

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and the Foundations of Inclusive Education: Philosophical Insights, Structural Reforms, and Contemporary Relevance

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Abstract: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, renowned for his contributions to law, economics, and social reform, was also a pioneering educationist whose vision of inclusive education aimed to dismantle caste-based inequalities and empower marginalized communities. This paper examines Ambedkar's educational philosophy, the reforms he advocated, and their continued relevance in addressing contemporary challenges in educational equity and access.

Keywords: Ambedkar, Inclusive Education, Social Justice, Educational Reforms, Caste Discrimination, Equity in Education, Dalit Empowerment, Educational Policy, NEP 2020

1. Introduction:

Education, as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar powerfully articulated, is not merely a tool for individual advancement but a fundamental instrument for collective liberation and social transformation. His declaration, "Education is the milk of a lioness; drink it and you will roar," encapsulates his belief in education as the most potent means to dismantle deeply entrenched caste hierarchies and socio-economic inequalities (Zelliot, 2005, p. 137).

In the Indian context, caste has historically dictated access to knowledge, with Brahmanical traditions systematically denying education to Dalits and other marginalized communities. Against this backdrop, Ambedkar's advocacy for universal, state-funded, and compulsory education was revolutionary. His role in institutionalizing social justice through educational provisions in the Indian Constitution—particularly the emphasis on equality of opportunity and the right to education—marks a watershed moment in India's social and educational history (Constituent Assembly Debates, 1948).

Ambedkar's educational philosophy was not limited to the provision of access. It encompassed the quality, purpose, and inclusiveness of education. He championed secular, rational, and scientific learning that fosters critical thinking and challenges social dogmas. Drawing from liberal democratic values, Buddhist ethics, and American pragmatism—especially the educational theories of John Dewey—Ambedkar envisioned an education system rooted in dignity, equality, and human rights (Rodrigues, 2002, pp. 56–59).

This literature review aims to unpack Ambedkar's educational thought, examine the policies and reforms he advocated, and situate them within contemporary debates on inclusive education. Despite constitutional guarantees and policy interventions like the Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009) and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the educational system in India remains fraught with inequities. Caste, class, gender, region, and language continue to act as barriers to educational equity, mirroring the very concerns Ambedkar identified nearly a century ago (Deshpande, 2011).

Therefore, a return to Ambedkar's educational vision is not merely an academic exercise but a necessary intervention in rethinking and restructuring the educational landscape in India today. His thought offers a robust framework to critique existing policies, propose inclusive alternatives, and reimagine education as a means of social emancipation.

2. Objectives of the Study:

- To analyze Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's contributions as an educationist.
- To explore his philosophy of inclusive education and its relevance today.
- To assess the impact of his reforms on educational policies and marginalized communities.
- To compare Ambedkar's educational philosophy with contemporary inclusive education frameworks.
- To identify existing challenges in implementing inclusive education in India.

3. Rationale of the Study:

Education is a powerful tool of social transformation. In the context of India's caste-based inequalities, Ambedkar viewed education as a means of liberation and equality. Despite legal safeguards and policy interventions, educational disparities persist. This study revisits Ambedkar's philosophy to critically evaluate the gaps between policy and practice and to suggest pathways for inclusive education in the 21st century.

4. Methodology:

- **Design:** Qualitative research with historical-documentary analysis.
- **Sources:** Primary sources (Ambedkar's speeches, writings), secondary sources (books, articles), and policy documents (NEP 2020, RTE Act).
- **Data Tools:** Content analysis and thematic coding.
- **Quantitative Support:** Statistical data from UDISE+ 2022-23, NSSO, and Census reports to support arguments.

5. Review of Literature:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, renowned for his contributions to law, economics, and social reform, was also a pioneering educationist whose vision of inclusive education aimed to dismantle caste-based inequalities and empower marginalized communities. His perspective on education stemmed from personal experience and scholarly insight. Born into an oppressed Mahar caste, Ambedkar faced intense discrimination during his early schooling. This discrimination shaped his understanding of systemic oppression and his belief that education was the greatest weapon for social change (Zelliot, 1992, p. 78).

Ambedkar's academic journey was marked by exceptional achievements, earning multiple doctorates from Columbia University and the London School of Economics. His experience studying in liberal Western societies highlighted the deep contrast with India's rigid caste structure. He emphasized that education must serve the purpose of moral and intellectual liberation, not merely vocational skill-building. In his speech at the Bombay Presidency Committee in 1917, he declared, "The backward classes have come to realise that after all education is the greatest material benefit for which they can fight... Nothing else can pull them out of their servitude" (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 65).

In his essay, *Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar laid down his radical critique of the caste system and emphasized education as a tool for dismantling it. He criticized religious doctrines that perpetuated caste hierarchies and argued that unless these ideologies were challenged intellectually, inclusive education would remain a dream. "What good is literacy if it only trains men to be slaves?" he asked (Ambedkar, 1936, p. 40). His writings portray education not as a neutral process but as a battleground for social justice.

Ambedkar's institutional efforts reflect his dedication to inclusive education. In founding the People's Education Society in 1945, he envisioned education for the marginalized that was both accessible and empowering. Siddharth College, one of its premier institutions, symbolized educational opportunity for the downtrodden. His educational philosophy was rooted in democratic principles and the assertion that all human beings possess equal capacity to learn when given equal opportunities (Keer, 2015, p. 342).

His debates in the Constituent Assembly underscored his commitment to state-sponsored education. While framing the Constitution, he ensured education was included in the Directive Principles (Article 45) and later as a Fundamental Right (Article 21A). He strongly supported affirmative action, arguing, "We must begin by recognizing that education is the basis of the claim for equality. Without education, equality is meaningless" (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 321).

Ambedkar's educational views anticipated modern inclusive education frameworks. The Right to Education Act (2009) and National Education Policy (2020) echo his advocacy for state responsibility and equity. The NEP's emphasis on mother-tongue instruction and holistic development finds resonance with Ambedkar's advocacy for culturally sensitive education that counters Brahmanical hegemony (Rawat, 2011, p. 115). However, these policies

often fall short of addressing structural discrimination. Scholars like Nambissan (2010) argue that implementation gaps reflect deeper casteist attitudes embedded in school systems.

Globally, Ambedkar's educational thought aligns with critical pedagogical traditions, especially those of Paulo Freire and W.E.B. Du Bois. Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" stresses the need for education to create critical consciousness, echoing Ambedkar's insistence that education must awaken self-respect and resistance among the oppressed (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Du Bois's concept of "double consciousness" and the elevation of the "Talented Tenth" as community leaders similarly parallels Ambedkar's vision for Dalit empowerment through elite education.

Contemporary educational challenges highlight the incomplete realization of Ambedkar's vision. Dropout rates remain high among SC/ST students, with UDISE+ 2022–23 indicating systemic underachievement due to poverty, discrimination, and lack of academic support. Census 2011 data confirm a continued gap in literacy between SC/ST communities and the general population. These disparities suggest that caste remains a critical axis of exclusion, especially in access to higher education and digital resources (Thorat & Newman, 2010, p. 213).

Moreover, the digital divide, especially post-COVID-19, widened existing inequalities. Less than 10% of SC/ST rural households had internet access during the pandemic (NSSO, 2020), highlighting infrastructural failures in ensuring equitable online learning. Ambedkar's call for investment in educational infrastructure, especially for marginalized communities, remains largely unheeded. His proposal for polytechnic and vocational education institutions intended to equip youth with employable skills, an idea reflected in Skill India initiatives but lacking the social justice grounding Ambedkar emphasized (Jaffrelot, 2005, p. 271).

In curriculum and pedagogy, Ambedkar's influence is minimal. Textbooks often omit or sanitize the caste question, and Dalit literature and perspectives are marginalized. Teachers lack training to address caste sensitively, leading to implicit biases in classrooms. Ambedkar envisioned education that would not only be inclusive in numbers but transformative in content—inculcating democratic values and fostering critical engagement with social structures (Omvedt, 2004, p. 89).

Internationally, countries like South Africa and Brazil have drawn from Ambedkarite ideas of redressal and affirmative inclusion. In South Africa, post-apartheid education reform prioritized equity through state-supported mechanisms, echoing Ambedkar's belief that social inequality cannot be rectified through neutral policies. UNESCO's Education for All movement and SDG 4 resonate with Ambedkar's vision of universal, quality education—but global data still shows vast disparities in learning outcomes for marginalized groups (UNESCO, 2022).

Ambedkar's influence on policy discourse is growing, but often in symbolic terms. Statues, anniversaries, and seminars celebrate his legacy, while institutional practices remain unchanged. Bridging this symbolic-practical divide requires a radical commitment to his core ideas: affirmative action, anti-discrimination laws, inclusive curricula, and targeted funding for marginalized schools. Ambedkar's call to "educate, agitate, and organize" remains a clarion call for educators and policymakers alike (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 5, p. 97).

To realize Ambedkar's vision, systemic reforms are essential: redesigning teacher training to include anti-caste pedagogy, decentralizing education governance, ensuring accountability in resource distribution, and involving marginalized communities in policymaking. Educational transformation must go beyond access and address dignity, recognition, and democratic participation. Education must be reframed not merely as a public good but as a tool for restructuring society toward equality.

Ambedkar foresaw that political democracy without social and economic democracy would be fragile. His insistence on education as a prerequisite for citizenship remains urgent as democratic institutions face erosion and social divisions widen. Reimagining education through Ambedkarite ethics can help build an India where learning is not a privilege but a right guaranteed with dignity, respect, and equity.

6. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Vision of Inclusive Education and Its Contemporary Relevance:

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Indian Constitution and a formidable intellectual force, articulated a radical vision of inclusive education as a mechanism to emancipate the historically marginalized, especially Dalits and other oppressed castes. His advocacy for education was not merely about literacy, but about transforming societal structures through access, equity, and empowerment.

Ambedkar's emphasis on education can be traced to his lived experiences of exclusion. Born into the Mahar caste, considered "untouchable," Ambedkar endured systemic humiliation and deprivation in school. As recounted in Eleanor Zelliot's *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*, he was made to sit on a gunny sack away from "upper-caste" children, and was denied access to drinking water unless served by a peon (Zelliot, 1992, p. 78). These traumatic early experiences profoundly influenced his lifelong commitment to educational justice.

Ambedkar often stated, *"Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of everyone"* (Ambedkar, 2014, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 2, p. 10). He saw education as the foundation of a just society—*"Cultivation of mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence"* (Ambedkar, 2014, Vol. 2, p. 64). This aligns with modern educational theories which argue that inclusion in education is critical to achieving democratic participation and human rights (UNESCO, 2020).

Ambedkar's commitment to inclusive education was institutionalized in his advocacy for affirmative action in education. His defense of reservations (quotas) in educational institutions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes during the Constituent Assembly debates was based on the premise that social and historical disadvantages required state intervention. He stated:

"We must realise that our difficulty is not about the ultimate future. Our difficulty is how to make the heterogeneous mass that we have today take a decision in common and march in a cooperative way on that road which is bound to lead us to unity" (Ambedkar, *Constituent Assembly Debates*, Vol. I, p. 59).

Despite constitutional guarantees, disparities persist. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023 highlights that while enrollment rates for children aged 6–14 are over 96%, learning outcomes remain poor, and Dalit and Adivasi children disproportionately attend under-resourced public schools. According to the NSSO 75th Round (2017–18), the Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) in higher education for SCs is 23.0%, compared to 43.6% for upper castes—a stark indicator of systemic inequity.

The U-DISE+ 2021–22 data shows that dropout rates at the secondary level remain highest among SC students (18.2%) and ST students (19.7%). These figures reflect structural barriers—poverty, caste discrimination, lack of representation—that Ambedkar anticipated and sought to rectify through state-supported inclusive policies.

Furthermore, a 2020 report by Oxfam India states that only 4% of faculty members in Indian higher education institutions belong to SC/ST categories, pointing toward severe underrepresentation and exclusion at the decision-making level. Ambedkar warned against such systemic marginalization:

"Political tyranny is nothing compared to the social tyranny and a reformer who defies society is a more courageous man than a politician who defies Government" (Ambedkar, 2014, Vol. 5, p. 256).

Ambedkar's educational philosophy draws from both Enlightenment liberalism and Buddhist ethics. His admiration for John Dewey, under whom he studied at Columbia University, shaped his belief in education as a tool for participatory democracy. Dewey's emphasis on critical thinking and social responsibility resonated deeply with Ambedkar, who envisioned education as a means to foster liberty, equality, and fraternity—the three pillars later enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

In his speech at the First All-India Depressed Classes Conference (Nagpur, 1930), Ambedkar declared:

"We will attain self-elevation only if we learn self-help and gain education. Political power cannot be a substitute for education."

This view finds powerful reinforcement in modern scholarship. Kancha Ilaiah (1996) in *Why I Am Not a Hindu* emphasizes that education is the only medium through which Dalits can enter the modern economic and cultural mainstream, echoing Ambedkar's insistence on knowledge as power.

In today's context, Ambedkar's vision is more relevant than ever. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes the need for "equity and inclusion", particularly for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). Yet, critics argue that NEP falls short on enforceable affirmative action measures. Dr. Ambedkar's model, rooted in constitutional morality, demands that policies go beyond rhetoric and ensure legal guarantees of educational justice.

Moreover, in the digital era, exclusion has taken new forms. A 2021 UNESCO report found that only 11% of rural SC students had access to digital devices during the COVID-19 pandemic. This digital divide reinforces existing caste and class inequalities, further underscoring the necessity of Ambedkar's call for state-supported, inclusive, and equitable education infrastructure.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision of inclusive education was radical in its demand for structural transformation. He did not view education as a neutral domain but as a site of struggle, capable of reshaping the nation. His speeches, writings, and actions provide a foundational framework to analyze and address contemporary educational disparities. As India aspires to be a global knowledge hub, it must embrace Ambedkar's legacy—grounded in social justice, democratic values, and the moral obligation to uplift the most oppressed.

7. Academic Journey and Philosophical Foundations:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's academic odyssey was extraordinary not only for its achievements but also for its intellectual and transformative influence on his socio-political philosophy. Born into systemic discrimination, Ambedkar pursued education with exceptional rigor, ultimately becoming one of the most highly educated individuals of his era. He earned doctorates from Columbia University (Ph.D., 1927) and the London School of Economics (D.Sc., 1923)—a feat virtually unprecedented among Indians at the time, especially from the so-called "untouchable" caste background (Zelliot, 1992, p. 85; Rodrigues, 2002, p. 35).

At Columbia University, under the mentorship of the pragmatic philosopher John Dewey, Ambedkar encountered democratic ideals that deeply influenced his belief in education as an instrument of critical inquiry, individual dignity, and moral freedom. Dewey's teachings on "education as a means of social progress" would become foundational to Ambedkar's view that education is not a passive accumulation of knowledge but a powerful means of social transformation. As Ambedkar himself noted:

"The backward classes have come to realise that after all education is the greatest material benefit for which they can fight... Nothing else can pull them out of their servitude" (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 65).

Ambedkar's time in liberal Western democracies offered a stark contrast to the caste-ridden hierarchy in India. At Columbia, he found respect and intellectual camaraderie; in contrast, in India, he had to drink water only when permitted by a school peon. These contradictions shaped his understanding of education not just as a tool for individual mobility, but as the collective emancipation of an oppressed people.

In his doctoral thesis, *The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution* (1923), he integrated economic theory, colonial critique, and social justice, showing his interdisciplinary brilliance. However, even in economic texts, his concern for the excluded and the marginalized remained paramount. He believed that intellectual capital was a precondition for political power—a vision rooted in the Enlightenment ideal that reason and knowledge should dismantle tyranny, whether economic, political, or social.

Ambedkar rejected both Brahmanical monopoly over sacred knowledge and colonial education models that only served elite interests. In *Annihilation of Caste* (1936), he declared that education should foster moral courage:

"What is the use of education to a man who is not free? What is the good of learning if it does not teach you to stand on your own legs?" (Ambedkar, 2014, Vol. 1, p. 53).

His vision was inspired not just by Western liberalism, but also by Buddhist philosophy, which emphasized rationality, ethical conduct, and universal compassion. Ambedkar believed Buddhism's egalitarian ethos offered

a cultural and spiritual foundation for an inclusive society. His later embrace of Buddhism (1956) was both a spiritual and political act to reclaim dignity for Dalits through a tradition rooted in equality and education.

Ambedkar's thoughts mirror the ideas of Paulo Freire, whose *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) argues that education must be a dialogical process aimed at liberation. Like Freire, Ambedkar emphasized conscientization, or the awakening of critical awareness. For Ambedkar, education had to dismantle internalized oppression and prepare the oppressed to claim their rightful place in democratic society.

This is reflected in his address at the All-India Depressed Classes Conference (1930), where he urged:

“What is the path? It is the path of education, the path of knowledge, and the path of culture” (Ambedkar, 2014, Vol. 17, Part 2, p. 130).

Ambedkar's insistence on moral and intellectual liberation remains deeply relevant today. In an age where vocational skilling programs dominate educational discourse, his vision demands a more holistic, humanistic model—one that fosters critical thinking, democratic values, and moral integrity.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 talks about ***“education rooted in Indian values with a global outlook”***—but without Ambedkarite grounding, such rhetoric risks promoting cultural majoritarianism over social equity. A report by the Azim Premji Foundation (2021) emphasizes that marginalized students benefit not just from access to schools but from classrooms that nurture self-worth and belonging—principles central to Ambedkar's philosophy.

Moreover, caste discrimination continues to afflict Indian education. The University Grants Commission (UGC) reported over 1,300 caste-based discrimination complaints from SC/ST students between 2018 and 2022. These statistics underscore that Ambedkar's critique of the caste system in education remains tragically relevant.

8. Critique of Caste and the Role of Education:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) remains one of the most powerful indictments of India's caste system and a foundational text in anti-caste and educational discourse. Originally written as a speech for the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal in Lahore, which was ultimately cancelled due to its radical content, the essay goes beyond social critique and articulates a transformative vision for education as the primary tool for dismantling caste-based inequality.

Ambedkar argued that the caste system was not just a social arrangement but a spiritual and intellectual prison, rooted in religious dogma, particularly in Manusmriti and Vedic ideology. He asserted that unless these religious doctrines were rationally critiqued and dislodged, structural social change would be impossible:

“Caste is not just a division of labour. It is a division of labourers” (Ambedkar, 2014, Vol. 1, p. 49).

In this context, Ambedkar envisioned education not as mere literacy or credentialism, but as an emancipatory force that must awaken critical consciousness and moral courage. He famously asked,

“What good is literacy if it only trains men to be slaves?” (Ambedkar, 1936, p. 40).

This reflects a profound epistemological critique: that uncritical education can reinforce servitude unless it actively challenges hierarchies of power and knowledge. Education must be liberatory, not legitimizing.

He viewed Hindu scriptures and religious education as a source of social tyranny and stressed the importance of secular, scientific, and humanistic education for creating an egalitarian society. As such, Ambedkar's educational vision was inseparable from his critique of caste.

Ambedkar emphasized that challenging caste would require intellectual revolution, particularly among the oppressed:

“We must shape our course ourselves and by ourselves” (Ambedkar, 2014, Vol. 1, p. 63).
“Turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform without touching the problem of the social reform” (Ambedkar, 1936, p. 30).

For Ambedkar, social reform—especially through education—had to precede political reform. His insight resonates with Paulo Freire’s concept of *conscientização* (critical consciousness), which holds that education must first expose learners to the mechanisms of oppression to then transform them.

In Ambedkar’s model, the classroom becomes a site of struggle, where hegemonic knowledge systems must be deconstructed, and alternative histories, perspectives, and aspirations of the marginalized are brought to the fore. His advocacy led to the establishment of reserved quotas for Scheduled Castes (SCs) in educational institutions—a bold move intended not merely to increase numbers, but to create spaces of dignity and epistemic justice.

Contemporary data continues to validate Ambedkar’s concerns. According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021–22, SC students account for just 14.8% of total enrollment, despite constituting over 16.6% of the population ([Census 2011](#)). Dropout rates among Dalit students in higher education remain disproportionately high—driven by caste-based discrimination, lack of mentorship, and financial hardship ([Oxfam India, 2020](#)).

Reports of caste-based bullying, isolation, and faculty bias are common, especially in elite institutions like IITs and IIMs. The tragic suicides of students such as Rohith Vemula (2016) and Darshan Solanki (2023) have become symbols of how caste continues to function as a barrier to educational inclusion, just as Ambedkar warned.

Additionally, the UGC 2022 report shows that only 2.6% of professors across Indian universities are from Scheduled Caste backgrounds—a stark underrepresentation that perpetuates caste-based epistemological exclusion in academia.

Ambedkar’s critique has been echoed by several contemporary thinkers. Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai, in *The Cracked Mirror* (2012), argue that caste not only distorts social relations but also structures the very production of knowledge. They build on Ambedkar’s insight that educational spaces can reproduce caste hierarchies unless radically democratized.

Similarly, in *Coming Out as Dalit* (2022), Yashica Dutt notes that many Dalits continue to mask their identity in educational institutions out of fear of exclusion, proving the lasting relevance of Ambedkar’s educational and social critique.

Ambedkar’s *Annihilation of Caste* offers more than a sociological account—it provides a moral and pedagogical blueprint for a caste-free society. He foregrounded education as resistance, capable of dismantling both mental servitude and institutional oppression. His searing question—“*What good is literacy if it only trains men to be slaves?*”—remains a timely warning against education that merely replicates power, rather than redistributes it. In the 21st century, if education is to serve the ends of justice, it must be Ambedkarite in spirit—critical, inclusive, and uncompromising in its challenge to social hierarchy.

9. Parliamentary Debates and Speeches: Education as a Constitutional Mandate:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s role in the Constituent Assembly of India was not only as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee but also as the conscience keeper of the nascent Republic, particularly in the context of social justice and inclusive education. His speeches in Parliament and legislative bodies capture his unwavering commitment to education as a tool for democratic empowerment, particularly for historically marginalized communities.

In his address to the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949, just before the adoption of the Indian Constitution, Ambedkar famously warned:

“We are going to enter a life of contradictions. In politics, we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality... If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove inequalities in education, otherwise our democracy is doomed” ([Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 11, p. 979](#)).

This statement underscores his acute understanding that educational inequality was antithetical to the spirit of constitutional democracy. For Ambedkar, literacy was not enough; what was needed was substantive equality in access, content, and opportunity—especially for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/STs).

In a lesser-cited but significant speech introducing the Draft Constitution on November 4, 1948, Ambedkar declared:

“We are building a temple of justice, equality, and liberty. Education must be its foundation stone” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 11, p. 33).

This metaphor of a temple of justice anchored in education reflects the synthesis of his constitutional morality and Buddhist ethical vision—both rooted in rationality, equality, and non-discrimination.

Ambedkar strongly stressed upon state obligation to education and budgetary advocacy. Ambedkar's advocacy for inclusive education was not limited to idealistic declarations. In budgetary debates during his tenure in the Bombay Legislative Council (1927–1939), he consistently demanded targeted funding for Dalit students. For instance, in the 1937 budget session, he strongly criticized the government for underfunding Scheduled Caste education, asserting:

“There can be no uplift of the Depressed Classes without education. The State must not merely open schools but make them accessible—through scholarships, hostels, and active removal of untouchability in classrooms” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 405).

In a later debate, he pressed for reservations not only in jobs but also in educational institutions, arguing that without academic empowerment, reservations in employment would be ineffective. His commitment to state-led affirmative action in education was decades ahead of its time, eventually influencing Articles 15(4) and 46 of the Indian Constitution, which mandate positive discrimination in favor of SCs/STs in education.

Ambedkar's position is evident in Article 46, which directs the State to:

“promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

Ambedkar's parliamentary interventions laid the groundwork for major educational policies and constitutional amendments post-independence. His insistence on universal and equitable education culminated decades later in the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act (2002), which made education a fundamental right under Article 21A.

However, Ambedkar's concerns about structural inequality in education remain pressing today. According to the National Sample Survey (NSS 2019), dropout rates among SC/ST children in secondary education are still disproportionately high (SC: 23.6%, ST: 29.3%) compared to the national average (17.1%). This validates Ambedkar's insight that legal equality without social and educational parity is insufficient for real democracy.

Moreover, in contemporary debates about NEP 2020, many scholars and Dalit activists critique the policy for insufficient emphasis on caste-based educational exclusion. They argue that Ambedkar's vision of inclusive, state-supported, and justice-oriented education has been diluted, with increasing privatization undermining accessibility for marginalized groups.

Scholars such as Anand Teltumbde and Shailaja Paik have emphasized that Ambedkar's educational philosophy was as much about dignity and self-respect as about knowledge acquisition. In *The Persistence of Caste* (2010), Teltumbde notes:

“Ambedkar's demand for education was not about charity; it was a demand for state accountability to its most oppressed citizens” (p. 92).

Similarly, Gopal Guru underscores how Ambedkar linked the question of knowledge production with social power, making a profound case for epistemic democratization.

Ambedkar's speeches in the Constituent Assembly and Bombay Legislature illuminate his lifelong struggle to make education the bedrock of Indian democracy. He foresaw the perils of educational inequality long before they became policy concerns. Today, as India grapples with rising educational disparities, Ambedkar's constitutional and ethical blueprint offers both a warning and a guide. His declaration that ***“Education must be the foundation stone”*** of our republic should not remain a rhetorical flourish—it must become a policy imperative.

10. Ambedkar strongly believed in institutional contributions to education and its role as building structures of empowerment:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's contributions to education were not confined to theoretical discourse or parliamentary advocacy. He was equally committed to creating educational institutions that would embody his egalitarian vision and provide tangible opportunities for the historically marginalized. His institutional legacy—most notably the founding of the People's Education Society (PES) in 1945—represents a critical and often underappreciated facet of his nation-building mission.

People's Education Society (PES): A Radical Experiment in Equality was his one of the practical experiments in the society. Ambedkar established the PES with the explicit goal of promoting "education to the poor and the downtrodden" and breaking the monopoly of the privileged castes over knowledge institutions. He believed that institutions run by upper-caste elites were structurally incapable of serving the interests of the marginalized:

"The spread of education among the Depressed Classes has been painfully slow... because it was never in the interest of the ruling class to educate them" (Ambedkar, 2014, Vol. 1, p. 315).

Through the PES, Ambedkar sought to institutionalize a system of inclusive, democratic, and secular education. The Society's motto—*"Educate, Agitate, Organize"*—was not merely rhetorical; it was implemented through concrete efforts to bridge the educational gap created by centuries of caste exclusion.

His vision of establishing Siddharth College: A Beacon for the Marginalized. The most prominent institution established under PES was Siddharth College of Arts and Science, founded in 1946 in Mumbai. It became the first college in India founded and managed by Dalits and quickly emerged as a symbol of social mobility and intellectual assertion. Siddharth College offered accessible education in English, a language Ambedkar considered a tool of empowerment rather than elitism. As Ambedkar noted:

"English is the milk of a lioness. Only those who drink it can roar" (Keer, 2015, p. 342).

This metaphor reflects his belief in English education as an instrument of global citizenship and cognitive emancipation, countering Brahminical dominance over Sanskrit and regional languages in traditional pedagogy.

Siddharth College actively enrolled students from SC/ST and OBC communities, many of whom went on to become civil servants, scholars, judges, and social leaders—realizing Ambedkar's dream of education as social capital. The institution emphasized not just literacy, but critical thinking, legal education, and human rights awareness, reinforcing Ambedkar's commitment to constitutional values in the classroom.

The establishment of PES and its affiliated institutions contributed significantly to Dalit participation in higher education in post-independence India. A 2015 study by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) on Dalit-run educational institutions in Maharashtra noted that colleges like Siddharth College created non-discriminatory environments, provided culturally sensitive curricula, and generated role models from within the community (TISS, 2015).

Moreover, data from the University Grants Commission (UGC, 2022) indicate that Dalit student enrollment in PES institutions is consistently above the national average, even in urban centers—an indicator of the success of Ambedkarite institutional models.

Ambedkar's institutional vision resonates with contemporary educational theorists like Pierre Bourdieu, who emphasized that institutions reproduce social hierarchies unless they are deliberately designed to disrupt them. Ambedkar understood this long before Bourdieu and acted upon it by founding schools and colleges that consciously catered to the oppressed, not just as beneficiaries but as agents of social transformation.

Ambedkar's philosophical foundations: Equal Capacity and Equal Opportunity were deeply relying on educational and academic growth. Ambedkar's educational institutions were not charity-driven but justice-oriented. He rejected the idea of intellectual hierarchy based on birth, arguing that all individuals have equal capacity to learn, provided they are given equal opportunities and resources. As he famously stated:

“Every man who is educated is not necessarily cultured. But every man who is cultured is bound to be educated. The education that nurtures equality is the only real education” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 3, p. 218).

This belief in intrinsic human equality aligns with the democratic and Buddhist foundations of his thought. Education, for Ambedkar, was the medium of moral cultivation, critical reasoning, and civic participation, not simply a path to employment.

Dr. Ambedkar’s institutional contributions—especially the creation of the People’s Education Society and Siddharth College—represent a radical departure from caste-bound educational models. These institutions were not merely alternatives to Brahminical schooling but models of epistemic justice, rooted in Ambedkar’s belief that education must liberate, equalize, and democratize. As India continues to battle educational inequality in the 21st century, Ambedkarite institutions serve as blueprints for inclusive, anti-discriminatory pedagogy and policy.

11. Ambedkar’s Role in Constitutional Provisions: Education as a Pillar of Social Justice:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s legacy as the chief architect of the Indian Constitution extends far beyond legal drafting—it encompasses a visionary commitment to using the Constitution as a tool for educational and social transformation. In particular, Ambedkar’s role in embedding educational rights within the constitutional framework reflects his belief that education was not merely a personal good, but a public right central to democracy, equality, and dignity.

Directive Principles and Article 45: Laying the Moral Foundation: Ambedkar was instrumental in the inclusion of Article 45 under the Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV), which originally stated:

“The State shall endeavor to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.”

Although not legally enforceable at the time, Ambedkar saw Directive Principles as “instruments of instruction” to guide governance. In the Constituent Assembly Debates, he repeatedly emphasized that the social and economic clauses of the Constitution, including educational directives, were vital to ensure equality in practice. As he asserted:

“We must begin by recognizing that education is the basis of the claim for equality. Without education, equality is meaningless” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 321).

This statement captures his foundational belief that formal legal equality must be backed by substantive, state-facilitated access to educational opportunities.

Fundamental Rights and the Emergence of Article 21A: Although education was initially placed in the Directive Principles, Ambedkar’s long-term vision materialized more fully in 2002, with the passage of the 86th Constitutional Amendment, which added Article 21A to the chapter on Fundamental Rights:

“The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.”

This evolution from aspirational directive to enforceable right is deeply rooted in Ambedkar’s philosophy. Scholars such as Upendra Baxi (2012) argue that Article 21A is a delayed realization of Ambedkar’s constitutional morality, where the right to education is understood as central to the dignity of citizenship.

Affirmative Action and Articles 15(4), 16(4), and 46: Ambedkar’s constitutional intervention also institutionalized affirmative action (reservations) in education and employment, particularly through Articles 15(4) and 16(4). These clauses empower the state to make special provisions for the educational advancement of socially and educationally backward classes, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/STs). His views were clear during the Assembly debates:

“It is the State’s primary duty to raise the level of the Scheduled Castes through education and representation. We cannot speak of equal opportunity if some have been historically kept in ignorance” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 3, p. 155).

Furthermore, Article 46—a Directive Principle directly attributed to Ambedkar’s advocacy—states:

“The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

This article not only underscores the moral duty of the state but also provides a constitutional mandate to allocate resources and implement targeted schemes such as post-matric scholarships, residential schools, and hostels for SC/ST students.

contemporary relevance and educational equity and the legacy of Ambedkar’s constitutional provisions is visible in programs like Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, and the Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme, which collectively attempt to fulfill the educational aspirations of disadvantaged groups. However, persistent inequality remains a serious concern. According to the AISHE Report 2021–22:

- Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for SCs is 23.6% compared to the national average of 27.3%.
- Dropout rates among Dalit students remain significantly higher, especially at the secondary and higher secondary levels.

These gaps validate Ambedkar’s foresight that legal equality alone cannot guarantee educational equity without proactive state intervention.

Scholars such as Christophe Jaffrelot (2005) have argued that Ambedkar’s constitutional vision continues to be relevant in the face of growing privatization of education, which tends to exclude the marginalized. The challenge, therefore, is to reinvigorate Ambedkar’s constitutional promises through robust public education systems, strong regulatory mechanisms, and community-based educational justice models.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s role in shaping constitutional provisions related to education was not accidental—it was foundational. Through the incorporation of Articles 15(4), 21A, 45, and 46, Ambedkar constructed a legal scaffolding for a just and inclusive educational order. His insistence that education is the basis of equality remains a guiding principle for educational policy and reform in India. As India aspires to become a knowledge-based economy, Ambedkar’s constitutional legacy demands that education must not only be universally accessible but also socially just.

12. Relevance to Modern Educational Policies: Realizing Ambedkar’s Vision Today:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s prophetic insights into inclusive education continue to echo in contemporary Indian policy frameworks, though often more in rhetoric than in implementation. His conceptualization of education as a public good, moral right, and emancipatory force forms the philosophical backbone of India’s Right to Education Act (2009) and the National Education Policy (2020). Yet, glaring gaps between policy ambition and on-ground reality continue to hinder the transformative potential he envisioned.

Right to Education Act (2009): A Deferred Constitutional Dream: The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), 2009, which operationalized Article 21A of the Constitution, finally gave legal teeth to what Ambedkar had envisioned in Article 45 over six decades earlier. The RTE guarantees free and compulsory education for all children aged 6–14 years and mandates non-discrimination in school admissions, infrastructure norms, and inclusive pedagogy.

However, significant implementation issues persist, especially in Dalit and Adivasi-majority areas. A 2022 report by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes found that over 45% of schools in SC/ST-dominated districts do not comply with basic RTE norms, including separate toilets, functional libraries, and trained teachers (NCSC, 2022). This aligns with Ambedkar’s warning during the Constituent Assembly debates that “educational inequalities would destroy the soul of democracy” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 3, p. 183).

National Education Policy (2020): Ambedkarite Echoes and Contradictions: The NEP 2020 attempts a paradigm shift toward equity and inclusion by promising universal access, flexibility in curriculum, and mother-

tongue instruction up to Grade 5. These align with Ambedkar’s call for “education rooted in local experience and cultural self-respect” to counter Brahmanical epistemic domination.

As Rawat (2011) observes:

“Ambedkar’s critique of Brahmanical pedagogy envisioned a democratic classroom, where cultural relevance and linguistic plurality serve as tools of liberation” (p. 115).

However, critics note that the NEP’s emphasis on privatization and digital learning may deepen structural inequalities. Nambissan (2010) argues that implementation gaps reflect entrenched caste biases:

“School practices often mirror social hierarchies, despite progressive policies. Teacher prejudice, tracking of SC/ST students into lower-performance categories, and neglect in rural schooling remain rampant” (p. 17).

This disconnect between policy intent and societal attitude affirms Ambedkar’s claim in *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) that social change cannot be legislated without a transformation of public conscience.

Empirical data underscores the continued marginalization of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), reinforcing the urgency of Ambedkarite interventions.

Table 1: Literacy Rate by Social Group (Census 2011)

Social Group	Literacy Rate (%)
General	82.1
OBC	71.2
SC	66.1
ST	58.9

Despite constitutional guarantees, SCs and STs lag behind by over 15–20 percentage points compared to the general population. These disparities reflect generational deprivation, social stigma, and infrastructural neglect (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011).

Table 2: Dropout Rates at Secondary Level (UDISE+ 2022–23)

Category	Dropout Rate (%)
General	12.3
SC	17.6
ST	23.2

The ST dropout rate at the secondary level (23.2%) is nearly double that of the general category, suggesting barriers beyond economic—such as cultural alienation, caste-based bullying, and lack of representation in curricula (UDISE+, 2023). These issues echo Ambedkar’s insistence that education for Dalits and Adivasis must be protected by policy, not left to market forces or passive reform.

The above data and policy analysis validate Ambedkar’s insistence on state-sponsored, equity-driven education as the bedrock of democracy. His famous assertion that “without education, equality is meaningless” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 321) remains more relevant than ever.

To close the educational gap, policy implementation must go beyond token inclusion and focus on:

- Budgetary Prioritization: Allocate at least 6% of GDP to education, as recommended by the NEP and the Kothari Commission.
- Curriculum Transformation: Include Dalit, Adivasi, and minority histories and thinkers to ensure representational justice.

- Community-based Monitoring: Empower local bodies and SC/ST student unions to report discrimination.
- Teacher Sensitization: Mandatory anti-caste pedagogy training for educators to challenge implicit bias.

Ambedkar's educational thought, far from being a historical artifact, is a living framework for educational justice. As policies like the RTE and NEP seek to build inclusive systems, Ambedkar's ideas offer both a moral compass and a practical blueprint. His vision demands that education must not only uplift but equalize, ensuring that no child is denied dignity due to caste, class, or community.

13. Comparative Educational Philosophies: Ambedkar, Freire, and Du Bois in Dialogue:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's educational philosophy not only transformed India's socio-political fabric but also resonates with global currents of critical pedagogy and emancipatory education. His emphasis on education as a means of liberation for the oppressed finds deep intellectual kinship with the ideas of Paulo Freire and W.E.B. Du Bois—two towering figures in the fields of critical theory and Black radical thought, respectively.

Ambedkar and Paulo Freire: Awakening Critical Consciousness: In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Paulo Freire articulates the concept of “conscientização” or critical consciousness, wherein the oppressed become aware of the socio-political forces that shape their lives and actively work to transform their reality:

“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system... or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Freire, 1970, p. 72).

Ambedkar expressed a strikingly similar view more than three decades earlier. He believed education should not merely produce workers or clerks but citizens capable of challenging caste hierarchies. In a speech at the Depressed Classes Conference in 1930, he stated:

“Cultivation of the mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 228).

Like Freire, Ambedkar rejected banking models of education that treat students as passive recipients. He insisted on education that fosters dignity, autonomy, and resistance. His institutions, such as the People's Education Society and Siddharth College, were conceived as sites of counter-hegemony, not just learning.

Ambedkar and Du Bois: Elite Education as a Tool of Upliftment: W.E.B. Du Bois, in his foundational work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), articulated the idea of “double consciousness”—a psychological conflict faced by African Americans who see themselves through both their own and the dominant white society's eyes. Du Bois contended that education must not only enlighten but empower the oppressed to define themselves:

“The function of the university is not simply to teach breadwinning... but the right use of leisure and the uplifting of the people” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 102).

Ambedkar, too, believed that education must transcend material aims to develop moral leadership. His advocacy for Dalit access to elite institutions—including his own education at Columbia and the LSE—was part of a strategy akin to Du Bois's “Talented Tenth”, the belief that a well-educated minority within the oppressed group could lead social transformation.

“My final words of advice to you are – educate, agitate, and organize; have faith in yourselves. With justice on our side, I do not see how we can lose our battle” (Ambedkar, 1935, as cited in Zelliott, 1992, p. 146).

Both thinkers rejected accommodation to systemic injustice. Where Du Bois challenged Jim Crow segregation, Ambedkar fought against Manusmriti and the caste system, using scholarship as a weapon of social revolution.

Three Philosophies, One Emancipatory Horizon: The convergence of these three educators lies in their shared commitment to transforming education into a tool of liberation, not just social mobility. Table 3 below summarizes key thematic parallels:

Table 3: comparison of Ambedkar’s Educational Philosophy

Theme	Ambedkar	Freire	Du Bois
Purpose of Education	Liberation from caste; dignity and self-respect	Awakening critical consciousness; praxis	Development of the "Talented Tenth"; combating racial inferiority
View on Oppression	Structural caste domination	Cultural and economic oppression	Double consciousness and systemic racism
Pedagogical Approach	Culturally rooted, moral, and empowering	Dialogical, participatory, and anti-authoritarian	Liberal arts as a path to leadership and upliftment
Role of the Educated	Social reformers and community leaders	Co-creators of knowledge with the oppressed	Leaders of race uplift and moral awakening

Contemporary Significance: In today’s context of global inequality and educational exclusion, the Ambedkar–Freire–Du Bois framework offers a compelling basis for rethinking education policy. It calls for:

- Curriculum reforms that include voices from below—Dalits, Afro-descendants, indigenous peoples.
- Democratization of pedagogy, ensuring dialogue, participation, and critical inquiry.
- Leadership development among marginalized youth through affirmative action in elite institutions.

As Ambedkar himself asserted:

“The progress of any society is measured by the degree of progress which women and the members of the Depressed Classes have achieved” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 258).

14. Digital Divide and Structural Inequities: A Contemporary Manifestation of Educational Exclusion:

The COVID-19 pandemic not only disrupted traditional modes of learning but also exposed and amplified longstanding structural inequalities in access to education. Nowhere is this more evident than in the digital divide, which disproportionately affects historically marginalized communities—precisely the groups Dr. B.R. Ambedkar dedicated his life to uplifting.

According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) 2017–18 (75th Round), only 4.4% of rural SC households and 4.2% of rural ST households had access to computers, while less than 10% had any form of internet connectivity. During the pandemic, when education shifted predominantly online, this lack of digital infrastructure effectively excluded millions of children from continuing their education (NSSO, 2020; Azim Premji Foundation, 2021). These figures starkly contrast with urban general category households, more than 40% of which had consistent internet access, indicating a multi-layered digital caste divide.

Dr. Ambedkar had long anticipated that material deprivation, if not addressed through state-led infrastructure development, would render constitutional promises hollow. In his speech before the Bombay Legislative Council in 1946, he argued:

“You cannot build a society based on liberty and equality unless the children of that society have equal means of education... It is the State’s duty to provide schools, hostels, and material support for the oppressed classes” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 343).

While Ambedkar did not live to witness the digital age, his insistence on public investment in educational infrastructure directly applies to today’s digital education ecosystem. His vision of equal opportunity education was not confined to chalk-and-board classrooms; it encompassed libraries, hostels, laboratories, and—by extension—technological access.

Vocational Training and Ambedkar’s Educational Blueprint: Ambedkar also championed vocational and technical education as a way to ensure dignified livelihoods for marginalized youth. In his memorandum to the British government ([Simon Commission, 1928](#)), he proposed the establishment of polytechnic schools and industrial institutes specifically for Scheduled Castes. He believed that education must lead to economic empowerment and not merely academic certification:

“What is the use of education if it does not equip one to earn one’s bread?” ([Ambedkar, as cited in Jaffrelot, 2005, p. 271](#)).

This holistic approach contrasts with current schemes like the Skill India Mission, which, though inspired by similar goals, often lacks Ambedkar’s emphasis on social justice and caste-based equity. Critics argue that such programs, without affirmative safeguards and adequate resourcing, risk reproducing caste hierarchies within vocational labor markets ([Mehrotra, 2022](#)).

The repercussions of the digital divide are not merely logistical—they are structural and generational. For instance, a UNICEF (2021) report noted that more than 60% of children from SC/ST communities in rural India experienced complete educational discontinuity during the first year of the pandemic. Dropout rates among SC and ST students at the secondary level remain alarmingly high—17.6% for SCs and 23.2% for STs as per UDISE+ 2022–23 data—suggesting that digital exclusion translates directly into educational abandonment.

These disparities provide empirical support for Ambedkar’s critique of formal equality in law that coexists with material inequality in life. His educational philosophy compels the state to not only legislate equality but implement it through redistributive investment, especially in digital and vocational infrastructure for historically oppressed communities.

Bridging the digital divide requires more than technological fixes—it demands a reimagining of digital education through the lens of Ambedkarite social justice. This means:

- Prioritizing fiber-optic and device access in SC/ST and rural areas.
- Integrating caste-sensitive digital pedagogy and content in e-learning platforms.
- Establishing inclusive digital vocational institutions with reservation-based admissions and employment linkages.

As Ambedkar affirmed, “The assertion of equality must be backed by the reality of opportunity” ([Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 294](#)). In this era of digital transformation, realizing his vision means transforming the digital landscape into a domain of opportunity, not exclusion.

15. Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Representation: Ambedkar’s Unfulfilled Vision of Transformative Education:

Despite constitutional commitments to equality and inclusion, the Indian educational curriculum and pedagogical practices continue to reflect upper-caste, Brahmanical worldviews, often excluding or diluting the histories, epistemologies, and lived experiences of marginalized communities. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s vision of education extended beyond access; it demanded a radical transformation of curricular content and classroom practice to inculcate social justice, critical inquiry, and moral responsibility.

Caste Evasion in Curriculum: Silences and Sanitization: Contemporary educational curricula often sanitize or entirely omit the caste question, treating it as a relic of the past rather than an ongoing system of structural oppression. An analysis by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks from 2018 revealed that caste is frequently discussed only in the context of ancient history, and Ambedkar is introduced briefly—often limited to his role in drafting the Constitution—without elaborating on his revolutionary anti-caste thought or his economic and philosophical writings ([Telumbde, 2020](#)).

Ambedkar warned against such selective representation in education:

“What is the use of a book that does not teach the oppressed the truth of their social condition? Education must sow the seeds of liberty, equality, and fraternity” ([Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 3, p. 244](#)).

Pedagogy and Teacher Bias: Structural Failures in Practice: Classroom pedagogy also fails to reflect inclusive principles. A study by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (2016) found that over 72% of Dalit children in rural schools reported discriminatory treatment by teachers, such as being made to sit separately or being asked to clean school premises. Furthermore, less than 3% of teaching staff in higher education institutions are from Scheduled Castes, creating a representational vacuum that reinforces systemic inequities (AISHE, 2021). Teachers often lack training or pedagogical resources to engage sensitively with caste. This leads to implicit caste bias, alienation of Dalit students, and the perpetuation of hidden curricula—those unspoken norms and attitudes that privilege dominant caste perspectives (Kumar, 2005).

Ambedkar’s Pedagogical Philosophy: Education as Moral and Social Awakening: Ambedkar did not view education as a neutral or technocratic enterprise. He believed it must function as a moral and political intervention into society’s deepest structures of inequality. In his 1938 address at the All India Depressed Classes Conference, he stated:

“An educated man without vision is the worst criminal. Education must be paired with values that challenge inequality and awaken civic duty” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 296).

This philosophy aligns with critical pedagogy, as later advanced by Paulo Freire, wherein the role of education is to equip students with the tools to critically examine their reality and act to change it. Ambedkar advocated for a curriculum that was not merely inclusive in numbers but transformative in content, capable of disrupting hegemonic narratives and enabling oppressed groups to assert epistemic authority.

Dalit Literature and Counter-Curriculum: One of the strongest vehicles for curricular transformation lies in Dalit literature, which represents embodied narratives of resistance and identity reclamation. Writers such as Omprakash Valmiki, Bama, Sharan Kumar Limbale, and Babytai Kamble articulate the emotional and political landscape of caste oppression with a power that academic texts often lack.

However, as Omvedt (2004, p. 89) observes, these voices are marginalized in mainstream syllabi:

“While Gandhi is required reading in most curricula, Ambedkar remains optional or peripheral. The same applies to Dalit writers, whose works are rarely taught except in specialized courses.”

The inclusion of Dalit literature and Ambedkarite philosophy would serve as an act of curricular decolonization, reclaiming the classroom as a site of anti-caste consciousness.

Table 4: Empirical Snapshot: Curricular Exclusion

Indicator	Observation
Ambedkar's writings in NCERT books	Often limited to Constitution drafting; social thought ignored
Representation of Dalit authors in syllabi (UG level)	Less than 5% in humanities/social science curricula (UGC, 2020)
Dalit teachers in HEIs (AISHE 2021)	Approx. 2.7% of faculty positions nationally

These exclusions highlight what Ambedkar termed “graded inequality”, where not just economic or social but epistemic discrimination defines the experience of the oppressed.

Realizing Ambedkar’s educational vision today demands radical curricular reforms, including:

- Mainstreaming Ambedkar’s philosophical and economic writings at all educational levels.
- Incorporating Dalit, Adivasi, Bahujan, and minority voices into literature, history, and social science texts.
- Training educators in caste-sensitive pedagogy through structured modules and anti-bias workshops.
- Promoting critical thinking and civic consciousness, rather than rote learning and status quo reinforcement.

As Ambedkar emphasized:

“We must shape education as a means to destroy old beliefs, create new ones, and prepare men for a world where justice is the guiding principle” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 4, p. 168).

16. Global Influence and Policy Parallels: Ambedkarite Thought in Transnational Contexts:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s vision of inclusive education as a state obligation rooted in social justice and structural redress has found resonance in various international contexts—especially in countries grappling with systemic inequalities shaped by race, class, and colonial histories. His insistence that neutrality in policy often perpetuates privilege prefigures the global turn toward affirmative, equity-driven educational reforms.

“You cannot build anything on the foundation of caste. You cannot build up a nation; you cannot build up morality. Anything that is of social importance must rest on the foundation of equality” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 3, p. 243).

South Africa: Echoes of Ambedkar in Post-Apartheid Education: Post-apartheid South Africa provides a salient comparative case. The South African Schools Act (1996) and subsequent reforms prioritized equity by:

- Redistributing resources to historically underfunded Black schools;
- Implementing race-sensitive admissions policies in universities;
- Creating a National Qualification Framework to standardize and democratize credentialing.

Much like Ambedkar's argument that caste-based inequality could not be corrected by universalistic policies alone, South African reformers rejected the myth of “color-blind” policy in favor of race-conscious redress (Soudien, 2004).

“If social disparities are deep-rooted, treating unequals as equals only maintains inequality,” Ambedkar warned (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 309).

Brazil: Affirmative Action in Higher Education: Brazil, a country marked by entrenched racial inequality, began implementing race and class-based quotas in public universities in the early 2000s. The 2008 Law of Social Quotas mandated that 50% of seats in federal universities be reserved for students from public schools, with sub-quotas for Black, Indigenous, and low-income students (Bailey, 2014). This model mirrors Ambedkar’s dual emphasis on social origin and economic status as grounds for redress.

Notably, Brazil’s approach also includes targeted funding and mentorship, addressing Ambedkar’s concern that access without support reproduces structural failure. This reflects his call during Bombay Legislative debates for “not just the right to enter, but the power to stay and succeed” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 3, p. 198).

UNESCO and the SDG Framework: Globalization of Ambedkar’s Ethos: Ambedkar’s commitment to universal, quality, and equitable education is globally echoed in the UNESCO-led Education for All (EFA) movement and the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which aims to:

“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

However, the implementation has revealed stark disparities:

Table 5: Global indicators of disparity educational outcomes

Indicator	Disadvantaged Groups	Global Status (UNESCO, 2022)
Primary school completion rate	Sub-Saharan Africa	64% vs global avg. of 87%
Gender parity index (GPI) in literacy	South Asia	0.89 (female/male)
Internet access in schools	Least developed countries	Less than 40%

This data underscores Ambedkar’s timeless insight that equity is not a natural outcome of expansion—it requires deliberate, redistributive policies.

Theoretical Parallels and Convergent Justice Frameworks: Globally, scholars and reformers are increasingly invoking intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), capabilities approach (Sen & Nussbaum), and structural equity models, which converge with Ambedkar’s framework. His insistence on combining legal safeguards, moral pedagogy, and material support reflects a comprehensive justice framework.

Table 6: Ambedkar’s principle and global parallel

Ambedkarite Principle	Global Parallel
State-led educational redistribution	South African redress & Brazilian quota systems
Intersectional inclusion	UNESCO's Inclusive Education Framework
Affirmative action + structural reform	U.S. Title VI Civil Rights Education Compliance
Vocational + liberal education fusion	EU's "Education for Skills and Equity" Initiative

Beyond Historicization, Toward Global Praxis: Ambedkar's educational philosophy must be viewed not merely as a national reform agenda but as a global model for justice-centric policy design. In an era of rising inequality, his insights into how education reproduces or resists hierarchy offer vital direction for nations rethinking inclusion. The global lag in educational equity, particularly for racial, ethnic, and Indigenous minorities, affirms Ambedkar’s call for proactive, context-sensitive, and justice-driven educational frameworks.

17. Symbolism vs. Practical Reform: Reclaiming Ambedkar’s Radical Educational Vision:

In contemporary India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s legacy is often celebrated symbolically but sidelined in structural reform. Statues, public holidays, and commemorative seminars serve as ritualized acknowledgments of his contributions, while actual policy commitments to educational equity remain diluted or poorly implemented. This gap between symbolic reverence and practical realization of Ambedkar’s ideas constitutes one of the most pressing contradictions in Indian democracy.

“What is the use of glorifying me now? If you believe in my ideas, implement them” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 5, p. 97).

Symbolic Commemoration vs Policy Neglect: India hosts over 5,000 public statues of Ambedkar, more than any other figure except Gandhi (Guru, 2009). Yet, his core policy proposals—such as equitable educational funding, caste-sensitive teacher training, and affirmative pedagogical reform—remain inadequately addressed:

- The Kothari Commission (1964–66) echoed Ambedkar’s call for a common school system, but this idea was abandoned post-liberalization.
- Despite constitutional mandates, SC/ST student dropout rates remain disproportionately high, as shown below:

Table 7: Drop out rate of marginalised community students

Level of Education	Dropout Rate (SC)	Dropout Rate (ST)	Dropout Rate (General)
Secondary (2022–23, UDISE+)	17.6%	23.2%	12.3%

Such disparities reveal how formal equality masks entrenched educational injustice, contradicting Ambedkar’s vision of substantive equality.

Misappropriation of Ambedkarite Thought: While Ambedkar is often invoked in political discourse, there is growing concern among scholars about the "domestication" of his radical ideas. According to Gopal Guru (2009), “Ambedkar is remembered, but rarely read.” His materialist and structural critique of caste is often sanitized into abstract ideals of social harmony, erasing the urgent need for caste annihilation through educational justice.

“Caste is not just a division of labor; it is a division of laborers” (Ambedkar, 1936, Annihilation of Caste, p. 25).

Revitalizing Ambedkar Through Policy Action: To bridge the symbolic-practical divide, policymakers and educators must realign with Ambedkar’s core transformative principles:

- **Affirmative Action:** Not just in admission quotas but in resource allocation, curriculum design, and institutional governance.
- **Anti-Discrimination Legislation:** Strengthening implementation of Prevention of Atrocities Act (1989) and RTE Act (2009) through independent monitoring bodies.
- **Inclusive Curricula:** Mandating the integration of Dalit literature, history, and resistance movements into school and university syllabi.
- **Targeted Funding:** Allocating equity-based educational budgets through Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP), which are often diverted or underutilized (Thorat & Dubey, 2012).

Ambedkar’s Agitation as a Democratic Praxis: Ambedkar’s immortal call to “educate, agitate, and organize” was not a slogan—it was a democratic strategy for structural transformation. Education, in his conception, was not about upward mobility alone, but about dismantling hierarchies and empowering communities to challenge oppressive systems.

“The progress of any society depends on the progress of education among the oppressed” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 204).

From Symbol to Substance: If India is to truly honor Ambedkar, it must move from idolization to implementation. This requires re-centering his epistemic authority in educational policymaking, confronting institutional casteism, and embedding transformative pedagogy in classrooms. His legacy is not a statue—it is a syllabus, a scholarship, a school without exclusion.

18. From Symbolism to Structural Reform: Realizing Ambedkar’s Vision of Educational Justice:

In contemporary India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s educational philosophy is more often celebrated than implemented. Statues adorn city squares, his anniversaries prompt official rituals, and political leaders cite his name—yet, the institutional structures of education remain steeped in inequality. This disjuncture between symbolic reverence and practical neglect not only betrays Ambedkar’s legacy but also stifles the transformative potential of education he so powerfully envisioned.

“What is the use of glorifying me now? If you believe in my ideas, implement them” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 5, p. 97).

Symbolic Commemoration vs. Structural Inequity: While India boasts over 5,000 public statues of Ambedkar (Guru, 2009), his demand for radical educational transformation remains largely unmet. Policies such as the Right to Education Act (2009) and the National Education Policy (2020) have adopted surface-level commitments to equity, but fail to address deep-rooted caste-based exclusion. As illustrated by the UDISE+ 2022–23 data, dropout rates for Scheduled Castes (17.6%) and Scheduled Tribes (23.2%) remain significantly higher than for the General category (12.3%), revealing a persistent gap in educational retention.

Table 8: Drop out rate of SC and ST in Secondary Level Education

Category	Dropout Rate (Secondary Level)
General	12.3%
SC	17.6%
ST	23.2%

These patterns reflect what Ambedkar warned of in 1949:

“We must remove inequalities in education, otherwise our democracy is doomed” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 3).

Moreover, despite constitutional safeguards like Article 15(4), Article 45, and Article 21A, budgetary allocations under the SC/ST Sub Plans are routinely underutilized (Thorat & Dubey, 2012). Curricula continue to marginalize Dalit voices, and caste-blind pedagogies fail to challenge dominant ideologies.

Misreading and Misappropriation: Many institutions adopt a sanitized version of Ambedkar, divorcing his ideas from their radical anti-caste foundation. His core insight—that education must challenge, not merely replicate, existing hierarchies—is frequently overlooked.

“Caste is not merely a division of labour; it is a division of labourers” (Ambedkar, 1936, [Annihilation of Caste](#), p. 25).

This tendency mirrors Paulo Freire’s critique of “banking education,” which instructs but does not liberate (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Ambedkar’s framework, like Freire’s, is deeply political—education must create critical consciousness and self-respect among the oppressed.

- **Toward a Just Educational Future:** To reclaim Ambedkar’s vision, reforms must go beyond superficial inclusion and address the foundational structure of inequality. This requires:
- **Anti-Caste Pedagogy:** Teacher training programs must integrate caste-sensitive, anti-oppressive pedagogical frameworks.
- **Democratized Governance:** Decentralizing decision-making in schools and involving Dalit, Adivasi, and minority communities in policy formation.
- **Curricular Transformation:** Incorporating Dalit literature, Ambedkarite philosophy, and histories of resistance in mainstream education.
- **Equity in Resource Distribution:** Strict enforcement of SCSP and TSP budgets, with transparency and community audits.
- **Digital Inclusion:** Bridging the digital divide by ensuring rural and marginalized students have access to devices, internet, and multilingual e-content (NSSO, 2020).

Above all, education must be reframed not merely as a public good, but as a tool for restructuring society. Ambedkar’s idea of education was not limited to literacy or employment—it was a project of dignity, recognition, and democratic participation.

“We must begin by recognizing that education is the basis of the claim for equality. Without education, equality is meaningless” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 321).

From Commemoration to Commitment: If India is to truly honor Ambedkar, his ideas must be institutionalized, not idolized. Bridging the gap between symbolic celebration and structural change involves redefining educational success through the lens of social justice. His enduring call to “educate, agitate, and organize” remains the guiding light for a truly democratic educational future—one in which no child is excluded, silenced, or devalued.

Ambedkar foresaw that political democracy without social and economic democracy would be fragile. His insistence on education as a prerequisite for citizenship remains urgent as democratic institutions face erosion and social divisions widen. Reimagining education through Ambedkarite ethics can help build an India where learning is not a privilege but a right guaranteed with dignity, respect, and equity.

19. Comprehensive Critical Analysis of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s Vision of Inclusive Education:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s educational philosophy was born out of personal struggle and grounded in liberal humanist traditions. His early experiences of caste-based discrimination in school, such as being denied water and made to sit outside classrooms (Zelliot, 1992, p. 78), profoundly shaped his understanding of education as both a site of exclusion and a potential instrument of liberation. His global academic exposure—earning doctorates from Columbia University and the London School of Economics—infused his vision with comparative perspectives. Ambedkar believed that education was not merely for individual upliftment but a collective emancipatory tool capable of dismantling structural inequalities.

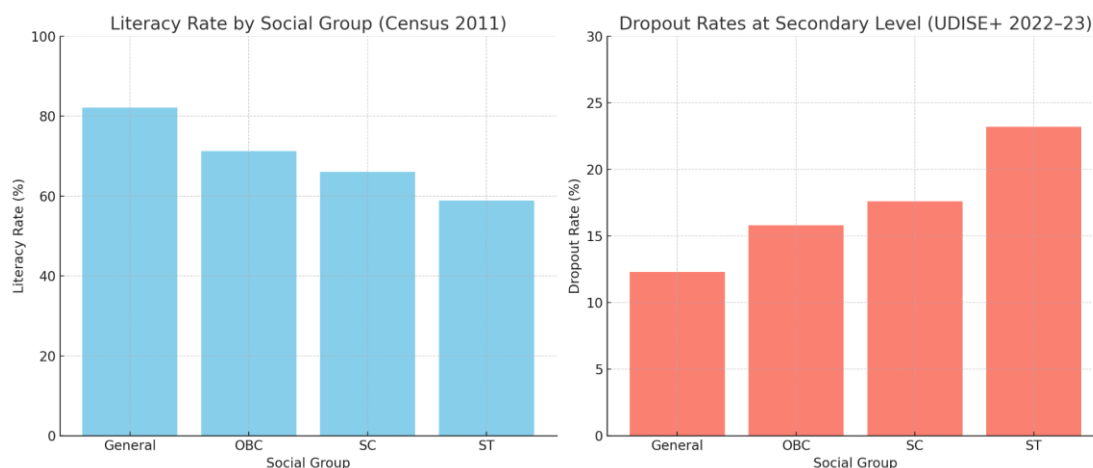
Ambedkar’s seminal essay *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) positioned education as a revolutionary act. He critiqued the Brahmanical order that preserved hierarchical social systems through the denial of education to oppressed castes. He wrote, “*What good is literacy if it only trains men to be slaves?*” (Ambedkar, 1936, p. 40). For Ambedkar, inclusive education must challenge not only economic and spatial exclusion but also ideological domination. His critique prefigures critical pedagogy frameworks like those of Freire (1970), who argued that literacy without liberation only reinforces oppression.

Ambedkar’s role as Chairperson of the Drafting Committee allowed him to embed educational equity in the Indian Constitution. Article 45 (Directive Principles) and later Article 21A (Fundamental Right to Education) reflect his vision of state-sponsored universal education. During Constituent Assembly debates, he warned, “*We are going to enter a life of contradictions... if inequalities in education are not removed, our democracy is doomed*” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 3). He consistently advocated for affirmative action and special resource allocations for SC/ST education during parliamentary and budget debates, showing his concern for practical implementation over symbolic gestures.

The founding of the People’s Education Society in 1945 was a landmark act of institutionalizing inclusive education. Colleges like Siddharth College were established to cater specifically to marginalized communities, providing high-quality education to those historically denied access (Keer, 2015, p. 342). Ambedkar’s pedagogy emphasized moral, social, and intellectual transformation, insisting on curriculum reform and the incorporation of critical thinking. Unlike modern token inclusion models, Ambedkar’s vision was holistic—demanding infrastructural investment, anti-caste content, and democratic classroom practices.

20. Discussion and Evaluation:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s concerns regarding structural discrimination in education continue to find alarming resonance in contemporary India. Despite constitutional guarantees and decades of policy interventions, empirical evidence reveals persistent disparities across caste lines. Data from the *Census 2011* indicates that the literacy rate for Scheduled Castes (66.1%) and Scheduled Tribes (58.9%) remains significantly lower than that of the General category (82.1%). Further exacerbating this inequity, *UDISE+ 2022–23* data reveals dropout rates at the secondary level are disproportionately higher among SC (17.6%) and ST (23.2%) students, compared to 12.3% among their General category counterparts. Such figures illustrate not only a quantitative manifestation of educational apartheid but also serve as empirical validation of Ambedkar’s early 20th-century warning about caste as a systemic force of exclusion in Indian society.

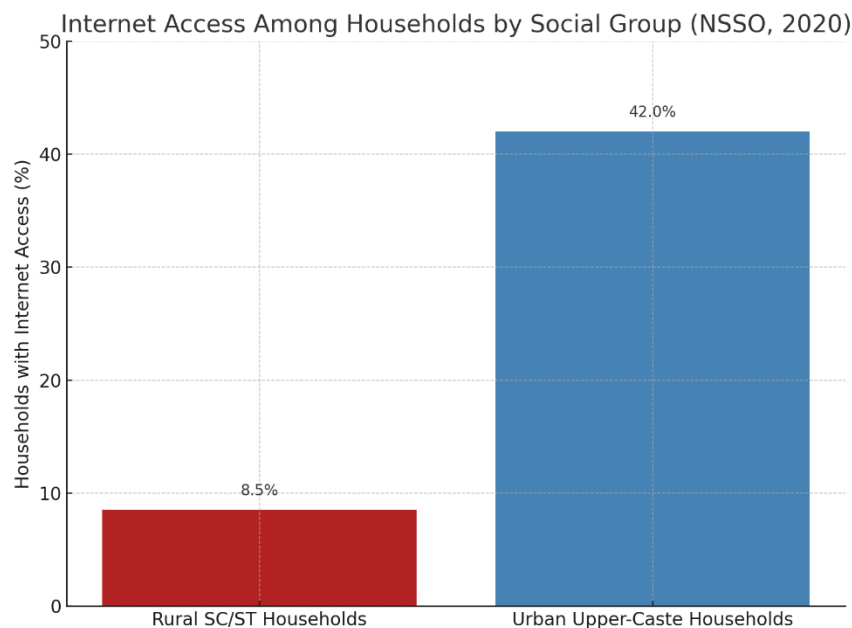


Graph (1) Disparities in Literacy and Dropout Rates Among Social Groups in India

These disparities are not incidental but symptomatic of deeper institutional failings that Ambedkar had presciently identified. The hierarchical structuring of access to education, both in terms of opportunity and quality, underscores the failure of modern Indian democracy to translate constitutional ideals into lived realities. The socio-educational disadvantage revealed by this data trajectory—wherein access declines from the General

category to OBC, SC, and finally ST groups—is emblematic of an entrenched caste order that continues to define educational mobility in India.

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the new dimensions of inequality through the emergence of a digital caste divide. According to the *NSSO (2020)*, only 8.5% of rural SC/ST households had access to the internet, making online education virtually inaccessible to millions during the lockdown period. In stark contrast, 42% of urban upper-caste households had regular digital connectivity. These statistics do not merely reflect a digital gap but represent the reproduction of caste privilege in the digital realm. Ambedkar’s vision, which emphasized the establishment of polytechnic and vocational training centers to democratize skill acquisition (*Jaffreot, 2005, p. 271*), anticipated such structural exclusions and advocated for institutional frameworks that could neutralize them. Today’s digital initiatives such as Digital India and PM e-Vidya, while technologically advanced, fall short precisely because they lack a social justice framework. They inadvertently reinforce the very digital casteism that Ambedkar sought to dismantle.



Graph (2) Digital Divide in Education: Internet Access by Social Group (NSSO, 2020)

Curricular and pedagogical exclusion forms another layer of systemic neglect. Despite the constitutional promise of equity and the legal abolition of caste discrimination, educational content and classroom practices continue to be deeply caste-blind. Nambissan’s (2010) content analysis of school textbooks revealed that only a meager 3% meaningfully address the issue of caste. Teachers, often unequipped or unwilling to tackle caste-based issues, contribute to a culture of silence that implicitly reinforces dominant narratives. Ambedkar’s vision of education was not merely the transmission of information but a transformative project to instill democratic values, foster critical reasoning, and challenge social hierarchies (*Omvedt, 2004, p. 89*). Current pedagogical practices, by failing to question caste structures, instead sustain them, proving that educational institutions have not internalized the emancipatory function Ambedkar envisaged.

Furthermore, while Ambedkar is celebrated symbolically—evidenced by over 5,000 statues and hundreds of institutions bearing his name (*Guru, 2009*)—the implementation of his educational vision remains half-hearted. Budgetary allocations under critical schemes like the Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCSP) and the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) are consistently underutilized, a fact well-documented by Thorat and Dubey (2012). This gap between symbolic commemoration and practical execution reflects precisely what Ambedkar feared: the transformation of radical constitutional rights into decorative artefacts. His poignant assertion, “Without implementation, rights are mere decorations in a Constitution” (*Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 4, p. 221*), captures the enduring gap between normative commitments and empirical outcomes.

Contrary to nationalist narratives that marginalize Ambedkar's contributions to education, his ideas resonate with global currents in progressive pedagogy. His insistence on dignity, rationality, and self-respect parallels Paulo Freire's notion of "critical consciousness," aimed at enabling the oppressed to question and transform their social reality. Similarly, Ambedkar's strategy of cultivating a vanguard within Dalit communities aligns with W.E.B. Du Bois's idea of the "Talented Tenth," which envisioned leadership emerging from within oppressed groups to uplift the collective. These intellectual parallels are not accidental but indicative of Ambedkar's stature as a global theorist of inclusive education—one whose contributions deserve recognition alongside the canonical figures of critical pedagogy.

Institutionally, Ambedkar's legacy remains embedded in the architecture of modern India's educational justice framework. From founding the People's Education Society to promoting scholarships for SC/ST students, his actions laid the groundwork for policies that now fall under the rubric of inclusive education. Affirmative action in higher education, though politically contested, finds its ethical and legal grounding in Ambedkar's philosophy of compensatory justice. The very notion that education must address historical disadvantage, rather than simply ensure equal opportunity, originates in his thought.

However, modern education policies such as the *Right to Education Act (2009)*, the *National Education Policy (2020)*, and programs like *Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan*, while echoing aspects of Ambedkarite thinking, often lack the transformative zeal he envisioned. They tend to privilege access and infrastructure over the deeper questions of curricular content, classroom interaction, and epistemic justice. Technocratic approaches dominate the policy landscape, sidelining the foundational question Ambedkar posed: who has the power to define knowledge, and in whose interest is education structured?

Ambedkar's enduring relevance lies in his unique ability to combine philosophical depth with pragmatic policy foresight. His triadic call to "educate, agitate, and organize" captures the essence of a democratic educational struggle that seeks not only to include the marginalized but to restructure the very foundations of knowledge and power. In contrast to many contemporary reformers who focus narrowly on metrics and outcomes, Ambedkar offered a comprehensive vision for structural overhaul rooted in ethical, political, and social transformation. For this reason, and many more, his rightful recognition as the Father of Inclusive Education is not merely symbolic—it is an empirical and philosophical necessity for any serious discourse on educational justice in India and beyond.

21. Suggestions and Future Directions:

The persistent educational inequalities rooted in caste-based exclusion call for a comprehensive reconfiguration of policy, pedagogy, and institutional governance. Addressing these structural injustices demands an explicit incorporation of Ambedkarite principles into every facet of the education system—ranging from teacher training to curricular content, from digital infrastructure to participatory governance.

First and foremost, teacher education must be restructured through the institutionalization of anti-caste pedagogy. It is imperative that all teacher training programs—both at the pre-service and in-service levels—incorporate modules that critically engage with caste, privilege, and social location. This includes the integration of Ambedkarite texts, intersectional frameworks, and dialogical methodologies that foster critical reflexivity among educators. Teacher eligibility tests and accreditation standards should be revised to assess not only content mastery but also sensitivity to caste and social diversity. Collaborative curriculum development must involve Dalit, Adivasi, and Bahujan scholars, civil society organizations, and anti-caste activists to ensure authenticity and groundedness in lived experiences. Moreover, mandatory fieldwork in socially diverse educational settings should be instituted as part of teacher preparation, allowing for experiential learning and deconstruction of caste-based assumptions.

Equally crucial is a radical overhaul of the national curriculum and textbook content. Current curricular frameworks must be reoriented to reflect the historical and contemporary experiences of marginalized communities. Ambedkar's thought—particularly his writings on social democracy, education, and annihilation of caste—must occupy central positions in social science, philosophy, and political theory syllabi from the upper primary through higher secondary levels. Textbook development boards such as NCERT and SCERTs should be mandated to undertake comprehensive equity audits of existing materials, assessing the extent of caste representation, narrative voice, and epistemic justice. These audits should result in actionable revisions and the

inclusion of Dalit-Bahujan counter-narratives, folk traditions, and knowledge systems often erased by dominant-caste historiography. Furthermore, textbook committees should maintain a minimum quota of scholars from SC/ST/OBC backgrounds to ensure participatory and pluralistic content creation.

In light of the deepening digital divide, infrastructural reform must prioritize equity in access to technology and digital learning. Targeted investments should be directed toward provisioning free or subsidized digital devices for students from SC, ST, and economically marginalized communities. Content should be multilingual and culturally contextualized, available in regional and tribal languages to ensure inclusivity. Government schemes such as PM e-Vidya, DIKSHA, and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan must embed equity targets within their design, supported by real-time data dashboards that disaggregate progress along caste, gender, and geography. Moreover, community internet centers and mobile digital libraries can be deployed in remote areas, supported by local volunteers and digital ambassadors drawn from the community itself. All digital equity schemes must include grievance redressal mechanisms with time-bound accountability to prevent exclusion by omission.

Decentralization and community participation, while nominally present in policy, require deeper democratization. School Management Committees (SMCs) must be restructured to ensure proportional representation of Dalit, Adivasi, and other historically disadvantaged groups. Legal mandates should require at least 50% representation from marginalized backgrounds in SMCs, with priority given to female guardians from these communities. Capacity-building workshops should be conducted to empower committee members with legal literacy, rights-based knowledge, and tools for school monitoring. Participatory audits—modeled on social audit principles—must be institutionalized to track expenditure, infrastructure quality, teacher performance, and caste-based discrimination at the school level. Annual “citizen report cards” should be made mandatory for every public school, to be displayed publicly and submitted to district education authorities, thereby enabling bottom-up accountability and transparency.

Together, these interventions represent more than incremental reforms—they constitute a structural realignment of the education system in accordance with Ambedkarite visions of justice, dignity, and democratic transformation. The future of inclusive education in India rests not in abstract policy declarations but in sustained political will, participatory design, and the moral courage to confront caste as an enduring axis of inequality within our classrooms and curricula. To ignore this imperative is to betray the constitutional promise of social justice, and to deny Ambedkar his rightful legacy as the architect of a truly inclusive educational order.

22. Conclusion:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar’s contributions to the architecture of inclusive education in India were not incidental adjuncts to his political activism; they were, rather, foundational to his broader vision of social democracy. For Ambedkar, education was not merely a tool for individual advancement but a structural instrument for dismantling caste hierarchies, eradicating socio-economic oppression, and instilling democratic consciousness. His assertion that “Without education, equality is meaningless” (Ambedkar, 1989, Vol. 2, p. 321) underscores the centrality he accorded to education in the project of human emancipation. This conviction animated his efforts in constitution-making, his establishment of educational institutions like the People’s Education Society, and his prolific theoretical interventions in texts such as *Annihilation of Caste* and *States and Minorities*.

Ambedkar’s educational philosophy was qualitatively distinct from that of his contemporaries. Where others saw education in terms of literacy acquisition or vocational skill development, Ambedkar envisioned it as a transformative praxis. He emphasized a curriculum that inculcated dignity, nurtured critical consciousness, and questioned the ideological scaffolding of caste, patriarchy, and economic exploitation. His call for pedagogical frameworks that integrate social justice with epistemological pluralism continues to expose the limitations of modern education systems that prioritize standardization and market-oriented skills over equity and ethical reasoning.

Despite constitutional mandates and policy advancements, the enduring realities of educational exclusion—manifest in disproportionately high dropout rates among SC/ST students, the digital divide, caste-based bullying, and curriculum invisibility—reflect the unfulfilled nature of Ambedkar’s vision. These systemic disparities not only validate the prescience of his critique but also reveal the superficiality of contemporary reforms that neglect structural justice. Policies such as the Right to Education Act (2009) and the National Education Policy (2020),

while progressive in intent, fall short of Ambedkarite rigor when divorced from redistributive frameworks and anti-caste imperatives.

To call Ambedkar the “Father of Inclusive Education” is not merely to bestow a posthumous honorific; it is to recognize his empirically substantiated and philosophically coherent blueprint for educational justice. His model predates and surpasses many global paradigms of inclusion by integrating constitutional morality, state responsibility, community representation, and ethical pedagogy into a unified framework. In doing so, he laid the groundwork for a radically democratic education system that remains unmatched in both vision and depth.

Re-centering Ambedkar in educational policy and discourse is thus not a matter of symbolic restitution—it is a necessary condition for the realization of a truly egalitarian and emancipatory education system. His famous call to “educate, agitate, and organize” must be reinterpreted as a pedagogical imperative: to educate with critical awareness, to agitate against injustice in institutional forms, and to organize education as a collective, democratic endeavor. Only through such radical reorientation can we begin to fulfill the promise of inclusive education—not as a policy buzzword, but as a transformative practice rooted in social justice and human dignity.

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