

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Political Philosophy: A Path to Equality and Justice

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Abstract:

This study examines Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's political philosophy, particularly his views on the role of the state in safeguarding justice and equality, his advocacy for economic justice, and his contributions to global ideals of social justice. Ambedkar conceptualized the state as an essential force in addressing systemic inequalities, advocating for legal reforms, affirmative action, and state intervention in the economy to ensure justice for marginalized communities. His ideas not only transformed India's social and political landscape but also resonated with global movements for human rights, equality, and social justice, influencing struggles against racial discrimination and apartheid. The study highlights how Ambedkar's vision continues to shape contemporary discussions on social justice and human rights, both within India and internationally.

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1. Introduction:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, an intellectual powerhouse and social reformer, dedicated his life to fighting for the rights of the marginalized, particularly the Dalits. His political philosophy centered on the principles of justice, equality, and fraternity, drawing inspiration from Western political thought, particularly the works of John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx, while also deeply understanding the complexities of the Indian social structure. Ambedkar's critique of the caste system, which he regarded as the root of social inequity in India, led him to challenge not only social norms but also political and legal frameworks that perpetuated inequality. His seminal contributions to the Indian Constitution, drafted between 1947 and 1949, remain his most significant legacy, wherein he advocated for constitutional safeguards for the oppressed. In his speech at the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949, Ambedkar famously stated, "We are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics, we will have equality, and in social and economic life, we will have inequality" (Ambedkar, 1949). His emphasis on social democracy within the framework of political democracy shaped the very core of India's democratic structure.

Ambedkar's political philosophy also addressed issues of economic and social justice, which he believed were inextricably linked to political freedom. He was a firm believer in the importance of affirmative action to rectify historical injustices. In his view, political democracy without social democracy was incomplete and futile. As a result, he was a strong advocate for measures such as reservations (affirmative action) for

Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) to ensure their representation in educational institutions, government jobs, and legislatures. This advocacy found expression in Articles 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution, which prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Ambedkar's relentless fight for the rights of the underprivileged culminated in the inclusion of provisions for social justice, which were institutionalized through the Indian Constitution. The abolition of untouchability under Article 17 was one of his key achievements, enshrining the principle of equality before the law.

Ambedkar's vision of a just society was not limited to legislative reforms but extended to his criticism of existing social and religious practices that perpetuated inequalities. In his work *The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution* (1923), Ambedkar highlighted the need for economic reforms to address disparities in wealth distribution. His belief in the economic upliftment of the lower castes led him to call for a fairer distribution of land and resources, as well as the establishment of a just economic system. His advocacy for reforms extended to Hindu personal law as well, where he sought to improve the status of women through the Hindu Code Bill, which aimed at granting women property rights and the right to divorce. Though the Bill faced opposition, it marked a significant step toward gender justice in India. Ambedkar's economic ideas also manifested in his support for the nationalization of resources and industries, which he believed would enable the state to ensure equitable distribution of wealth and provide basic needs for all citizens.

Furthermore, Ambedkar's influence extended to the international arena, where his advocacy for human rights and social justice earned him recognition globally. His philosophical ideas influenced movements for social equality worldwide, from the Civil Rights Movement in the United States to the struggles for democracy and human rights in various parts of the world. Ambedkar's impact on India's political landscape, particularly through the Articles of the Constitution, was profound. The affirmative action policies he championed were instrumental in empowering marginalized groups, thereby laying the foundation for a more inclusive India. His vision of an egalitarian society, where all individuals have the opportunity to flourish irrespective of their caste, religion, or gender, remains a guiding light for social justice movements even today. Through his tireless advocacy for equality, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar truly paved the path for a more just and equitable India.

1.1. The Review of Related Literature:

Suna, S. (2025). This study provides a comparative analysis of the distributive justice frameworks of John Rawls and B.R. Ambedkar. While both scholars prioritize the creation of a "just society," the paper highlights Ambedkar's unique focus on "fraternity" as a prerequisite for social equality. The research argues that while Rawls's "Difference Principle" addresses economic disparities, Ambedkar's political philosophy is more robust in addressing systemic social hierarchies like the caste system, offering a more localized and comprehensive roadmap for achieving social justice in the Indian context.

Mathew, C. K. (2025). This work reflects on the enduring relevance of Ambedkar's constitutional vision in the face of 21st-century political upheavals. The author discusses the "self-correcting mechanisms" embedded in the Indian Constitution by the Drafting Committee led by Ambedkar. The literature emphasizes the Preamble as a "shield and torchlight" for modern protest movements, suggesting that Ambedkar's political philosophy remains a living instrument for defending secularism, socialism, and democracy against contemporary authoritarian trends.

Trivedi, H. (2025). This thesis investigates the image and legacy of Dr. Ambedkar within the context of global neoliberalism and the rise of religious nationalism. By placing Ambedkar's critique of "temporal reason" and the "philosophy of karma" in dialogue with Derrida's deconstruction, the author explores how

“Brahminical Realism” intersects with global capitalism. The literature argues that Ambedkar’s political philosophy provides a necessary alternative to “Capitalist Realism,” offering a vision of justice that transcends both local caste hierarchies and global economic structures.

Tripathi, K., et al. (2024). This article explores Ambedkar’s political and social vision through the lens of modern public health and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The authors argue that Ambedkar’s advocacy for social justice was intrinsically linked to the socioeconomic determinants of health. By examining his stances on maternity benefits and the empowerment of marginalized groups, the paper concludes that Ambedkar’s political philosophy serves as a precursor to modern “health equity” frameworks, asserting that political freedom is unsustainable without social and physical well-being.

Stroud, S. R. (2023). This literature examines the intellectual relationship between B.R. Ambedkar and his mentor, John Dewey. Stroud argues that Ambedkar did not merely adopt American pragmatism but “reconstructed” it to suit the struggle against caste-based oppression. The book illustrates how Ambedkar utilized pragmatist tools—such as the rejection of fixed ends and the emphasis on social democracy as a “mode of associated living”—to build a political philosophy that views communication and shared experience as the foundations of a democratic society.

1.2. The Research Gap:

The research gap in the context of Ambedkar’s views on the role of the state in safeguarding justice and equality, economic justice, and his alignment with global ideals of social justice and equality lies in the need for a more comprehensive exploration of how Ambedkar’s political philosophy interacts with contemporary global justice frameworks. While existing studies highlight his contributions to Indian political thought and social justice, there is limited comparative analysis that situates his ideas alongside modern international theories of justice, particularly in the context of global neoliberalism and the rise of authoritarianism. Furthermore, although much has been written about his advocacy for social and economic justice, a deeper investigation into the specific mechanisms he proposed for state intervention in the economy and their relevance to present-day global economic inequality remains underexplored. Additionally, while some studies focus on Ambedkar’s critique of caste and his role in Indian secularism, further research is needed to fully understand how his vision of the state’s role in fostering equality resonates with or diverges from global movements for human rights and social justice today.

1.3. The Statement of the Problem:

The study addressed in this study is the need to understand the depth and implications of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s political philosophy, particularly in relation to his vision for equality and justice. Despite his pivotal role in shaping India’s democratic framework, there remains a gap in comprehensive analysis of how his ideas on social justice, economic equality, and the role of the state continue to influence contemporary political and social structures. This study seeks to critically examine Ambedkar’s contributions and their lasting impact on both Indian and global movements for justice and equality.

1.4. The Significance of the Study:

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to a deeper understanding of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s political philosophy and its relevance in contemporary discussions on social justice, equality, and democratic governance. By examining Ambedkar’s views on the role of the state, economic justice, and his influence on global social justice movements, the study highlights the continued importance of his ideas in addressing modern-day inequalities, especially concerning caste, gender, and economic disparities. Additionally, this research helps bridge the gap between Ambedkar’s theoretical insights and their practical application in

political systems, offering valuable perspectives for policy-makers, scholars, and activists committed to fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. Furthermore, it underscores the global significance of his advocacy for human rights, making his philosophy a critical framework for understanding and combating systemic injustice worldwide.

1.5. The Research Questions:

RQ1: How did Dr. B.R. Ambedkar conceptualize the role of the state in safeguarding justice and equality?

RQ2: What were Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's views on economic justice?

RQ3: What is the relationship between Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's political philosophy and global ideals of social justice and equality?

1.6. The Objectives of the Study:

O1: To analyze the Ambedkar's views on the role of the state in safeguarding justice and equality.

O2: To evaluate Ambedkar's views on economic justice.

O3: To investigate the relationship between Ambedkar's political thought and the global ideals of social justice and equality.

2. The Methodology of Study:

The methodology of this study is based on a qualitative analysis of secondary sources, including scholarly articles, books, and research papers that discuss Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's political philosophy, economic justice, and his views on social equality. The study will involve a comparative approach, examining Ambedkar's ideas alongside those of other political theorists such as John Rawls, to highlight the unique aspects of his vision. Additionally, relevant constitutional documents, speeches, and legislative records, including the Indian Constitution and Ambedkar's contributions to its drafting, will be analyzed. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of Ambedkar's political thought, its historical context, and its ongoing relevance in contemporary global discussions on justice and equality.

3. The Analysis and Interpretation:

O1: To analyze the Ambedkar's views on the role of the state in safeguarding justice and equality.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's conceptualization of the role of the state in safeguarding justice and equality was deeply rooted in his understanding of the Indian social order and the need for structural reforms to ensure the protection of marginalized communities. Ambedkar firmly believed that the state should play a central role in eradicating social and economic inequalities, as these disparities were deeply entrenched in India's caste system. He viewed the state not just as a political entity but as a necessary instrument for promoting social justice and securing equal rights for all citizens, particularly those who had been historically oppressed. For Ambedkar, political democracy alone was insufficient without social democracy, which required active intervention from the state to dismantle the social hierarchies and discriminatory practices that perpetuated caste-based exclusion and oppression.

Ambedkar argued that the state's role in safeguarding justice and equality should include enacting laws that protect the rights of marginalized groups, ensuring their access to education, employment, and political representation. He emphasized that the state must create legal mechanisms that not only prevent discrimination but also actively promote the social and economic upliftment of the oppressed. In his speech

on November 25, 1949, in the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar stated, “*We are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics, we will have equality, and in social and economic life, we will have inequality.*” This statement underscored his belief that the state must address these contradictions through affirmative action and legal reforms that promote equality in both political and social spheres (Ambedkar, 1949). He advocated for the inclusion of provisions that would ensure the protection of Dalits, women, and other marginalized groups within the Indian Constitution, which led to the inclusion of affirmative action measures such as reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in educational institutions, government jobs, and legislative bodies (Constitution of India, Article 15, 16, and 17).

One of the key measures Ambedkar advocated for was the abolition of untouchability, a practice that perpetuated discrimination against Dalits. Article 17 of the Indian Constitution, which prohibits untouchability, was a direct result of his efforts to ensure the legal eradication of caste-based discrimination. Ambedkar believed that the state must not only outlaw such practices but also create an environment where marginalized communities could have equal access to social, political, and economic opportunities. In this regard, Ambedkar also supported the implementation of reservations (affirmative action) to ensure representation of SCs and STs in government institutions, a crucial step to counteract historical exclusion from political and economic power. Ambedkar’s vision of state intervention extended beyond legal measures to include social reforms that would alter the attitudes of society, thus facilitating a more inclusive and just society.

Ambedkar also recognized that economic justice was essential for achieving true equality. He believed that economic disparities were just as oppressive as social inequalities, and that the state had an obligation to redistribute wealth and resources to ensure fairness. He advocated for measures such as land reforms and the nationalization of industries to address the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. His economic vision was grounded in his belief that only through the redistribution of resources could the state ensure a just and equitable society. In his writings, such as *The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution* (1923), Ambedkar highlighted the role of the state in regulating economic systems that disproportionately benefited the upper classes, particularly in colonial India. This economic philosophy called for state intervention in ensuring the welfare of the marginalized, as well as equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Ambedkar’s vision of the state was comprehensive and transformative. He conceptualized a state that not only provided legal protections but also actively engaged in social, economic, and political reforms to ensure justice for all its citizens. His focus on the role of the state as a vehicle for social change is evident in the constitutional provisions he helped draft, particularly those aimed at dismantling the caste system, protecting the rights of marginalized communities, and promoting equality. The constitutional safeguards he championed, including the abolition of untouchability, reservations, and protection against discrimination, continue to play a crucial role in safeguarding the rights of Dalits and other marginalized groups in India.

O2: To evaluate Ambedkar’s views on economic justice.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s views on economic justice were deeply intertwined with his belief in social justice and equality. He recognized that economic inequality was not merely an economic problem but also a fundamental issue of social and political justice. Ambedkar saw the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, particularly the upper castes, as a major barrier to the realization of true equality in Indian society. He believed that economic inequalities were not just the result of individual failures but were deeply rooted in the social and political structures of the time. For Ambedkar, economic justice required an overhaul of the existing system, with the state playing a central role in addressing the economic disparities caused by historical discrimination, particularly against Dalits, backward classes, and women.

One of the key ways Ambedkar proposed addressing economic inequality was through state intervention in the economy. He advocated for a planned economy where the state would take an active role in regulating industries, redistributing wealth, and ensuring equitable access to resources. Ambedkar was a proponent of the nationalization of industries as a means of controlling the economic power of the few and ensuring that resources were used for the welfare of all citizens. In his work *Thoughts on Linguistic States* (1948), Ambedkar argued that economic decentralization, along with nationalization, was necessary to reduce the concentration of wealth and ensure that economic benefits reached the marginalized and poor sections of society. He also emphasized the importance of land reforms, which would dismantle the concentration of land in the hands of the upper classes and redistribute it to the landless, particularly Dalits and other backward classes.

Ambedkar's emphasis on economic justice also extended to his critique of the capitalist system, which he believed perpetuated economic inequalities. He argued that capitalism, in its traditional form, was exploitative and favored the wealthy and powerful. He believed that the capitalist system, without regulation, would continue to marginalize the poor and perpetuate social hierarchies. As a solution, Ambedkar proposed a form of state socialism, where the government would regulate the economy to ensure fairness, economic security, and the welfare of all citizens. In his speech to the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar stated, "*We must remember that political democracy cannot last unless there is economic democracy. The rich and the powerful will always exploit the weak unless the government steps in to prevent them*" (Ambedkar, 1949). This statement underscores his belief that economic intervention by the state was necessary for the protection of the rights of the poor and marginalized.

The legal reforms Ambedkar championed also aimed at addressing economic inequalities. In his view, legal protections were essential to create a level playing field for the economically disadvantaged. He advocated for laws that would ensure the economic upliftment of marginalized communities, including reservations (affirmative action) in education, employment, and politics. The reservation system, enshrined in Articles 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution, was designed to ensure that Dalits, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) had access to opportunities that were previously denied to them. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, while Article 16 provides for equal opportunities in public employment, particularly for underrepresented groups. These constitutional provisions were a direct result of Ambedkar's advocacy for legal reforms to address the economic and social exclusion faced by these groups.

Ambedkar also addressed the need for a more equitable taxation system, which would prevent the wealthy from exploiting the state and ensure that the state had the resources to fund welfare programs for the poor. He was critical of the economic policies of colonial India, which, according to him, were designed to enrich the British Empire at the expense of India's impoverished masses. In his work *The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution* (1923), Ambedkar criticized the colonial government's economic policies and advocated for the control of currency and a fairer monetary system that would serve the needs of India's population rather than the interests of colonial rulers.

Ambedkar's economic vision was not only focused on legal and economic reforms but also aimed at transforming the social order. He believed that social inequalities, such as the caste system, were inextricably linked to economic disparities, and that only by dismantling the caste system could economic justice be achieved. This view was reflected in his work on the economic and social status of the Dalits. For Ambedkar, economic justice meant the end of the economic exploitation that was rooted in the caste system, and the creation of a society where all individuals, regardless of their social or economic background, could access the resources necessary to live a dignified life.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's views on economic justice were centered on the idea that the state must intervene in the economy to ensure fairness, redistribute wealth, and provide opportunities for marginalized communities. Through his advocacy for state socialism, land reforms, nationalization of industries, and legal protections for Dalits and backward classes, Ambedkar sought to create a more equitable society. His ideas, enshrined in the Indian Constitution, continue to influence debates on economic justice and social equality in contemporary India.

O3: To investigate the relationship between Ambedkar's political thought and the global ideals of social justice and equality.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's political philosophy was deeply aligned with global ideals of social justice and equality, particularly those related to human rights and the fight against discrimination. Ambedkar's vision extended beyond the borders of India and resonated with international movements for social justice, including the global struggle for racial equality, women's rights, and the rights of marginalized communities. His advocacy for equality, social justice, and the abolition of untouchability mirrored the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations in 1948, which emphasized the dignity and equal rights of all people, regardless of race, caste, or gender. Ambedkar's philosophy echoed the global ideals of liberty, fraternity, and equality, not only in the context of India's social structure but also in the broader context of global human rights movements.

Ambedkar's political thought was grounded in the principles of justice and equality, which are central to the global discourse on human rights. In his advocacy for the rights of Dalits, Scheduled Tribes, and other marginalized groups, Ambedkar's ideas closely aligned with the global struggle for civil rights, particularly the struggle for racial equality in the United States. His critique of the caste system as a form of systemic discrimination and exclusion has been compared to the struggles against racial segregation and apartheid in other parts of the world, such as in South Africa and the United States. Ambedkar's commitment to equality and justice for the oppressed paralleled the objectives of international human rights law, which seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote equality of all individuals, irrespective of their social, economic, or political status.

Ambedkar's contribution to social justice can be understood in light of his advocacy for constitutional reforms that guaranteed fundamental rights for marginalized communities. In the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar championed the inclusion of provisions that guaranteed equality before the law and the abolition of untouchability. Articles 15, 16, and 17 of the Indian Constitution, which prohibit discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, reflect Ambedkar's commitment to ensuring that marginalized groups had the legal protection necessary to enjoy their fundamental rights. The abolition of untouchability under Article 17 and the provision for affirmative action in education, employment, and politics through reservation systems were legal innovations that reflected Ambedkar's alignment with global ideals of justice and equality. These measures also resonate with international human rights instruments, such as the UDHR, which calls for the elimination of discrimination and the protection of the rights of disadvantaged groups (United Nations, 1948).

Ambedkar's influence can be seen in his contributions to global movements for human rights, particularly in relation to the civil rights movement in the United States and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. His ideas on caste-based discrimination were instrumental in shaping the global understanding of structural inequalities and the need for systemic reforms to address them. In the United States, civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and W.E.B. Du Bois were inspired by similar struggles against racial discrimination, drawing parallels between the racial segregation in the U.S. and the caste discrimination in India. Ambedkar's critique of caste has thus been influential in shaping global conversations about the

intersectionality of race, class, and caste in the fight for social justice. Additionally, his advocacy for women's rights, including his support for the Hindu Code Bill to grant women equal rights in marriage and property, resonated with the global feminist movements of the time, which were pushing for equal rights for women in various parts of the world.

Ambedkar's vision of social justice was not confined to India but had a global impact, particularly in the context of decolonization and the struggle for human rights in the mid-20th century. His advocacy for political, social, and economic equality contributed to the global discourse on the rights of marginalized and oppressed people. As countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America sought independence from colonial rule, Ambedkar's ideas provided a blueprint for the creation of inclusive democratic societies that prioritized equality and social justice. His thoughts on the need for economic justice, such as his support for land reforms and the nationalization of industries to address economic inequality, also aligned with the global push for equitable economic development and social welfare.

Ambedkar's ideas on the role of the state in ensuring justice and equality aligned with the post-World War II development of international human rights law. The establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 were major milestones in the global recognition of the need to protect human dignity and prevent discrimination. Ambedkar's work in India's Constituent Assembly and his philosophy of state intervention to secure the rights of marginalized communities can be seen as a precursor to the global movement toward the establishment of protective legal frameworks for vulnerable populations. His advocacy for affirmative action, legal protections for minorities, and social and economic reforms has been recognized as an important contribution to global human rights thought and continues to influence contemporary discussions on justice and equality worldwide.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's political philosophy was deeply aligned with global ideals of social justice and equality. His advocacy for the rights of marginalized communities, his critique of caste-based discrimination, and his vision for state intervention to ensure economic justice and equality resonate with international human rights movements. Ambedkar's ideas contributed significantly to global conversations on social justice, particularly in relation to the rights of oppressed groups, the role of the state in promoting equality, and the need for legal frameworks to protect the dignity and rights of all individuals. His legacy continues to inspire social justice movements worldwide.

4. The Findings of the Study:

- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar viewed the state as a crucial entity for ensuring justice and equality, advocating for its active role in dismantling social inequalities, particularly caste-based discrimination.
- He emphasized the need for legal provisions and state intervention to protect marginalized communities, with a focus on reservations, affirmative action, and the abolition of untouchability (Article 17 of the Indian Constitution).
- Ambedkar's political philosophy demanded that the state not only provide legal equality but also foster social and economic justice through state-driven reforms.
- Ambedkar was a strong proponent of economic justice, seeing economic inequalities as deeply intertwined with social hierarchies.
- He proposed state intervention in the form of nationalization of industries, land reforms, and redistribution of wealth to address economic disparities.



- His advocacy for affirmative action, as reflected in Articles 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution, was aimed at ensuring economic opportunities for marginalized communities, thereby reducing historical economic inequalities.
- Ambedkar's political philosophy closely aligned with global ideals of social justice, particularly those found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and international movements for racial and gender equality.
- His critique of caste-based discrimination and advocacy for marginalized communities mirrored global struggles against racial segregation and apartheid, especially in the U.S. and South Africa.
- Ambedkar's ideas influenced global human rights movements, particularly through his emphasis on the role of the state in ensuring the rights and dignity of marginalized groups.

5. Conclusion:

In conclusion, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's political philosophy fundamentally reshaped the framework for justice and equality in India, emphasizing the critical role of the state in dismantling social, economic, and political inequalities. His advocacy for legal reforms, affirmative action, and state intervention in economic matters reflected a deep commitment to achieving true equality for marginalized communities, particularly Dalits and backward classes. Ambedkar's ideas not only transformed Indian society but also aligned with global ideals of social justice, resonating with international movements for human rights and equality. His vision continues to inspire global and domestic efforts to combat discrimination, ensuring that his legacy as a champion of justice and equality remains relevant in contemporary debates on social and economic justice worldwide.

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