

Eco-Social Justice: B. R. Ambedkar's Understanding of Caste, Environment and Sustainable Development in India

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15505049>

ABSTRACT:

This article considers as the intersection of caste, nature and sustainable development in the philosophy of justice of B. R. Ambedkar. It as argues about the environmental degradation in India is intimately linked with caste-based discrimination and that Ambedkar's emphasis on social and economic rights are a key to eco social justice. By examining Ambedkar's views on land reforms, water rights, workers' rights and moral living through Buddhism. This study brings his contributions to words contemporary environmental theory to the forefront. Ambedkar's emphasis on state intervention and redistribution of resources is consistent with the values of environmental justice in terms of enhancing equal access to natural resources. His conception of Navayana Buddhism also presents an ethical framework for sustainability based on the non-violence and the compassion. This paper also discusses policy implications, it's the need for caste-sensitive environmental governance in order to promote inclusive and equitable sustainability practice has been emphasized. By incorporating Ambedkarite ethics are related to this work calls for a wider model of climate justice that is attuned to the socio-economic inequalities are that contextualize environmental experience in India.

KEYWORDS:

Eco social, caste, environment, sustainability, labor rights.

Introduction:

Environmental justice is a new discourse that acknowledges the uneven impact on environmental degradation on marginalized groups. In India caste controls access to the natural resources, pollution levels and participation in environmental decision making. While environmental consciousness increases, the caste aspect is undertheorized in dominant environmental discourse. B. R. Ambedkar, renowned for his efforts in social justice and constitutional changes, presents a critical vision on eco-social justice. Through his campaign of equal distribution of resources, protection of labor, and Buddhist ethics, he presents a radical yet contemporary view of sustainable development. This essay critically analyzes Ambedkar's work and its application to modern environmental policy.

In spite of growing attention to environmental justice, there is limited scholarship that bridges Ambedkar's social justice paradigm with ecological issues. The majority of the literature on sustainability in India ignores the caste aspects of environmental injustice. Although land rights, access to water, and economic justice have been studied in isolation, their intersection has seldom been explored in the context of Ambedkarite thought. This study attempts to bridge this gap by providing a detailed analysis of eco-social justice from an Ambedkarian perspective. The study investigates the intersectionality of caste, nature, and sustainable development from an Ambedkarite perspective. It deals with:

- » Historical and contemporary caste-based environmental injustices.
- » Ambedkar's interventions in land, water, and labor policies.
- » The role of Buddhism in constructing an ethical and sustainable ecological practice.
- » Policy implications to synthesize caste-sensitive environmental

governance.

The study is primarily grounded in India but has implications for other societies with social hierarchies that affect environmental policies.

Purpose of the Research: The overarching purpose of the research is to advance the role of caste in environmental justice and sustainable development in line with the thinking of Ambedkar. Specifically, it seeks to Evaluate the manner in which caste discrimination influences environmental policy and the availability of resources. Consider the contribution of Ambedkar towards eco-social justice and their relevance in the modern world. Advance caste-sensitive environmental policy in harmony with sustainability goals. Close the gap between social and environmental justice movements.

Theoretical Framework: Eco-social justice is an inter-disciplinary framework bringing together environmental sustainability and social justice, challenging mechanisms of oppression that target communities along the lines of caste, class, and gender. Ambedkar's equalitarian philosophy and human dignity provide a strong framework to analyze environmental governance. His deconstruction of the Hindu social order as exploitative has an echo in environmental justice paradigms that call for the dismantling of systemic inequalities in resource allocation. Ambedkar's emphasis on state-led interventions and economic democracy is full of learning for the construction of sustainable and equitable environmental policy.

Caste, Environment and Structural Inequality: Historically, the caste system has governed access to land, water, and sanitation and perpetuated environmental injustices. Dalits and Adivasis have been systematically denied productive agricultural land and pure sources of water. Traditional caste-based occupations are like

manual scavenging and working in tanneries are subject on Dalit and marginalized groups to extreme environmental and health hazards. Furthermore, urbanization and industrialization have typically dislocated Dalits, with development projects disproportionately affecting them. Ambedkar pointed out these inequities and demanded that the state step in and see to it that there is resource justice.

Ambedkar's views on Land, Water, and Natural Resources—Land reforms were central to the economic justice vision of Ambedkar. He advocated land redistribution policies in order to address historical injustices that made Dalits landless and economically insecure. His actions regarding India's water policies, i.e., large dams and irrigation projects, reflect his attempts to secure water as a public good and not a commodity under the domains of the upper castes. The critique of caste control over resources by Ambedkar points towards the necessity of environmental governance that is directed toward social equity.

Labor, Sustainability and Economic Justice: Ambedkar's campaigns for labor rights are inseparable from environmental sustainability. He was a firm believer in the achievement of fair and equitable wages, safe working conditions and state intervention to prohibit labor exploitation. Environmental degradation tends to effect on working people most because pollution, deforestation and natural resource depletion disproportionately affect agriculturalists, miners and industrial workers. Ambedkar's call for planned economic growth and industrial policy is consonant with contemporary concepts of sustainability, which uphold ecologic accountability along with social justice.

Buddhism, Ecology and Ethical Living: Ambedkar's adoption of Buddhism provided an ethical content that has appeal to ecological consciousness. Buddhist are precepting of non-violence,

interdependence and compassion nurture sustainable existence and wise utilization of resources. Navayana Buddhism is as Ambedkar envisioned it and envisions an egalitarian society free from caste-based oppression but cultivating harmony with nature. His emphasis on rationality and moral life contributes to a sustainability platform integrating social justice with environmental protection.

Policy Implications and Contemporary Relevance: The exclusion of caste concerns from environmental policy results in the persistent marginalization of Dalit and Adivasi communities. Climate change, pollution, and natural resource depletion directly affect these communities, so that caste-sensitive environmental management is paramount. The inclusion of caste concerns will make climate justice movements inclusive. Sustainable development practices must be conceptualized within an Ambedkarite framework, so that economic development does not exacerbate social inequalities.

Conclusion:

Ambedkar's notion of justice is not merely confined to social and economic levels but encompasses environmental sustainability as well. His call for land and water rights, workers' rights, and moral living presents a revolutionary model in addressing contemporary ecological emergencies. An understanding of the interconnectedness of caste, environment, and sustainability is important to achieve actual justice.

Follow-up research and advocacy can further enrich the application of Ambedkarite theory towards environmental policy such that the pillars of equality and dignity continue to guide sustainable development initiatives.

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Funding:

This study was not funded by any grant.

Conflict of interest:

The Authors have no conflict of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

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