



## SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY IN INDIA: AN AMBEDKAR PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*The Indian Constitution represents a transformative social document aimed at dismantling historical inequalities rooted in caste, gender, class, and religion. Drafted under the leadership of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Constitution envisioned not merely political democracy but also social and economic democracy. This paper critically examines the constitutional provisions related to backward classes, minorities, women, workers, farmers, media, and Dalits, analysing their intent, implementation, and contemporary challenges. Using an Ambedkarite theoretical framework and qualitative textual analysis, the study highlights the gap between constitutional ideals and lived realities. It argues that the persistence of caste discrimination, economic inequality, and institutional erosion threatens constitutional morality. The paper concludes that safeguarding the Constitution is essential for sustaining democracy, social justice, and human dignity in India.*



**KEYWORDS:** Indian Constitution, Social Justice, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Marginalised Communities, Democracy, Constitutional Morality.

### INTRODUCTION

The Indian Constitution is not merely a legal framework but a revolutionary social charter designed to reconstruct Indian society on the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Constitution, consistently argued that political democracy without social and economic democracy is hollow. Understanding the Constitution, therefore, necessitates an understanding of India's historical injustices, particularly caste-based oppression and social exclusion.

Despite constitutional guarantees, marginalised communities continue to face discrimination, violence, and economic deprivation. This paper examines the constitutional vision for social justice and evaluates its implementation with respect to backward classes, minorities, women, workers, farmers, Dalits, and the media. It situates the discussion within contemporary sociopolitical realities and Ambedkar's warnings regarding constitutional failure due to unethical governance.

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## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyse constitutional provisions aimed at the upliftment of marginalised communities.
2. To examine the role of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in shaping social justice policies.
3. To assess the gap between constitutional ideals and contemporary realities.
4. To critically evaluate emerging threats to constitutional democracy.
5. To propose the need for collective resistance to safeguard constitutional value

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical research methodology. The research is based on:

- Textual analysis of constitutional provisions, particularly Articles related to social justice.
- Secondary sources, including books, scholarly articles, commission reports, and Ambedkar's writings.
- Theoretical framework rooted in Ambedkarite thought, focusing on constitutional morality, social democracy, and human dignity.
- Critical interpretation of contemporary socio-political developments affecting marginalised communities.

The study does not employ empirical data collection but relies on interpretative analysis to understand structural inequalities and institutional failures.

## CONSTITUTION AND BACKWARD CLASSES

The Indian Constitution provides special safeguards for socially and educationally backward classes under Articles 15, 16, 340, and related provisions. Reservation policies, scholarships, and welfare measures were introduced to ensure equitable participation in education and employment. The establishment of backward class commissions aimed to periodically assess their socio-economic conditions.

However, the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations in 1990 exposed deep social resistance. While Dalit communities largely supported these reforms, opposition from privileged groups highlighted entrenched caste hierarchies. This resistance reflects the contradiction between constitutional equality and social reality.

## CONSTITUTION AND MINORITIES

The Constitution guarantees minorities the right to preserve their language, culture, and religion under Articles 29 and 30. Educational institutions established by minorities receive constitutional protection, and welfare measures such as reservations and scholarships aim to promote inclusion.

Dr. Ambedkar rejected the notion that religious conflict was the primary driver of India's historical invasions, emphasising political and economic motives instead. Despite constitutional protections, minorities today face communal violence, discrimination, and shrinking civic spaces, raising serious concerns about secularism and democratic pluralism.

## CONSTITUTION AND WOMEN

Dr. Ambedkar was a pioneer of women's emancipation and viewed gender equality as central to social reform. The Constitution prohibits gender discrimination and ensures equal rights in education, employment, property, and political participation.

Legal reforms addressing dowry, domestic violence, child marriage, and maternity benefits represent constitutional commitments to women's rights. Ambedkar's resignation over the failure of

the Hindu Code Bill underscores the resistance to gender justice. Despite progress, patriarchal structures continue to restrict women's constitutional freedoms.

### CONSTITUTION AND WORKERS

As Labour Minister, Dr. Ambedkar introduced landmark labour reforms, including the eight-hour workday and social security provisions. The Constitution safeguards workers' rights to fair wages, safe working conditions, social security, unionisation, and legal remedies.

In the neoliberal era, however, labour rights face dilution through contractualisation, privatisation, and weakening of trade unions. This shift undermines the constitutional promise of economic justice.

### CONSTITUTION AND FARMERS

The Constitution envisages land reforms, cooperative farming, and equitable resource distribution to ensure rural justice. These measures aimed to dismantle feudal structures and caste-based exploitation.

Despite these intentions, farmer suicides, indebtedness, and agrarian distress persist. Market-oriented policies and corporate control over agriculture contradict constitutional commitments to farmers' welfare.

### CONSTITUTION, MEDIA, AND DEMOCRACY

The media, often regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy, plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse. Dr. Ambedkar himself used journalism as a tool for social reform.

However, contemporary media often marginalises Dalit and minority voices while reinforcing dominant caste narratives. Corporate ownership and political influence compromise media neutrality, threatening freedom of expression and democratic accountability.

### DALITS AND THE CRISIS OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY

Dr. Ambedkar warned that political democracy cannot survive without social democracy. Persistent caste atrocities, economic inequality, unemployment, and exclusion reveal the fragility of constitutional governance.

Wealth concentration, privatisation, and erosion of welfare policies disproportionately affect Dalits and other marginalised communities. Ambedkar's assertion that a good Constitution can fail due to bad governance remains profoundly relevant.

### CONCLUSION

The Indian Constitution remains one of the most progressive social documents in the world. Yet, its transformative potential is undermined by social resistance, institutional decay, and neoliberal economic policies. The erosion of constitutional morality threatens democracy, equality, and human dignity.

Safeguarding the Constitution requires collective action by Dalits, backward classes, minorities, women, workers, farmers, journalists, and progressive democratic forces.

Protecting constitutional values is not merely a legal obligation but a moral and political responsibility essential for sustaining India's democratic future.

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