



REVOLUTION THROUGH RIGHTS: DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S VISION FOR EQUITY AND JUSTICE

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Abstract:

This paper exclusively shows the need for social justice and economic equity in India as a transformative vision of Dr B.R Ambedkar, highlighting his dream of bringing true democracy based on the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Dr. B.R Ambedkar, through his writing and speeches, initiated a social revolution through the rights for uplifting the unprivileged and marginalised communities through legal, social and economic reforms. He believed that without socio-economic empowerment, political freedom has no meaning and is hollow. He advocated 'Affirmative action' through caste dismantling, labour reforms, land distribution, and state-led economic planning to bring justice and restructure Indian society. He did not work for one community but did try to bring social justice to marginalised communities, Women, labour, Minorities and economically oppressed classes. His vision remains deeply relevant in the present day as well as in India, where incidents are taking place that are hurting social justice and equity. This paper is a review-based paper discussing his legacy and the need for action for a just and equitable society.

Keywords: *social justice, economic equity, marginalised communities*

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Introduction To Social Justice:

Social justice refers to the elimination of social inequalities within society and the assurance of equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, particularly disadvantaged and marginalised groups such as SCs, STs, OBCs, and minorities. It primarily focuses on removing socio-economic barriers that prevent certain communities from living with dignity and equality. The preamble of the Indian Constitution promises social, economic, and political justice to its citizens. In the words of D.D. Basu, "Social justice enables the state to make laws that ensure social, economic, and

political justice for the welfare of the people, especially those who have been historically oppressed. In the words of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, social justice is a 'means to establish equality among unequal people,' aiming to create a society where everyone has access to resources, education, and rights, regardless of caste, class, or gender. To ensure social justice, India implemented a reservation policy that abolished untouchability, protected minority rights, and introduced numerous welfare schemes for vulnerable communities.



Economic Equity:

Economic equity fairly refers to the distribution of wealth along with the opportunities and resources in society. It aims to remove the gap between the rich and poor and uplift marginalised communities who were denied all kinds of rights and were ruled over for years. It recognizes historical injustices and seeks to provide need-based and justice-oriented distribution, ensuring everyone has the right to lead a successful life. It is different from the term 'Economic equality', which means that everyone gets the same or equal. In India, to ensure economic equity, many steps have been taken, like land reforms and redistribution of land, reservation in public employment, poverty alleviation schemes and subsidies provided and financial inclusiveness.

In the words of DR. B.R. Ambedkar, economic equity is a must to ascertain true democracy that is supported by social and economic democracy. He quoted 'What is the use of fundamental rights to the millions who are denied bread?' (Ambedkar, 1950, Writing and speeches). Article in the Indian constitution also safeguards the interests of people, ensuring economic equity. In the words of Amartya Sen:

"Equity in economic terms implies a fair opportunity for every individual to realize their economic potential and to access resources necessary for a dignified life" (Sen, 1999, Development as Freedom, Oxford University Press)

Objectives of the study:

1. To highlight Dr B.R Ambedkar's concept of social justice for empowering the marginalised communities in India.
2. To discuss the vision of DR. B.R. Ambedkar for economic equity and its relevance today.

Reviews of Literature:

- **Keer D. (1990)** provided a detailed narrative of Dr. B.R Ambedkar's struggle with caste discrimination during his formative years and

shows how this shaped his revolutionary ideals. He discussed Babasaheb's achievements, legal career and political interventions, focusing on the concept of liberalization. This book mainly focuses on fundamental rights and liberty.

- **Iliaiah (1996)** offered a critique of caste-based Hinduism and its social hierarchy, building on Ambedkar's anti-castes framework. He mentions his thoughts on social systems and alternative cultural narratives. He also argued for 'economic justice' through redistribution and empowerment of marginalised groups. His style was provocative and direct, aiming to spark debate and reflection.
- **Sen (1999)** focused on Dr. Ambedkar and Dr. Amartya Sen's work, complementing each other. He compares the views of Babasaheb on freedom, capability and justice with Sen's view on social exclusion, poverty and inequality. He is more focused on the deprivation of people in terms of access to education, health care and economic participation, aligning with Babasaheb's demand for structural social changes.
- **Guru G. (2001)** emphasized the intellectual and emotional Dr. B.R Ambedkar and his legacy that inspired the generations. He mentioned Dalit-Bahujan scholars who combine activism and scholarship. He interprets his ideas about cultural and epistemic aspects related to justice and shows his intellectual and cultural dimensions.
- **Rodrigues, V. (2002)** analysed the speeches, writings and debates of Dr.B.R Ambedkar related to his political and philosophical views. He mentioned his views on liberty, equality, capitalism, Hindu orthodoxy and social justice. He highlighted his thoughts and relevance to contemporary democratic theory and values. He mentioned his advocacy for socialism and planned development.



- **Omvedt, G. (2004)** explored the role of Dr B.R. Ambedkar as a social and political philosopher by emphasising how he used law and education as tools to fight social discrimination. This book mentions his beliefs related to social justice through state policies. She mentioned how caste is a social evil and the steps of Babasaheb to convert to Buddhism as a modern Dalit moment. In her view, he was not a leader of the oppressed class but a global thinker for liberation.
- **Jaffrelot (2005)** analysed Dr Ambedkar's anti-caste movement and its implications on modern India. He believed that social reform must precede political reform by arguing on Babasaheb's vision of social justice over the views of nationalists. He also mentioned his confrontation with Gandhi over separate electoral and representation. He concluded that the work of Babasaheb is vital in combating institutionalized discrimination.
- **Zelliot E. (2005)** traced the journey of the Dalit movement inspired by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, she mentions a sociological and historical account of how Babasaheb mobilized Dalits through education, religion and political action. How he accepted Buddhism as a moral and social alternative to the caste system. Her study provides rich and qualitative insights into how Babasaheb's ideas took root in grassroots activism.
- **Thorat & Newman (2010)** analysed how caste continues to affect economic access and outcomes in modern India. They stressed that despite constitutional and legal protection, caste based discrimination remains deeply rooted in all sections of Indian society. Based on their empirical studies, they show the real social realities, reassuring the failure of maintaining social equity. They mentioned excluding Dalits from their rights in the private sector and asked for true democratic intervention. They also mention economic dynamism.
- **Teltumbde A (2010)** evaluated the shift in Dalit politics and activism afterwards, with more emphasis on structural change and anti-capitalist politics. He discussed his vision of social justice encompassed by electoral gains. He highlights the ideological principles of B.R. Ambedkar and reservation as the sole effective tools for social justice.
- **Rege (2013)** explored gender and caste together in her studies by bringing an intersectional lens to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's writing. She talked about Brahminical patriarchy, arguing that he was one of India's earliest thinkers against it. He mentioned women's emancipation, Dalit women's struggle and inclusive justice. Her work is a crucial understanding of his justice philosophy.
- **Kumar R (2015)** provided a detailed philosophical analysis of Ambedkar's concept of social justice within the framework of Indian political thought. He writes about Babasaheb's liberalism, socialism, and Buddhism, assessing his unique vision of justice for the marginalised section. The author ascertained his views on 'actionable justice'. Kumar helps make the reader understand Ambedkar's theoretical legacy.

Methodology of the Study:

This paper is opinion-based and qualitative. The thematic analysis is used to explain the views of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, sources from books, speeches, journal articles, and official documents authored by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The study consists of opinions from assembly debates, reports, historical records and socio-economic policies.

Importance of the Study:

This study is significant given the rising social and economic inequalities in India. This is like revisiting Ambedkar's vision, which provides a strong foundation for policymaking and social reforms. This



study highlights the interdisciplinary approach of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, combining many disciplines that offer an understanding of the Indian social system. The study reassures his philosophy that continues to inspire justice, equity and rights of marginalised sections of the society.

Discussion and Debate:

Social justice has five principles that need to be taken care of. Access, equity, participation, diversity and human rights, aiming for a fair and just society, enabling everyone to have equal treatment. For Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, social justice safeguards human dignity and is a powerful indicator of democracy. His view on social justice was not only limited to legal or political equality, but it was mainly focused on the socio-economic realism for the welfare of the oppressed caste. To ensure social justice, he demanded the complete dismantling of the caste system as he believed that caste was the root cause of all social injustice in India. In his words, *‘Caste is not just a division of labour. It is a division of labourers.’* (Annihilation of caste-1936). For him, true justice cannot exist without liberty, equality and fraternity that operate together. He recommended it for an egalitarian society. He stated that *‘Equality may be a fiction, but one must accept it as a governing principle.’* He framed the Indian Constitution to provide legal safeguards for marginalised communities in the form of reservations and, abolition of untouchability. In his words, *‘Justice has always evoked ideas of equality... rules are not ends in themselves but means to an end, the realisation of justice’* – (speech on constitution-1951). He challenged Hindu scriptures and religious sanctions of inequality. He stood against the Manu Smriti and its teachings. He stated that “Justice is simply another name for liberty, equality and fraternity. Although we have come so far, there are incidents taking place that ensure the existence of social

injustice in India. Over the past decade, India has witnessed several incidents that have significantly undermined the principles of social justice.

1. Muzaffarnagar Riots (August–September 2013)

Communal clashes erupted between Hindu Jats and Muslims following an altercation in Kawal village.

2. Delhi Riots (February 2020)

Violence broke out amid protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), leading to clashes between different communities.

3. Bhima Koregaon Violence (January 2018)

During the bicentenary celebrations of the Battle of Bhima Koregaon, violence erupted when Dalit attendees were attacked, leading to one death and several injuries.

4. Kolkata Doctor Assault and Murder (August 2024)

A 31-year-old female doctor was brutally assaulted and murdered within the premises of a medical college.

5. Cow Vigilante Violence in Haryana (December 2024)

A Muslim migrant worker, Sabir Malik, was lynched by a Hindu mob on suspicion of consuming beef.

6. Dimapur Mob Lynching (March 2015)

A mob of approximately 7,000–8,000 individuals broke into Dimapur Central Jail, dragged out Syed Sarif Uddin Khan, who was accused of rape, paraded him naked, and lynched him.

7. Palghar Mob Lynching (April 2020)

Two Hindu sadhus and their driver were lynched by a mob that suspected them of being thieves, following rumours circulating during the COVID-19 lockdown.

8. Haldwani Clashes (February 2024)

Violent clashes erupted over the demolition of a Muslim seminary and mosque deemed illegal by authorities, leading to the imposition of an



indefinite curfew and orders to shoot violators on sight.

9. Anti-Dalit Violence in Gujarat (July 2024)

Ajay Parmar, a 24-year-old Dalit man, was violently assaulted by upper-caste men for displaying a profile picture on social media featuring him wearing traditional headgear and sunglasses.

B) Economic Equity:

For Dr. Babasaheb, the core component of social justice is nothing but 'Economic equity'. According to him, economic empowerment is the base of political rights and freedom to livelihood, dignity, and equal access stands above freedom of vote only. He proposed the model of 'state socialism' in his document 'State and Minorities' in 1947, giving stress on that basic industries and agriculture must be owned and controlled by the state government to ensure economic equity and he even proposed that economic resources should be used for the benefit of all and the benefits of capitalists. He also supported land reforms and labour rights in the form of redistribution of land to eliminate economic inequality in rural areas. He looked forward to fair wages, good working conditions and social security as a priority. He stated, "The landlord is a parasite. He lives by exploitation of the Tenants. This has to end if economic equality is to be achieved"- speech in Bombay Legislative Council, 1937. He strongly criticised capitalism, especially unregulated ones, and he felt that it led to poverty more among the lower cast and wealth was concentrated in a few hands only. State intervention, he recommended for this. He stated that 'Without economic reform, political reform is a distant dream'-(Constituent Assembly Debates.). Dr Babasaheb also spoke in favour of employment and economic security as a basic human right. He suggested public sector expansion and guaranteed work. He stated that "Economic security and employment are fundamental

to individual liberty". He advocated reservations in education and jobs to help SCs, STs develop financially.

Although some efforts have been made to bring economic equity to all. Today, India's wealth is concentrated in a handful of people, and the rest all struggle for their basic needs. Economic equity in India has faced significant challenges in recent years, marked by incidents that have exacerbated economic disparities and highlighted systemic issues.

Suggestions:

1. This generation of learners should be taught the thoughts of the social, political and economic thinkers. Critical thinkers like Irawati Karve, Knacha Ilaiah, Nancy Fraser, John Rawls, and G.S. Ghurye. M. N Srinivas, Ashwin Deshpande etc.
2. Reservation should be strongly implemented in the private sector
3. Cast-sensitive UBI should be encouraged.
4. Wealth concentration should be discouraged.
5. Budge allocation for marginalized classes and minorities should be enforced.
6. Inter-caste, inter-religion, and inter-race marriages should be encouraged.

Conclusion:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar envisioned "Revolution Through Rights" as more than just a call for legal changes; it served as a plan for reshaping Indian society based on justice, equity, and dignity. His unwavering dedication to eliminating caste, uplifting the marginalized, and creating a fair socio-economic system illustrates a transformative path from subjugation to liberation. Ambedkar understood that political democracy needs to be supported by social and economic democracy—a conviction that prompted him to promote state socialism, affirmative action, labour reforms, and land redistribution. In his critical works like Annihilation of Caste and States and Minorities, Ambedkar confronted long-standing systems of inequality and



offered a radical and inclusive perspective on social justice. His legacy is still highly pertinent today, as modern India continues to experience severe infringements of social justice and increasing economic inequality. Even with constitutional protections and welfare initiatives, caste-related violence, discrimination, and economic disparities continue, necessitating a reinvigorated dedication to Ambedkar's principles.

This research emphasizes the immediate necessity to reexamine and invigorate Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy in policy-making, education, and public discussions.

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Cite This Article:

Dr. Bhoite R.H. (2025) *Revolution through Rights: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision for Equity and Justice. In Electronic International Interdisciplinary Research Journal: Vol. XIV (Number II, pp. 161–167).*

Doi- <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15564140>