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NEW DEMOCRACY





The Voice That Spoke for Millions

*He gave us rights, not just rules.
He built a future from fragments of discrimination.*

On his birth anniversary, let's honour Dr. B.R. Ambedkar,
the man who gave India its moral compass.
Jai Bhim. Jai Bharat.



RAM DAS ATHAWALE

Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India

From the Editor's Desk

A New Voice for a Changing India

By Kush, Editor – New Democracy

It gives me immense pride to introduce you to the first issue of New Democracy — a magazine born out of conviction, shaped by resistance, and driven by the people it hopes to serve.

We are launching this magazine at a time when Indian democracy is both celebrated and challenged. In a media landscape often divided along ideological lines or muted by corporate interests, New Democracy offers something different — a platform for truth, accountability, and dialogue that rises above partisanship.

For over a decade, I've been part of political struggles on the ground — organising, listening, speaking out. This magazine is a continuation of that journey, one that seeks to bridge the widening gap between public sentiment and political action. New Democracy is not aligned with any party or faction. Our allegiance is to the Constitution, to the people, and to the principles of justice and equality.

Our launch on the birth anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is no coincidence. His vision of social, economic, and political justice continues to inspire millions, including me. His legacy demands that we not just vote but question, not just follow but think, and not just hope but act. This magazine is my humble tribute to his unfinished mission.

In these pages, you will find diverse voices — from grassroots activists to seasoned policy experts, from young writers to established thinkers. We are here to interrogate power, not echo it. To question dominant narratives, not reinforce them. To ensure that the voice of the last person is heard as clearly as the voice of the first.

New Democracy is an evolving space for dialogue, dissent, and discovery. Whether we are analysing policies, unpacking electoral strategies, or amplifying unheard stories, our goal remains constant: to make Indian democracy more participatory, more inclusive, and more accountable.

I invite you to join us — as readers, as critics, as contributors. Because democracy is not something we inherit. It's something we build together.

Welcome to New Democracy.

Kush

Editor

Political Analyst & Founder,

New Democracy



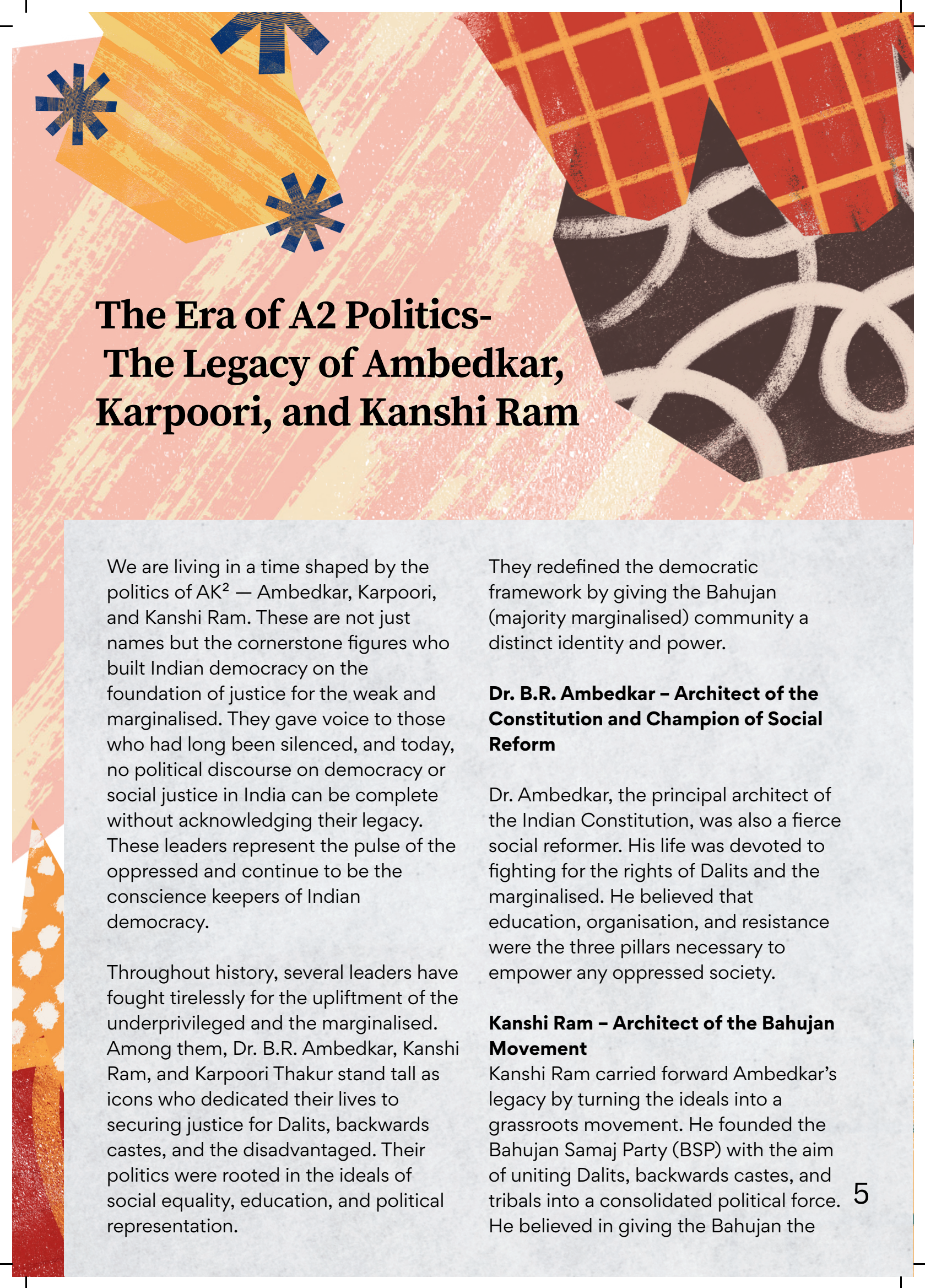
From Silence to Strength

*He turned pain into purpose,
Silence into strength,
and laws into justice.*

This Ambedkar Jayanti, let's rededicate ourselves to his ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity.



KISHOR MAKWANA
(Chairman, National Commission for Scheduled Castes)



The Era of A2 Politics- The Legacy of Ambedkar, Karpoori, and Kanshi Ram

We are living in a time shaped by the politics of AK² — Ambedkar, Karpoori, and Kanshi Ram. These are not just names but the cornerstone figures who built Indian democracy on the foundation of justice for the weak and marginalised. They gave voice to those who had long been silenced, and today, no political discourse on democracy or social justice in India can be complete without acknowledging their legacy. These leaders represent the pulse of the oppressed and continue to be the conscience keepers of Indian democracy.

Throughout history, several leaders have fought tirelessly for the upliftment of the underprivileged and the marginalised. Among them, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Kanshi Ram, and Karpoori Thakur stand tall as icons who dedicated their lives to securing justice for Dalits, backwards castes, and the disadvantaged. Their politics were rooted in the ideals of social equality, education, and political representation.

They redefined the democratic framework by giving the Bahujan (majority marginalised) community a distinct identity and power.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar – Architect of the Constitution and Champion of Social Reform

Dr. Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, was also a fierce social reformer. His life was devoted to fighting for the rights of Dalits and the marginalised. He believed that education, organisation, and resistance were the three pillars necessary to empower any oppressed society.

Kanshi Ram – Architect of the Bahujan Movement

Kanshi Ram carried forward Ambedkar's legacy by turning the ideals into a grassroots movement. He founded the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) with the aim of uniting Dalits, backwards castes, and tribals into a consolidated political force. He believed in giving the Bahujan the

power to participate in and shape political governance.

His efforts were focused on transforming these communities into an organised and politically aware force. He established BAMCEF (1978), DS-4 (1981), and finally the BSP in 1984. Kanshi Ram's famous slogan, "Jiski jitni sankhya bhaari, uski utni hissedari" (One's share should be proportional to their population), became a rallying cry for social and political equality.

Karpoori Thakur – Messiah of the Most Backwards

Known as the "Son of the Soil," Karpoori Thakur, former Chief Minister of Bihar, was a staunch advocate for the extremely backward classes (EBCs) and the poor. His most revolutionary contribution was the implementation of EBC reservations in Bihar. Rooted in socialist ideology, Thakur believed in equal opportunity for all, irrespective of caste or class.

He gave the slogan "Pichda pave sau mein saath" (The backward should get 60 out of 100), placing social justice at the core of his politics. He joined the broader socialist movement under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan and championed systemic change through grassroots activism.

Unity in Ideology and Purpose

Despite their different eras and approaches, Ambedkar, Kanshi Ram, and Karpoori Thakur shared a common

mission — achieving social justice through political empowerment. Ambedkar fought for Dalits, Kanshi Ram for the broader Bahujan community, and Karpoori Thakur for the most backward among them. Each battled against caste-based discrimination and inequality, using education, political representation, and constitutional reform as tools for change. They viewed politics not as a quest for power but as a vehicle for social transformation. Power, in their view, was not an end but a means to ensure justice and dignity for the marginalised.

Shaping the Present, Inspiring the Future

These three leaders successfully awakened Bahujan consciousness in their times and continue to be central figures in today's political discourse. Ambedkar gave Dalits legal rights through the Constitution. Kanshi Ram created political structures that empowered the Bahujan. Karpoori Thakur brought the most backwards into the mainstream through radical social and economic reforms.

Their legacy lives on — not just in memory, but in every movement that demands dignity, equity, and representation. In today's age of AK² politics, they remind us that true democracy begins with the voice of the marginalised.

Sunil Kashyap
Journalist



Not Just the Constitution's Architect

*Equality was not gifted to us.
It was fought for by Babasaheb.
He gave the oppressed a voice, and the nation its moral spine.*

On his birth anniversary, let's honour Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, for shaping a just India built on dignity, democracy, and dialogue.



PAPPU YADAV

Member of Parliament - Purnia Lok Sabha, Bihar



Ambedkar Jayanti: How Should the BJP and Modi Government Celebrate It?

Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar stands among the greatest visionaries in Indian history. His thoughts and struggles were never confined to a single caste or community but aimed at the total reconstruction of Indian society and the establishment of a democratic republic based on liberty, equality, and fraternity. Every year, Ambedkar Jayanti is celebrated across India on April 14. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) routinely pay homage to Ambedkar, speak about the “Panchteerth” (five key pilgrimage sites linked to his life), and acknowledge him as the chief architect of the Indian Constitution.

But is Ambedkar’s legacy best honoured through statues, speeches, and garlands? Or should it find deeper reflection in governance, policy, and public ethos? The upcoming Ambedkar Jayanti should not be just another ceremonial observance; it must be a moment of national introspection,

particularly for the BJP and the Modi government.

Don’t Reduce Ambedkar’s Ideology to a Narrow Identity

The BJP often hails Ambedkar as a “Dalit icon” or a “messiah of the marginalised.” While Ambedkar did devote his life to eradicating caste-based discrimination, his ideological reach extended beyond identity politics. He was a universal thinker who fought for the rights of all oppressed, be it women, labourers, religious minorities, or the economically deprived.

Ambedkar’s emphasis on constitutional morality, rationalism, and social democracy must be acknowledged in its full scope. BJP leaders should engage with his entire intellectual legacy and resist limiting him to electoral optics or symbolic inclusion.

Promote Education and Scientific Temper

Ambedkar famously asserted, “Education is the weapon of liberation.” Yet the current trajectory of India’s education system raises serious concerns. Escalating privatisation, rising tuition fees, shrinking scholarships, and reduced access for SCS, STS, and OBCS run counter to Ambedkar’s educational philosophy.

Moreover, Ambedkar promoted a scientific temper and encouraged rational inquiry. In contrast, today we see increased glorification of mythology masquerading as science. The government must ensure that educational institutions remain spaces of critical thought, free from dogma, and accessible to all, particularly those who have been historically oppressed.

Strengthening Reservations and Social Justice

Ambedkar viewed reservation as a constitutional mechanism to rectify historical injustices and ensure representation. However, the increasing contractualization of jobs and privatisation of public services are eroding the practical benefits of reservation.

The Modi government should not only uphold reservations in public employment and education but also consider extending affirmative action to the private sector. Representation of SCS, STS, OBCS, and minorities in universities, the judiciary, and decision-making bodies remains crucial.

Ambedkar’s dream of a just society cannot be realised without proportional representation.

Respect Dissent and Uphold Democracy

One of Ambedkar’s greatest concerns was the tendency of majoritarianism to eclipse individual liberty. Today, peaceful dissent is often labelled anti-national, and the space for independent thought is shrinking.

If the BJP truly seeks to honour Ambedkar, it must protect the right to dissent, ensure press freedom, and uphold the independence of democratic institutions. Democracy is not just about elections; it is about nurturing a culture where disagreement and debate are respected.

Stop the Political Weaponisation of Cultural Symbols

Garlanding Ambedkar statues and building memorials in his name are welcome, but these gestures become hollow if they are used to cover up regressive policies or social exclusion. Using Ambedkar’s image for electoral gains while sidelining his anti-caste ideology is deeply hypocritical. The BJP must introspect: is it celebrating Ambedkar’s name or embodying his values? His fight against Brahmanism and caste hierarchy must not be erased from the public narrative. Focus on Women’s and Workers’ Rights Ambedkar was an early feminist and a staunch advocate for women’s rights. Through the Hindu Code Bill,

he tried to grant women equal rights in inheritance and marriage, though it faced strong opposition.

Today, gender inequality remains pervasive. The Modi government should pursue policies that promote women's education, employment, political participation, and protection from violence.

Similarly, Ambedkar was a champion of labour rights. Recent labour code reforms that weaken protections for workers need urgent review. Worker safety, minimum wage laws, and trade union rights must be reinforced to honour Ambedkar's legacy.

Embrace Buddhism and Morality-Based Social Values

Ambedkar adopted Buddhism in the final years of his life, finding in it a moral framework grounded in compassion, rationality, and equality. His conversion was a rejection of caste-based Hindu orthodoxy and a call for a more humane society.

To pay a meaningful tribute to Ambedkar, the Modi government should invest in preserving Buddhist heritage sites, support the neo-Buddhist community, and promote ethical governance grounded in reason and compassion.

Integrate Ambedkar's Legacy into National Discourse

Despite his towering contributions, Ambedkar's works remain underrepresented in curricula and

national debates. Texts such as *Annihilation of Caste*, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, and *The Problem of the Rupee* offer powerful critiques of caste, religion, and economic exploitation. The government should ensure these works are taught across universities and discussed in civil society. Research centres, think tanks, and public discourse should actively engage with Ambedkar's thought, not as historical artefacts but as living blueprints for justice.

Conclusion: From Symbolism to Substance

Dr. Ambedkar was not merely the father of the Indian Constitution or a Dalit icon. He was a philosopher of modern India who advocated for the abolition of caste, the promotion of a scientific temper, and the establishment of a moral and egalitarian society.

On Ambedkar Jayanti, the BJP and Modi government must move beyond tokenism. They should use this occasion to recommit to Ambedkar's vision through concrete policy shifts, inclusive governance, and public accountability.

Ambedkar does not need mere remembrance—he needs revival. His dream was of a nation where liberty, equality, and fraternity are not just constitutional ideals but lived realities. Turning that dream into action would be the most fitting tribute.



Jai Bhim. Jai Samvidhan

*He wasn't just the architect of the Constitution
he was the architect of hope for millions.*

On Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's birth anniversary,
let us walk the path of social justice he paved for us.



CHANDRASHEKHAR AZAD

Member of Parliament - Nagina Lok Sabha Uttar Pradesh



Who Is Arundhati Roy to Claim Ambedkar's Legacy? A Critique of Appropriation

Arundhati Roy's preface to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste*, titled *The Doctor and the Saint*, is a sharp political essay—but one that ultimately reflects a troubling pattern: the appropriation of Dalit discourse by Savarna intellectuals. Though Roy claims to elevate Ambedkar's radical politics, her essay asserts a dangerous authority over his voice, re-establishing caste privilege in the very act of dismantling it.

Roy's own lineage—Syrian Christian mother and Brahmin father—places her squarely within the Savarna fold. She acknowledges these roots, yet fails to confront the privileges they confer. The Syrian Christian community in Kerala, claiming descent from Brahmin converts, remains culturally Hindu, economically dominant, and staunchly endogamous. Roy grew up surrounded by privilege: her mother, Mary Roy, founded a prestigious school; her family owned land, enjoyed financial stability, and lived far removed from caste

persecution. Her memories of a segregated Dalit church serve more as anthropological asides than political reckonings.

I met Arundhati Roy twice—once during the anti-CAA protests in Delhi and again at a magazine launch in the Constitution Club. When I brought up my stance on the Sabarimala issue, she dismissed it harshly. Her explanation of enjoying caste privilege "by accident" felt hollow. Privilege is not accidental—it is systemic, generational, and fiercely guarded. Her defence, echoed by others on the panel, that the privileged contribute meaningfully to society, missed the point: they often dominate spaces meant for the oppressed, diluting radical energy with liberal sentiment.

I hold deep respect for Arundhati Roy and her contributions to political discourse, yet my personal interactions with her have been



profoundly disheartening. During the CAA protests, when I approached her with sincerity and hope, I was met with a cold and dismissive response that left me feeling insulted and unwelcome. Despite several attempts to connect further, including messages on WhatsApp, I received no acknowledgement. As a Dalit woman who had faced attacks from both right-wing extremists and state machinery, I had expected solidarity, especially from someone who speaks so strongly on behalf of the oppressed. Instead, what I experienced was silence. Her selective engagement with Dalit and Adivasi issues, seemingly reserved for moments that elevate her public stature, felt deeply painful. It revealed a troubling gap between her advocacy and her personal ethics—one where the lived struggles of marginalised individuals like me are too easily ignored.

Roy's engagement with Ambedkar's work, while eloquent, is often orthogonal or tangential, as scholar A. Gajendran notes. Her writing swims valiantly across waters she was never submerged in. Her preface is less a bridge and more a detour—a narrative of caste seen through a Savarna lens, wrapped in literary flair and personal memory. Her use of terms like "endosmosis" and "purity-pollution" may signal intellectual engagement, but it lacks the political accountability that true solidarity demands.

The fact that Roy a Savarna was chosen to introduce Ambedkar's most scathing


critique of Hinduism, a speech originally rejected by upper-caste reformers, drips with irony.

For decades, Savarna elites ignored, marginalised, and resisted Ambedkar. That his words must now be "validated" by a globally recognised Savarna writer only reinforces the caste system's insidious hold. Roy does not translate Ambedkar for the masses, she filters him.

Her critique of Gandhi is fierce and needed. But she inserts herself as the mediator of Ambedkar's rage, thus recentralizing Savarna authority in a space Ambedkar had carved out precisely to escape it.

Roy's framing often reduces Ambedkar to a class-conscious thinker within the Marxist paradigm, misreading Ambedkar. But he was critical of the Left, particularly its caste-blindness. He exposed communist parties for their upper-caste dominance and failure to recognise caste as an autonomous axis of oppression. Her preface barely addresses Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism—his rejection of Hinduism wasn't just spiritual, it was a political break from the casteist cosmos. By glossing over this, Roy misrepresents Ambedkar's core project: not just class struggle, but annihilation of caste and the creation of a new ethical order.

Roy's prominence eclipses generations of Ambedkarite scholars, Kancha Ilaiah, Sharmila Rege, Anand Teltumbde, Suraj Yengde, whose work stems



from lived struggle. When a single Savarna writer overshadows an entire movement's intellectual output, it becomes an act of epistemic violence and silencing Dalit Thinkers.

Her preface scarcely references contemporary Dalit movements or voices. Her narrative is fixed in the past, where she can control the frame.

This is not amplification, it's substitution.

The heart of the issue lies here: is Roy standing with the oppressed or instead of them? True solidarity requires decentering oneself, making space for others. Roy, by contrast, recenters herself, she becomes the saint who introduces the doctor, and her solidarity leads to substitution.

Her liberal framework cannot contain Ambedkar's fire. He did not ask for mediation, he demanded confrontation. Roy's presence, even if well-intentioned, neutralises this rage, making Ambedkar palatable to elites who still flinch at caste's raw truths.

Roy may not intend harm, but her role reveals how caste operates even in radical spaces. The Left, often blind to caste privilege, has celebrated her essay as a gift. It is not. It is a cautionary tale. Ambedkar does not need rescuing by Savarna authors. He needs amplification from the margins, from those who know what it means to live, suffer, and fight caste. Roy's words are not inherently illegitimate, but they cannot

be allowed to overshadow Dalit voices, histories, or futures.

Ambedkar never craved Savarna validation. He knew they found his presence "repugnant." He knew Hindu society was not a society, it was a system of castes, each closed, competing, and segregated. The term "Hindu" itself, he reminded us, was foreign, imposed, and meaningless in a context where public spirit, charity, or collective responsibility had no ground. Caste, he said, made morality impossible. It created a world where virtue, empathy, and responsibility began and ended at caste lines.

He saw through the fraud of religion-as-ritual, demanding instead a religion of principles rooted in justice, reason, and equality.

Ambedkar's call was not for moderation, it was for emancipation through radical reform, through moral courage, and through annihilation, not accommodation, of caste. "You must make your own efforts to uproot caste," he said. "If not in my way, then in your way."

Adv. Bindu Ammini
Dalit Feminist



Still Guiding India Forward

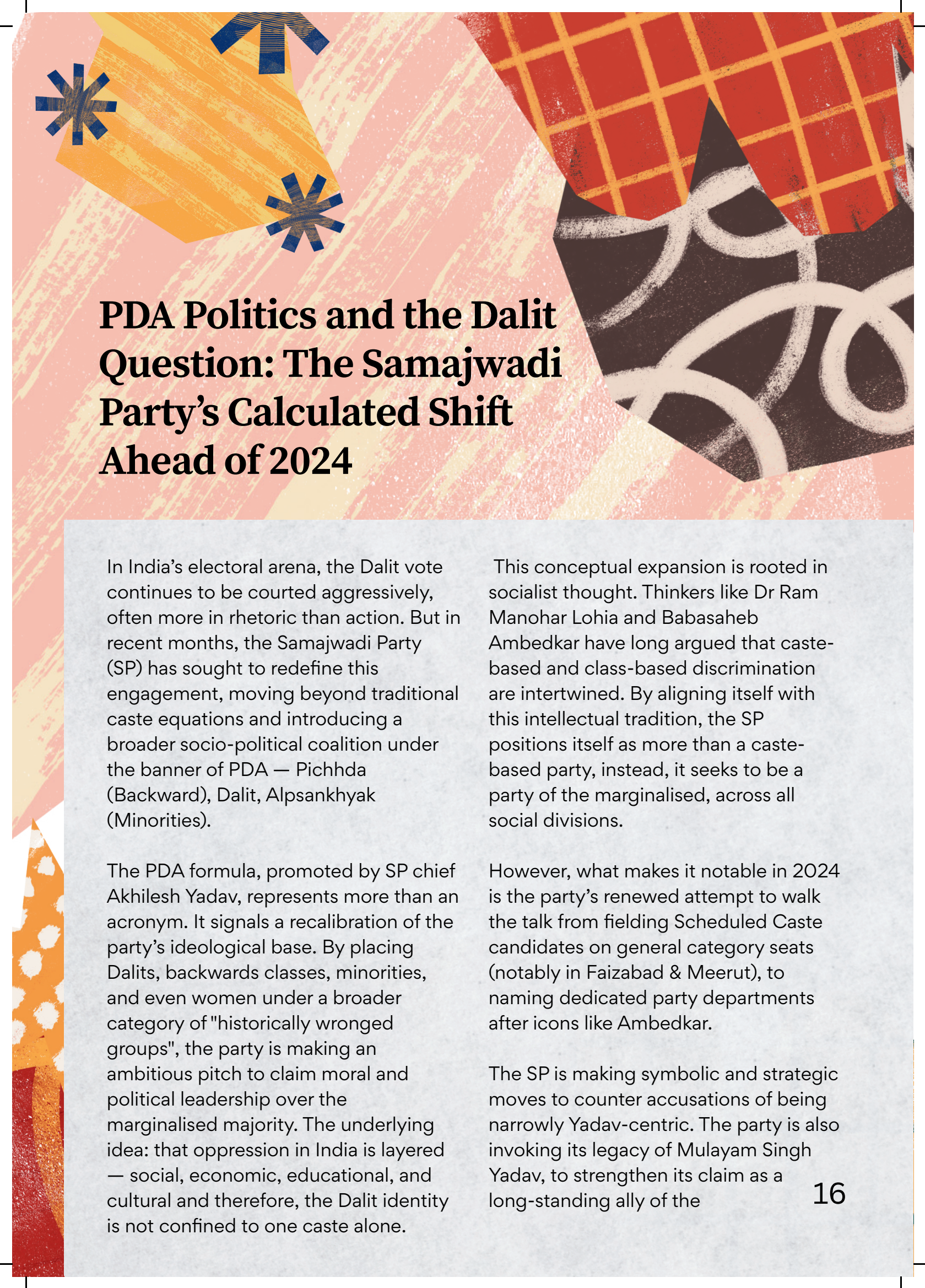
*Decades later, his vision continues to guide us.
His voice still echoes in every courtroom, classroom and Constitution.*

This Ambedkar Jayanti, we salute the father of modern India.



BHOLA SINGH

Member of Parliament - Buland Shehar Loksabha, Uttar Pradesh



PDA Politics and the Dalit Question: The Samajwadi Party's Calculated Shift Ahead of 2024


In India's electoral arena, the Dalit vote continues to be courted aggressively, often more in rhetoric than action. But in recent months, the Samajwadi Party (SP) has sought to redefine this engagement, moving beyond traditional caste equations and introducing a broader socio-political coalition under the banner of PDA — Pichhda (Backward), Dalit, Alpsankhyak (Minorities).

The PDA formula, promoted by SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, represents more than an acronym. It signals a recalibration of the party's ideological base. By placing Dalits, backwards classes, minorities, and even women under a broader category of "historically wronged groups", the party is making an ambitious pitch to claim moral and political leadership over the marginalised majority. The underlying idea: that oppression in India is layered — social, economic, educational, and cultural and therefore, the Dalit identity is not confined to one caste alone.

This conceptual expansion is rooted in socialist thought. Thinkers like Dr Ram Manohar Lohia and Babasaheb Ambedkar have long argued that caste-based and class-based discrimination are intertwined. By aligning itself with this intellectual tradition, the SP positions itself as more than a caste-based party, instead, it seeks to be a party of the marginalised, across all social divisions.

However, what makes it notable in 2024 is the party's renewed attempt to walk the talk from fielding Scheduled Caste candidates on general category seats (notably in Faizabad & Meerut), to naming dedicated party departments after icons like Ambedkar.

The SP is making symbolic and strategic moves to counter accusations of being narrowly Yadav-centric. The party is also invoking its legacy of Mulayam Singh Yadav, to strengthen its claim as a long-standing ally of the



oppressed. One of Mulayam's earliest political movements, as the party recalls, was against the injustice faced by Dalit women, a campaign that even led to his imprisonment. Later, as Chief Minister, his government, and subsequently Akhilesh Yadav's administration (2012–2017), introduced welfare schemes that benefitted farmers, girls, and poor students: free irrigation, the Kanya Vidya Dhan scheme, accident insurance for farmers, and free laptops for youth.

These policies, the party argues, are not caste-specific but class-conscious, aimed at uplifting the very sections clubbed under the PDA umbrella. The party sees this as a counter to the BJP's model, which it accuses of deploying "fake Hindutva" — a political Hindutva, divorced from spirituality and aimed at creating communal divisions. In contrast, the SP claims its vision is one of development-driven politics: employment, healthcare, education, and dignity for all.

But criticism remains. The party is frequently accused of promoting "Yadavism" and not giving adequate space to Dalit leadership. The limited electoral scope given to Dalit parties like Chandrashekar Azad's Bhim Army further fuels these doubts. The SP, in response, distances itself from the internal choices of other parties but maintains that its own record shows progressiveness, not exclusion. Another contentious issue is the renaming of districts, universities, and institutions after Dalit icons — a move actively

pursued by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) under Mayawati but quietly reversed or diluted during SP regimes. The justification offered now is that these changes were driven by local sentiment, residents preferred older or historically rooted names. Yet, there's a notable admission: that keeping those names might have been a better decision. It's a rare moment of political reflection, even if carefully worded.

Importantly, the SP is not backing away from Ambedkarite symbols. Instead, it promises to go beyond nameplates by building real institutions: universities, hospitals, colleges, and memorials. The idea is to convert symbolic respect into tangible infrastructure that benefits the Bahujan community. The reference to Janeshwar Park in Lucknow, touted as India's largest urban park, exemplifies that scale of ambition. The political signal is clear: the Samajwadi Party aims to set itself apart from the BJP's majoritarianism and the BSP's narrow identity politics. With PDA, it seeks a middle path, merging representation with welfare, legacy with vision.

Whether this will convert into votes is uncertain. But the SP is clearly moving beyond its old "Yadav-Muslim" image, aiming to craft a broader social alliance rooted in dignity, justice, and inclusion, with the Dalit voter at its core.

Raj Kumar Bhati
Spokesperson
Samajwadi Party



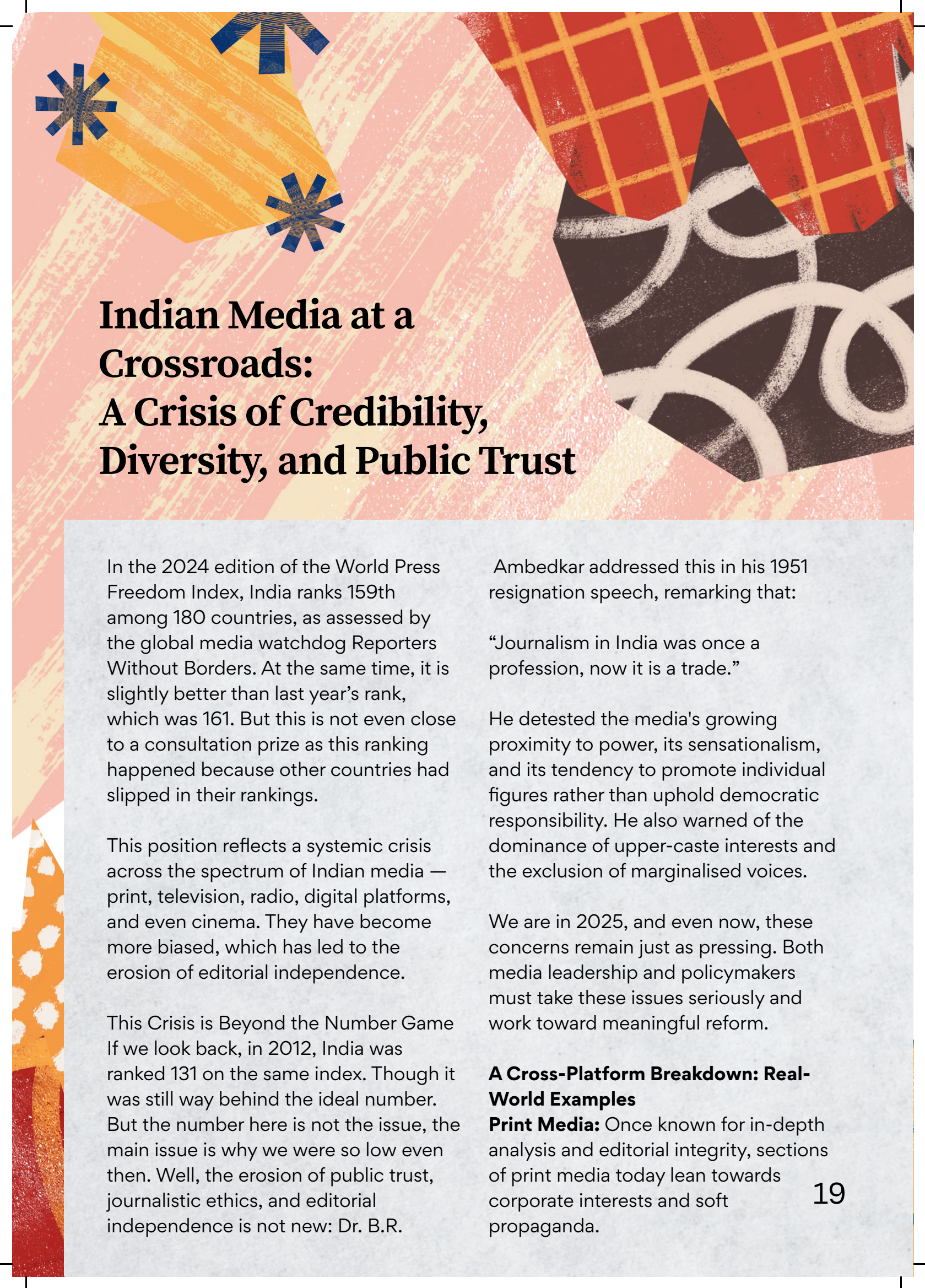
From Margins to Constitution

*He walked through fire and rewrote our future.
From the margins of society to the heart of the Constitution,
Dr. B.R. Ambedkar gave us the right to stand tall.*

This Ambedkar Jayanti,
let's rise to the vision he bled for.



RAJKUMAR BHATI
Spokes Person Smajvadi Party



Indian Media at a Crossroads: A Crisis of Credibility, Diversity, and Public Trust

In the 2024 edition of the World Press Freedom Index, India ranks 159th among 180 countries, as assessed by the global media watchdog Reporters Without Borders. At the same time, it is slightly better than last year's rank, which was 161. But this is not even close to a consultation prize as this ranking happened because other countries had slipped in their rankings.

This position reflects a systemic crisis across the spectrum of Indian media — print, television, radio, digital platforms, and even cinema. They have become more biased, which has led to the erosion of editorial independence.

This Crisis is Beyond the Number Game
If we look back, in 2012, India was ranked 131 on the same index. Though it was still way behind the ideal number. But the number here is not the issue, the main issue is why we were so low even then. Well, the erosion of public trust, journalistic ethics, and editorial independence is not new: Dr. B.R.

Ambedkar addressed this in his 1951 resignation speech, remarking that:

“Journalism in India was once a profession, now it is a trade.”

He detested the media's growing proximity to power, its sensationalism, and its tendency to promote individual figures rather than uphold democratic responsibility. He also warned of the dominance of upper-caste interests and the exclusion of marginalised voices.

We are in 2025, and even now, these concerns remain just as pressing. Both media leadership and policymakers must take these issues seriously and work toward meaningful reform.

A Cross-Platform Breakdown: Real-World Examples

Print Media: Once known for in-depth analysis and editorial integrity, sections of print media today lean towards corporate interests and soft propaganda.

Example: In 2023, several front pages of The Times of India, Dainik Bhaskar, and The Indian Express featured identical political advertisements designed to look like news articles, blurring the line between editorial and sponsored content.

Example: In 2024, during the protests against the Agnipath military recruitment scheme, particularly after violent clashes and widespread youth unrest in states such as Bihar and Haryana, several leading national dailies provided limited front-page coverage, downplaying the extent of discontent. Meanwhile, regional newspapers, independent portals, and social media platforms captured on-ground realities and the sentiments of affected aspirants, exposing the growing disconnect between mainstream editorial priorities and public concerns.

Television News: Television news in India continues to command immense reach but often prioritises sensationalism over substance, blurring the lines between journalism and spectacle.

In 2020, the tragic death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput became a media prime time. Channels like Republic TV and Times Now ran relentless coverage, amplifying conspiracy theories and pushing speculative narratives without verified evidence. The tone was accusatory, the coverage constant, and the media began issuing verdicts while the case was still ongoing in court.

Fast forward to March 2025, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) formally closed the case, stating that Rajput's death was a suicide and that no foul play was involved. Republic TV reported the closure, and Times Now covered procedural updates related to the court filings. However, neither channel reflected meaningfully on their prior coverage. The silence was telling. The contrast between the aggressive posturing in 2020 and the muted response in 2025 underscores a persistent issue in Indian television journalism: the absence of accountability when narratives collapse. Sensationalism sells — but truth rarely gets a headline.

Digital Platforms

While digital media offered hope for independent journalism, it now battles threats of government censorship, trolling, and economic insecurity.

- Example: Websites like The Wire, Scroll.in, Article 14, and Newslandry have pursued investigative journalism despite lawsuits and financial constraints, offering a contrast to mainstream outlets.
- Example: The blocking of critical YouTube channels and fact-checking platforms has raised concerns about shrinking digital space for dissent.

Radio: Radio, especially community stations, remains underutilised despite its reach and potential for social change.

- Example: While community radio stations like Radio Namaskar

(Odisha) or Radio Ujjas (Rajasthan) provide valuable grassroots engagement, they receive limited support and face excessive licensing barriers.

Cinema and Popular Culture

Mainstream cinema, which holds massive cultural influence, often reinforces dominant narratives or avoids political critique.

- Example: Films like *The Kashmir Files* were accused of promoting polarisation and communal rhetoric, while receiving government endorsements and tax exemptions.
- Example: Meanwhile, socially conscious films like *Phule*, *Article 15*, *Jai Bhim*, or *Court* have highlighted caste discrimination and judicial issues, but remain exceptions rather than the norm.

Even streaming platforms like Netflix or Prime Video have recently begun self-censoring content, anticipating backlash or legal trouble — narrowing the space for bold, diverse storytelling.

Representation: The Missing Majority

Media must reflect the country it serves. Yet, a 2019 Oxfam–Newslaundry report revealed that over 90% of leadership positions in Indian media are held by individuals from upper-caste Hindu backgrounds.

- During the 2022 Uttar Pradesh elections, debates on Dalit issues aired on national TV with zero Dalit panellists, highlighting systemic exclusion.

Adivasi and Muslim voices remain nearly invisible in primetime discussions, despite forming a significant portion of India's population.

Profit over People: Commercial Pressures and Editorial Compromise

As media houses increasingly rely on advertising and conglomerate funding, editorial integrity is compromised. Stories that challenge powerful interests — political or corporate — are often dropped, diluted, or never published.

Example: The resignation of senior journalists from NDTV, once a symbol of editorial independence, after its takeover by the Adani Group in 2022, sparked concerns about media monopolies and silent censorship.

Parliament's Role: From Observation to Action

To safeguard media freedom and democratic integrity, policymakers must act decisively. Some critical interventions may include:

- Mandating transparency in media ownership and funding to prevent conflicts of interest.
- Enforcing caste and community diversity norms in media employment and editorial boards.
- Strengthening public broadcasters like DD and AIR with editorial independence and community accountability.
- Promoting independent journalism through public-interest grants and tax benefits.
- Expanding and simplifying community radio licences to foster

grassroots voices.

- Safeguarding digital news creators from arbitrary blocking or harassment.

Conclusion: Rebuilding Trust, Restoring Purpose

India's democracy cannot flourish without a media that is fair, inclusive, and independent. The challenges confronting Indian media today are no longer limited to censorship or overt political influence — they cut deeper into the very structure of how narratives are created and controlled. Systemic exclusion, corporate consolidation, erosion of editorial independence, and the shrinking space for dissent are all symptoms of a deeper malaise: the loss of the media's commitment to public service.

Real reform cannot be cosmetic. It must begin by asking fundamental questions:

- Whose stories are being told?
- Whose voices remain invisible?
- Who controls the narratives that shape national consciousness?

Without addressing these core issues, India risks nurturing a media landscape that amplifies only the powerful, sidelines the marginalised, and distorts the idea of an informed public.

As lawmakers and custodians of the Constitution, Members of Parliament have a crucial responsibility in this regard. Supporting a media ecosystem that reflects the true diversity of India — across caste, class, gender, and region — is not just about protecting freedom

of speech; it is about strengthening the foundations of Indian democracy itself.

This requires more than rhetoric. It demands bold legislative frameworks that safeguard press freedom, incentives for independent journalism, protection for whistleblowers and investigative reporters, transparent regulation of media ownership, and support for regional and community media initiatives.

The choice before us is stark: we can continue to treat media as an instrument of influence, or we can restore it to its rightful place — as a platform for accountability, diversity, truth, and public empowerment.

A media that is truly free and representative will not only serve democracy, but it will also safeguard the soul of the Republic.

KUSH & RACHITA RATHI
EDITOR & SCRIPTWRITER



From Margins to Constitution

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This Ambedkar Jayanti,
let's rise to the vision he bled for.



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Congress's Commitment to Social Justice: A Vision for Inclusive Governance

In recent years, social justice and empowerment of marginalised communities have become central issues in Indian politics. The Congress Party, historically a key advocate for Dalit, OBC, and minority rights, has consistently worked to create policies that foster equality and provide opportunities for all citizens, regardless of caste, religion, or background. The party's vision for social justice is built on the core principles of equality, representation, and opportunity, inspired by the ideologies of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi.

Commitment to Caste-Based Enumeration and Socio-Economic Surveys

A central tenet of Congress's approach to social justice is its commitment to implementing caste-based enumeration and socio-economic surveys. These surveys aim to collect vital data about the socio-economic status of different communities, enabling policymakers to tailor interventions that address the

specific needs of marginalised groups. By understanding the challenges faced by Dalits, OBCs, and minorities more comprehensively, Congress aims to design policies that are not only inclusive but also effective in bridging the gaps of inequality that persist in society.

This initiative is particularly important as it will enable the Congress party to push for policies that allocate resources based on the real, on-the-ground needs of different communities. Accurate socio-economic data will help the government identify the areas where interventions are most urgently required, allowing for more targeted support for the marginalised. Whether it's ensuring better access to education, healthcare, or economic opportunities, the Congress party envisions a system where every citizen, regardless of their background, has the tools they need to succeed.

Empowering Grassroots Leadership

The Congress Party has always prioritised empowering its grassroots leadership, understanding that real change starts at the local level. The party's commitment to decentralisation involves granting district presidents more authority, enabling them to play a more significant role in representing their communities. This structural change ensures that the party's leadership is inclusive and reflective of India's diverse demographic. It is through such decentralised leadership that Congress aims to represent better the needs of Dalits, OBCS, and minorities in every region of the country.

This shift toward empowering local leaders also ensures that people from all backgrounds have a voice in the decision-making process. It is this kind of representation that Congress believes is essential for achieving true social justice. By ensuring that local leaders are more involved in shaping party policies and strategies, the party aims to create a more inclusive political structure that fairly represents all communities.

The Slogan “Jai Bheem Jai Bapu”


The Congress Party's recent adoption of the slogan "Jai Bheem Jai Bapu" reflects the merging of two powerful ideologies that have shaped India's approach to social justice: that of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. Ambedkar's focus on equality and the abolition of the caste system, combined with Gandhi's emphasis on unity and

Non-violence forms the foundation of Congress's philosophy. Dr. Ambedkar's vision was grounded in the idea of complete social and political equality, which included breaking down the barriers created by the caste system. He fought for the rights of Dalits and other marginalised groups, advocating for their equal participation in all aspects of society, from education to political representation. Gandhi, on the other hand, believed in social harmony and unity. His ideology emphasised the importance of peaceful coexistence between different communities.

By adopting "Jai Bheem Jai Bapu," Congress aims to combine the best of both ideologies. The slogan reflects the party's commitment to ensuring equality for all communities, while also promoting unity and integration. The aim is not only to address social discrimination but also to ensure that marginalised communities have a fair share in all spheres of life, including politics, education, employment, and the judiciary.

Affirmative Action and Policy Implementation

The Congress Party's track record in affirmative action demonstrates its commitment to providing opportunities for marginalized communities. The party has long been a supporter of job reservations, land rights for the landless, and scholarships for underprivileged students. These policies have significantly improved the lives of millions, providing them with the resources they need to succeed in life.



For example, Congress's nationalisation of banks led to the implementation of reservation policies within the banking sector, offering Dalits and OBCs greater access to stable employment. Similarly, Congress's land reforms and programs like the 20-point program have provided land, housing, and economic opportunities to thousands of marginalised families.

The party has also been instrumental in ensuring the representation of Dalits, OBCs, and minorities in key political and administrative positions. Whether in the judiciary, academia, or government jobs, Congress has consistently advocated for the inclusion of marginalised groups in positions of power. This type of representation is crucial in ensuring that policies reflect the needs of all segments of society, especially those who have historically been marginalised.

Comparing Congress and AAP: Action vs Rhetoric

While both the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Congress have claimed to support Dr. Ambedkar's vision of social justice, there are significant differences in their approaches. Congress, under its current leadership, has consistently implemented policies that benefit marginalised communities, while AAP, despite its rhetoric, has fallen short in providing meaningful participation for Dalits, OBCs, and minorities within the party and governance. While AAP may display Dr. Ambedkar's portrait in its offices, its policies have not translated into substantive action.


In contrast, Congress's affirmative action policies have had a direct and positive impact on the lives of millions of marginalised individuals. Congress's efforts have been focused on ensuring that Dalits and OBCs are not just symbolically included but are given real opportunities for growth and empowerment.

Social Justice Beyond Politics: A Long-Term Commitment

Congress's vision of social justice is not limited to political representation; it extends to all aspects of governance. The party believes that education, economic empowerment, and healthcare are fundamental rights for every citizen, and it has worked tirelessly to ensure that marginalised communities have access to these services.

The Right to Education Act, which guarantees free and compulsory education for children, and the Right to Food Act, which provides subsidised food grains to the poor, are just two examples of Congress's commitment to social justice. These policies have made a significant difference in the lives of millions, especially those from marginalised communities who have historically been excluded from the benefits of development.

Furthermore, Congress has continually advocated for policies that promote economic empowerment for marginalised communities.



Job reservations in public sector jobs, land rights for the landless, and scholarships for underprivileged students have helped create pathways to success for Dalits, OBCs, and minorities.

The Role of Rahul Gandhi in Fostering Social Justice

Rahul Gandhi's leadership in the Congress has played a crucial role in advancing the party's commitment to social justice. His focus on inclusivity and his support for affirmative action policies have ensured that Congress remains at the forefront of the fight for equality. Gandhi has consistently called for the inclusion of Dalits, OBCs, and minorities in all aspects of Indian society, including politics, education, and employment.

Despite criticism from some quarters, Gandhi's leadership has reflected a deep commitment to Dr. Ambedkar's vision of equality and social justice. His work has continued to build on the foundations laid by Congress in the past, ensuring that marginalised communities have a voice in the country's political discourse.

A Future of Equality and Opportunity

Looking ahead, Congress remains committed to ensuring that social justice is not just a lofty ideal but a reality for every citizen of India. The party's focus on caste-based enumeration, empowering grassroots leadership, and implementing affirmative action policies will continue to ensure that marginalised communities have access to the

resources and opportunities they need to thrive. Congress is committed to building a more inclusive and equitable society where everyone, regardless of caste or background, has the opportunity to succeed.

In conclusion, Congress's vision for social justice is clear: to create a society where every individual, regardless of their caste, religion, or background, has access to equal opportunities and rights. Through its policies of empowerment, representation, and inclusion, Congress seeks to build a future where marginalised communities are not only acknowledged but are given the tools to shape their own destiny. With a firm commitment to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's principles of equality and Mahatma Gandhi's call for unity, Congress will continue to work toward creating a just and equal India for all.

Rajender Pal Gautam
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Educate. Agitate. Organise.

*Three words. One revolution.
Babasaheb didn't just want laws—
he wanted a society that learns, questions, and unites..*

This Ambedkar Jayanti,
let's honour him by living his mantra:
Educate. Agitate. Organise.



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India's Press Freedom Crisis and the Vanishing Voice of the Bahujan

I often return to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's 1943 essay "Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah", where he said something prophetic: journalism in India started as a mission during the freedom struggle, later became a profession, and eventually morphed into an industry. That transformation, he warned, would compromise the integrity of the press. Today, we see exactly that.

Journalism Without the Margins Is Just Public Relations

Dr. Ambedkar noted that journalists in his time often served their "masters" and indulged in hero worship.

Even the World Press Freedom Index has recently ranked India at 159 out of 180 countries. This isn't just a number—it's a reflection of a dangerous silence that is creeping into our democracy. For me, this silence is not new. It has been building for decades, especially when it comes to the voices of Dalits, Adivasis, and OBCs. He called much of the Indian

press "Hinduwadi" — not because it reported news, but because it consciously excluded the stories and struggles of the oppressed.

If we examine today's media landscape, we must ask: has anything really changed? Look closely, and you'll realise that Dalit, Adivasi, and Bahujan voices remain conspicuously absent. We are only visible when there's an atrocity, not when there's an achievement. When a Dalit is raped, murdered, or beaten, the media claims to "cover Dalit issues." However, when a Dalit excels in science, civil services, or art, silence prevails.

Let me be clear: reporting atrocities is not the same as representing the community. That's not Dalit news; that's Savarna society's horror story. Real representation begins when we start celebrating the success, resilience, and creativity of Bahujan communities, not just their suffering.

Kanshi Ram Understood This Media Void Early On

That's why Kanshi Ram didn't rely on existing media. He created his own. Starting with *The Untouchable* in the 1970s, he went on to launch *The Oppressed Indian*, *The Bahujan Times*, and later *Bahujan Sangathak*. For nearly 30 years, these publications amplified what mainstream media never did — the organised resistance, political articulation, and cultural assertion of India's oppressed.

He rightfully called the mainstream press "Manuwadi" — not because of its personnel alone, but because of its ideology. It was never designed to report on our realities truthfully or consistently. Even today, despite having hundreds of TV channels and digital outlets, where is the representation of SC, ST, and OBC journalists, editors, or anchors? We might see more women on screen today, but Dalits and minorities are still invisible.

BSP Is Not a Party, It Is a Protest in Motion

Much like the media, people are also quick to write off the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). They look at its recent electoral performance and ask, "Is it even relevant anymore?" I say that BSP is an embodiment of resistance. It was born not in air-conditioned rooms but in the burning ghettos of injustice, where caste atrocities, landlessness, and systemic exclusion were everyday realities. As long as this structure of oppression exists, BSP will remain relevant.

Let me point to NCRB data: every day in India, 154 crimes are committed against Dalits. Around 12 Dalit women are raped daily. These are not just statistics; they are calls to action. And BSP is one of the few political entities that still responds to that call. When the Supreme Court ruled against reservation in promotions, the BJP and Congress stayed silent. It was Behen Mayawati and the BSP who took a stand. That is not just politics; that is moral clarity in a nation that is rapidly forgetting its constitutional commitments.

What Must Be Done

If we truly believe in democracy, the media must democratise itself — not through symbolic gestures, but by giving real decision-making power to marginalised communities. Journalism must return to its roots: as a mission for the people, not a market-driven enterprise.

At the same time, we must stop measuring Bahujan movements by Savarna metrics. BSP's relevance lies not just in its seat count, but in the questions it compels us to confront — ones others ignore. Dr. Ambedkar gave us the tools. Kanshi Ram built the platform. It is now our responsibility to ensure these legacies don't fade into ritual. They must thrive — in newsrooms, politics, and public discourse. Until we centre the silenced, we remain a democracy in name, not in practice.

Professor Vivek Kumar

JNU, World Ranking Sociologist



He Gave Us More Than a Constitution He Gave Us Courage

He taught us to question.

He taught us to rise.


He taught us that courage, not compromise, creates change.

This Ambedkar Jayanti,
let's carry forward his fearless fight for equality and education.



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Ambedkarite Buddhist Women and their everyday life in India: A study across changing time

I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress women achieved.

Dr.B. R. Ambedkar

Women's religious life is very difficult, as no religion can give them the right to live freely. Religion confines women's lives through the traditions and cultural norms, which are mainly created by men and from a patriarchal perspective.

Religious systems tend to foster and promote the power and voices of men at the expense of the women who make up the majority of adherents. In the Indian context, people of various religions reside in India. Every religion has its unique aspects, ideology, and practices. A majority of Indian people have faith in one or the other religion, they live a religious life in private and public domain. For instance, in the Hindu practices, they wear religious thread on their wrist, they wear ashtgandh (saffron colour) on their forehead, and they wear religious clothes also. Through all this, we

recognise the religious people. It shows that they carry their religious identity every day. The question of women's religious life remains controversial because men have controlled women's religious life. In many religions, men run the human culture; most aspects of human culture have been run by men, who have often used them to control women.

The reason I am discussing men and religion here is that through this article, I aim to explore the gendered aspects in the religious lives of Ambedkarite Buddhist women. In the contemporary period, women have gained awareness of their rights in various aspects, including religious, political, social, educational, and economic rights. Women have begun making choices about their lives and are trying to follow the paths they have chosen. But many women still live their lives under the control of men, because they are not financially independent. They have spent their entire life in doing house

chores and looking after their family. Therefore, they have not been able to live freely. So, they have had to be dependent on their husbands' earnings and have also been subjected to family pressure that women should stay at home and take care of their children, husband, and in-laws. Within the larger context of women's lived realities in the Indian context, I aim to explore why it is essential to understand the lives of Ambedkarite Buddhist women.

I argue that the majority of Ambedkarite Buddhist Women are very educated and have become financially independent as a direct consequence of following the Ambedkarite Buddhist ideology. Their education and financial independence have thus ensured that they are not bound by the social constraints that society has historically imposed on women, and they are able to achieve a greater degree of freedom in their everyday lives than they did earlier.

I argue that these achievements of the women in my sample are rooted in the fact that Buddhism teaches us to engage with life's challenges rather than escaping them. Such teachings have deeply inspired these women. They have therefore also found the path that gives them greater freedom in their everyday lives. As my respondent discussed, the Buddhist Path gives them freedom from all custom-based practices.


They have faith in the path that Dr. B. R Ambedkar showed them through Buddhism. His life inspired them and

helping them to find a meaningful life. The Hindu caste system in India has created a system of unequal status by birth for human beings. Therefore, finding ways to overcome and dismantle such a system became crucial for these women to lead an intellectual and meaningful life.

Conversion of Dr. B. R Ambedkar in Buddhism

Dr. Ambedkar was one of the most educated persons in India. He acquired advanced degrees in social sciences. And the law from the best universities in the UK and the US. And through this he studied all social aspects in India and has written many books on the inequalities in Indian society and its religious problems. In his exemplary and pioneering works, he has brought out how deeply Indian society is based on caste and religion, where there is a high and low status assigned to people and people are discriminated against on the basis of their caste in the society. He himself experienced discrimination while getting an education because he belonged to a lower caste.

Untouchability was practised with certain castes, and Ambedkar belonged to one of these castes. Therefore, he devoted considerable time and energy to studying the religions of India in great depth and ultimately decided to convert to Buddhism. He finds that only the Buddhist path would lead to a better life, because in the Buddhist religion, all are equal, man is at the centre of the Buddhist religion. Therefore, he embraced Buddhism along with half a million people and showed the new



path to live life. Dr. Ambedkar was also concerned about women's lives in India because women could not move freely in society, were prevented from getting an education, and had a secondary position in society. Within the patriarchal structures of Indian society, women were considered inferior and therefore confined to the domestic domain. Such discriminatory practices placed women's lives entirely under the control of men. In independent India, Dr. Ambedkar drafted the Hindu Code Bill to codify women's rights in various domains legally. However, most educated people of the time, who belonged to the dominant castes, opposed the idea of the Hindu Code Bill, and it was ultimately rejected in parliament. Buddhism, however, does not restrict either the educational opportunities of women or their religious freedom.

Ambedkarite Buddhist Women and their life.

I have interviewed four Buddhist women. While interviewing them, I could understand that all of them are well-educated. Three of them have completed their PhD. They are now employed in reputable Indian educational institutions. One has done her master's and is working in a well-recognised NGO. All four women whom I interviewed are aware of the gender / human rights. Apart from their jobs, all four of them are associated with social movements and socially engaged with Buddhism. They are recognized within social, academic and political circles as

activists who fight for equality. When I asked them about which of Buddha's teachings they follow the most in their daily life, they all answered that they like the Buddha's teachings like "Att Deep Bhav", Maitri, Karuna, Anitya (impermanence), the most, and they practice these teachings in their daily life. They also believe in the path that Ambedkar has shown them of liberty, fraternity and equality. All of them have mentioned this principle in their interviews.

None of them believes in the religious ritual; they all reject it. They believe in being rational and identify as Buddhists. For them, to live as a Buddhist is not to live religiously, but to live rationally. Like many Buddhists, they practice meditation; all are inspired by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's life and his work for society. He encouraged people to pursue higher education and work in academic settings. He also helped lower-caste people get jobs in government sectors. He made us aware of the varna system and taught us to fight against such discriminatory practices towards some communities.

Dr. B. R Ambedkar's philosophy stands for equality, liberty, fraternity and justice, which lead to the path of enlightenment. Therefore, many people call themselves Ambedkarite Buddhists, and these four women are among them. The Buddha's teachings and the path he showed are a framework for

Unlike those who identify as Buddhist yet continue Hindu practices, Ambedkarite Buddhist women reject the idea of God and embrace rationality, reflective thinking, and social justice. These women, from traditionally marginalised castes under Hinduism's Chaturvarna system, find dignity and empowerment through Ambedkar's interpretation of Buddhism, which emphasises reason, morality, and equality.

All the women I interviewed are the first-generation learners in their families. They said that because of the education they acquired, they were able to study the social issues in the practises of religion. They also said that they could learn to see differences on the basis of class and caste. They said that women who don't get education are not able to fight against the customs of the society, when you get education you become a competent person, and can fight for your rights. Through it, women find their ways where they find the way to liberation and a meaningful life. Therefore, Buddhist women in India give more importance to become Ambedkarite Buddhist because Ambedkar embraced Buddhism and showed a new and liberating path in India.

They said that being a Buddhist in India is a distinction. As Buddhists we learn two things. One is that being an Ambedkarite Buddhist means we move forward in response to the discrimination that exists under the caste system, and the other is that we as

Buddhists follow the Buddha's path shown by the Dr. Ambedkar, whereby we look at our lives as they are and find a way that empowers us to live. Also, while living a religious life as a Buddhist, they say that many times negativity arises in life, but we make a way out of negativity, the negative feeling in us never ends.

Conclusions

Ambedkarite Buddhist women look to Buddhism as a hopeful way of living in such a precarious world. They look upon the Buddhist path as a meaningful and peaceful way. Their identity stands out from other Buddhist women as a strong identity. They live a revolutionary life, trying to make others adopt the same path that they have got through becoming a Buddhist. The change in the lives of these women can be seen due to education. Through education, they could understand Buddhism better. They all find the Buddhist teachings very effective, which leads their life toward emancipation. Babasaheb Ambedkar's influence is evident in their lives today, and being an Ambedkarite Buddhist means living a self-respecting life for them.

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Knowledge is the Foundation of Progress

Education is the first step to liberation

This Ambedkar Jayanti,
let's honour his legacy by learning,
questioning, and rising together.



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