

Role of Babasaheb Ambedkar's Social Movements in Indian Democracy

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Abstract

This study examines the ideas and reform efforts of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar and their significance in shaping the democratic and constitutional development of India. Dr. Ambedkar led several campaigns against caste discrimination and social exclusion and advocated civil rights for the oppressed communities, gender equality, labour welfare, and religious reform. His efforts transformed the understanding of democracy in India from a political mechanism into a broader social, economic, and moral order supported by constitutional principles. The study examines how Ambedkar's social movements contributed to structural change and continue to influence contemporary democratic discourse through the sociological perspectives of social stratification, social justice, and collective action. A descriptive research design and analytical method are adopted for the study based on secondary data. The findings indicate that Dr. Ambedkar's social movements significantly influenced India's democratic environment. Through sustained struggles against caste discrimination, social exclusion, and injustice, he established a new political and social vocabulary based on justice, rights, equality, and human dignity. His movements contributed to the development of public institutions, legal frameworks, and social relations that strengthened the inclusive character of Indian democracy. Ambedkar's democratic thought continues to remain relevant in India's efforts to promote social equality and justice. His ideas provide important insights for addressing contemporary challenges such as gender inequality, caste based violence, and socioeconomic disparity.

Keywords: *Caste, Equality, Social Change, Humanity, Society, Hindu, Dalit, Navayana.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The caste system, which has defined Indian society for centuries, has traditionally justified uneven social ties and limited mobility. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar rose to prominence in this sociocultural context as a trailblazing thinker whose life's work was to eradicate caste-based injustice and create a democratic, just, and egalitarian society. Ambedkar's reform initiatives addressed caste discrimination, religious access, conversion, and political participation, contributing significantly to the evolution of democratic practices in India.

Rather than being limited to constitutional writing, Ambedkar's efforts must be seen as part of a broader social struggle to restructure Indian society. His social movements dismantled established structures, democratized access to rights, and formed the socio-ethical basis for Indian democracy. This study situates Ambedkar within the sociological framework, evaluating his deeds through the lenses of structural injustice, social exclusion, human rights, and collective mobilization.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Narwaria, Geeta, 2023 in his research work "*Dalit Sahitya Prampara Mai Dr Bhimrav Ambedkar Ke Chintan Ka Prabhav Upnyaso Ke Vishesh Sandarbha Mai*" described the impact of Babasaheb's reformative social movements on the world of Novels and literature. Scholar had significantly highlighted many aspects and impact of subaltern perspective on literature & novel.

Kaushal, Chandra Kishor, 2023 in his research work "*Bhartiya Mahilaon ke Utthan mein Dr. B. R. Ambedkar ka Yogdan*" explains that the contribution of Babasaheb in gender equality and empowerment of women in all possible dimensions. Because of his efforts Hindu code bill, Hindu Marriage Act had come in to existences, which are the pioneer in their social liberty, equality and empowerment. Reservation in various platforms for women is also his visionary contribution for upliftment of weaker gender.

Rathod, Ramila G, 2022 in his research work "*Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Social Reform Movements: A Sociological Study*" explains the powerful impact of Ambedkar's

Social reform movement's impact on Indian society. It is because of his fearless approach & enlightened insight, the Women/SC/ST/OBC/Minority/labors etc. have being able to gain their dignity and rights.

Yadav, Harishchandra, 2018 in his research work "*Swatantrata purav katha sahitya me dalit sandarbh*" described that Babasaheb's Social Movements against the untouchability and exploitation of lower castes were quit significant before independent India. His visionary approach and courageous rebel against the exploitation of lower castes was the milestone for their social reforms and much welfare based constitutional articles.

Ram Dinesh, 2003 in his research work "*Samkalin Hindi kahani me ger dalito ka dalit vishayak lekhan Ambedkarwadi chintan ke vishesh sandarbh me*" explained the impact of Ambedkar's Social Movement on the various Indian literature, especially in the field of story writing by non-dalit authors on various dalit issues.

Prasad, Gobind, 2003 in his research work "*Samkaleen Hindi dalit sahitya ka samaj shastriya adhyayan*" described the various social movements related and initiated by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Scholar found that the suppressed class and Dalit consciousness is just a byproduct of Babasaheb's crucial efforts.

3. SOCIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT

The social activities of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar significantly altered Indian society. They revealed the underlying basis of social inequity and contested the established caste system. Ambedkar transformed the demand for equality, dignity, and access to public resources into a collective social statement through campaigns like the Mahad Satyagraha and temple entry movements. His initiatives helped democratize Indian society by uniting the downtrodden classes into a conscious community with a common identity of resistance and self-respect.

Ambedkar linked education with empowerment and advocated constitutional safeguards to strengthen justice, equality, and human dignity in India. His subsequent conversion to Buddhism redefined religion as a force for equality and morality. All things considered, Ambedkar's movements laid the theoretical groundwork for contemporary Dalit assertion and still have an impact on the fight against caste prejudice in India today.

Pre-Ambedkar India's Sociological Context:

A. Caste as a Stratification System

Caste served as a strict, birth-based system of stratification that governed social standing, work, food habits, marital customs, and geographic division. In addition to being excluded from the Varna system and denied access to public resources, the untouchable communities—later known as Dalits—were severely disadvantaged by segregation, brutality, and inherited servitude.

B. Untouchability and Social Exclusion

A permanent type of exclusion was entrenched by untouchability. Dalits were prohibited from:
*Public educational institutions
*Tanks and wells in the village
*Temples and communal areas
*Jobs in the government and professions

In addition to material loss, this exclusion led to symbolic violence, a key idea in sociological theory that normalizes systematic discrimination.

C. Modernity and British Colonial Rule

New approaches to public discourse, education, law, and government were brought about by colonial modernity. However, rather than eliminating caste divisions, colonial practices frequently strengthened them. Ambedkar, who received his education in Columbia and London, criticized Indian societal systems using Western liberalism, rationality, and contemporary political theory.

4. OBJECTIVE

The objectives are here:-

- Study of the Social Movements lead by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar.
- To study the role of Ambedkar's movement in Indian democracy.

5. METHEDOLOGY

Descriptive research designed is used for this research work with analytical method on the basis of secondary data. This research work is also inspired by the subaltern perspective to study the repressed class/caste of the society.

6. AMBEDKAR'S LEADING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

***The Call to Annihilate Caste and the Anti-Caste Movement:** Caste, according to Ambedkar, is incompatible with democracy. Caste normalized

inequality, hindered social mobility, and killed fraternity. He also criticized Hindu texts that established caste. The upper castes' cultural predominance was directly contested by the anti-caste movement. Ambedkar launched a revolutionary critique that reorganized the national conversation on equality by challenging caste at its ideological foundation.

***Mahad Satyagraha (1927): Civil Rights Movement:** A resolution permitting untouchables to utilize public water tanks was passed by the Mahad municipality in Maharashtra in 1924, but caste Hindus blocked its implementation. Ambedkar symbolically asserted the Dalits' human right to public resources by leading thousands of them to drink water from the Chavdar Tank. In an effort to oppose texts that supported caste prejudice, he also set fire to the Manusmriti.

***Movement for Temple Entry (Kalaram Temple Satyagraha, 1930):** Religious institutions occupied an important place in India's socially divided communities. Denying Dalits entry perpetuated ideas of sub-humanity and filth. Over 15,000 Dalits were organized by Ambedkar's effort to gain access to Nashik's Kalaram Temple. The movement profoundly questioned the social legitimacy of exclusion, notwithstanding caste Hindus' physical resistance. The movement weakened the hegemonic dominance of Brahmanical standards by declaring religion to be a public domain subject to democratic values.

***"Educate, Agitate, Organize: Education for Empowerment":** Ambedkar saw education as a tool for liberation—a way to cultivate critical consciousness—rather than just an academic pursuit. In addition to creating magazines like Mooknayak and Bahishkrit Bharat and establishing hostels, schools, and colleges, he also promoted mandatory education during constitutional discussions. Ambedkar's educational efforts helped strengthen learning and leadership within Dalit communities.

***Socio-Political Movements:** Civil Rights, Separate Electorates and Representation Ambedkar felt that social democracy needed political power for underrepresented groups.

Round Table Conferences: He called for guaranteed parliamentary representation, separate electorates for depressed classes, and legal protections against discrimination.

Poona Pact (1932): Ambedkar negotiated reserved seats for Dalits in legislatures, a pivotal milestone in Indian political history, despite being forced to give up distinct electorates following Gandhi's fast.

***Independent Labour Party (1936) & Scheduled Castes Federation (1942):** These parties emphasized caste-based discrimination in the legislative, labor, and land domains. Ambedkar made the voices of the oppressed essential to democratic governance in India by institutionalizing representation and rights-based politics.

***Labor and Economic Justice Movements:** Ambedkar was a qualified economist who researched industrial management, labor rights, and monetary economics. His concepts highlighted: Intervention by the state, Minimum pay, Social Security, Workers' unionization. While serving in the colonial government, Ambedkar advanced major labour reforms, including shorter working hours and maternity protections, while advocating stronger workers' rights and state involvement in essential industries.

***Gender Equality and Women's Rights Movement:** Ambedkar attacked the patriarchy ingrained in Hindu law and caste. He thought that without gender equality, no society could be democratic. In the Hindu Code Bill Ambedkar proposed changes pertaining to Women's property rights, Marriage and divorce laws, Guardianship and adoption, equitable inheritance. Even though political resistance caused the bill to fail at first, its ideas later influenced significant legal changes. Ambedkar's theories gave gender justice a legal basis and radicalized the Indian feminist movement.

***The Buddhist Movement and Religious Reform (1956):** According to Ambedkar, caste and Hinduism are inextricably linked. In order to reject caste at its intellectual core, conversion was a sociopolitical act. Buddhism Navayana- Buddhism was reinterpreted by Ambedkar as reasonable, moral, equitable, anti-hierarchical. Dalits' new collective identity, an ethical basis for social justice, an analysis of Brahmanical dominance. Dalit action and consciousness are still influenced by the Buddhist movement.

7. CONCLUSION

India's democratic environment was radically altered by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's social movements. Ambedkar established a new political and social vocabulary based on justice, rights, and dignity through

persistent battles against caste discrimination, exclusion, and injustice. His movements ensured that democracy in India was not just procedural but also moral, ethical, and inclusive by reshaping public institutions, legal frameworks, and social interactions. Ambedkar's conception of democracy, which is based on liberty, equality, and fraternity, continues to be essential to India's continuous quest for social justice. His theories continue to shed light on the way to a fully egalitarian democratic system in a culture currently struggling with issues like gender inequality, caste violence, and socioeconomic disparity.

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