

## **STUDY ON ENVIRONMENTAL OF DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Everyone has a stake in preserving Earth's natural wealth. It would not have been possible for Earth's prosperity and survival without humanity's efforts to save it. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, one of the most influential thinkers of the modern era, is the subject of this investigation of the role of his natural surroundings in shaping his ideas. It has been stated that Ambedkar's guiding philosophy includes a series of strategies to minimise both individual and societal exploitation of natural resources, as well as an understanding of the connection of individuals and their environment. In this analysis, we examine Ambedkar's ideas and strategies from an environmental perspective, stressing the steps he suggests we take to reduce our negative influence on the natural world.

**KEYWORDS**Environmentalism, Ambedkar, Caste, Water, Nature

### **INTRODUCTION**

There has always been an awareness in Indian culture of the need of protecting natural resources. To "live in harmony with nature" is the societal creed. The forests of India were sacred places for the country's saints and sages. These writings show conclusively that people of Vedic ancestry respect everything of nature, from plants and animals to the earth and sky and the very air and water we breathe and drink. Everyone had an overwhelming want to keep them safe. Ancient cultures believed that trees, rivers, and the ocean were holy since they were the cradles of all life. Parents and grandparents instilled in their offspring a respect for the Earth and all its inhabitants, including its rivers, forests, trees, animals, and plants.

Environment, when not otherwise defined, includes all forms of life on Earth, including humans, animals, plants, microbes, and property. The Environmental Protection Act of 1986 mandates this. The atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere are the classical physical divisions of the environment.

The term "atmosphere" is used to describe the layer of gases that surrounds and protects Earth. The term "Hydrosphere" refers to the sum total of all accessible water, including oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, streams, reservoirs, polar icecaps, glaciers, and ground water. The biosphere encompasses the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and the world of living beings and their

interactions with their environment. The lithosphere, or outer mantle of the solid earth, is made up of elements including minerals, organic matter, air, and water that are found in the planet's crust and soil.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Dr. Tejaswini V. Shende (2019)** Dr. Ambedkar's views and interventions on nature, village, land, agriculture, water, community, industry, technology, science, and social justice all contribute to environmental sustainability, and his concepts may be found in the Sustainable Development Goals. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's understanding significantly alters the 'natural' course of many systems, including the biosphere. However, Dr. Ambedkar's universal and socially critical ideas sometimes served to obscure the history and politics of exploitative casteist relationship. Perhaps with his ideas on how people should deal with nature, environmental fairness can become a more prominent topic of discussion. Over-exploitation of natural resources, in Dr. Ambedkar's opinion, is just one contributor to environmental degradation. Dr. Ambedkar's understanding of the natural world went well beyond what his senses had revealed to him. All the while he's sorting everything into categories, The first was the unmediated material world, or what Dr. Ambedkar referred to as "useful things from the earth," which may be obtained via activities like hunting, fishing, and stock-raising. The second was the widespread acceptance of the concept of "universal nature," which holds that the foundations of human social order may be found in universal laws and constants.

**Meenakshi Sharma (2019)** This article highlights Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's contribution in liberating women by organising the womenfolk against their slavery, which is essential for maintaining the present caste structures. Ambedkar recognised that women must spearhead efforts to advance the post-caste, post-class society he envisioned. He advocated for a more equitable relationship between the sexes, as opposed to Manu's master-slave paradigm advocated for in Manu smriti. This could only be accomplished by toppling the Brahmanical social order that saw women just as objects to be owned by men and forced them to rely on men for their own existence. Women, in Manu's view, are subhuman and should be subject to the authority of their male kin. This paper's goal is to elaborate on the justifications behind gender-based legislation that places stringent restrictions on women. Women's reproductive abilities provide them the ability to dismantle caste systems by producing offspring with members of other castes. Therefore, it is crucial to suppress their views if the caste system is to be maintained as a commercial enterprise. This is why several rituals were created, each with the overarching purpose of making women's sexuality completely harmless.

**Naveen Kumar Arora (2018)** Maintaining a sustainable ecology in the modern world is a major challenge. Concerns about the future of the world's natural resources have arisen in response to the rapid growth in human population and the dramatic increase in human-caused environmental deterioration. Worldwide, people are feeling the impacts of pollution and rising human populations. The increasing human population and subsequent rise in consumption per person have placed a significant pressure on the Earth's dwindling natural resources. The pervasive pollution of water sources, air, and soil has been exacerbated by urbanisation, industrialisation,

and current farming methods. Overexploitation of natural resources, followed by poisoning with dangerous chemicals, makes it difficult for future generations to prosper.

**RavikumarVejendala(2016)** The environmental ramifications of Ambedkar's theories, whether explicitly expressed or not, are fascinating. Understanding the natural world from his point of view helps bring environmental issues to the forefront of political debate. Ambedkar argues that environmental degradation has several causes, one of which is the unfair distribution of resources within society. The limitation of access to clean water for marginalised people like the Dalits was a central theme throughout Ambedkar's life as a thinker and activist. This article claims that the ecological viewpoint of B. R. Ambedkar presents a model of environmentalism from below that can be utilised to appropriately depict the disproportionately detrimental consequences environmental challenges have on socially disadvantaged groups like Dalits.

### **AMBEDKARITE UNDERSTANDING OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE**

Ambedkar's perspective may be somewhat at odds with the conventional wisdom when it comes to the natural world and environmental issues. Mainstream discussions on ecology and the environment are rife with Brahmanism and caste prejudice. Ambedkar argues that individuals in hierarchical societies form their impressions of the world by the habits they adopt. Separated ecological zones and uneven distribution of natural resources are glaring examples of the injustices meted out to society's most marginalised groups. "the exclusion of dalits from resources was operationalized and legitimized by a system of graded inequality that was sanctioned by the Brahminical traditions that he regarded as being the theoretical underpinning of what we now designate as Hinduism," writes Ambedkar.

Not everyone has access to a community's share of the water, rivers, land, ponds, and other natural resources. Ambedkar states in his book *Waiting for a visa*, "...there was hunger burning within us; with all this, we were to sleep without food; that was because we could access no water, and that was because we were untouchables." Such brazen expressions of prejudice and animosity are run for the course for individuals already at the bottom of society's food chain. Ambedkar was "sensitive" about the exclusion of dalits from the environment, as V.M. Ravi Kumar puts it: "his thought on the restriction of dalits from possessing land, and his views on the relationship between caste system and access to forest and water." Ambedkar believed that those on the bottom of social hierarchies—whether in India's caste system or the West's racial hierarchy—had the key to a full appreciation of the natural world. By putting Ambedkar's environmental philosophy into reality, one cannot examine society without also considering its natural surroundings.

Current environmental discourse is dominated by a modernist lens through which nature and the environment are interpreted. The influence that Gandhi and Ambedkar have had on India's environmental culture has been the subject of much academic investigation. In contrast to the Gandhian tradition, Ambedkar built a more humane society from the ground up. Ambedkarism and contemporary values like a dedication to equality, social justice, and a scientific



temperament go hand in hand. According to Ambedkar, the development of modernism will allow dalits to be freed. This approach helps the environment in the long run.

The Gandhian tradition, which is based on the division of natural regions and the uneven distribution of natural resources, is upheld by Brahmanical environmental intellectuals who reject the modernising process. Ambedkar believed that a democratic and egalitarian society could only be built via the equal distribution of natural resources. It is inevitable that disadvantaged people will be exploited if this kind of inequality is not addressed. Ambedkar's writings may be seen as a precursor to the alternative environmental movement and a critique of elite Brahmanical environmental discourses.

### **ENVIRONMENT-DEVELOPMENT-TECHNOSCIENCE: DEBATES IN INDIA**

The issue of dwindling natural resources and the need of limiting economic expansion was first addressed in the West in the 1970s with the publishing of the report Limits to Expansion, and it has remained until the current day. The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm the same year, likewise focused on environmental and development issues. The idea that increased economic activity need not be environmentally damaging was widely disseminated thanks in large part to this meeting. Sustainable development was originally used in the 1987 report of the Brundtland commission, Our Common Future.

As a consequence of these worldwide shifts, the Indian government's planning commission reworked its five-year plans from the first to the fifth decade, and the consequent shifts in language may be seen in how nature and economic development are conceived of. The first document of India's autonomous five-year plan emphasised nature and humanity's untapped potential, whereas the fifth document explicitly addressed resource restriction and the necessity to identify environmental degradation and pollution. This change in terminology reflects the global transition from seeing development only in terms of economic growth in the 1800s to viewing development as growth that incorporates social and environmental factors.

Understanding the development discourses of postcolonial India requires familiarity with the concepts of three nationalist figures: Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, and B. R. Ambedkar. Nehru's scientific socialism, which was adopted as India's development model after independence, posited that a socialist state with an emphasis on regulated economic growth, supported by technological advancements in healthcare and infrastructure, would be the best way for India to address its persistent poverty, poor health, and large population. In contrast, Gandhi pushed for a model of development that prioritised preserving rural ways of life above consolidating power via means such as massive de-skilling technology and industrialization (decentralized governance at the village level). Ambedkar, an anti-caste crusader and constitutional architect in India, believed that state aid for industry was needed. Protecting the working class was of paramount importance to him. It was his firm belief that the modernization of India's economy would lead to the elimination of economic feudalism based on caste, which had long pervaded the country's rural population.

When Jawaharlal Nehru took office as the first Prime Minister of India, he was met with a range of opinions on where the nation should go. Unfortunately, scientific socialism as envisioned by Nehruvian thinkers was ultimately unsuccessful. The nuclear energy business began in the 1950s, agricultural technology experienced the Green Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, and the dairy industry experienced the White Revolution in the 1980s. However, social movements also began to pose harsh questions about the winners and losers of technology and scientific growth projects during this time period. Examples include the 1980s Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada Movement), which successfully opposed the construction of the Sardar Sarovar hydroelectric power-plant, a massive technological and scientific development project, due to justified concerns about widespread ecological destruction and the relocation of marginalised people living in the area. Therefore, the people's movements raised the vital questions of who should gain from expansion and who should bear its costs. International and national policy papers praise sustainable development, while people's movements in India in the 1970s and 1980s aimed to politicise the notion of development and raise concerns on conventional ways of economic growth.

## **AMBEDKAR AND GREEN DISCOURSE**

Ecology is the study of the relationship between natural and anthropogenic systems. This line of thinking implies that Ambedkar's ideas and deeds both explicitly and implicitly reflect the ecological component of human engagement with environment. The environmental movement might become more sensitive to the need to rectify inequities in light of Ambedkar's ideas. Through the prism of Ambedkar's environmental philosophy, we can see how social exclusion contributes to environmental devastation. Understanding Ambedkar's ecological contribution may need concepts from intellectual environmental history, which places an emphasis on the engagement of philosophers, poets, politicians, and activists with environmental thought and practise.

The historical literature on India's intellectual environment was formerly dominated by M.K. Gandhi. This school of thinking argues that Gandhian ideas, as an exemplar of eastern political-environmental thought and action, should be included into environmental management strategies. The effect of nationalist romanticism may be seen in many aspects of Indian policy and ideology, including the way natural resources are managed. Some people look to villages as models of harmonious, egalitarian communities. This is taken into account when formulating policies like watershed management, forest management, etc. If these changes are to have any kind of positive impact, it's imperative that all affected parties be engaged and given a fair opportunity to benefit from them. The reform effort is currently incapable of yielding meaningful outcomes. Second-generation reform challenges in natural resource management policy are the focus of certain studies. Emerging as a critical aspect in the phenomena of underachievement is the impact of socioeconomic inequalities on the efficacy of policies. This is why it is so important for Indian environmental discourse to centre the concepts of Dalit intellectuals like Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who advocated for a more just and inclusive India, in the present day.

## **ECOLOGY AND AMBEDKAR**

Ambedkar's central argument is that India must become a modern nation. Transformation or reform of social, cultural, and political institutions and behaviours is necessary to meet the requirements of modernity. This is important to keep in mind while interpreting his critique of caste and Brahmanism. Ambedkar also pointed out the adverse socioeconomic situation faced by millions of untouchables and other oppressed groups in rural India.

Ambedkar considered the Brahmanical world view as a key defect in the Indian social order and the caste system, and he used this to argue that the untouchable castes were denied a satisfying life because of it. He posed the question, "What does this civilisation bring to the 25 million of Primitive Tribes who are living on its frontiers?" to the Indian nationalists who praised Indian culture. To what end does it serve the five million members of the Criminal Tribes who call that civilisation home? However, the issue remains, "What does it supply to the 50 million Untouchables who not only exist in the centre of that society which has made no effort to embrace them in its field?" So, according to Ambedkar, India's civilising process has always included keeping its untouchables and other oppressed people away from the country's natural resources.

Ambedkar theorised that systematic exclusion was to blame for the persistent economic disadvantage of India's Untouchable caste in rural areas. After investigating, he concluded that Untouchables were barred from owning land and hence unable to make a decent livelihood in the Hindu-dominated village economy. Begging and scavenging were the only menial tasks within their reach. In his argument, Ambedkar claimed that the dominant society and the colonial authorities had prevented members of the Untouchable community from gaining access to land and other natural resources. The Untouchables, in Ambedkar's view, were deprived of a meaningful life because of the state's mismanaged political economy on the one hand and society's hierarchical, caste-based structure on the other.

Ambedkar was a firm believer that everyone should have the same opportunities to enjoy nature's bounty. He hopes that this will lead to a more equitable society in the long run. In particular, he advocated for the government to take part in the redistribution of land. To make people feel more connected to the land, he suggested resettling the untouchables in irrigated areas and allocating underutilised forest and waste land to individuals. He said that the government's distribution of land to Dalits may have a significant impact. When asked for his opinion, he said, "The most critical topic on which Government has to concentrate is the giving of land to the Scheduled Castes." They need to be permanently transferred to territory where they can cease depending on others, hold their heads up, and confront life without fear. I think every minister feels the same way. Land redistribution for Dalits should be the government's responsibility, in his opinion.

## **MORALITY, ENVIRONMENT AND AMBEDKAR**

Indian environmental historians relied heavily on Brahminical literature and practises because of the idealistic preservationist ideas they presented there. The ultimate objective of these ideas is to provide a theoretical underpinning for the various ways in which Hindus allocate their resources.

Through consideration of Buddhist thought, Ambedkar develops a theory of equitable ecology that challenges the romantic Hindu environmentalist tradition. According to this philosophy, the earth's resources should be used for the common good rather than hoarded by a privileged few. Further, the benefits of our planet belong to all people equally. Ambedkar's stance on the morality of man's role in nature is reminiscent of Marx's, who believed that all persons were created equal in terms of their access to nature's resources (what he called "eco-equality").

Perhaps Ambedkar's engagement with Buddhism encapsulates his thoughts on bio-centric equality. Buddha and his Dharma is a monumental classic that begins with an examination of Siddhartha Gautama's transformation into the Buddha. Ambedkar claims this happened when Gautama tried to arbitrate a conflict over water rights between the Sakhyas and the Koloyas of ancient India. In a nutshell, Gautama was not on board with the Sakhyas' decision to engage in hostilities with their enemies. In light of the Buddha's failure to discover a solution, Ambedkar followed suit and went into exile. Ambedkar's understanding of the Buddha places a premium on water and other ecologically fragile resources. The ethics of human ecology, which entails thinking about our role in the natural world and our relationships with other creatures, is a thread that connects Ambedkar's fight for environmental justice to Buddha's teachings in three ways.

Then he spoke about how the Indian intellectual tradition treats the Big Bang and provided Buddha's view of nature. Ambedkar believed that there was no such thing as superior or inferior in the biotic world because "all individual things are analogues one to another and therefore, no one can be viewed as the ultimate sources to other." This means that all living things on Earth are interdependent. The ecological and biological concept of the food chain has close ties to this theory. This concept is reminiscent of Ambedkar's social notion that individuals from all walks of life have something to offer. Ambedkar's proposal of socio-ecological equality has the potential to broaden the conversation on environmental justice.

Ambedkar argues that Buddhism is the true embodiment of Indian culture. For him, Brahmanism is diametrically opposed to both humanism and the biological ethics of nature. He shares the Buddhist view that we should work to prevent the extinction of all forms of life. Ambedkar maintained, citing Buddha's teachings, that "in that sacrifice neither were no bulls murdered, nor were goats, nor fowls, nor were any forms of living animals put to death" (that sacrifice neither were nay oxen slain, neither were goats, nor fowls, nor were any kinds of fatted pigs). Nothing living was sacrificed to serve as stakes or fill the space around the shrine; not even the native Dabbha grasses. In light of Buddha's harsh criticism of Brahmanism over 2,000 years ago on the topic of human exploitation of nature, Ambedkar's Neo-Buddhism is a direct reaction.

## CONCLUSION

In India, the environmental movement takes into account people's socioeconomic status as well as their religious beliefs. There has been a significant uptick in interest in the study and discussion of ecology among both the general public and academics. To find a solution to the impending ecological crisis, it is necessary to go beyond the box. India's environmental movement may get fresh insight from Ambedkar's guiding principle. His ideas shed light on how

important it is to consider environmental issues as part of a larger web of influencing social dynamics when considering how people behave in the natural world. Ambedkar's ideas are a potent reminder that environmental governance has to be built on a foundation of equality and bio-ethical emotions if it is to really serve the needs of all segments of human society. Ecological democracy and inclusive environmentalism are made feasible, in part, by Ambedkar's beliefs on environmental justice. His Buddhist beliefs, in particular, promote an instrumentalist, reductionist view of societal progress. It follows that all forms of life, including humans, have a responsibility to fight against environmental deterioration and a right to equal protection under the law.

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