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Role of Bhimrao Ambedkar in Indian Society: A sociological perspective

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Abstract: *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar played a transformative and foundational role in Indian politics, especially in shaping modern India's democratic and constitutional framework. Ambedkar was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution.*

He advocated for social justice, fundamental rights, universal adult franchise, and equality before the law. His legal and intellectual input ensured protection for minorities, Scheduled Castes (Dalits), and women. Champion of Dalit Rights. Ambedkar led movements for the upliftment of Dalits (then called "Untouchables"), demanding equal access to public spaces and education.

He emphasized the need for reservation policies to correct historical injustices. He founded the Scheduled Castes Federation (1942) and later the Republican Party of India (1956), to give a political voice to the marginalized.

He served as India's first Law Minister (1947–1951) but resigned in protest over inadequate efforts to reform Hindu personal laws. Ambedkar emphasized the importance of economic and social democracy, not just political democracy.

He warned against the dangers of caste in democracy and promoted education, agitation, and organization as tools for empowerment. Ambedkar's legacy continues to influence Indian politics, especially around issues of social justice, equality, and affirmative action.

Key words: Indian Society, transformative and foundational role, social justice, fundamental rights

Indian politics after independence in 1947 has evolved through various phases, shaped by democratic institutions, political parties, and socio-economic developments.

Era of Congress Dominance (1947–1977) : The Indian National Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, dominated national politics. India adopted a parliamentary democracy, with emphasis on planning, industrialization, and non-alignment in foreign policy. Nehru was succeeded by Lal Bahadur Shastri and then Indira Gandhi, who centralized power and declared the Emergency (1975–77), a controversial period that curtailed civil liberties.

Rise of Opposition and Coalition Politics (1977–1999): In 1977, the Janata Party defeated Congress after the Emergency, marking the first non-Congress government.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged in the 1980s, gaining strength. Coalition governments became common in the 1990s due to fragmented mandates (e.g., United Front, NDA).

Economic Liberalization (1991 onwards): Under P.V. Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh, India shifted from a socialist model to economic liberalization, opening markets and reducing state control. This led to rapid economic growth, urbanization, and rise of the middle class.

Rise of BJP and Identity Politics (2000s–Present): The BJP grew under Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and later Narendra Modi, winning majorities in 2014 and 2019. Indian politics has seen increasing religious, regional, and caste-based mobilization. Issues like Hindutva, nationalism, federalism, and welfare politics have become central.

Current Trends-

- Focus on development, digital governance, and social welfare schemes.
- Growing regional parties influence state politics.
- Concerns around press freedom, judiciary independence, and secularism are widely debated.

Caste- Caste has played a significant and complex role in Indian politics since independence. While the Constitution seeks to eliminate caste-based discrimination, caste continues to influence political behavior, party strategies, and governance. Here's an overview:

1. Caste as a Social and Political Identity : Caste is a traditional social hierarchy in India, but in politics, it has become a tool for mobilization and identity assertion. Voting patterns often reflect caste affiliations, especially in rural areas.

2. Role in Electoral Politics: Political parties often select candidates and frame policies based on caste considerations. Caste-based vote banks have emerged, where groups like Dalits, OBCs (Other Backward Classes), and upper castes support particular parties.



Reservation policies for SCs, STs, and OBCs in education, jobs, and legislatures have both empowered communities and led to political debates.

3. Rise of Caste-Based Parties: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh, led by Dalit leaders like Kanshi Ram and Mayawati, gave political power to marginalized communities.

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and other regional parties used caste identities (especially OBCs) for political support.

4. Mandal Commission and Backward Caste Politics: In the 1990s, the Mandal Commission's recommendations for OBC reservations reshaped Indian politics.

It led to the rise of backward caste leaders and restructured party strategies around caste dynamics.

5. Contemporary Trends: While caste-based mobilization remains strong, there is also a shift toward development-based politics, especially among urban and young voters. Some parties use "social engineering" to form broad caste alliances (e.g., BJP's combination of upper castes and non-dominant OBCs/Dalits). Caste-based violence and discrimination still occur and influence political responses. Caste remains a deep-rooted factor in Indian politics—both as a tool for empowerment and as a challenge to national unity and equality. Political parties continue to navigate its influence while trying to balance identity politics with development agendas.

Would you like a short essay version of this summary or a case study example (like UP or Bihar)?

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's contributions to women's empowerment during the formation of the Indian Constitution and his advocacy for the Hindu Code Bill were pivotal in shaping a more equitable society.

Constitutional Safeguards for Women- As the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, Ambedkar ensured the inclusion of provisions that aimed to eliminate gender-based discrimination:

- Article 14: Guarantees equality before the law.
- Article 15: Prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.
- Article 16: Ensures equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.
- These articles laid the foundation for legal equality between men and women in India.

The Hindu Code Bill: A Landmark Reform Ambedkar's most significant legislative initiative for women's rights was the Hindu Code Bill, introduced in 1947. This bill sought to reform Hindu personal laws, which were deeply patriarchal and discriminatory towards women. Key provisions included:

Property Rights: Women were granted equal rights to inherit property, challenging the traditional norms where women had limited or no rights.

Marriage and Divorce: Introduction of civil marriage and divorce provisions, allowing women to seek divorce and judicial separation, which was previously not permitted.

Monogamy: Prohibition of polygamy, ensuring that men could have only one wife, thereby protecting women from exploitation.

Ambedkar viewed the Hindu Code Bill as crucial for women's liberation and believed it was as important as the Constitution itself.

Opposition and Legacy- Despite Ambedkar's efforts, the Hindu Code Bill faced immense opposition from conservative and orthodox sections of society, leading to its eventual dilution and partial enactment. However, Ambedkar's vision laid the groundwork for future reforms, including the Hindu Succession Act (1956), which further advanced women's property rights.

Ambedkar's commitment to women's rights is encapsulated in his quote: "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved."

This philosophy continues to inspire movements for gender equality in India. In summary, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's advocacy for women's rights during the formation of the Indian Constitution and through the Hindu Code Bill was instrumental in challenging entrenched patriarchal norms and promoting gender equality in India. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Jawaharlal Nehru, two towering figures in post-independence India, had a complex and often contentious relationship, particularly concerning issues of caste, governance, and national unity.

Divergent Views on Caste and Social Justice: Ambedkar, as the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, was a staunch advocate for the rights of Dalits and other marginalized communities. He championed affirmative action and was instrumental in securing reservations in education and employment for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. In contrast, Nehru, while sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged, expressed reservations about the long-term efficacy of reservations, emphasizing meritocracy and efficiency in governance. In a 1961 letter to chief ministers, Nehru stated,



"They (Scheduled Castes and Tribes) deserve help but, even so, I dislike any kind of reservation, more particularly in service. I react strongly against anything which leads to inefficiency and second-rate standards."

Ambedkar, in response, criticized Nehru for focusing primarily on the protection of Muslim rights while neglecting the needs of Dalits and other marginalized groups. He argued that these communities required more attention and support to uplift their socio-economic status.

The Hindu Code Bill and Gender Reforms: Ambedkar's advocacy for the Hindu Code Bill, which aimed to reform Hindu personal laws and grant women equal rights in marriage, inheritance, and property, was another point of contention. While Nehru recognized the importance of social reforms, he was cautious about implementing such sweeping changes, fearing potential backlash from conservative sections of society. The bill faced significant opposition and was eventually diluted, with many of its provisions enacted piecemeal over time.

Disagreement on Jammu and Kashmir's Special Status: One of the most significant disagreements between Ambedkar and Nehru centered on the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370. Ambedkar opposed this provision, believing it would create a separate sovereignty within India and undermine national unity. He felt that if India were to defend Kashmir, feed its people, and provide equal rights to Kashmiris, it was unjust to deny India and Indians rights within Kashmir.

Despite Ambedkar's objections, Nehru, with the support of his confidant N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, introduced the motion for Article 370 in the Constituent Assembly. Ambedkar refused to attend the session that passed the motion, signaling his strong dissent. Political Partisanship and Legacy

Despite their differences, both leaders respected each other's commitment to India's progress. Nehru acknowledged Ambedkar as a "symbol of the revolt against all the oppressive features of Hindu society," while Ambedkar recognized Nehru's contributions to the nation's development. However, their ideological rifts, particularly on issues of caste, governance, and national unity, reflect the broader challenges of balancing social justice with national integration in a newly independent India.

In summary, the political dynamics between Ambedkar and Nehru were marked by a blend of collaboration and contention, with both leaders striving to shape India's future through their respective visions. Indian society is characterized by a rich tapestry of cultural diversity, yet it faces significant barriers that impede social equity and cohesion. These obstacles are deeply rooted in historical practices, social structures, and systemic inequalities.

1. Caste-Based Discrimination: The caste system, though constitutionally abolished, continues to influence social interactions and opportunities. Dalits and Adivasis often face exclusion from public spaces, limited access to education, and are overrepresented in low-paying, hazardous occupations. In rural areas, practices like separate seating in schools and restrictions on using common facilities persist, reflecting deep-seated social prejudices.

2. Gender Inequality: Women in India encounter multifaceted challenges, including lower literacy rates, limited access to education, and underrepresentation in the workforce. Cultural norms often prioritize sons over daughters, leading to gender-based discrimination. This bias extends to practices like honor killings and societal pressure to conform to traditional roles, hindering women's empowerment and participation in public life.

3. Healthcare Accessibility: Access to healthcare services remains uneven, particularly in rural regions. A significant disparity exists, with 74% of doctors serving urban populations. This urban-centric distribution, coupled with inadequate infrastructure in rural areas, results in unmet medical needs and higher mortality rates among rural children.

4. Educational Disparities: While strides have been made in expanding education, disparities persist. Girls, especially in rural and tribal areas, often face barriers to education due to cultural norms and economic constraints. This educational gap limits opportunities for personal and professional growth, perpetuating cycles of poverty and social stratification.

5. Disability Inclusion: Individuals with disabilities encounter significant obstacles, including lack of awareness about rights, inaccessible infrastructure, and limited educational and employment opportunities. Societal stigma and inadequate implementation of supportive policies further marginalize this group, hindering their full participation in society.

6. Urban-Rural Divide: The urban-rural divide exacerbates inequalities, with rural areas often lacking basic amenities such as quality education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. This disparity



leads to increased migration to cities, where competition for resources and services intensifies, sometimes leading to urban poverty and social tensions.

7. Religious and Ideological Intolerance: Religious diversity is a hallmark of Indian society; however, intolerance and communal tensions have led to social fragmentation. Minority communities, including nonreligious individuals, often face discrimination and exclusion, limiting their freedom of expression and participation in public life. Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive policy interventions, societal awareness, and a commitment to inclusive development. Efforts must focus on dismantling discriminatory practices, ensuring equitable access to resources, and fostering a culture of respect and equality for all individuals, regardless of their background or identity.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's contributions to Indian society are profound and enduring, shaping the nation's legal, social, and economic landscapes.

Architect of the Indian Constitution-As the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Ambedkar played a pivotal role in framing India's Constitution. He ensured the inclusion of provisions that guarantee equality, liberty, and fraternity, laying the foundation for a secular and democratic republic .

Champion of Social Justice- Ambedkar dedicated his life to dismantling the caste system and advocating for the rights of marginalized communities. He led movements like the Mahad Satyagraha, demanding Dalits' right to access public resources, and played a crucial role in the Poona Pact, securing separate electorates for Dalits .

Advocate for Women's Rights- He was a strong proponent of gender equality, advocating for women's rights in marriage, inheritance, and property. His efforts culminated in the introduction of the Hindu Code Bill, which sought to grant women equal rights, laying the groundwork for later reforms in family law .

Promoter of Education- Ambedkar emphasized the transformative power of education, establishing institutions and advocating for policies that promote inclusive education. His slogan "Educate, Agitate, Organize" encapsulated his belief in education as a tool for social change.

Economic Reformer-He introduced economic reforms aimed at reducing poverty and addressing socio-economic disparities. His insights into economic policies, including advocating for industrialization and land reforms, laid the groundwork for inclusive economic growth .

Legacy of Equality and Justice-Ambedkar's legacy continues to inspire movements advocating for social justice, human rights, and equality. His teachings resonate in legal frameworks, policies promoting affirmative action, and societal shifts towards a more inclusive and egalitarian India .

In conclusion, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's multifaceted contributions have indelibly shaped modern India, fostering a society that strives for equality, justice, and inclusive development.

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