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## Department of Political Science — Index of Papers

Sr. No.	Title of Paper	Author(s)	Page No.
1	लोकशाहीची संकल्पना व अकोले तालुक्यातील आदिवासी राजकीय नेतृत्व	Dagale, A. N. & Sheikh, W. A. R.	189–196
2	भारताची वाढती भू-राजकीय महत्त्वाकांक्षा आणि चीन-अमेरिका स्पर्धा: धोरणात्मक संधी आणि आव्हाने	Atar, A. S.	197–200
3	भारतीय राजकीय विचारवंत आणि सामाजिक परिवर्तन: एक विश्लेषणात्मक अभ्यास	Giri, B. K. & Nandeshwar, P. K.	201–207
4	भारतीय राजकीय विचारवंत आणि सामाजिक परिवर्तन (राजा राममोहन रॉय, महात्मा फुले आणि स्वामी विवेकानंद)	Deshmukh, J.	208–211
5	भारतीय राजकीय विचारधारेतील सामाजिक परिवर्तन: गांधी, आंबेडकर, नेहरू आणि जयप्रकाश नारायण यांच्या योगदानाचा चिकित्सक अभ्यास	Auti, M. E.	212–220
6	75th Years of Indian Constitution	Jawale, R. J.	221–224
7	Gender Justice Under the Indian Constitution	Suryawanshi, M. N.	225–233
8	75 Years of the Indian Constitution: Evolution, Achievements and Challenges	Hajare, M. G.	234–239
9	भारत आणि जागतिक राजकारण (India and Global Politics)	Kshirsagar, P.	240–244
10	भारतीय लोकशाहीतील डिजिटल परिवर्तन: ई-गव्हर्नन्स आणि डिजिटल इंडिया	Patil, P. P.	245–251
11	Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Social Transformation	Charankar, P. A.	252–257
12	जागतिक राजकारणातील भारत: धोरण, प्रभाव आणि भविष्यातील दिशा	Patil, P. V. Z.	258–265
13	इंडो-पॅसिफिक भू-राजकारण: भारताची भूमिका	Jadhav, B. K.	266–271
14	75 Years of Indian Constitution and Indian Republic	Ghorpade, S. S.	272–276
15	भारतीय संविधानाची अमृत वर्षे आणि लोकशाही भारत	Kasbe, P. D.	277–284
16	महाराष्ट्र विधानसभा राखीव मतदार संघातील राजकीय नेतृत्वाचा अभ्यास	Nadekar, R. S. & Shinde, B. A.	285–289
17	भारतीय निवडणुकांवरील सामाजिक माध्यमांचा प्रभाव: निवडणुकांचे बदलते आयाम	Jaykar, R. S. & Patil, T. M.	290–295
18	नारीवाद आणि लैंगिक न्याय	Patil, S. M.	296–299
19	Recent Trends in Political Theory	Padghan, A. R.	300–307
20	Indian Political Thinkers and Social Transformation: Buddha, Basavanna, Phule, Ambedkar and Periyar	Kamble, K. S. & Kore, V. G.	308–314
21	दक्षिण आशियातील भारताचे नेतृत्व आणि जागतिक परिणाम	Phunne, N. S.	315–319
22	सांप्रदायिकतेचे राजकारण व महात्मा गांधीचे राजकीय विचार	Lokhande, B. B.	320–324
23	जागतिक राजकारणातील भारताचे स्थान	Patil-Shetke, D. S.	325–329
24	राजकीय संवाद आणि लोकशाही	Kore, V. G. & Rathod, S. K.	330–335

Sr. No.	Title of Paper	Author(s)	Page No.
25	Global Conflict and the Indian Context: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Reflections on the Second World War	Kadu, A. A.	336-343
26	Euthanasia: Indian and International Legal Perspective	Mahapure, P. S.	1465-1468
27	महिलांचे अधिकार जाणीव-जागृतीत भारतीय संविधानाचे योगदान	Muluk, S. R.	1469-1474
28	लोकशाही संवर्धनासाठी राजकीय सुसंवादाची गरज व महत्त्व	Hake, D. D.	1475-1480
29	न्या. महादेव गोविंद रानडे यांचा उदारमतवाद आणि सामाजिक परिवर्तन	Chavan, S. & Patil, S. C.	1481-1486
30	भारतीय संसद आणि महिलांचे प्रतिनिधित्व: एक चिकित्सक अभ्यास	Mulla, S. M.	1487-1490
31	डॉ. बाबासाहेब आंबेडकर यांचे सामाजिक परिवर्तनातील भूमिका	Bansode, J. P.	1491-1495
32	स्त्री सबलीकरण: आव्हाने आणि उपाययोजना	Koli, L. D.	1496-1499
33	स्त्रीवाद आणि लिंगन्याय : एक संशोधनात्मक अभ्यास	Chavan, M. S.	1500-1504
34	महात्मा फुले यांचे समाज परिवर्तन कार्य	Kambire, R. B.	1505-1509
35	बहुध्रुवीय जग आणि भारत	Chavan, R. S.	1510-1515
36	भारतातील आरक्षण धोरण आणि समान संधी	Kadam, R. S.	1516-1521
37	लोकशाहीतील राजकीय संवादाची भूमिका : एक विश्लेषण	Bagal, S. N.	1522-1526
38	संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद सुधारणा – भारताच्या स्थायी सदस्यत्वाच्या दाव्याचे मूलभूत आधार	Kudale, T. D. & Dahalke, B. M.	1527-1531
39	बहुसंस्कृतीवाद आणि राष्ट्रवाद	Patil, A. N.	1532-1536
40	Nuclear Weapons Changed World Politics	Inamdar, R. K.	1537-1541
41	A View on India's Foreign Policy from Pre-Independence to Post-Independence Era	Potdar, V. M.	1542-1548
42	महाराष्ट्र विधानसभा सदस्यांनी वापरलेली संसदीय आयुधांचा अभ्यास : लक्षवेधी सूचना आणि स्थगन प्रस्ताव	Biradar, D. D. & Pagar, A. R.	1549-1551
43	Political Communication and Democracy	Dahalake, B. M.	1552-1556
44	सर सय्यद अहमद खान यांचे सामाजिक आणि राजकीय विचार : एक अभ्यास	Pathan, A. I.	1557-1561
45	कायद्यांबाबत पं. जवाहरलाल नेहरू यांचे विचार	Patil, P. V.	1562-1567
46	भारतीय राज्यघटनेची ७५ वर्षांतील वाटचाल	Jadhav, M. S.	1568-1572
47	महिला सबलीकरणात बिगर शासकीय संस्थांची भूमिका	Shinde, P. A.	1573-1577
48	Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Political Thoughts and Social Transformation	Kamble, S. B.	1578-1582
49	Socio-Political Thought of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule	Patil, S. S.	2379-2384
50	Raja Ram Mohan Roy: Father of Modern India	Kothavale, S. V.	2385-2387

Total Papers: 50

## Dr. B R Ambedkar's Political Thoughts and Social Transformation

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article History:</b> Received: 15<sup>th</sup> Dec 2025 Accepted: 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 2025 Published: 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2025</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p><i>Social justice, social transformation, annihilation of caste, anti-caste ideology, Dalit emancipation, equality liberty fraternity,</i></p>	<p>Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956) developed one of the most systematic philosophies of social transformation in the modern world, rooted in his analysis of caste as a system of graded inequality and his conviction that democracy must be social as well as political. This paper examines Ambedkar's thoughts on social transformation under four interrelated themes. First his critique of caste and the call for its annihilation, Second his conceptualization of social democracy through liberty, equality and fraternity, Third his strategy of "Educate, Agitate, Organize" as a programme of change, and Fourth his use of constitutionalism, law and mass movements to reconstruct society. Drawing on primary texts such as "Annihilation of Caste" and his speeches in the Constituent Assembly,</p>

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## Introduction

Ambedkar was born into a community stigmatized as “untouchable” and converted this experience of oppression into a rigorous critique of caste and a transformative social philosophy. In early writings like “Castes in India” (1916), he theorized caste as an artificial imposition of endogamy on an otherwise culturally unified population, stressing that it produces a system of closed, graded hierarchies rather than simple division of labour. “Annihilation of Caste” (1936), prepared as a speech for the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal, became the foundational text where Ambedkar argued that caste has no scientific or moral basis and must be completely uprooted if India is to become a democratic society, Ambedkar insisted that social transformation in India could not be achieved by minor reforms within Hindu society but required a radical reconstruction of social values, religious authority and institutional arrangements. As chair of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, he sought to translate his vision of social democracy into fundamental rights, affirmative action and directive principles aimed at dismantling entrenched inequalities. His later embrace of Buddhism at Nagpur in 1956 signified the creation of a new ethical and spiritual basis for an egalitarian society, further linking social transformation with a change in moral and religious consciousness.

### Ambedkar’s Critique of Caste and the Call for Annihilation Caste as Graded Inequality

For Ambedkar, caste was not merely a traditional custom but a system of “graded inequality” in which every caste is above some and below others, producing a fragmented social order without a sense of common humanity. In “Annihilation of Caste,” he refuted the idea that caste is only a division of labour, arguing instead that it is a division of labourers, fixed by birth, which denies mobility, fraternity and basic human dignity. He rejected claims that caste preserves racial purity, pointing out that there is no racial homogeneity within castes and attacked the notion that caste helps cultural continuity, calling it a barrier to national unity and social progress. Ambedkar emphasized that caste corrupts morality, obstructs charity beyond one’s own group, and makes genuine social cooperation impossible. Because caste assigns status and occupation by birth, it destroys the conditions for equality of opportunity, which he regarded as essential to democracy. In his view the Hindu social order organized around caste and varnashrama dharma, institutionalizes permanent disabilities for the so called “untouchables” and other lower castes, making social transformation impossible without uprooting its religious and ideological foundations.

### Annihilation, Not Reform

Ambedkar therefore distinguished between reforming caste and annihilating it, insisting that nothing short of total destruction of the caste system could create a just society. He argued that inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriages though important, were insufficient by themselves, because the deeper problem lay in the religious notions and scriptural authority that sanctified caste. He famously concluded that it is necessary “to destroy the religious notions upon which caste is founded”, thereby rejecting the authority of scriptures that justify hierarchy and exclusion. This position led him to a direct critique of Hinduism as historically practiced which he saw as structurally tied to caste and untouchability.

### Ambedkar’s call for annihilation of caste

Thus implied both a social revolution in everyday practices and a religious-ideological revolution, which would free people from belief systems that legitimized inequality. From this standpoint, social transformation required not only economic reforms but a deep change in values, consciousness and

religious authority.

### **Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Social Democracy**

Social Democracy as a way of life in his famous speech to the Constituent Assembly on 25 November 1949, Ambedkar warned that political democracy “one person, one vote, one value” could not survive unless it rested on a foundation of social democracy. he defined social democracy as “a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life”, insisting that these values must structure social relations and not remain mere constitutional slogans. for Ambedkar, social democracy meant the disappearance of caste hierarchies, the absence of discrimination, and the presence of equal opportunity and mutual respect among citizens. Ambedkar was deeply aware of the tension between liberty and equality, liberty can lead to inequality and equality can restrict liberty, so he treated fraternity as the principle that reconciles and sustains both. Fraternity - in his view, was more than goodwill; it was the recognition of the intrinsic worth and dignity of every person necessary for national integration and social cohesion. without fraternity formal liberty and equality remain hollow, because social prejudice and hierarchies continue to oppress marginalized groups, especially Dalits and women. as tools of Transformation Ambedkar’s idea of liberty was not only political freedom but the removal of social barriers that prevent individuals from developing their capabilities, particularly the shackles imposed by caste and untouchability he argued that political independence from colonial rule would be meaningless if Dalits and other oppressed groups remained bound by social and economic servitude. Equality, for Ambedkar, required both legal equality and substantive measures to correct historical disadvantages, which later justified reservations and other compensatory policies. Fraternity functioned as the emotional and ethical glue necessary for a society of equals, and Ambedkar saw its absence as the central defect of caste society. In “Annihilation of Caste” he stated that his ideal society would be based on liberty, equality and fraternity, directly challenging those who defended caste as a natural or divinely ordained order. these three values, later reinforced by his reading of Buddhism, became the normative core of his vision of social transformation.

### **“Educate, Agitate, Organize”: Programme for Change Education**

As awakening Ambedkar’s slogan “Educate, Agitate, Organize” summarizes his strategy for transforming oppressed communities into agents of their own liberation. as early as 1924, he founded the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha with objectives including hostels, libraries and schools to raise the educational level of the “depressed classes” he believed that education would enable the oppressed to understand their conditions, reject myths of inferiority, and use political power effectively to secure their rights. education, in Ambedkar’s philosophy, has both instrumental and emancipatory roles: it improves material prospects but also develops critical consciousness. he warned that an illiterate, unorganized oppressed community would remain at the mercy of upper-caste leaders and religious authorities. therefore social transformation must begin with educational empowerment that is accessible, secular and oriented towards human dignity and self respect. agitation and Organization the second component, “Agitate”, referred primarily to intellectual and political agitation rather than violent protest. Ambedkar saw agitation as a “mental revolution”, involving critical questioning of tradition, mobilization against unjust laws and practices, and peaceful protest against discrimination. he organized satyagrahas for temple entry access to public water sources and equal civic rights, demonstrating how agitation could challenge entrenched caste

norms. "Organize" highlighted the need for collective strength; isolated individuals could not confront a system as powerful as caste. Ambedkar established organizations such as the scheduled castes federation and encouraged Dalits to form political parties, unions and associations to negotiate with the state and society. for him, organization of the oppressed was essential to convert scattered grievances into a sustained movement for legal and social change making social transformation an organized historical process.

### **Constitutionalism, Law and Institutional Reform**

The Constitution as an Instrument of Social Revolution as chairman of the drafting committee, Ambedkar conceived the Indian Constitution as a vehicle of social revolution, not merely a legal document. the Constitution's guarantees of fundamental rights equality before law, abolition of untouchability, non-discrimination in employment and access to public places reflected his insistence that the state must actively dismantle caste-based disabilities provisions for reservations in legislatures public employment and education for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes operationalized his belief that social transformation requires compensatory justice. Ambedkar repeatedly warned that political democracy would be in peril if social and economic inequalities remained unaddressed. he argued that majority rule is unjustifiable when the majority is a "communal majority" that legitimizes caste oppression, and therefore minorities, including Dalits, need constitutional safeguards and institutional checks. in his economic writings, he advocated industrialization and land reforms as remedies for agrarian problems, linking social democracy to structural economic changes. limits of law and the Need for Social Ethics At the same time, Ambedkar recognized that law alone cannot transform society if social attitudes remain casteist. he emphasized that constitutional provisions must be accompanied by changes in social morality, especially within the majority community. the state can outlaw untouchability but only a transformation in religious and ethical consciousness can make equality a lived reality. this insight led Ambedkar to focus on both "top-down" reform through state and law, and "bottom-up" reform through movements, education, and religious-ethical reorientation. his later writings stressed that social democracy requires a culture of fraternity, which cannot be imposed by law but must be cultivated through new social practices and moral teachings.

### **Critique of Hinduism and Search for a New Ethics**

Ambedkar's critique of Hinduism centered on its scriptural sanction for caste and untouchability, which in his view made the religion incapable of providing an ethical basis for equality. In "Annihilation of Caste," he argued that so long as people accept scriptures that uphold caste, social reform will remain superficial. this led him eventually to the conclusion that Dalits must leave Hinduism to secure self-respect and equality. for Ambedkar, religion was not inherently reactionary; he distinguished between a religion that supports morality and equality and one that legitimizes hierarchy. his search was for a religious ethical framework consistent with democracy, human dignity and rationality which he ultimately found in Buddhism.

### **Navayana Buddhism and Social Transformation**

In 1956, Ambedkar and hundreds of thousands of followers converted to Buddhism at Nagpur, marking the birth of Navayana ("New Vehicle") Buddhism he interpreted Buddhism as a rational, ethical religion centered on compassion, equality and the rejection of metaphysical hierarchy, thus providing a

spiritual foundation for social democracy, his book “The Buddha and His Dhamma” re-read Buddhist teachings in terms of social justice, arguing that the dhamma should guide a life of liberty, equality and fraternity. Navayana Buddhism redefined religion as a moral force for social transformation rather than an instrument of ritual or caste privilege. For Ambedkar, conversion was a collective act of agitation and organization: a rejection of caste identity and a declaration of a new community grounded in dignity and fraternity. In this way his religious thought is integral to his broader project of transforming Indian society. contemporary relevance of Ambedkar’s thought Ambedkar’s analysis of caste as a system of graded inequality remains central to understanding the persistence of discrimination in contemporary India, despite legal reforms. ongoing debates on reservation policies, communal violence, and social exclusion show that political democracy without social democracy can produce instability and injustice, echoing his warnings. movements for Dalit rights, women’s rights and minority protections continue to draw upon his ideas of constitutionalism, social justice and fraternity. globally, Ambedkar’s framework has been compared to other anti-discrimination and human rights discourses, especially in its insistence that legal equality must be accompanied by substantive social and economic measures. his slogan “Educate, Agitate, Organize” inspires contemporary activism and community organizing, from grassroots education initiatives to campaigns against caste discrimination in diaspora contexts. Ambedkar’s thought thus offers a powerful lens for imagining social transformation wherever structural inequalities persist.

### **Conclusion**

Re-state that Ambedkar offers not just criticism of caste but a fourfold strategy: structural critique, constitutional rights, institutional redistribution, and ethical reconstruction, which together provide a long-term blueprint for social transformation.

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