

Research Article

Revisiting Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Theory of Economic Justice for Viksit Bharat 2047

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Abstract: Arguably, the Indian economist most deserving of renewed attention in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047 is Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956), whom Economics Nobel Laureate Dr. Amartya Sen described as his “Father in Economics”. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a pioneering economist with a Ph.D. in Economics from Columbia University and a D.Sc. from the London School of Economics, envisioned an India that is inclusive, equitable, and developed. His economic philosophy aligns closely with the vision and mission of Viksit Bharat 2047, an ambitious national transformation agenda formally launched on 11 December 2023 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi developed by the NITI Aayog, to make India a fully developed, inclusive, and globally competitive nation by the 100th year of its independence in 2047. This paper revisits Dr. Ambedkar’s economic justice framework to evaluate its relevance to and potential integration within the Viksit Bharat 2047, a happiness-induced development model centred on the four pillars of Yuva (Youth), Garib (Poor), Mahila (Women), and Kishan (Farmers). Rooted in distributive justice, economic democracy, and structural transformation, Ambedkar’s economic theory of development envisions a just, inclusive, developed India. Using a qualitative, interpretive methodology, this study explores the integration of Ambedkar’s theory of economic justice into the developmental strategies envisioned in Viksit Bharat 2047 by addressing the central research question: How can Ambedkar’s economic justice framework be integrated into India’s Viksit Bharat 2047 policy to build an inclusive, just, and sustainable developmental model? The paper concludes that incorporating Ambedkarite principles into the policy framework of Viksit Bharat 2047 can bridge persistent structural inequalities and guide India toward a growth trajectory that is not only economically vibrant but also inclusive, equitable, and socially just, thus realizing the true spirit of transformative development.

Keywords: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Economic exploitation, Economic Justice, NITI Aayog, Viksit Bharat 2047.

I. INTRODUCTION

India is moving through a crucial phase in its developmental journey as it is all set to celebrate the centenary of its independence in 2047. The Government of India’s most ambitious initiative, *Viksit Bharat 2047*, envisions transforming India into “a fully developed, equitable, and globally competitive economy” (NITI Aayog, 2023). Officially launched on 11 December 2023 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and coordinated by NITI Aayog, the *Viksit Bharat 2047* blueprint sets forth a development agenda that seeks to eliminate poverty, empower women and youth, support farmers, and establish India as an innovation and knowledge superpower. More than a strategic policy vision, *Viksit Bharat 2047* represents a participatory, people-driven roadmap to foster inclusivity, sustainability, and development (Jameel, 2025). In light of this vision, it is timely and necessary to revisit the economic philosophies of Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar—one of India’s most visionary intellectual reformers who believed “Democracy is a form and method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and the social life of the people are brought without a bloodshed” (Kumar & Jaffrelot, 2018).

"Viksit Bharat" (Developed India) is a national vision aimed at transforming India into a developed country by 2047, marking 100 years of independence. It encompasses goals like economic growth, digital transformation, infrastructure expansion, and global competitiveness. However, critics argue that *this vision often overlooks structural inequalities*, which are deeply embedded in Indian society.

What Are Structural Inequalities?

Structural inequalities refer to systemic disparities that arise from historical, social, and institutional arrangements. These include:

- Caste-based discrimination
- Gender inequality
- Regional imbalance
- Economic disparities (urban vs rural, formal vs informal sectors)
- Access to education, healthcare, and justice



These inequalities are not just outcomes of individual actions, but are built into laws, policies, cultural norms, and economic systems.

How the Current *Viksit Bharat* Framework Overlooks these Inequalities:

a. Growth-Centric Development

The emphasis is often on GDP growth, foreign investment, and global rankings.

This approach tends to prioritize industrial expansion, smart cities, and digital hubs, often benefiting the urban elite. Marginalized communities, such as Dalits, Adivasis, and rural poor, are frequently left out of these growth narratives.

b. Digital Divide

Digital India is an important part of Viksit Bharat, but millions of people don't have internet access, know how to use digital devices, or have basic devices. Policies anticipate that everyone has access, which is not true in rural or backward areas.

c. Labor Informality

Over 80% of India's workers work in the shadowy economy, but the vision doesn't do enough to protect their rights, provide social security, and pay them fairly.

"Ease of Doing Business" often trumps "ease of working with dignity."

d. Caste and Social Exclusion

Even though the Constitution protects against caste-based discrimination, it still happens in education, jobs, and housing. Development policies seldom integrate affirmative action or equitable social frameworks into their fundamental design.

e. Gender Blindness

People don't pay attention to women's unpaid work, wage gaps, and low participation in formal labor markets. Viksit Bharat doesn't talk about gender-sensitive budgeting or infrastructure very often.

f. Regional Disparities

Investments generally go to places that are already developed, like Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka. Places that are still developing, like Bihar, Jharkhand, and the Northeast, don't get as much. This makes federal disparities worse, which leads to a "multi-speed India."

In this context, this paper reexamines Dr. Ambedkar's economic justice framework to assess its applicability to Viksit Bharat 2047, a national initiative for an inclusive and developed India. The research underscores distributive justice, economic democracy, and structural change as essential for addressing inequalities and achieving a just, sustainable growth model.

The size and goals of the Viksit Bharat 2047 agenda call for a development model that is fair, rights-based, and open to everyone. India has a population of 1.65 billion people and wants to be a \$30 trillion economy by 2047 (NITI Aayog, 2023). To do this, it needs to fix the wrongs of the past that still affect large parts of its population. "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayaas" (NITI Aayog, 2023). Moreover, Viksit Bharat 2047 vision is built on four primary pillars: Yuva (Youth), Garib (Poor), Mahila (Women), and Kisan (Farmers). Each of these pillars echoes Dr. Ambedkar's lifetime advocacy for the upliftment of those at the margins of economic progress. His early work on labour welfare, including fixed working hours, maternity benefits, minimum wages, and job security, was ahead of its time and laid the groundwork for India's labour legislation. His vision for women's empowerment, particularly through access to education, property rights, and equal employment, resonates with contemporary goals of gender parity and social equity. This includes youth, women, farmers, and the underprivileged, including SCs, STs, and OBCs. India's history of caste-based oppression, landlessness, labour informality, and exclusion from education and markets still foreshadows its developmental efforts. Against this backdrop, Dr. Ambedkar's ideas offer a roadmap to build a more participatory and humane economy, one that is not solely focused on GDP growth but also on distributive outcomes and the enhancement of human capabilities.

Although popular discourse frequently highlights Bharat Ratna Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's contribution in securing political rights and 'constitutional safeguards' for the marginalized communities, his pioneering contribution to economic thought remains more or less neglected (Guru, 2011; Sundar, 2020). Remarkably, Dr. Ambedkar was the first Indian to earn a PhD in Economics from Columbia University and a D.Sc. in Economics from the renowned London School of Economics, thus by training and temperament an economist who savoured both economic theory and practice (Rodrigues, 2002; Supreme Court of India, n.d). While Dr. Ambedkar is widely celebrated as the principal draftsman of the Indian Constitution, he was also a pioneering economist. The Economist Nobel Laureate Dr. Amartya Sen described Dr. Ambedkar as his "Father in Economics" (Sen, 2010), who championed social justice, economic equality, and sustainable development (Guru, 2011; Jaffrelot, 2005). He believed that social justice, political justice, and economic justice are inalienable (Chavda & Chavda, 2024), in contrast to the neoliberal growth models that more often than not neglect social

equity. Dr. Ambedkar envisioned a 'participatory economic system' rooted in distributive justice as the bedrock of inclusive growth. No wonder then Ambedkar's theory of economic justice resonates with Viksit Bharat 2047, which aspires to model India as a developed nation and high-income country by 2047 (NITI Aayog, 2023).

Dr. Ambedkar took both Indian and global economic issues upfront and minced no words on monetary policy, fiscal federalism, land reform, women's participation, and labour rights (Thorat & Newman, 2007). Importantly, Ambedkar fiercely opposed structural inequality, specifically caste-based economic deprivation, and emphasized economic justice for all, especially for the marginalized. His holistic justice framework, consisting of social, economic, and political justice, underscored economic redistribution, universal access to education, labour empowerment, progress of women, and the establishment of a state-intervened robust social welfare system (Jaffrelot, 2005; Zelliott, 1992). Dr. Ambedkar's economic thought, centred on annihilating caste-based hierarchies and democratizing access to economic opportunities, aligns seamlessly with the objectives. In this context, the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision does offer a unique opportunity to reflect on Ambedkar's theory of economic justice.

Ambedkar's contributions to 'economic thought' were revolutionary for their time and even remain intensely pertinent today. Social and political democracy, believed Dr. Ambedkar, would be totally hollow if not underpinned by 'economic democracy'. He opposed the capitalist structural economic disparities and social exclusion on the basis of caste (Geetha, 2024). While opposing economic exploitation of the marginalized, he consistently emphasized the necessity of addressing landlessness, unequal ownership of capital, exploitative labour conditions, and lack of access to quality education and healthcare as root causes of economic backwardness. Dr. Ambedkar (1947) pleaded: "The State should be empowered to plan the economic life of the people and should have the right to own key industries and services." His advocacy for state-led industrialization, public ownership of essential industries, and nationalization of land demonstrates his vision for a socially just economic order that enables all citizens to thrive (Ambedkar, 1947/2014; Jaffrelot, 2005).

Dr. Ambedkar also recognized that economic exclusion was not merely a function of poverty but a result of entrenched social systems, particularly the caste system. His examination of caste as an economic institution revealed its systematic denial of opportunities, imposition of unequal labor burdens, and perpetuation of generational poverty. Consequently, any conception of a developed India must inherently confront the structural origins of inequality. Ambedkar's vision for the "annihilation of caste" and the democratization of economic structures (Ambedkar, 1936/2014) can assist in formulating policies that transcend mere 'token welfare' to achieve transformative results. His unwavering insistence on universal access to education, labor protections, and land redistribution constituted not merely policy suggestions but "foundational pillars" of economic justice.

This paper argues that India must not only honor Dr. Ambedkar's legacy through rhetoric, commemorative events, and official narratives, but also integrate his transformative vision into the structural planning and execution of Viksit Bharat 2047. This entails rethinking economic growth for a developed India and putting an end to economic exploitation in every area of life. It means moving from a model of growth that is 'exclusive and extractive' to one that is 'inclusive, sustainable, and human-centred'. The ideas of participatory democracy, economic dignity, and cooperative development, as envisioned by Dr. Ambedkar, are essential for building a future where no Indian is left behind.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's economic justice framework is ingrained in the conviction that political democracy cannot sustain itself without being anchored in economic democracy. As Ambedkar (1947/2014) asserted in States and Minorities, mere political rights are inadequate if vast segments of the population remain economically vulnerable and dispossessed. For him, justice encompassed not only civil liberties but also "equitable access to land, capital, education, and employment," especially for communities marginalized by the caste system (Jaffrelot, 2005; Thorat & Newman, 2007). The Ambedkarite vision aimed to dismantle caste-based economic structures that institutionalized inequality and exclusion. Through his advocacy for state-driven industrialization/industrial development, nationalization of land, and progressive labour rights, Ambedkar sought to establish a just economic order grounded in human dignity, distributive equity, and collective welfare (Rodrigues, 2002). Central to his economic philosophy was the conviction that "liberty, equality, and fraternity could only flourish in a society where economic power was not concentrated in the hands of a few" (Guru, 2011) but was equitably distributed to uplift the most marginalized. (Zelliott, 1992).

Aligning Dr. Ambedkar's economic philosophy and Viksit Bharat 2047, this paper attempts to answer the core research question: How can Ambedkar's economic justice framework be integrated into India's Viksit Bharat 2047 policy vision to build an inclusive, just, and sustainable developmental model? While doing so, we will examine how Dr. Ambedkar's economic theory can strengthen and refine the framework of Viksit Bharat 2047. The paper also intends to draw lessons from policy gaps, global development experiences, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) to recommend actionable reforms for realizing India's national dream of Viksit Bharat 2047. The ultimate aim is to present

a compelling case for anchoring India's developmental future in the enduring wisdom of Dr. Ambedkar's economic justice framework.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach to examine the potential integration of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's 'theory of economic justice' into the policy vision and "developmental aspirations" articulated in the *Viksit Bharat 2047* framework. Anchored in a critical-analytical paradigm, the research is designed to explore how Ambedkar's theory of economic justice (integral with political and social justice), especially distributive justice, economic democracy, and social equity, can inform and reshape India's development trajectory as it approaches its centenary of independence.

Research Questions:

The core research question guiding this paper is:

How can Ambedkar's economic justice framework be integrated into India's Viksit Bharat 2047 policy vision to build an inclusive, just, and sustainable developmental model?

To address this overarching research question, the study is organized around the following sub-questions:

1. How can Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's economic vision of distributive justice be applied to contemporary India's development policies under the *Viksit Bharat 2047* framework?
2. In what ways can Ambedkar's concept of economic democracy contribute to the creation of a more inclusive economic model in India under the *Viksit Bharat 2047* framework?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities in integrating Ambedkar's ideas on social inclusion and economic empowerment into the current policy landscape of India?
4. How does the *Viksit Bharat 2047* framework address or overlook the socio-economic inequalities identified by Ambedkar, and how can these gaps be bridged?
5. What policy measures can the *Viksit Bharat 2047* framework adopt to integrate Ambedkarite principles of economic justice and resistance to exploitation in pursuit of inclusive and sustainable national development?

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative research methodology rooted in critical discourse analysis and comparative policy review. Our methodological strategy involves:

- *Textual Analysis of primary writings by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar*—especially his speeches, essays, and policy proposals—pertaining to both economic justice and structural inequality.
- *Policy Document Analysis of the Viksit Bharat 2047* Vision Document, NITI Aayog reports, and other governmental publications, to assess their alignment with Ambedkarite thought.
- *Thematic Coding to identify recurring motifs* such as distributive justice, caste-based exclusion, labour rights, education, land reform, and state responsibility.
- *Comparative Synthesis drawing from global development models*, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that resonate with Ambedkar's vision and *Viksit Bharat*.
- *Critical Reflection on contemporary political economy and development discourse* to evaluate gaps and suggest reforms in line with Ambedkar's ideals.
- This multi-pronged approach ensures a comprehensive and context-sensitive exploration of how Ambedkar's economic vision can enrich India's path toward inclusive and sustainable national development under the *Viksit Bharat 2047* mission.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reclaiming Economic Justice: Applying Ambedkar's Thought to India's Development Future

Research Question 1:

How can Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's economic vision of distributive justice be applied to contemporary India's development policies under the Viksit Bharat 2047 framework?

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's concept of distributive justice is verily rooted in the belief that no democracy can be sustainable without addressing the deeply entrenched social and economic disequilibrium in society for ages. He advocated for the redistribution of resources, land reforms, and state ownership of key industries to dismantle economic hierarchies rooted in caste and class divisions that tend to perpetuate economic inequality and economic exploitation. For Ambedkar, distributive justice was not a wistful thinking but a structural mandate to ensure that liberty, equality, and fraternity principles he deemed foundational to any democratic society in material terms of socio-economic development (Ambedkar, 1947/2014). Applying Ambedkar's vision of distributive justice to the *Viksit Bharat 2047* framework entails reorienting development policy to focus on outcomes that reduce disparities across caste, gender, geography, and class. Through distributive justice and economic justice concepts, Ambedkar underscored the need of "fair and equal distribution of resources" and "equal access [of all] to

social, political, and economic resources” while rooting out historical inequalities stemming from caste discrimination, gender disparity, lack of opportunities for the youth for development, and lack of access to resources (Ambedkar, 1947/2014).

While the *Viksit Bharat 2047* vision emphasizes inclusive growth, poverty eradication, and empowerment of the poor, youth, women, and farmers (NITI Aayog, 2023), it requires a cardsharp focus on structural redistribution to align with Ambedkarite principles. One critical area is land reform and asset redistribution. Ambedkar believed that landlessness was a primary cause of economic dependence and social subjugation for Dalits and marginalized communities (Rodrigues, 2002). Although India has executed land reforms since independence, the outcomes have been patchy, and disparities in ‘asset ownership’ still persist. Integrating this into *Viksit Bharat 2047* would require renewed policy attention to equitable access to land, housing, and productive assets, possibly through ‘legal entitlements’ and ‘cooperative ownership’ models. Another application is in universal and equitable access to education, healthcare, and credit, which Ambedkar identified as prerequisites for economic mobility. At the strategic level, *Viksit Bharat 2047* could embed these through targeted investment in public infrastructure, affirmative action in higher education and skill development of youth for employability, and inclusive financial services prioritizing the farmers, women, and the historically socially and economically disadvantaged sections of the population.

Ambedkar, like J. M. Keynes, advocated state intervention in regulating markets, curbing monopolistic practices, and safeguarding welfare provisioning to achieve economic justice. In the context of increasing privatization and market-led growth strategies, the *Viksit Bharat* framework could integrate Ambedkar’s insights by reinforcing the state’s regulatory and redistributive functions—particularly in essential sectors like health, education, water, and energy. This includes formulating fiscal policies that prioritize ‘fair and progressive taxation’ and the creation of ‘social safety nets’ to directly address inequalities. Moreover, Ambedkar’s emphasis on labour rights and dignified employment aligns with the contemporary challenge of informalization and underemployment and the side-effects of a developing gig economy. *Viksit Bharat 2047 needs to make "decent work" for everyone a top priority by making labor laws stronger, making sure everyone gets a fair wage, giving people social protection, and pushing for "collective bargaining rights," especially for informal workers, most of whom are from "socially disadvantaged" groups.*

In short, to make Viksit Bharat 2047 fit with Ambedkar's economic vision, we need to go from just including people to changing things so that "distributive justice" is really a part of national development. This entails the methodical dismantling of systemic barriers, the formulation of equity-focused, redistributive, and socially inclusive economic policies, and the establishment of participatory governance frameworks and mechanisms that empower marginalized and historically excluded communities to engage as active stakeholders in India's developmental narrative.

Research Question 2:

In what ways can Ambedkar’s concept of economic democracy contribute to the creation of a more inclusive economic model in India under the Viksit Bharat 2047 framework?

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s theory of economic democracy is encapsulated in his assertion that “We need to create an economy which works for everyone, not just the privileged few.” This concept serves as a potent instrument for transforming India’s development paradigm within the *Viksit Bharat 2047* initiative. Ambedkar characterized economic democracy as a framework in which individuals possess equitable access to the fundamental resources land, labor, education, and capital essential for attaining human dignity and liberty (Ambedkar, 1947/2014). It also entails the dismantling of systemic barriers that perpetuate ‘socio-economic inequality’. Ambedkar’s concept of economic justice, as his writings reveal, goes beyond redistribution of wealth and demands structural changes in the organization of the economy, where the welfare-oriented state plays a strategic role in ensuring ‘economic rights for all citizens,’ irrespective of caste, gender, or socio-economic status. In his Statement to the Royal Commission on Labour, Ambedkar (1930) argued, “The basis of the economic structure of society must be such as to promote welfare and prevent exploitation.” In his Speech at the All-India Depressed Classes Women’s Conference, Nagpur, 20 July 1942, he famously asserted: “The progress of any society depends on the progress of women” (Keer, 1971). Dr. Ambedkar (1947/2014) insisted that “The State should strive to remove poverty and inequality of status and opportunity”. He claimed, “There can be no equal opportunity without social and economic equality. It is the privilege of the few to be well-fed and well-clothed while the rest live in abject poverty” (Ambedkar, 1947). These points remain particularly relevant in India’s pursuit of an inclusive and sustainable economic future.

Dr. Ambedkar argued that political democracy would remain a hollow shell without its social and economic counterpart. In the Constituent Assembly debate, Dr. Ambedkar (1949) insisted that “We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well” and went on to explain: “Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality, and fraternity as the principles of life” (Ambedkar 1949). For Ambedkar, democracy was not merely about ‘universal suffrage’ but about the real empowerment of individuals to lead lives of dignity (Zelliot, 1992; Rodrigues, 2002). In practical terms, this meant addressing

systemic inequities, especially those rooted in caste, that denied a significant section of the population access to resources and opportunities. Ambedkar (1936/2014) found that caste is not merely a division of labour. It is also a division of labourers.” The *Viksit Bharat 2047* framework, which emphasizes empowerment of youth, women development, and women-led development, the all-round development of farmers and the poor, can draw directly from this perspective by prioritizing redistributive justice and human development as its central policy goals (NITI Aayog, 2023).

A key contribution of Ambedkar’s economic democracy to the *Viksit Bharat* vision is the stress on labour rights and decent work. Ambedkar was a staunch proponent of regulated working hours, fair wages, maternity benefits, and social insurance (Sundar, 2020). Implementing labour-centred economic reforms that reflect these principles can help uplift informal sector workers and reduce precarity in India’s labour market, an area still marked by informality and vulnerability, even as most labourers are living in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world. For the farmers and labourers’ economic upliftment, Dr. Ambedkar called for land nationalization and equitable distribution with the avowed aim to dismantle the caste-based agrarian structure that perpetuated rural poverty and exclusion (Ambedkar, 1936/2014). While such a radical reform may be politically complex today, its spirit can inform policies promoting ‘cooperative farming,’ land-leasing rights, and improved land access for marginalized groups, thus contributing to agricultural equity one of the pillars of *Viksit Bharat*. Dr. Ambedkar’s insistence on universal and quality education as a vehicle for economic liberation aligns with India’s goal of becoming a global knowledge superpower. Investing in inclusive education, skill development, and higher education access for the youth, women, and marginalized communities would honour this legacy while advancing national competitiveness (Jaffrelot, 2005).

In sum, integrating Ambedkar’s vision of economic democracy into the *Viksit Bharat 2047* framework involves ‘reimagining development’ through the lens of rights, redistribution, and representation. This would mean not just focusing on GDP growth, but on equitable outcomes, participatory governance, and the dismantling of structural barriers that hinder the economic mobility of disadvantaged groups.

Research Question 3:

What are the challenges and opportunities in integrating Ambedkar's ideas on social inclusion and economic empowerment into the current policy landscape of India?

In his final speech in the Constituent Assembly in 1949, Dr. Ambedkar remarkably drew attention to the challenges of social exclusion: “We are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics, we will have equality, and in social and economic life, we will have inequality. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? (Ambedkar, 1949). Integrating Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's ideas on social inclusion and economic empowerment into India's current policy landscape thus presents both substantial challenges and transformative prospects. Ambedkar envisioned a society where justice, equality, and fraternity were not merely ‘constitutional ideals’ but lived realities, especially for “historically marginalized communities” such as Dalits, Adivasis, women, and informal sector workers (Ambedkar, 1947/2014; Jaffrelot, 2005). While contemporary India has made considerable progress in undertaking affirmative action and welfare policies, considerable structural and socio-political hurdles continue to impede the realization of Ambedkar's vision.

Challenges:

One of the foremost challenges is the persistence of caste-based socio-economic disparities. Despite constitutional safeguards and reservations in education and employment, caste continues to dictate access to resources, opportunities, and dignity for millions. Studies show that Dalits and other marginalized groups still face discrimination in labour markets, land ownership, education, and public service delivery (Roy, 2020; Thorat & Newman, 2007). Ambedkar’s call for the annihilation of caste remains a distant goal in both practice and policy.

Ambedkar's economic thought emphasized ‘institutional transformation’—land reforms, universal education, labour rights, and public ownership of key resources. Translating these into policy today requires strong political will, inter-departmental coordination, and sustained investment, all of which are often lacking in India’s policy apparatus (Sundar, 2020).

Second, economic liberalization and market-oriented reforms since the 1990s have often exacerbated inequalities (Tejaswi, 2024). While growth has accelerated, the benefits have not been evenly distributed. Informalization of labour, privatization of public assets, and reduced state intervention in welfare have undermined the principles of state-led economic justice that Ambedkar advocated. This shift makes it challenging to implement redistributive policies that prioritize the poor and socially excluded.

Third, the government of India needs to be wary of policy myopia regarding structural reforms. Many current schemes aimed at social welfare are non-comprehensive, non-consensual, or populist, and often lack a structural reorientation towards equality. The withdrawal of the farm laws under opposition party pressure and orchestrated “farmer protests” exposed the failure of the government in terms of both conviction and consensus.

Opportunities:

Even with these problems, the policy landscape also has big chances to combine Ambedkarite ideas with the Viksit Bharat 2024 strategy. India's dedication to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015) gives Ambedkar's ideas a strong moral framework, especially when it comes to ending poverty, achieving gender equality, providing decent work, and lowering inequalities. The Viksit Bharat 2047 agenda, which focuses on social justice, digital empowerment, and inclusive development, gives us a way to put these goals into action through Ambedkar's eyes (NITI Aayog, 2023).

India's growing digital infrastructure and civil society involvement also make it easier for people to participate in democracy and hold politicians accountable. Ambedkar had strong beliefs in participatory democracy and the need for checks and balances in institutions. Digital governance, decentralized planning, and community-based monitoring can make development more democratic and give power to groups that have been left out (Rodrigues, 2002).

Finally, more and more people are interested in Ambedkar's economic ideas. Scholars, activists, and policymakers are increasingly acknowledging his significance beyond caste politics, viewing him as “a thinker who can guide India’s path toward ethical, inclusive, and economically viable growth” (Laxman, 2024). Embedding his principles into educational curricula, economic planning, and public discourse can foster a cultural shift towards social justice as a foundational value.

Research Question 4:

How does the Viksit Bharat 2047 framework address or overlook the socio-economic inequalities identified by Ambedkar, and how can these gaps be bridged?

The Viksit Bharat 2047 framework presents an ambitious blueprint for transforming India into a developed nation by its centenary of independence. With pillars such as Yuva (Youth), Garib (Poor), Mahila (Women), and Kisan (Farmers), it aspires to be “inclusive and future-ready” (NITI Aayog, 2023). However, while it emphasizes economic growth, digital transformation, and global competitiveness, it only partially addresses the deep structural socio-economic inequalities that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar identified as central to India’s developmental challenges.

Ambedkar’s critique of Indian society revolved around the structural nature of caste-based exclusion, landlessness, and unequal access to capital, education, and employment (Ambedkar, 1947/2014; Jaffrelot, 2005). While the *Viksit Bharat 2047* agenda incorporate progressive elements such as focus on skill development, entrepreneurship, gender parity, and rural infrastructure it often does so through a market-oriented lens that lacks a redistributive justice framework. For instance, initiatives like the PM Vishwakarma Yojana for artisans and PM Gati Shakti for infrastructure development (PM Gati Shakti - National Master Plan for Multi-Modal Connectivity| National Portal of India, n.d.) are commendable, but they do not explicitly tackle the institutionalized barriers faced by Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes (Thorat & Newman, 2007).

Moreover, the framework does not articulate a direct strategy for the annihilation of caste, a foundational component of Ambedkar's vision of socio-economic justice. It assumes that economic growth and digital inclusion will organically translate into social equity a notion that Ambedkar would have critiqued as overly optimistic and insufficient without deliberate structural reforms (Guru, 2011).

Overlooked Gaps: Structural Inequality and Redistributive Justice

Key gaps remain in addressing land reforms, universal quality education, and labour rights—all of which were central to Ambedkar’s economic thought. While the government has increased spending on welfare and infrastructure, there is little focus on institutional mechanisms that can safeguard disadvantaged groups from market volatility, automation-induced unemployment, and environmental shocks (Sundar, 2020; Verma, 2024; World Bank Group, 2019). The absence of targeted affirmative action in new sectors such as digital services, the green economy, and artificial intelligence further exacerbates these disparities. Furthermore, healthcare and social protection remain underfunded, and many of the welfare schemes suffer from poor implementation, bureaucratic hurdles, and leakage (Deshpande, 2011). We can therefore argue that Ambedkar’s emphasis on public provisioning and state responsibility in ensuring economic security has therefore not been fully addressed in the current policies.

Bridging the Gaps: Towards an Ambedkarite Viksit Bharat

To bridge these gaps, India must incorporate a rights-based and justice-oriented approach to development. This includes:

1. Embedding caste equity and economic justice explicitly into developmental plans and budgetary allocations, with measurable targets for social inclusion.
2. Expanding reservation policies in private and digital sectors to ensure access for marginalized communities in emerging job markets (Thorat & Dubey, 2012).

3. Implementing universal land reforms, community asset ownership models, and cooperative-based industrialization, as Ambedkar envisioned.
4. Reforming education to make it not only accessible but also “emancipatory” by including Ambedkarite philosophy and anti-caste pedagogy (Rodrigues, 2002).
5. Strengthening local governance and participatory democracy to ensure that development is rooted in the voices and experiences of the poor and excluded (Jodhka & Shah, 2010).

Integrating Ambedkar’s vision into the *Viksit Bharat 2047* strategy requires more than inclusion—it demands transformation. It calls for moving beyond welfare towards structural justice, beyond representation towards empowerment, and beyond GDP metrics towards inclusive growth.

Research Question 5:

What policy measures can the Viksit Bharat 2047 framework adopt to integrate Ambedkarite principles of economic justice and resistance to exploitation in pursuit of inclusive and sustainable national development?

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s economic philosophy, rooted in liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice, provides a powerful normative and policy framework for building a more inclusive and sustainable India. His vision emphasized core concepts of state responsibility, redistributive justice, and democratic ownership of resources, which are critical for resisting economic exploitation and fostering long-term development. The *Viksit Bharat 2047* initiative, while admirably comprehensive in its ambition, can be significantly strengthened by embedding Ambedkarite principles into its core policy architecture.

Ambedkar strongly advocated for land nationalization, arguing that land should be a public utility under state control to prevent exploitation by landlords (Ambedkar, 1947/2014). Because of this, *Viksit Bharat 2047* needs to look at land reforms again and make sure that land and community resources are shared fairly, especially for the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Community land trusts, co-ops, and land rental rights for tenant farmers are some new ways to deal with the problem of landlessness and exclusion from farming (Sundar, 2020).

To resist economic exploitation, Ambedkar emphasized labour rights, including decent wages, collective bargaining, and ‘state regulation’ of employment conditions. The *Viksit Bharat 2047* strategy should strengthen labour codes, expand social security coverage (including informal workers), and enforce minimum wage laws. Sector-specific protections, especially in agriculture, construction, and gig economy work, are essential to prevent exploitation in high-risk labour markets (International Labour Organisation, 2024; Lerche, 2012; Sundar, 2020).

Education was central to Ambedkar’s idea of empowerment. The state must provide universal access to quality education with special focus on residential schools, scholarships, and higher education quotas for marginalized communities. *Viksit Bharat* should also expand affirmative action into emerging sectors like technology, digital economy, and climate jobs to ensure social mobility aligns with industrial transformation (Thorat & Dubey, 2012).

The shift to a green economy gives India a chance to not only fight climate change but also promote social justice by bringing marginalized groups into new job markets. Green jobs in fields like renewable energy, sustainable farming, and restoring the environment can be very helpful for boosting the economy. But without specific “inclusion strategies,” these chances could make existing inequalities worse. The *Viksit Bharat 2047* strategy must actively make sure that green job creation includes marginalized groups and communities, in line with Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s idea of “equitable development.”

Ambedkar saw democracy as more than just politics; he saw it as social and economic as well. To make this vision a reality, we need to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and allow “community-based decision-making.” Participatory budgeting, public-private partnerships (PPPs), community development funds, and citizen report cards are all policy tools that can help make *Viksit Bharat* more accountable and give power to the people.

To ensure distributive justice, the *Viksit Bharat 2047* framework must adopt progressive taxation, wealth redistribution, and subsidized credit for marginalized entrepreneurs, even if this contravenes international regulatory standards. According to Ambedkar’s idea of state-led welfare (Deshpande, 2011), the government should spend ten times more on health, education, and food security to create universal social minimums. This must be paired with a green and inclusive industrial policy to make sure that economic growth doesn’t make inequality worse. We can hope that the *Viksit Bharat 2047*, which is a model that makes people happy, will put these kinds of things into action.

Ambedkar said that democracy would always be empty if caste weren’t destroyed. The *Viksit Bharat* vision needs to have clear policies against discrimination in housing, jobs, and government programs. Building upon institutions such as the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Competition Commission, the Women’s

Commission, and the GST Council for Centre-State decision-making and legal enforcement of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act are “non-negotiable pillars” for a just society (Guru, 2011).

IV. CONCLUSION

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's theory of economic justice, which is based on freedom, equality, brotherhood, and justice, is an interesting way to rethink India's development agenda. Distributive justice is at the heart of his economic philosophy. It stresses fair access to land, capital, education, and jobs in order to get rid of caste-based disparities that have been around for a long time. To fit these ideas into the Viksit Bharat 2047 framework, we need structural changes like land and credit systems that are open to everyone, affirmative action, and redistributive policies that put the needs of the most disadvantaged groups first.

Ambedkar's demand for economic democracy, which is based on the idea that everyone should have a say in how the economy works, means that everyone in Indian society should have a say in how resources are produced, distributed, and decisions are made. This would allow the marginalized to become key stakeholders. The economy should pay more attention to things like more worker involvement, decentralization, public ownership, universal access, and policy-making that includes everyone. The NITI-Aayog has correctly stressed a bottom-up approach to restructuring the economy through Viksit Bharat 2047. However, more involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions and urban self-governments at the local level, as well as more Coordination Committees between the Centre, States, and UTs, would make the vision and mission of Viksit Bharat 2047 more democratic. Promoting community ownership models, public-private partnerships, and worker cooperatives would lead to (a) democratizing development, (b) diminishing reliance on centralized governance, and (c) enhancing grassroots participation—thereby transforming the Indian economy and society. Dr. Ambedkar's theory of economic justice can help shape a people-centered growth model under the Viksit Bharat 2047 program by making it possible for everyone to participate in the economy fairly.

Even though the current government of India has inherited many difficult problems from past governments, such as caste-based discrimination, institutional corruption, economic exclusion, and institutional inertia, it should take strong action to enforce anti-discrimination laws, change the tax system to make it fair, and expand social safety nets to include all of India's marginalized people, regardless of their caste, creed, gender, place of origin, culture, or standard of living. To truly fulfil the ambitious agenda of *Viksit Bharat 2047* entailing a happy, prosperous and developed India, all the governments of India central, provincial and local-self-governments—need to embrace Ambedkar's transformative codes of development through meaningful institutional change. Such measures will hopefully ensure development that empowers the most marginalized, upholds constitutional ideals, and advances a future that is just, inclusive, and sustainable.

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