part of a broader cultural revival of Buddhism in India, especially after centuries of marginalization. The pilgrimage reflects a symbolic reclaiming of Buddhist heritage by placing Ambedkar within a historical continuity that connects past, present, and future Buddhist identity.

3. Geography of Pilgrimage and Collective Identity

The spatial dimension of the pilgrimage underscores its communal and political significance. Ambedkar's visit to sacred Buddhist sites was not an isolated act but an embodied geography of faith. Each location represented a node in the construction of collective Buddhist identity, anchoring his followers to a shared sense of place, belonging, and cultural pride. The geography of pilgrimage thus transformed personal devotion into a map of collective identity formation.

4. Cultural Significance and Social Transformation

The cultural layer of the pilgrimage is reflected in its role as an untold narrative of social reform. Ambedkar's journey was a performative act that carried cultural symbolism for Dalit empowerment. By aligning his personal spiritual quest with the collective struggle of his community, the pilgrimage became a tool of resistance against caste oppression and a

pathway toward cultural emancipation.

5. Experiential Dimension and Lived Spirituality

Through phenomenological analysis, the pilgrimage emerges as a lived spiritual experience characterized by intensity, determination, and reflection. This dimension emphasizes Ambedkar's sincerity and personal commitment, demonstrating how spirituality and social justice were inseparable in his vision. The experience of pilgrimage offered not only doctrinal understanding but also a transformative energy that inspired his followers.

Conclusion

A Pilgrimage (*Cetiya-cārika*) has to be completed with one's mind and body united in the process and thereby becoming an inner and outer experience, and Ambedkar undertook his pilgrimage with this understanding, fulfilling this spiritual pilgrimage within this lifetime itself. With the nature and essential qualities of Buddha and how they had preached the Ocean of Dhamma and developed the Noble Sangha, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was impressed with each doctrine and was enthusiastic with mindfulness to walk on each footstep led by Buddha to complete this pilgrimage through faith, moral principles, meditation, patience, generosity, equanimity, veneration, and recitation of prayers.

A deep connection could be felt or seen by Ambedkar when we touched each site through physical and spiritual means. The tears that were deep within for years kept rolling out at each historical site when they connected with the Buddha deeply through their mind, as if they were interacting with the Buddha 2600 years ago. This shows a lost path for thousands of years was reconciled or reconstructed for a new sunshine amid darkness, which has been illuminated through this momentous visit. Their body language through this spiritual journey reflected the teachings of Buddha with full of compassion that could be felt; they might have forecasted something; in a state of mindfulness, a speechless emotional state of mind it is bliss to be born in India, to learn the teachings of Buddha and take refuge has a layperson to serve the Dhamma and revive the lost glory of Buddhist education and culture. That is the reason they were inclined to call has Yugpravartak, Krantikarak's decision to embrace Buddha teachings as a religion by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar at Nagpur on 14th November 1956, and imparting it to eight million or lakhs of people. Buddha's path is full of compassion toward all beings. Through this research, we see how Dr Ambedkar knowingly emphasized the Pārmitā, such as Dana, Sila, Khanti, Metta, and Bhavana in this entire spiritual pilgrimage and transformed the revival of Buddhist Culture. More research on this topic can further enhance this through opening up the untold story that needs to reach the masses about the life and struggle of Dr Ambedkar.

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