

The Struggle for Social Equity : Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Critique of Caste and Vision for a Just Society

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Abstract

The Indian Constitution fundamentally enshrines the ideals of social justice, positioning the legal system as a mechanism to foster equal opportunities and eliminate structural inequities. The state is obligated to cultivate a social order where economic, social, or other forms of disadvantage do not obstruct access to justice, thereby promoting substantive equality. This article engages with a theoretical exploration of Ambedkar's vision of social justice, situating his thought within broader discourses of justice, equality, and rights. It further interrogates the intersection of Ambedkar's struggles with the constitutional framework and critically evaluates the enduring relevance of his mission in contemporary discourses of social justice. Through this analysis, Ambedkar's contributions are not only historicized but also theoretically situated as a continuing critique of social stratification and institutional injustice. (Ambedkar, 1949; Rawls, 1971; Sen, 2009)

Keywords- Equality, liberty, fraternity, justice, struggle, constitution, caste system, discrimination

Concept of social justice

The concept of social justice, as it has evolved in both ancient and modern contexts, reflects a complex interplay of duties, rights, and equality. In ancient Indian thought, justice was primarily duty-bound, articulated through the frameworks of 'Dandaniti' (law and punishment) and 'Dharma' (moral duty), where justice was synonymous with virtuous conduct as prescribed by *dharma*. This understanding closely parallels the Platonic notion of justice, which also emphasized the performance of duties rather than the assertion of individual rights (Sharma, 2005).

Modern approaches to justice have shifted significantly. Liberal perspectives focus on individual rights and liberty as essential for a just society, whereas Marxist perspectives emphasize the necessity of eliminating social and economic inequalities to achieve justice (Rawls, 1971; Marx, 1844).

Social justice, in its contemporary form, emerged as a response to the evolving norms around social equity, order, and morality. It emphasizes just action,

allowing for institutional interventions that promote social equality and protect individual rights. The term itself represents a synthesis of 'social,' pertaining to human relations in society, and 'justice,' which is fundamentally concerned with liberty, equality, and rights (Sen, 2009). Therefore, social justice is oriented towards ensuring liberty, equality, and the protection of individual rights to foster the highest possible development of each individual's capacities (Nussbaum,

Social justice is a multi-dimensional and comprehensive concept, interpreted variously by scholars in law, philosophy, and political science. It functions as a balancing force between the privileged and the marginalized, ensuring the protection of the vulnerable, such as the weak, aged, poor, and underprivileged (Dias, 1985). As Professor R.M.W. Dias argues, justice is a dynamic and evolving process, balancing factors such as the allocation of advantages and disadvantages, prevention of the abuse of power, and adaptation to social changes (Dias, 1985). In this sense, social justice extends beyond legal frameworks to encompass economic justice, striving to remove all forms of inequality based on caste, race, gender, or wealth, and to harmonize social rights with social controls (Rawls,

This conceptualization of social justice, therefore, underscores its role as a foundational principle in creating equitable societies, where the rule of law sustains not just legal justice but also economic and social fairness.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's ideas on social justice were rooted in a critique of caste-based oppression and social inequality in Indian society. Ambedkar viewed social justice as inseparable from the annihilation of caste and the creation of a just society where liberty, equality, and fraternity are upheld. Scholars like Aakash Singh Rathore and Anand Teltumbde have emphasized that Ambedkar's vision goes beyond legalistic reforms and focuses on the transformation of social structures that perpetuate discrimination (Rathore, 2020; Teltumbde, 2019). In a similar vein, Gail Omvedt and Gopal Guru argue that Ambedkar's approach to social justice was deeply intersectional, encompassing economic and social justice to ensure the empowerment of the marginalized, particularly the Dalits and other oppressed classes (Omvedt, 1994; Guru, 2009).

Comparatively, Sudipta Kaviraj and Valerian Rodrigues offer a nuanced understanding of Ambedkar's social justice within the framework of Indian constitutionalism. Kaviraj highlights Ambedkar's role in framing the Constitution as a tool for social transformation, where in the rule of law serves as a mechanism to dismantle entrenched hierarchies (Kaviraj, 2010). Valerian Rodrigues, on the other hand, underscores the intellectual tensions between Ambedkar's radical views on social justice and the more conservative strands of Indian politics that sought incremental change (Rodrigues, 2002). Eleanor Zelliot and Arvind Elangovan, in contrast, argue that Ambedkar's ideas were revolutionary in that they called for a complete overhaul of social relations, viewing caste as an obstacle to achieving true democratic equality (Zelliot, 1979; Elangovan, 2014). In comparing these scholars, it becomes clear that while Ambedkar's ideas were broad and transformative, the interpretations of his Contributions range from legalistic to radical, offering a rich, multi-faceted view of his vision for social justice in India.

Ancient Hindu Society-The *Varnashrama Dharma*, as maintained by the ancient Hindu legal system, institutionalized a rigid caste hierarchy, perpetuating social inequality and denying the fundamental principle that all humans are born equal. This caste-based stratification, which classified society into four *varnas*—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras—became a mechanism for preserving privileges for the higher castes, particularly the Brahmins, while relegating the majority to positions of subordination. The caste system, according to Ambedkar, was the antithesis of social justice, as it not only imposed dehumanizing occupations on the lower castes but also denied them access to education and upward mobility. Ambedkar critiqued the caste system as a form of graded inequality that fostered a social order where privilege and oppression were hereditary, thereby negating the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity that he championed as essential for a just society (Ambedkar, 1936).

Ambedkar's understanding of the formation of caste was deeply structural and historical. He argued that caste was not a natural or organic division of labor but rather a religiously sanctioned system of power that preserved the privileges of the few at the expense of the many. In his work *Who Were the Shudras?*, Ambedkar traced the origins of caste to a deliberate effort by the Brahmins to monopolize power and social status through religious and cultural means. The *varna* system, in his view, served as the ideological justification for these divisions, with caste acting as a mechanism to keep certain groups in perpetual servitude (Ambedkar, 1946). While the Brahminical order played a key role in constructing and perpetuating the

system, Ambedkar argued that caste was sustained by the complicity of the entire Hindu society, including the lower castes who internalized and reinforced these oppressive norms (Ambedkar, 1936). Scholars like Gopal Guru and Aakash Singh Rathore reinforce Ambedkar's critique, asserting that caste was a tool for controlling labor and restricting social mobility, rather than a functional division of labor as often defended in Hindu texts (Guru, 2009; Rathore, 2020). Valerian Rodrigues and Gail Omvedt further emphasize that Ambedkar's analysis extended beyond economic exploitation to encompass social and psychological oppression, where caste divisions were reinforced even among the oppressed, creating a multi-layered system of inequality (Rodrigues, 2002; Omvedt, 1994). For Ambedkar, the caste system was not only a social and economic structure but a deeply spiritual and psychological one, maintained through religious doctrines that dehumanized the lower castes and entrenched Brahmanical dominance. This understanding led him to conclude that the caste system could only be dismantled through radical reforms aimed at eradicating its very foundations, both in terms of material inequality and cultural-religious legitimacy (Ambedkar, 1936; Jaffrelot, 2005).

This nuanced view reflects Ambedkar's belief that the caste system was a carefully constructed social control mechanism, upheld by both the privileged and the oppressed, and it required profound, systemic change to achieve true social justice.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar's Struggle for Social Justice--Dr.

B.R. Ambedkar's approach to social justice is theoretically rich, grounded in his deep critique of the socio-religious structures that perpetuate inequality. His notion of social justice transcends mere legal or political reform and engages with the fundamental reordering of social relations, particularly through the dismantling of the caste system. Ambedkar's concept of justice is influenced by The principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which he saw as inter connected and essential for a just society. His theoretical framework builds on the idea that social justice cannot be understood purely in legalistic or procedural terms, but must address the structural and historical injustices that have marginalized large sections of society, particularly Dalits and other oppressed communities (Ambedkar, 1936).

Ambedkar's vision of social justice is informed by a rejection of hierarchical social structures that are justified through religious and cultural traditions. He viewed the caste system as a form of "graded inequality" where each caste was ranked and privileged differently,

creating divisions even within the oppressed classes. This system, according to Ambedkar, was not only unjust but also antithetical to the very idea of a democratic society. He argued that the caste system institutionalized inequality by denying individuals the opportunity to transcend their birth status and achieve personal or social mobility. This analysis draws from Ambedkar's engagement with theories of social contract and justice, where he saw the caste system as a violation of the idea that all individuals are equal before the law and have an inherent dignity (Ambedkar, 1946; Guru, 2009).

Ambedkar's theoretical contribution to social justice also challenges classical liberal ideas that focus solely on formal equality. For Ambedkar, formal political equality—such as equal voting rights—was insufficient in a society where social and economic inequalities were entrenched. He advocated for what scholars call “substantive equality,” where justice is not merely about equal treatment under the law but also involves affirmative actions to address the historical disadvantages faced by marginalized communities. This idea aligns with contemporary theories of social justice, such as those of John Rawls, who argue that justice requires addressing the “unjust starting points” of individuals, particularly those who are disadvantaged by historical or structural inequalities (Rawls, 1971). Ambedkar's emphasis on affirmative action and preferential treatment for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was thus a key theoretical component of his vision, aimed at leveling the playing field for historically oppressed groups (Rodrigues, 2002).

Ambedkar's theoretical approach also incorporates a critical perspective on religion, particularly its role in sustaining social inequality. His critique of Hinduism, especially its justification of caste through religious texts like the Manusmriti, represents a radical departure from other social reformers of his time. Ambedkar did not view religion as a neutral or benign force but as a source of institutionalized oppression that must be reformed or rejected to achieve true justice. In this sense, Ambedkar's views align with critical social theories that see ideology and culture as central to the maintenance of power structures. His conversion to Buddhism was part of his theoretical response to the need for a religion based on rationality, humanism, and universal moral principles, which could support a just social order rather than reinforce inequality (Ambedkar, 1956; Omvedt, 1994).

Scholars like Valerian Rodrigues and Gopal Guru highlight that Ambedkar's conception of social justice is deeply transformative, aimed at restructuring the very foundations of social relations in India. Rodrigues points out that Ambedkar's vision was not merely about redressing

immediate grievances but about creating a new social order where caste and class hierarchies were abolished, and human worth was based on merit and individual capability rather than birth (Rodrigues, 2002). This aligns with theories of distributive justice, which focus on the fair allocation of resources and opportunities in society. Ambedkar's demand for land redistribution, economic reforms, and social policies aimed at uplifting the marginalized reflect his broader theoretical commitment to an egalitarian society where social and economic justice are foundational, not secondary, concerns (Jaffrelot, 2005).

In sum, Ambedkar's struggle for social justice represents a complex theoretical intervention into the debates on equality, liberty, and fraternity. His approach goes beyond mere legal reforms and seeks a radical restructuring of Indian society to eliminate the systemic injustices perpetuated by caste. His ideas are both historically grounded and forward-looking, offering a blueprint for addressing deep-rooted social and economic inequalities through a comprehensive framework of substantive equality, affirmative action, and moral transformation. Ambedkar's work thus remains a cornerstone in theoretical discussions of justice, particularly in contexts where historical oppression and structural inequality continue to shape social relations.

Conclusion—In conclusion, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's struggle for social justice is both a profound theoretical intervention and a practical blueprint for the transformation of Indian society. His critique of the caste system, grounded in his lived experience and scholarly analysis, revealed how deeply entrenched systems of graded inequality perpetuated oppression, particularly for Dalits and other marginalized communities. Ambedkar's vision of social justice goes beyond mere political and legal reforms, calling for a fundamental restructuring of social and economic relations. Scholars such as Christophe Jaffrelot and Gail Omvedt emphasize that Ambedkar's call for substantive equality—through affirmative action and social reform—was designed to address the deeply institutionalized disadvantages faced by the lower castes (Jaffrelot, 2005; Omvedt, 1994).

Ambedkar's approach to social justice, as noted by Gopal Guru and Valerian Rodrigues, demanded not just the eradication of caste but also the creation of a new social order based on liberty, equality, and fraternity. His insistence on preferential treatment for historically oppressed groups, like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, reflects his broader concern for distributive justice. Aligning with contemporary theories of justice such as those of John Rawls, which focus on leveling the

playing field for disadvantaged groups (Guru, 2009; Rodrigues, 2002).

Ambedkar's rejection of caste-based religious doctrines, such as those found in the Manusmriti, and his embrace of a rational, humanistic Buddhism underscore his commitment to amoral and ethical framework for social justice. As scholars like Gail Omvedt have argued, Ambedkar's transformation from a social reformer to a religious leader was part of his larger goal of creating a just society based on universal human values (Omvedt, 1994). His work continues to inspire contemporary social justice movements and remains a key theoretical and practical resource for those challenging structural inequality and advocating for a more inclusive and equitable society.

Thus, Ambedkar's struggle for social justice, as highlighted by various scholars, was not just a fight against caste oppression but a comprehensive vision of social, economic, and moral reform. His contributions have left an indelible mark on both the Indian Constitution and the broader discourse on social justice, making his legacy central to ongoing efforts to achieve true equality and justice in India.

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STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE REGARDING PATIENT SAFETY AMONG UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS IN SELECTED NURSING COLLEGE, BHOPAL (MP) -

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF
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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to assess the knowledge of undergraduate nursing students about patient safety in selected Bhopal colleges. The study aimed to determine the pre-test level of patient safety knowledge, establish a correlation between patient safety knowledge and demographic factors, and compare the levels of patient safety knowledge among groups A and B. The research used an exploratory quantitative research design and involved 60 participants aged 20 to 28 years. The instrument used was a questionnaire and sociodemographic information. The non-probability purposive sampling approach was used to gather data. The results showed that Group A nursing students had an excellent knowledge distribution of 33.3%, average 60.0%, and poor 6.7%, while Group B had a good knowledge distribution of 13.3%, average 36.7%, and bad 50.0%. The chi-squared test revealed a significant difference between patient safety knowledge and demographic characteristics. The study also compared two nursing colleges in terms of patient safety using their demographic factors, revealing a table value of 2.048 and a calculated value of 6.85.

KEYWORDS: Undergraduate, Patient Safety, Demographic, Non-Probability.

INTRODUCTION:

The first goal of every healthcare institution is patient safety. Patient safety is the absence of avoidable harm to a patient while they are receiving medical treatment. For every patient, one of the most important factors is patient safety. Even while hospital accidents cannot be totally avoided, we can create an environment where such injuries may be avoided. There have been several incidents worldwide that have the potential to injure patients when they are being moved or lifted, as well as instances where medical personnel