

Caste, Class, Gender, and Constitutional Justice in the Indian Classroom with Reference to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

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Abstract:

This research explores how caste, class, and gender continue to shape inequality and resistance in Indian society. It takes inspiration from the ideas and legacy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, especially his writings on his role in shaping the Indian Constitution, and his seminal work *Annihilation of Caste*. The paper also connects Ambedkar's ideas to today's classrooms. It asks an important question: can the way we teach help challenge social injustice? By studying literature and classroom practices, the research shows how education can be a tool for both reflection and change. When students discuss texts that highlight the struggles of marginalized groups, they learn to see the world differently and think more critically about equality. In simple terms, this study shows that Ambedkar's ideas are not just history — they are a guide for the present and the future. His vision can help shape a more inclusive India where everyone's voice matters. The research also suggests that open discussions, diverse readings, and inclusive teaching methods can help create a classroom environment that supports democracy and social transformation. Ultimately, this paper argues that Ambedkar's way of understanding society by looking at caste, class, and gender together is essential for building the kind of India we dream of for 2047: an equal, educated, and truly united *Viksit Bharat*.

Constitutional Vision and Marginal Discourse

Dr. Ambedkar's ideas and contributions to the Indian Constitution continue to guide scholars, thinkers, and activists who work to challenge the deep-rooted inequalities of caste, class, and gender. Through his powerful writings and speeches, Ambedkar questioned the social and religious systems that allowed discrimination to survive for centuries. In his famous work *Annihilation of Caste*, he openly criticized how traditional beliefs often stood in the way of equality and human dignity. He believed that true social change requires more than just new laws, it also demands a change in the way people think and act. His vision of the Constitution was not only about legal rights but also about creating a society built on justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. These principles, for Ambedkar, were essential for genuine human freedom and social harmony. His constitutional philosophy continues to remind us that the fight against discrimination is both a legal and moral responsibility. Under the guidance of Dr. Ambedkar, the Indian Constitution established a strong foundation for equality and justice. It introduced key provisions that protect citizens from discrimination and promote affirmative action, especially for Dalits, women, and other marginalized groups who had long been excluded from social and economic opportunities. Ambedkar's constitutional vision went far

beyond the idea of simply changing laws, he wanted to transform the very structure of Indian society. He believed that only legal rights were not enough if social attitudes and institutions continued to uphold caste and gender hierarchies. For real change to happen, Ambedkar argued, the caste system had to be dismantled and patriarchal norms challenged. The Constitution, therefore, was not just a legal document for him, it was a tool for social revolution. It became a space where the voices and struggles of marginalized communities could find recognition and strength. In this sense, the Constitution itself represents both the hope for justice and the ongoing effort required to achieve it.

Caste, Class, and Gender: Intersecting Axes of Oppression

Dr. Ambedkar's writings expose and challenge the traditional myths that uphold the caste system in India. He strongly rejected the idea that caste has any moral, scientific, or religious justification. Ambedkar argued that caste is not a natural division of labor or a means of maintaining social order, as some claim. Instead, it is a system designed to confine people within rigid social boundaries, where one's birth determines one's place in society. According to him, the caste system thrives by creating and maintaining exclusion. It divides people, denies them dignity, and limits their opportunities for growth and cooperation. By enforcing hierarchy and inequality, caste becomes a tool of domination that not only controls labor but also shapes the entire social order. In this way, it prevents true unity and progress by keeping individuals and communities locked within inherited positions of privilege or oppression.

He also explored how caste and gender are deeply connected in maintaining systems of inequality. He explained that caste does not survive only through social or religious rules but also through the control of women's lives. By restricting marriage choices, controlling reproduction, and regulating women's sexuality, the caste system ensures that caste boundaries remain fixed and caste privilege continues from one generation to the next. In this way, patriarchal control over women becomes a key mechanism for protecting caste purity and hierarchy. Women from marginalized castes face an even harsher reality — they experience discrimination and violence both as women and as members of oppressed communities. Ambedkar argued that the fight for women's equality cannot be separated from the struggle against caste oppression. True social liberation, he believed, can only be achieved when both caste and patriarchy are dismantled together.

According to Dr. Ambedkar, class is not only an economic category but also a social and cultural one. He pointed out that in India, caste and class are closely connected which makes the idea of economic progress far more complicated than simply increasing wealth or

redistributing resources. For him, true economic justice cannot be achieved if caste-based hierarchies continue to shape access to opportunities and dignity. He observed that Dalits and other marginalized groups have been systematically denied education, land, and respectable forms of employment. This exclusion is not accidental but rooted in a belief system that values inherited social status over individual talent or hard work. As long as caste continues to define a person's position in society, class equality remains an unfulfilled dream. Ambedkar therefore argued that the struggle for economic or class justice must directly confront caste-based discrimination and ideology. Without destroying the foundations of caste, social and economic reform would always remain incomplete.

Dialogic Pedagogy: The Classroom as a Space for Marginal Discourse

In postgraduate literary studies, Dr. Ambedkar's ideas highlight the importance of bringing marginalized voices and perspectives to the center of classroom discussions. Teaching texts like Annihilation of Caste offers students and scholars a chance to go beyond reading a work of literature. It becomes an opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue about the social realities and inequalities that Ambedkar exposed. Here, the classroom transforms into more than just a learning space; it becomes a space for reflection, questioning, and collective understanding. Students are encouraged to think critically about how caste, class, gender, and religion continue to shape people's lives and experiences. By discussing these issues openly, the classroom becomes a democratic forum. In this way, Ambedkar's approach to dialogue and education turns learning into an act of social awareness and transformation.

Teaching Annihilation of Caste at the university level requires more than just reading and interpretation, it calls for a teaching approach that nurtures critical thinking, empathy, and moral reflection. When students engage with this text, they are invited to question long-held social beliefs and to see literature as a living force that can inspire both personal and collective transformation. In the classroom, Annihilation of Caste becomes a starting point for conversations about justice, equality, and human dignity. Students from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to share perspectives, listen deeply to others, and challenge their own assumptions. Through this dialogic process, they learn that literature is not simply an object of study but a space for ethical engagement and social awareness. The act of reading and discussing his essay thus becomes a practice in understanding difference, promoting inclusion, and envisioning a more equitable society.

Ambedkar's Enduring Concerns: Relevance for "Viksit Bharat@2047"

Dr. Ambedkar's constitutional vision continues to hold deep relevance for India's present and future, especially in the context of the national aspiration for Viksit Bharat@2047 which means a developed and inclusive India by the centenary of Independence. His ideas remind us that true progress cannot be measured by economic growth alone. A genuinely progressive nation must ensure that equality, justice, and dignity are lived realities for all citizens. The path toward Viksit Bharat depends on fulfilling Ambedkar's dream of substantive equality where the elimination of caste-based and gender-based hierarchies becomes a social and moral commitment, not just a political slogan. His intersectional approach provides a powerful way to examine today's policies, social movements, and developmental agendas. It calls for aligning economic advancement with constitutional values and ethical responsibility. In this sense, his vision serves as both a guiding light and a moral compass for building an India that is prosperous, inclusive, and grounded in justice.

For BabaSaheb, social justice was never limited to laws or government policies, it also depended on open public discussion, critical education, and active participation in shaping society. He believed that meaningful change could only come when people collectively questioned the structures of inequality and worked together to overcome them. He viewed education as the most powerful tool for social transformation. He saw it as a way to awaken self-respect, challenge prejudice, and create a sense of shared humanity. However, even today, educational institutions often reflect the same biases and exclusions that exist in society whether through unequal access, biased curricula, or unfair evaluation systems. His vision reminds us that education must not only provide knowledge but also develop equality, empathy, and justice. When classrooms become spaces of inclusion and dialogue, they carry forward his lifelong mission of liberation through learning.

His understanding of feminism was deeply connected to his critique of caste-based patriarchy. He recognized that gender inequality in India could not be separated from the structures of caste, which controlled women's bodies, choices, and opportunities. His writings and reforms continue to inspire present-day movements and policies aimed at achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. He believed that true social change required more than sympathy or reformist gestures; it needed a complete transformation of social and economic structures. He advocated universal education for women, equal access to work and property, strong legal protections, and a cultural shift that challenged patriarchal and casteist norms. These strategies, he argued, were essential to dismantle the intertwined systems of caste and

gender oppression. By pursuing these principles, society moves closer to realizing the constitutional promises of liberty, equality, and dignity for all.

Literature as Resistance: Marginal Discourse and Social Justice

The study of literature becomes a powerful act of resistance when examined through the lenses of caste, class, and gender. In this context, literary works are not just stories or artistic expressions, they are instruments of protest, memory, and reclamation. Dr. Ambedkar's writings, along with those of other marginalized thinkers and authors, challenge the dominance of traditional literary canons that have historically silenced certain voices. By bringing these voices to the center, such texts expose the injustices hidden within cultural and social narratives. Engaging with literature from the margins allows students to develop critical awareness and empathy. It equips them to question established systems of knowledge and to recognize how exclusion operates not only in society but also within literature itself.

When the Indian classroom centers marginal voices and perspectives, it transforms into a space that reflects the true spirit of participatory democracy where every voice matters and every experience is valued. This approach to teaching moves beyond the idea that literature is neutral or detached from reality. Instead, it encourages students and teachers to question what is represented, who is silenced, and why. By examining literature through the lens of marginal discourse, the classroom becomes an active site of reflection and renewal. It allows learners to see how stories, poems, and essays carry political and ethical meanings, shaping the way we understand justice and identity. In this way, marginality itself becomes a source of creativity and moral insight — a force that challenges dominant narratives and opens new possibilities for empathy, equality, and social transformation.

Transforming the Social Order: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

Dr. Ambedkar's demand for the annihilation of caste is, at its core, a vision for rebuilding society on the timeless principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. For him, these were not abstract ideals but living values that needed to shape everyday life and collective action. He believed that a truly democratic society could only emerge when individuals were free from inherited hierarchies and when mutual respect replaced social exclusion. Within this vision, the classroom plays a vital role. It becomes a space where these constitutional principles are practiced and experienced through shared learning and open dialogue. His intersectional approach provides a framework for understanding how caste, class, and gender interact to shape social inequality. His analysis goes beyond identifying oppression, it offers practical and intellectual tools to challenge and transform it. By connecting these overlapping systems of

power, Ambedkar showed that genuine progress requires confronting all forms of injustice together, not in isolation. His lasting legacy lies in his belief that social change is inseparable from ethical reflection and intellectual effort. Transformation, for Ambedkar, was not only a matter of policy or law but also of thought, dialogue, and moral responsibility. This lesson continues to resonate in classrooms, social movements, and legal reforms, where each new generation is called to question inherited hierarchies and work toward a more equal and humane society.

In conclusion, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's ideas continue to hold significance not only in shaping constitutional thought and policy but also in guiding how we teach, learn, and engage with society. His emphasis on 'marginal discourse', articulated in *Annihilation of Caste*, challenges educators and students alike to rethink the purpose of learning itself. When classroom discussions embrace this vision, they move beyond academic study and become exercises in active citizenship and social awareness. Through dialogue, empathy, and critical reflection, the classroom transforms into a living space where the ideals of equality, liberty, and fraternity are practiced and renewed. This approach not only questions existing hierarchies but also nurtures a shared commitment to justice and inclusion. In carrying forward Dr. Ambedkar's legacy education became a means of realizing the Constitution's promises and building the moral and intellectual foundation for a truly *Viksit Bharat* an India that is both developed and just by 2047.

Works Cited

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