
UNIT 13 IDEAS OF NATION AND NATION - BUILDING

Structure

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13.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit would enable you to understand:

- the basic concept of a nation;
- Ambedkar's idea of a nation;
- Ambedkar's schemes for nation-building; and
- Ambedkar's views on how to keep our nation safe in future.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will discuss about the concept and idea of nation, Ambedkar vision for nation building. A nation is a large group or collective of people with common characteristics attributed to them, including language, traditions, mores (customs), habitus (habits), and ethnicity. A nation is more impersonal, abstract, and overtly political. It is a cultural-political community that has become conscious of its autonomy, unity, and particular interests (Anthony D. Smith 1991: 17). According to Harper Douglas, the word nation came to English from the Old French word *nacion*, which in turn originates from the Latin word *natio* literally meaning "birth". In other words, nation as a new social formation is characterised by a consciousness of unity and fraternity leading to increased, intensified but also non-discriminate social exchange (G Aloysius 2009: 6). This chapter attempts to understand and analyse B. R. Ambedkar's thoughts and philosophy about notion of nation and nation building. The paper also includes Ambedkar's views on how to keep our nation safe in future.

13.2 IDEAS OF NATION AND AMBEDKAR

Is India a Nation?

Ambedkar did not accept that India was a nation; rather it was nation in the making. He made this fact very clear in 1930s during his conflict with Mohandas

Karamchand Gandhi. According to Ambedkar, “The Anglo-Indians were never tired of proclaiming that India was not a nation.” (Ambedkar 1990: 29). It is true that the colonial administrators did not view the Indian subcontinent as one nation. Strachey (1888:5) wrote, “...there is not and never was an India...no Indian nation, no people of India.” In the same vein, Sheeley (1883: 255) commented, ‘India is ... only a geographical expression like Europe or Africa. It does not make the territory of a nation and a language, but the territory of many nations and languages’ (both Strachey and Sheeley as quoted in Oommen 2000: 1). Ambedkar also opined that even Rabindranath Tagore, the national poet of Bengal, also agreed that India was not a nation (Ambedkar 1990: 29). That is why he emphasized that, “First of all there is no nation of Indians in real sense of the word. The nation does not exist, it is to be created, and I think it will be admitted that the suppression of a distinct and a separate community is not the method of creating a nation” (Ambedkar 1991: 412).

Again while speaking on the 26th November 1949 when the Constituent Assembly was going to pass the Constitution of independent India, he argued, “[in the past] politically- minded Indian resented the expression “the people of India.” They preferred the expression “the Indian nation”, I am of opinion that in believing that we are a nation, we are cherishing a great delusion” (Ambedkar 1994: 1216).

Why is India not a Nation?

According to Ambedkar, “How can people divided into several thousands of castes be a nation? The castes are anti-national. In the first place, because they bring about separation in social life. They are anti-national also because they generate jealousy and antipathy between caste and caste” (Ambedkar 1994). Moreover, “There is an utter lack among the Hindus of what the sociologists call “consciousness of kind”. There is no Hindu consciousness of kind. In every Hindu the consciousness that exists is the consciousness of his caste. That is the reason why the Hindus cannot be said to form a society or a nation...” (Ambedkar 1979: 50-51).

Apart from fraternity within Hindus, Ambedkar also highlighted whether, “...there are enough affinities between Hindus and Muslims to constitute them into a nation...” (Ambedkar 1990: 31). Ambedkar asked,

Are there any common historical antecedents which Hindus and Muslims can be said to share together as matter of pride or as matters of sorrow...so far they have been just two armed battalions warring against each other. There was no common cycle of participation for a common achievement. Their past is a past of mutual destruction – a past of mutual animosity, both in political as well as in religious fields” (Ambedkar 1990: 35).

Ambedkar emphasised, while Hindus revere Prthiviraj Chauhan, Rana Pratap, Shivaji in history, the Muslims revere the likes of Mohammed Bin Qasim and Aurangzeb. In religious field argued he, “...the Hindus draw their inspiration from the Ramayan, the Mahabharat, and Geeta. The Musalmans...derive their inspiration from Quran and Hadis” (Ambedkar 1990: 36).

Therefore he suggested that “we must overcome all these difficulties if we wish to become a nation in reality. For fraternity can be a fact only when there is a nation” (Ambedkar 1994: 1216-7).

Having discussed India was not and why was India not a nation let us see how did Ambedkar define Nation? Ambedkar argued that race, language and country do not suffice to create a nation. Quoting Renan, Ambedkar argued that:

A nation is a living soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute the soul, this spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other in the present. One is the common possession of a rich heritage of memories; the other is the actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to preserve worthily the undivided inheritance which has been handed down... (Ambedkar 1990: 35).

Further Ambedkar continues:

The nation, like the individual, is the outcome of a long past of efforts, and sacrifices, and devotion... A heroic past, great men, glory,... these form the social capital, upon which a national idea may be founded. To have common glories in the past, a common will in the present: to have done great things together, to will to do the like again, – such are the essential conditions for the making of a people ...In the pastan inheritance of glory and regrets to be shared, in the future a like ideal to be realized; to have suffered, and rejoiced, and hoped together; all these things are worth more than custom houses in common, and frontiers in accordance with strategically ideas; all these can be understood in spite of diversities of race and language... for indeed, suffering in common is a greater bond of union than joy. As regards national memories, mourning's are worth more than triumphs; for they impose duties, they demand common effort. (Ambedkar 1990: 35).

Ambedkar and Nationality

Ambedkar also explained the meaning and function of nationality:

Nationality is a social feeling. It is feelings of a corporate sentiment of oneness which makes those who are charged with it feel that they are kith and kin. This national feeling is a double-edged feeling. It is at once a feeling of fellowship for one's own kith and kin and an anti-feeling for those who are not one's own kith and kin. It is a feeling of "Consciousness of kind" which on the one hand binds together those who have it, so strongly that it overrides all differences arising out of economic conflict or social gradation and, on the other, severs them from those who are not of their kind. It is a longing not to belong to any other group. This is the essence of what is called a nationality and national feeling (Ambedkar 1990:31).

13.3 AMBEDKAR'S SCHEME OF NATION - BUILDING

We will now analyse Ambedkar's scheme of nation-building. We can highlight three aspects of it.

At the outset, the realization of the fact that India was not a nation can be called as the first step towards nation building. According to him, "The sooner we realize that we are not as yet a nation...we shall realize the necessity of becoming a nation and seriously think ways and means of realizing the goal" (Ambedkar 1994: 1217).

Taking a clue from Renan who had sighted the case of the union of Northern and Southern France after a struggle of nearly a hundred years, Ambedkar emphasized forgetfulness as a second factor in the creation of a nation (Ambedkar 1990:36). Therefore via Renan he concluded that, “the essence of the nation is, that all its individuals should have things in common; and also that all of them should hold many things in oblivion” (Ambedkar 1990: 37).

The third aspect of Ambedkar’s scheme of nation building was establishing rights of the three subjugated groups, namely Dalits or ex-untouchables, Muslims and Hindu women.

Although Ambedkar realized that equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice for every citizen were necessary conditions for building a nation, however he emphasised that, “Philosophically it may be possible to consider a nation as a unit but sociologically it cannot but be regarded as consisting of many classes and the ...nation if it is to be a reality must vouchsafe that the freedom of the different classes comprised in it, particularly those who are treated as servile classes”. (Ambedkar 1991: 201-2) It is in this context Ambedkar considered ex-untouchables (Dalits), Backward Classes, Muslims and Hindu women as the most servile groups which needed special attention in the process of nation building.

Nation-building and the Question of Self-representation of Deprived Sections

Ambedkar wanted self-representation for the ex-untouchables (Dalits) in the government, cabinet, bureaucracy etc. Defining its importance, Ambedkar opined in his written statement given to the Southborough Committee on franchise in 1919. Ambedkar (1979: 247) argued that:

As the government is the most important field for the exercise of individual capacities, it is in the interest of the people that no person as such should be denied the opportunity of actively participating in the process of government. That is to say popular government is not only government for the people but by the people. To express the same in a different way, representation of opinions by itself is not sufficient to constitute popular government. To cover its true meaning it requires personal representation as well (Ambedkar 1979: 247).

Inclusion of Dalits and Backwards in Different Institutions of Governance

Ambedkar went on to support the representation of ex-untouchables (Dalits), non- Brahmins including Muslims, in the administration by nomination rather than competition. He did so because he knew that to some, “administration appears to be nothing more than the process of applying law as enacted by the legislative” (ibid). However, according to Ambedkar, “Administration in modern times involves far more than the scrutiny of statutes for the sake of knowing the regulations of the state. Often under the pressure of time or for convenience a government department is now-a-days entrusted with wide powers of rulemaking” (ibid). Further, he argued that,

It must be accepted as beyond dispute that such wide powers of rule-making affecting the welfare of large classes of people cannot be safely left into the hands of the administrators drawn from one particular class which as a matter of fact is opposed to the rest of the population in its motives and interests,

(which) does not sympathize with the living forces operating in them, is not charged with their wants, pains, cravings and desires and is inimical to their aspirations (ibid).

Over-dominance of the Brahmins and allied castes in the public services was another reason because of which Ambedkar asked for representation of ex-untouchables, Mohammedans and non-Brahmins via nomination rather than competition. According to him people who insist on appointment with competition, "...presuppose that the educational system of the state is sufficiently democratic and is such that facilities for education are sufficiently widespread and sufficiently used to permit all classes from which good public servants are likely to be forthcoming to compete...This basic condition is conspicuous by its absence in India, so that to invite Backward Classes to rely upon the results of competitive examination as a means of entry into the public services is to practice delusion upon them" (Ambedkar 1982: 394-5).

Thirdly for Ambedkar, self-representation of ex-untouchables (Dalits), non-Brahmins and Muslims in the administration was also a moral issue. Ambedkar quoted Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who had stated that because of exclusion of Indians from British public services in India,

"A kind of dwarfing or stunting of the Indian race is going on ...The upward impulse...is denied to us. The full height to which our manhood is capable of rising can never be reached by us under the present system. The moral elevation which every self-governing people feel cannot be felt by us. Our administrative and military talent must gradually disappear, owing to sheer disuse," (Ambedkar 1982: 397).

Drawing a parallel, Ambedkar argued that:

Is it not open to the backward classes to allege against Brahmins and allied castes all that was alleged by the late Mr. Gokhale on behalf of Indian people against the foreign agency? Is it not open to the Depressed Classes, the non-Brahmins and the Mohammedans to say that by their exclusion from the Public Service a kind of dwarfing or stunting of their communities is going on?...they are obliged to live all ... their lives in an atmosphere of inferiority ...Can they not indignantly assert that the full height to which their manhood is capable of rising can never be reached by them under the present system? Can they not lament that the moral elevation which every self-governing people feel cannot be felt by them and that their administrative talents must disappear owing to sheer disuse...The answer to these queries cannot but be in the affirmative. If to exclude the advanced communities from entering into public service of the country was a moral wrong, the exclusion of the backward communities from the same field must be a moral wrong and if it is a moral wrong it must be righted (Ambedkar 1982: 397-8).

For inclusion of Dalits and other marginalized sections in the public services Ambedkar also highlighted that the demand for Indianisation of public services did not rest on consideration of efficient administration; rather, it was condemned as it was found to be wanting in those qualities which make for human administration. It is therefore, he pointed, "that those who clamoured for Indianisation of public services are themselves opposed to inclusion of the Depressed and Backward Classes" (Ambedkar 1982: 398).

That is why he proposed that, “A certain number of vacancies in Superior Services, Class I and Class II, and also in the Subordinate Services should every year be filled by system of nomination with pass examination ... Such nomination shall be reserved to the Depressed Classes, the Mohammedans and the Non-Brahmins in order of preference herein indicated until their numbers in the services reach a certain proportion” (Ambedkar 1982: 398). The major development of the period is attributed to Ambedkar serving as member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council. It was he who issued an office order in 1943 to reserve 8.33 per cent places in the central government services for the Depressed Classes (Dalits). In fact this order, which reserved the posts for the Dalits, specifically had replaced an earlier general order for general preference for the Dalits in their recruitment in the services (Ambedkar 1990: 475).

Necessity of Self Representation

Why at all self-representation of Untouchables was necessary? According to Ambedkar, this was necessary because of the following reasons:

- “Between two Hindus, caste-like mindedness is more powerful than the like- mindedness due their both being Hindus” (Ambedkar 1982: 249).
- He was convinced that, “they can be represented by the untouchables alone. They have distinctively their own interests and none can truly voice them...Untouchability constitutes a definite set of interests which the untouchables alone can speak for (ibid: 256)”.
- “A Government for the people, but not by the people, is sure to educate some into masters and others into subjects...To be specific, it is not enough to be electors only. It is necessary to be law-makers; otherwise who can be law-makers will be masters of those who can only be electors” (ibid: 251).

That is why along with administration, Ambedkar demanded representation of Dalits in the cabinet also. According to him,

“Just as it is necessary that the Depressed Classes should have the power to influence governmental action by seats in the Legislature so also it is desirable that the Depressed Classes should have the opportunity to frame the general policy of the Government. This they can do only if they can find a seat in the cabinet. The Depressed Classes therefore claim that in common with other minorities, their rights to be represented in the Cabinet should be recognized”(Ambedkar 1991: 51).

Nation Building and Inclusion of Muslims

In spite of the fact that the Muslim League had announced its boycott of the Constituent Assembly, when it was constituted in 1946, Ambedkar insisted on making extra effort to include Muslim League for the discussion on resolution of the Indian Constitution for the sake of nation-building. In fact he wanted to remove a particular paragraph of the resolution that could prevent Muslim League members joining the Constituent Assembly (Ambedkar 1994: 9-10). Ambedkar appealed to both the Congress and the Muslim League to give up their prejudices and come together for the destiny of the country.

It is in this context he argued that, "... Our difficulty is how to make the heterogeneous mass that we have to-day take a decision in common and march on the way which leads us to unity... therefore, I should have thought that in order to make us willing friends, in order to induce...every section in this country to take on to road it would be an act of greatest statesmanship for the majority party even to make a concession to the prejudices of people who are not prepared to march together and it is for that, that I propose to make this appeal... This is too big a question to be treated as a matter of legal rights... Let us make it possible for them to come (Ambedkar 1994: 10)...another attempt may be made to bring about a solution of the dispute between the Congress and the Muslim League. This subject is so vital, so important that I am sure it could never be decided on the mere basis of dignity of one party or the dignity of another party" (ibid).

Ambedkar emphasised, "When deciding the destinies of nations, dignities of people, dignities of leaders and dignities of parties ought to count for nothing. The destiny of the country ought to count for everything" (Ambedkar 1994: 12).

Ambedkar was of the opinion that the Congress and Muslim League conflict cannot be solved through violence or war. That is why he argued that political problems of this country cannot be solved by the method of war. But if people think like that it, "is because most of them...believe that the war ...would be a war on the British...But...if war comes in this country ...it will not be a war on the British. It will be a war on the Muslims or...probably worse, It will a war on a combination of the British and the Muslims" (Ambedkar 1994:13). Quoting Burke, Ambedkar rejected the idea of war to solve the Congress and Muslim League conflict. Therefore he argued that,

...the use of force is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment, but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again; and a nation is not governed which is perpetually to be conquered...next objection is its uncertainty. Terror is not always the effect of force and an armament is not a victory. If you do not succeed, you are without resource for, conciliation failing, force remains; but, force failing no further hope of reconciliation is left. Power and authority are sometimes bought by kindness; but they can never be begged as alms by an impoverished and defeated violence" (Ambedkar 1994:13 -14).

Therefore Ambedkar concluded, "If there is anybody who has in his mind the project of solving the Hindu-Muslim problem by force, which is another name of solving it by war, in order that the Muslims may be subjugated and made to surrender to the Constitution that might be prepared without their consent, this country would be involved in perpetually conquering them. The conquest would not be once and for ever" (Ambedkar 1994: 14).

Rights of Hindu Women

Apart from securing the rights for the Dalits, Other backward castes and Muslims in the processes of nation-building, Ambedkar envisaged to secure a dignified life and equal status for Hindu women also. He wanted to establish at least seven laws for empowering Indian women. These were the following:

- 1) Rights of inheritance and succession,
- 2) Law related to dowry,
- 3) Law for maintenance,

- 4) Law against polygamy,
- 5) Law for civil marriage,
- 6) Law for divorce,
- 7) Law for making wife's consent compulsory in adoption.

Ambedkar had mooted Hindu Code bill in Parliament with the aforesaid rights. For instance, he had mooted that, "In the order of succession to a deceased Hindu, the bill seeks to make four changes. One change is that the widow, the daughter, widow of a pre-deceased son, all are given the same rank as the son in the matter of inheritance. In addition to that, the daughter also is given a share in her father's property (Ambedkar 1995: 6). Ambedkar proposed to, "Consolidate the different categories of Stridhan into one single category of property and lays down a uniform rule of succession"(Ambedkar 1995: 7) in the Bill.

Ambedkar's Bill related to dowry stated that, "...girls who bring enormous lot of property...by way of dowry or Stridhan or gift are treated, nonetheless, with utter contempt, tyranny and oppression" (Ambedkar 1995: 8). Therefore Ambedkar introduced that, "property which is given as dowry...shall be treated as a trust property, the use of which will inure to the woman and...neither her husband nor the relations of her husband will have any interest in that property" (ibid).

Moreover, Ambedkar laid the following conditions in which a wife can claim maintenance from her husband:

- 1) If he suffers from a loathsome disease,
- 2) If he keeps a concubine,
- 3) If he is guilty of cruelty,
- 4) If he has abandoned her for two years,
- 5) If he has converted to another religion,
- 6) Any other cause justifying her living separately (Ambedkar 1995 8-9).

Ambedkar introduced the idea of civil marriage. He argued, "Marriage under this Bill will be valid irrespective of the caste or sub-caste of the parties entering into marriage" (Ambedkar 1995:9). Ambedkar introduced the provision to dismantle the sacramental status of the Hindu marriage in which it cannot be dissolved. He made it a contract by introducing the provision of divorce. Ambedkar introduced the following seven grounds for divorce:

- 1) Desertion,
- 2) Conversion to another religion,
- 3) Keeping concubine or becoming a concubine,
- 4) Incurably unsound mind,
- 5) Virulent and incurable form of leprosy,
- 6) Venereal diseases in communicable form,
- 7) Cruelty (ibid: 10).

It is pertinent to note here that the Hindu Code Bill to empower Hindu women was not passed by the then Indian Parliament and therefore Ambedkar resigned from Nehru's cabinet as the first law minister of independent India in 1951.

13.4 FUTURE OF THE INDIAN NATION

Ambedkar not only gave a scheme of nation and nation-building but he also gave five principles to keep the future of our nation safe. These were the following:

Self- Introspection by Indians

On the day when the Constitution of India was to be finally passed, Ambedkar told the

Constituent Assembly to have self- introspection. He said:

... my mind is so full of future of our country... On 26th January 1950, India will be an independent country. What would happen to her independence? Will she maintain her independence or will she lose it again?... It is not that India was never an independent country. The point is that she once lost the independence she had. Will she lose it second time?... What perturbs me greatly is the fact that not only India has once before lost her independence, but she lost it by the infidelity and treachery of some of her own people. In the invasion of Sind by Muhommed-bin- Kasim, the military commanders of King Dhar accepted bribes from the agents of Muhommed-bin-Kasim and refused to fight on the side of their King. It was Jaichand who invited Mahommed Ghori to invade India and fight against Prithvi Raj and promised him the help of himself and the Solanki kings. When Shivaji was fighting for the liberation of Hindus, the other Maratha nobleman and Rajput Kings were fighting the battle on the side of Moghul Emperors. When the British were trying to destroy the Sikh Rulers, Gulab Singh, their principal commander sat silent and did not help to save the Sikh kingdom. In 1857, when a large part of India had declared a war of independence against the British, the Sikhs stood and watched the event as silent spectators (Ambedkar 1994: 1213-14).

Besides the old dangers, Ambedkar highlighted the dangers from new enemies in the form of political parties with diverse and opposing political creeds. He asked,

Will Indians place the country above their creed or will they place creed above country? ... if the parties place creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy... What would happen to her democratic Constitution? Will she be able to maintain it or will she lose it again... It is not that India did not know what is Democracy... This democratic system India lost. Will she lose it a second time? I do not know, but ... there is danger of democracy giving place to dictatorship (Ambedkar 1994: 1215).

Adherence to Constitutional Means

Further Ambedkar's vision for maintaining democracy included adherence to constitutional means. He stated:

If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, ... The first thing... we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving

our social and economic objectives. It means we must abandon the bloody methods of revolution. It means that we must abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha. When there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving economic and social objectives, there was a great deal of justification for unconstitutional methods. But where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us (Ambedkar 1994: 1215).

Denunciation of Hero-worship

Similarly Ambedkar saw a threat to the future of democracy, and thereby to the nation, in hero-worship. That is why he emphasized, that “we must...observe the caution which John Stuart Mill has given to all who are interested in the maintenance of democracy, namely, not ‘to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institutions’ “ (Ambedkar 1994: 1215).

Ambedkar warned against bringing Bhakti into politics. He said:

There is nothing wrong in being grateful to great men who have rendered life-long services to the country. But there are limits to gratefulness. As has been well said by the Irish Patriot Daniel O’Connell, ‘no man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty’. This caution is far more necessary in the case of India than in the case of any other country, for in India, Bhakti or what may be called the path of devotion or hero-worship, plays a part in its politics unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in the politics of any other country in the world. Bhakti in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, Bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship (Ambedkar 1994:1215-16).

Establishment of Social and Economic democracy along with Political

For strengthening Indian democracy, Ambedkar believed that we should stretch our political democracy to social and economic democracy. Therefore he stated that “we must... not...be content with mere political democracy. We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well” (Ambedkar 1994: 1216). Ambedkar asked “What does social democracy mean?” And answered, “It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity” (Ambedkar 1994: 1216). He wrote:

They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality, equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. Without equality liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things... We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is complete absence of two things in Indian society. One of these is equality. On the social plane, we have in India a society based on the principle of graded inequality which means elevation for some and degradation for others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty. (Ambedkar 1994: 1216).

Therefore he stated that,

On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social economic life we will have inequality. In Politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy ...” (Ambedkar 1994: 1216-17).

Changing Government by People to Government for the People

Ambedkar has highlighted that political monopoly has not merely deprived the down- trodden of their chance of betterment, it has sapped them of what may be called the significance of life (Ambedkar 1994: 1217-18). He affirmed that:

These down-trodden classes are tired of being governed. They are impatient to govern themselves. This urge of self-realization in the down-trodden classes must not be allowed to develop into a class struggle or class war. It would lead to a division of the House... For, as has been well said by Abraham Lincoln, a house divided against it-self cannot stand very long. Therefore the sooner room is made for the realization of their aspiration, the better for the few, the better for the country, the better for the maintenance of its independence and the better for the maintenance of its democratic structure. This can only be done by the establishment of equality and fraternity in all spheres of life...Times are fast changing. People... are being moved by new ideologies. They are getting tired of government by the people. They are prepared to have Government for the people...If we wish to preserve the Constitution in which we have sought to enshrine the principle of Government of the people, for the people and by the people, let us resolve not to be tardy in the recognition of the evils that lie across our path and which induce people to prefer Government for the people to Government by the people, nor to be weak in our initiative to remove them” (Ambedkar 1994: 1218).

13.5 LET US SUM UP

Ambedkar argued that India is not a nation but a nation in the making. It was not a nation because India was divided into thousands of castes and lacked fraternity between Muslims and Hindus. India was not a nation also because Indians have denied rights to ex-untouchables, backward castes and their women. Ambedkar highlighted an alternative path of nation-building. Accordingly, he pleaded to the Indian ruling elite that a nation cannot be built without establishing the rights of every section of society which comprised it; especially rights of the erstwhile excluded groups. In this regard he called for self- representation for ex-untouchables (Dalits), other backward castes, minorities and women. Along with these Ambedkar also prescribed a five-fold path to keep the future of our nation safe:

- self-introspection by Indians,

- adherence to constitutional means,
- denunciation of hero worship in politics,
- establishment of social and economic democracy along with political democracy,
- changing government by the people to government for the people.

13.6 QUESTIONS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) Discuss Ambedkar's ideas of nation and nation-building?
- 2) How can the Indian nation be built? What are Ambedkar's schemes of nation-building?
- 3) How can the unity and integrity of the Indian nation be kept intact?
- 4) According to Ambedkar, what are the features of the Indian nation?

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