

“Industrial Policy in the Vision of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar”

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.1210000048>

Received: 04 October 2025; Accepted: 12 October 2025; Published: 01 November 2025

ABSTRACT:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956), popularly known as the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, was also a distinguished economist whose contributions to industrial policy are often overlooked. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar envisioned industrialization not merely as an economic necessity but as a vehicle of social transformation. He argued that agriculture alone could not sustain India’s economic growth and emphasized state-led industrialization, labor welfare, and social justice. This paper examines Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s industrial policy in terms of his advocacy for state intervention, balanced economic growth, protection of labor, and prevention of economic inequality. By analyzing his writings, speeches, and policy interventions, this study highlights the relevance of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s economic vision for contemporary India.

Keywords: Ambedkar, Industrial Policy, State Socialism, Labor Welfare, Economic Democracy, Social Justice

INTRODUCTION:

Industrial policy plays a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of national development. In India, debates on industrialization have often been dominated by the perspectives of nationalist leaders like Gandhi and Nehru. However, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s vision of industrial policy represents a distinct and pragmatic approach. Trained as an economist at Columbia University and the London School of Economics, Ambedkar developed a modern outlook on economic planning. He consistently argued that without industrialization, India could neither overcome poverty nor achieve social equality.

For Ambedkar, industrialization was intrinsically linked to his broader project of social justice. His proposals, particularly in **States and Minorities** (1947), anticipated many elements of India’s post-independence planning model. This paper examines Ambedkar’s perspective on industrial policy through the lens of research methodology.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze Dr. Ambedkar’s views on industrialization and its role in India’s economic development.
2. To examine Ambedkar’s recommendations for state intervention in industrial policy.
3. To explore the connection between industrial policy and social justice in Ambedkar’s thought.
4. To evaluate the relevance of Ambedkar’s industrial policy in contemporary India.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on qualitative and descriptive research methodology. It relies secondary sources:

Secondary Sources: Scholarly writings, commentaries, and biographies such as Rodrigues (2002) and Zelliott (2013).

The study follows an analytical approach, interpreting Ambedkar’s economic philosophy in the context of industrial policy and linking it with present-day implications.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Here are some authors & works that specifically deal with Ambedkar’s vision / economic thought / industrial policy.

Key Authors & Works

Author(s)	Title / Work	Key Arguments & Relevance to Industrial Policy / Related Themes
1. Gummadi Nanchaiah	“B.R. Ambedkar, Economic Development and Dalits in Post-Independence India” (2022)	Looks at Ambedkar’s economic writings in the post-independence period, especially how his ideas about monetary / fiscal systems, trade, land reforms, inclusive growth relate to the socio-economic outcomes for Dalits. Useful for comparing what Ambedkar envisioned vs what actually happened.
2. Satish Gaikwad	*Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and His Economic Reforms towards Building Modern India as a Developed Nation*	Emphasizes Ambedkar’s vision for inclusive industrial development, labour rights, monetary stability, education, fiscal federalism. It shows how many of Ambedkar’s proposals anticipated modern notions of inclusive growth.
3. Patil B. S. & Dr. Dhore K. B	*Economic Thoughts of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar for Sustainable Economic Development in India*	They connect Ambedkar’s ideas to sustainable development: not merely growth, but equitable growth, environmental sustainability, social justice. Relates industrial policy to broader goals of sustainability.
4. Anita Moudgil	The Contributions of Dr. Ambedkar in the field of Economics*	Covers many aspects including industrial reforms, agricultural reform, revenue, etc. Helps you to see how industrial policy fits into Ambedkar’s overall economic philosophy.
5. Sunil Khosla	*Economic Revolution in India: Contribution of Dr. Ambedkar*	Discusses how Ambedkar’s thoughts applied to growth planning, industrial reforms, public finance, agriculture. Useful for drawing connections between his early ideas and later industrial policy.
6. Sridevi, Editor (Gummadi Sridevi)	*Ambedkar’s Vision of Economic Development for India* (Book, 2020)	This volume contains several essays by different authors (like Sukhadeo Thorat, R. S. Deshpande, Anand Teltumbde etc.) that treat industrialization, labour laws, economic planning, trade, public finance, as central to Ambedkar’s vision. Good for thematic coverage.
7. Sukhadeo Thorat	Contributor in *Ambedkar’s Vision of Economic Development for India*	Thorat writes on economic development and poverty alleviation in Ambedkar’s thought. Helps understand his view on how industrial growth must be linked with poverty reduction.

8. Odeyar D. Heggade	*Economic thought of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar* (1998)	This is an older, more foundational work. It traces Ambedkar's economic ideas more generally—including issues relevant to industrial policy—like labour, public finance, agriculture. Useful to see how interpretations have changed over time.
9. Surender Singh, Dhani Ram, Vishal Pandey	*Ambedkar's Study on Fiscal Economics: A Critical Analysis*	Examines Ambedkar's contributions to fiscal economics: colonial & provincial finance, public expenditure, and fiscal discipline. Useful to understand his views on state revenue, public investment – important for industrial policy.
10. Veena L B & Mahendra Kumar S	*Ambedkar's Thoughts of Economics: An Analysis*	Focuses on “Small Holdings in India and Their Remedies”, rupee/currency issues etc. Helps understand the agricultural/land dimension that connects with industrialisation (e.g. labour, surplus, capital).
11. Jyoti Kumar	*Assessment of the Impact of Dr. Ambedkar's economic philosophy on India's last decade budget*	Looks at how state budgets in recent years reflect (or not) Ambedkar's economic philosophy: fiscal allocations, poverty, industrial vs agricultural spending etc. Good for tracing present-day relevance.
12. Prof. (Dr.) B. S. Patil & Dr. K. B. Dhore	*Economic Thoughts of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar for Sustainable Economic Development in India*	Analyses Ambedkar's ideas in the context of sustainability: combines economic growth, social justice, environment, labour rights etc. Useful to show how industrial policy must also be sustainable.
13. Gummadi Nancharaiah	*B.R. Ambedkar, Economic Development and Dalits in Post-Independence India*	Places Ambedkar's economic ideas in the post-1947 Indian context; examines caste, land, labour, fiscal & monetary policy. Helps see how much of Ambedkar's industrial policy vision was adopted or differed over time.
14. Gummadi Sridevi (Editor)	*Ambedkar's Vision of Economic Development for India*	A collection of essays that among other themes focus on industrialisation, trade, public finance, labour laws; very relevant for mapping Ambedkar's industrial policy vision.
15. Dr. G. Yoganandham	*Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar's thoughts on Selected Economic, Political and Social Issues in India* & *Contribution to Selected Economic and Social Issues – A Theoretical Assessment*	These works include Ambedkar's views on the economic side of social issues, productive resources, state control etc. Useful to pick up his normative positions which influence industrial policy.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

1. Industrialization as the Remedy to Agricultural Distress:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar emphasized that “industrialization is the soundest remedy for the agricultural problem of India” (Writings and Speeches, Vol. 1). He observed that excessive dependence on agriculture led to disguised unemployment and poverty. By transferring surplus labor into industries, India could generate employment and increase productivity.

2. State’s Role and Industrial Democracy

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar advocated state socialism in basic industries. In States and Minorities, he argued for nationalization of key industries like mining, electricity, and transport. His reasoning was twofold: first, to prevent capitalist monopolies; second, to ensure that industrial growth benefits the masses. Unlike laissez-faire capitalism, Ambedkar’s model placed strong emphasis on economic democracy alongside political democracy.

3. Balancing Agriculture and Industry

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar envisioned a dual economy where agriculture and industry complemented each other. Industrial growth would reduce pressure on land, while agricultural productivity would feed industrial workers and supply raw materials. This balanced approach was later reflected in India’s Five-Year Plans.

4. Labor Welfare and Social Justice:

As Labour Member (1942–46), Ambedkar introduced significant reforms such as:

- * Eight-hour workday
- * Maternity leave benefits
- * Workers’ welfare funds
- * Health insurance schemes

These policies reflected his belief that industrialization should empower labor rather than exploit it. Industrial policy, in Ambedkar’s vision, was an instrument of social transformation—breaking caste-based occupational rigidities and providing equal opportunities for marginalized groups.

5. Preventing Economic Inequality

Ambedkar warned that private industrialization would lead to wealth concentration. By advocating public sector control, he sought to ensure redistribution of resources. He argued that political democracy without economic democracy would be hollow.

FINDINGS

The study highlights several key findings:

1. Ambedkar saw industrialization as essential for India’s economic modernization.
2. His advocacy of state socialism anticipated many post-independence economic policies.
3. He consistently linked industrial policy with social justice and equality, making him unique among Indian leaders.
4. His contributions to labor rights were pioneering and remain relevant today.

5. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's industrial vision was not just economic but deeply humanistic, aiming at dignity of labor and equitable opportunities.

CONCLUSION:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's vision of industrial policy reflects his dual concern for economic progress and social justice. By advocating state-led industrialization, labor welfare, and prevention of monopolies, he sought to build an economy that could uplift the marginalized and reduce inequality. His ideas anticipated India's mixed economy model and continue to inspire debates on inclusive growth. In today's era of globalization and privatization, Ambedkar's warning against unchecked capitalism remains highly relevant. Thus, Ambedkar's industrial policy vision offers both a historical foundation and a guiding principle for shaping equitable economic development in modern India.

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