

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Global Relevance in Equity and Justice: A Vision for Viksit Bharat 2047 and Sustainable Development

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Abstract:

This paper explores the global relevance of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's ideas on equity and justice, contextualizing them within contemporary discourses of sustainable development and India's national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. It argues that Ambedkar's philosophical foundations - social democracy, constitutional morality, and economic justice - resonate strongly with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and remain indispensable for inclusive nation-building. Drawing on major scholarly works, constitutional analysis, and global comparisons, the study demonstrates that Ambedkar's humanist framework continues to guide policies aimed at eradicating inequality, promoting gender justice, and sustaining democratic institutions worldwide.

1. Introduction:

Few thinkers have so powerfully bridged the moral and material dimensions of justice as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956). As the principal architect of the Indian Constitution and an early global theorist of equality, Ambedkar envisaged democracy as a way of life grounded in liberty, equality, and fraternity. His insistence that political freedom is meaningless without social and economic justice provides a universal framework for addressing inequality—an issue still at the heart of global governance.

In the 21st century, India's aspiration to become a developed nation by 2047 (Viksit Bharat 2047) aligns naturally with Ambedkar's inclusive vision. Simultaneously, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development advances similar goals: poverty eradication, gender equality, decent work, and peace. This study therefore examines how Ambedkar's thought continues to inform both global and national strategies for equitable and sustainable progress.

2. Review of Literature

Scholarly engagement with Ambedkar's legacy has expanded beyond Indian studies into global political thought.

- **Gail Omvedt (1994)** interprets Ambedkar as a radical humanist whose critique of caste prefigured intersectional analyses of social exclusion.
- **Anand Teltumbde (2008)** emphasizes Ambedkar's economic philosophy and its parallels with Western welfare models.
- **Christophe Jaffrelot (2005)** situates Ambedkar within comparative frameworks of minority rights and constitutional democracy.
- **Aakash Singh Rathore (2018)** explores Ambedkar's moral realism, connecting it to contemporary human-rights discourse.

- **Eleanor Zelliot (2004)** documents Ambedkar's mobilization of Dalits as a democratic awakening comparable to global civil-rights movements.

Beyond Indian scholarship, UNESCO (2016) acknowledged Ambedkar as a global advocate of social justice, while comparative political theorists such as Bhikhu Parekh (2011) and Will Kymlicka (2015) recognize his contribution to multicultural citizenship theory. Yet few studies have directly linked his philosophy to Viksit Bharat 2047 or the SDGs—an analytical gap this paper addresses.

3. Ambedkar's Philosophy of Equity and Justice

3.1 Social Democracy and Moral Foundation

Ambedkar defined social democracy as “a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality, and fraternity as the principles of life.”

Unlike formal legal equality, his social democracy demanded transformation of cultural values that perpetuate hierarchy. Caste, he argued, is not merely a social arrangement but a “graded inequality” that violates human dignity. His call for the annihilation of caste anticipates today’s global campaigns against racial and ethnic discrimination.

3.2 Economic Democracy

For Ambedkar, democracy was incomplete without economic reorganization. His 1944 memorandum, State and Minorities, proposed state ownership of key industries and land redistribution to ensure that political rights translate into material equality. These ideas echo the Nordic welfare model and modern debates on inclusive capitalism. As Labour Member of the Viceroy’s Council (1942–46), Ambedkar introduced policies such as the eight-hour working day and maternity benefits - precursors to the International Labour Organization’s conventions on decent work.

3.3 Gender Equality

Ambedkar’s efforts to pass the Hindu Code Bill (1948) reflected his commitment to gender justice, granting women rights to property, divorce, and adoption. Although partially realized later, the reform anticipated SDG 5’s emphasis on gender equality. His advocacy situates him among global pioneers of women’s legal empowerment alongside Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan.

4. Global Parallels and Relevance

Ambedkar’s struggles mirror other 20th-century liberation movements. His constitutionalism parallels Abraham Lincoln’s moral politics and Nelson Mandela’s reconciliation ethics. Both Ambedkar and Martin Luther King Jr. employed non-violent, law-based resistance against systemic injustice. The universality of Ambedkar’s ideas is evident in

their resonance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which affirms equality, dignity, and freedom - principles Ambedkar had already embedded in India's Constitution.

Today, over 260 million people worldwide face caste-like or descent-based discrimination (UN OHCHR Report 2016). Ambedkar's emancipatory framework thus remains globally relevant as an intellectual resource for anti-discrimination policies and affirmative-action models.

5. Ambedkar's Legacy and the Indian Constitution

Ambedkar's drafting of the Constitution of India (1950) institutionalized equity and justice through Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. The constitutional guarantee of equality before law (Article 14) and prohibition of discrimination (Article 15) make India a pioneer in rights-based democracy. His model of reservation or affirmative action for historically oppressed groups has inspired similar initiatives in the United States, South Africa, and Brazil.

Furthermore, his concept of Constitutional Morality - the ethical obligation of citizens and rulers to uphold democratic principles - has gained renewed importance in contemporary debates on governance and accountability.

6. Linking Ambedkar with Viksit Bharat 2047

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 seeks to transform India into a developed, inclusive, and resilient nation by its centenary of independence. Its four pillars - economic prosperity, social inclusion, environmental responsibility, and good governance - mirror Ambedkar's multidimensional approach to justice.

Sr No	Ambedkarian Principle	Viksit Bharat 2047 Application
1	Social Democracy	Empowerment of marginalized groups through education, healthcare, and digital access (Digital India , PM-Awas Yojana, Ayushman Card).
2	Economic Democracy	Promotion of self-reliance and equitable growth via Atmanirbhar Bharat , MSME support, and rural entrepreneurship.
3	Gender Equality	Policies such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and increased women's political representation.
4	Constitutional Morality	Strengthening transparent, accountable institutions - core to sustainable governance.

Ambedkar's insistence that "political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy" serves as a moral compass for policy design under Viksit Bharat 2047.

7. Ambedkar and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Ambedkar's vision corresponds with several SDGs:

Sr No	SDG	Ambedkar's Contribution / Analogue
1	SDG 1 – No Poverty	Advocated state intervention and redistribution; State and Minorities blueprint
2	SDG 4 – Quality Education	Founded the People's Education Society (1945); stressed education as social liberation.
3	SDG 5 – Gender Equality	Drafted Hindu Code reforms.
4	SDG 8 – Decent Work	Introduced labour protections and social security measures
5	SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities	Framed affirmative-action policies to rectify structural injustice.
6	SDG 16 – Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions	Authored a constitution ensuring rule of law and independent institutions.

Hence, Ambedkar's philosophy functions as a domestic translation of the global SDG agenda, providing a culturally rooted yet universally valid path to sustainable development.

8. Policy Implications and Pathways

1. Inclusive Education and Digital Access:

Ambedkar's call for universal education supports initiatives such as National Digital University (2023). Bridging digital divides fulfils both SDG 4 and his egalitarian ethos.

2. Economic Empowerment:

Programmes like Stand-Up India and PM Mudra Yojana extend Ambedkar's idea of economic democracy by promoting entrepreneurship among SC/ST and women beneficiaries.

3. Environmental Ethics:

While Ambedkar wrote little on ecology, his moral framework implies inter-generational justice, a cornerstone of sustainability. Integrating social justice with climate policy ensures that environmental burdens do not reproduce inequality.

4. Governance through Constitutional Morality:

Training civil servants in constitutional ethics and citizen-centric governance strengthens institutional sustainability—a prerequisite for Viksit Bharat 2047.

9. Global Impact and Recognition

Ambedkar's influence transcends India. Statues, research centers, and academic courses dedicated to him exist in London, Tokyo, New York, and Seoul. The United Nations (2016) commemorated his 125th birth anniversary as a celebration of equality and inclusion. Scholars

now describe him as an early theorist of intersectionality—analyzing how caste, class, and gender intersect to produce compounded disadvantage.

His vision informs global debates on human rights, affirmative action, and democratic pluralism, making him a key figure in comparative constitutional studies.

10. Discussion: Toward a Just and Sustainable Global Order

Ambedkar's principles invite a re-imagining of development as justice-based rather than purely growth-based. Economic expansion without social transformation, he warned, leads to “inequality breeding contempt and instability.” Contemporary global challenges - climate change, digital inequality, and populist authoritarianism - underscore his insight that true sustainability requires moral equality.

Thus, implementing Viksit Bharat 2047 in an Ambedkarite spirit demands:

- Integration of **social indicators** with GDP-based growth metrics.
- Institutional safeguards against marginalization in the digital economy.
- A commitment to **constitutional morality** as the ethical foundation of policy.

11. Conclusion

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's intellectual legacy provides an enduring moral and constitutional framework for both India's national transformation and global sustainable development. His synthesis of social, economic, and political democracy offers a human-centered model for progress that aligns perfectly with Viksit Bharat 2047 and the UN SDGs.

In essence:

- Ambedkar's Social Democracy = SDGs' Sustainable Development
- Ambedkar's Economic Justice = Viksit Bharat's Inclusive Growth
- Ambedkar's Constitutional Morality = Global Ethical Governance

Realizing Viksit Bharat 2047 is therefore not only an economic aspiration but a moral realization of Ambedkar's dream - a world order grounded in justice, equity, and fraternity.

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