



THE RELEVANCE OF DR. AMBEDKAR'S THOUGHTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT PERIOD IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's political, social, and economic thoughts have significantly shaped the framework of modern India. As the principal architect of the Constitution, he laid down principles that continue to influence national development. This paper delves into how Ambedkar's ideologies align with current development priorities such as social inclusion, participatory democracy, digital equity, and grassroots governance. The analysis underscores the relevance of his philosophy in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promoting an inclusive growth model.

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Introduction:

India's development journey in the 21st century is driven by rapid economic change, urbanization, technological advancement, and global integration. Yet, stark inequalities in caste, gender, region, and income continue to undermine inclusive growth. Revisiting Dr. Ambedkar's philosophies offers insights into reconciling development with social justice. This paper evaluates the enduring influence of Ambedkar's vision in shaping India's path toward equitable and inclusive development.

Dr. Ambedkar's Vision of an Inclusive Society:

- 1. Social Re-engineering:** Dr. Ambedkar envisioned a society free from caste-based hierarchy, rooted in **justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity**. He viewed caste as a psychological and structural barrier to national integration and development.
- 2. Contemporary Reality:** Caste-based exclusion remains entrenched in many regions, particularly in

access to education, employment, and housing. The existence of manual scavenging, limited Dalit representation in private sectors, and systemic discrimination in higher education institutions demonstrates that the dream of an inclusive society is yet unfulfilled.

Dr. Ambedkar's Emphasis on Constitutionalism:

- 1. Democracy and Rule of Law:** Ambedkar firmly believed in **constitutional morality**, where institutions, rather than individuals, wield authority. He emphasized the importance of safeguarding **fundamental rights, judicial independence, and secularism**.
- 2. Challenges Today:** Instances of mob lynching, suppression of dissent, and communal polarization have raised concerns about the erosion of constitutional values. The misuse of sedition and anti-terror laws also points to growing



authoritarianism, against which Ambedkar had warned.

Economic Democracy and Redistribution:

1. Beyond Political Democracy: For Dr. Ambedkar, political democracy was incomplete without **economic democracy**. He proposed measures like land reforms, nationalization of key industries, and strong labor rights to ensure economic redistribution.

2. Today's Inequality Crisis: India's booming economy coexists with massive wealth inequality. The rural-urban divide, agrarian distress, and growing unemployment challenge the very principles of distributive justice. Dr. Ambedkar's economic philosophy, emphasizing **state intervention, social security, and decentralization**, offers a roadmap to tackle these issues.

Relevance to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

Dr. Ambedkar's vision aligns closely with multiple UN SDGs:

- **Goal 1 (No Poverty):** Advocated for state-supported economic justice and job creation.
- **Goal 4 (Quality Education):** Promoted universal and inclusive education as a tool for empowerment.
- **Goal 5 (Gender Equality):** Fought for women's rights, including equal property rights and legal protection.
- **Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities):** Laid the foundation for affirmative action and reservations.
- **Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions):** Championed the rule of law and democratic institutions.

Digital Inclusion and the New Development Paradigm:

1. Bridging the Digital Divide: In the age of Digital India and Artificial Intelligence, access to technology determines access to opportunity. Dalits, Adivasis, and rural populations often remain at the margins of the digital economy.

2. Dr. Ambedkar's Approach: Though he lived in a pre-digital era, Ambedkar's insistence on **universal access to knowledge and technological empowerment** for the marginalized is more relevant than ever. His call for libraries, public education, and vocational training mirrors today's push for digital literacy and inclusion.

Panchayat Raj and Local Governance

1. Grassroots Empowerment: Dr. Ambedkar advocated for **decentralization** and local governance. His draft for the States and Minorities envisioned protections for backward communities through community representation and autonomy.

2. Strengthening Local Institutions

Today, Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) play a pivotal role in rural development, but often lack financial autonomy and administrative support. Reinforcing Ambedkar's decentralization framework can empower PRIs to deliver better governance and services.

Gender Justice and Ambedkar's Feminism

1. Legal Reforms for Women: Dr. Ambedkar was instrumental in pushing the **Hindu Code Bill**, which proposed groundbreaking reforms in inheritance, marriage, and property rights. Although opposed by conservatives, it laid the groundwork for modern gender laws.

2. Gender Challenges Today: India continues to face high rates of gender-based violence, child marriage, and workplace discrimination. Ambedkar's approach—legal reform combined with social transformation—is a powerful model for achieving gender equity.



Youth, Ambedkarite Thought, and Political Engagement

1. **Rise of Ambedkarite Movements:** The modern youth, especially students and marginalized communities, have increasingly turned to Ambedkar for ideological guidance. Movements such as the protests against caste discrimination in institutions (e.g., IITs, Hyderabad University) are examples of this resurgence.
2. **Education as a Tool for Political Awakening:** Dr. Ambedkar placed education at the center of empowerment. In today's context, this means not just literacy, but **critical thinking, civic awareness, and digital skills**, enabling youth to participate meaningfully in democracy and policy-making.

International Legacy and Global Human Rights:

Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts have begun to gain global recognition for their relevance to **human rights, anti-racism, and social justice**. Institutions abroad now study Ambedkar alongside civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. This internationalization further underscores his universal message of equality.

Conclusion:

India's developmental discourse is often measured in GDP growth and infrastructure. However, Dr. Ambedkar reminds us that development devoid of **dignity, justice, and inclusion** is hollow. His thoughts compel us to reimagine growth — not merely as a number but as a shared reality. As India aims for a \$5 trillion economy and global leadership, Ambedkar's legacy serves as both a caution and a compass.

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