



Ambedkar as a global anti-caste thinker: Dialogues with Du Bois, Fanon and contemporary critical race theory

Dr. Dheeraj Pratap Mitra

Independent Researcher, Department of Sociology, Former Doctoral Research Scholar, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

Abstract

This paper takes up a problem that global social theory has quietly lived with for decades: caste remains pushed to the margins of race theory treated as local, cultural or residual even though it works through structure, inheritance and social closure in ways that strongly resemble racial domination elsewhere. That gap shapes how inequality is understood worldwide. It narrows the field. The central argument developed here is that B. R. Ambedkar should be read as a foundational global theorist of structural domination whose work speaks directly to the same problems that animate W. E. B. Du Bois's writing on race, Frantz Fanon's account of colonial injury and the later concerns of Critical Race Theory. Ambedkar's analysis of caste does not rest on identity alone but on how institutions, law, labour, religion and everyday habits combine to lock people into graded forms of life from birth often with no visible exit. That insight travels. This paper places Ambedkar in dialogue with Du Bois's idea of double consciousness, Fanon's work on dehumanization and violence, and key Critical Race Theory arguments about law, power and interest without forcing equivalence or smooth comparison. The method is comparative textual sociology built through close reading of major texts, speeches and debates, and guided by later high-citation scholarship in race and postcolonial studies. The aim is not to add caste as a footnote to race theory but to widen the frame itself so that global sociology can better grasp how durable systems of hierarchy are built, defended and lived through. This shift matters now. It opens space for new conversations across regions, movements and traditions of critical thought.

Keywords: Ambedkar, caste, race theory, structural domination, du bois, fanon, critical race theory, global sociology, social inequality, postcolonial thought

Introduction

Global social theory still carries a quiet imbalance. It talks endlessly about race, power, exclusion, domination etc., yet it keeps circling the same geographies and the same intellectual lineages, returning again and again to Europe and the Atlantic world as if the deeper grammar of inequality was born there and nowhere else. This habit has consequences. It shapes what counts as theory and what is reduced to 'context.' Caste has long suffered from this narrowing of vision. It is often described as cultural, religious or uniquely Indian, a strange survival from the past rather than as a durable system of graded inequality that fixes value at birth, organizes labour, regulates intimacy and trains people to accept hierarchy as ordinary life. That framing is not innocent. It keeps caste outside the main conversations of global race theory and allows social thought to remain Eurocentric even when it claims to be critical. B. R. Ambedkar saw this problem early. His work did not treat caste as belief or tradition alone but as structure, as a system that produces humiliation, exclusion, blocked futures through everyday routines that feel natural because they are learned so early (Ambedkar, 1936) [2]. This is where his thought begins to travel. When W. E. B. Du Bois wrote about the colour line and double consciousness, he was describing a similar injury, one where the self is forced to see itself through the eyes of a hostile social order, learning to live with a split sense of worth that never fully heals (Du Bois, 1903) [12]. The language differs but the pressure feels familiar. Ambedkar's untouchable lives inside a social world that marks the body as polluted before action even begins much like Du Bois's Black subject learns that

skin becomes meaning long before choice is possible. Frantz Fanon pushed this insight further showing how colonial power settles into the body turning domination into feeling, reflex and fear, and how violence, whether physical or slow and silent, becomes part of everyday existence under such conditions (Fanon, 1961) [15]. Ambedkar did not celebrate rupture in the same way Fanon sometimes did but he shared the sense that domination works most effectively when it feels normal when it becomes part of common sense rather than open coercion. This is why reading Ambedkar only as an Indian nationalist or constitutional architect shrinks his work. It ties his ideas to a single place when their reach is much wider. His critique of graded inequality speaks to any society where hierarchy is inherited, justified through culture and protected by law. It also exposes a gap in global race theory itself. Even Critical Race Theory which insists that racism is structural, embedded in law and reproduced through institutions rather than personal prejudice has rarely taken caste seriously as a parallel system of domination (Collins, 2000) [7]. This silence is telling. It reflects how global sociology still decides, often without saying so, which histories produce theory and which merely supply examples. Ambedkar's underuse outside South Asia is part of that pattern. His work demands a different reading practice, one that does not ask whether caste is the same as race but whether both emerge from comparable logics of exclusion, closure and moral ranking. Seen this way, caste and race appear less as separate problems and more as variations of a shared social form, one that links dignity to birth and then calls that link natural. Ambedkar's insistence on annihilating caste rather than reforming it, rests on this

insight. He understood that systems built on graded inequality cannot be softened without being reproduced because their strength lies in how deeply they organize everyday life from food and marriage to work and worship (Ambedkar, 1936) [2]. This argument resonates strongly with later feminist and Black sociological work that shows how domination survives by embedding itself in ordinary routines rather than spectacular acts of violence (Collins, 2000) [7]. Gurminder Bhambra's call for connected sociologies pushes the same point from another angle arguing that social theory remains incomplete when it refuses to link histories of colonialism, race and hierarchy across regions, instead treating Europe as theory and the rest as case material (Bhambra, 2014) [5]. Reading Ambedkar globally is one way to undo that imbalance. It shifts the center of gravity. It also matters for the present. Contemporary debates around racism, citizenship, dignity, exclusion etc. increasingly move across borders carried by migration, media and shared political struggles. Dalit movements now speak in global spaces. Anti-racist movements borrow language and tactics across continents. Yet the theory often lags behind practice. Ambedkar's work offers tools to think about how exclusion operates even within formal democracies, how law can both promise equality and quietly protect hierarchy, and why dignity cannot survive where social worth is fixed in advance (Ambedkar, 1948) [3]. These questions are not confined to India. They sit at the heart of current struggles over belonging and recognition worldwide. This is why Ambedkar must be read globally not as an addition to race theory but as a thinker who helps reshape it from the ground up. The task is overdue.

Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach

The framework guiding this study grows out of comparative historical sociology, a tradition that refuses to treat social hierarchies as isolated accidents or cultural quirks and instead asks how large systems of domination take shape, settle into institutions and then travel across time. This approach matters here because caste, race and colonial power did not emerge in sealed national boxes; they developed through overlapping histories of empire, labour control, law and moral ranking that still shape the present in uneven but familiar ways. Comparative historical sociology allows these links to surface without flattening differences, keeping attention on structure rather than surface similarity and on process rather than static description (Skocpol, 1979) [22]. The analysis works through textual comparison across colonial and postcolonial contexts, reading Ambedkar's writings on caste next to Du Bois's reflections on race and Fanon's account of colonial domination not to claim that these systems are identical but to trace how each organizes exclusion, justifies inequality and reproduces itself through routine social life. This matters because domination rarely survives by force alone. It survives because it is built into institutions and habits that appear ordinary. That insight sits at the center of this framework. A key concept used here is social death which captures how entire groups can be pushed outside full social recognition while remaining physically present, alive yet denied dignity, voice and moral worth. Although developed most sharply in studies of slavery and racial domination, the idea speaks clearly to caste where exclusion operates through inherited stigma and enforced distance rather than formal expulsion. Structural

violence offers another tool. It draws attention away from dramatic acts and toward slow harm, the kind that accumulates through blocked access to education, work, safety and respect shaping lives without needing constant coercion. This violence is easy to miss because it looks normal. That is precisely the point. Recognition and misrecognition help explain how such systems endure. Dominated groups are not only denied material resources but are also mis-seen, forced into identities defined by those above them, a process that shapes self-understanding and narrows what people imagine they can become. Over time, this pressure can turn inward. Internalized oppression names that difficult process where the logic of domination is absorbed into everyday thinking, habits and expectations making resistance costly and uneven. These concepts are not used as labels but as lenses guiding attention toward how domination works through law, culture and the body at the same time. The method remains deliberately modest. It relies on close reading of canonical texts, speeches, political interventions etc., treating them not as timeless theory but as responses to specific historical pressures. Ambedkar, Du Bois and Fanon are read carefully, line by line where needed, with attention to how their arguments shift depending on context and audience. This close reading is paired with a secondary synthesis of high-impact scholarship that has shaped how domination, power and inequality are understood in sociology and social theory. The aim is not to produce a new grand theory but to place these thinkers in a shared analytical space where their insights can speak to one another. C. Wright Mills's insistence on linking personal troubles to public issues helps keep the analysis grounded reminding us that structures of domination are lived through ordinary experience, not abstract systems alone (Mills, 1997) [18]. Pierre Bourdieu's work on symbolic power and misrecognition sharpens the focus on how hierarchy becomes legitimate, how it hides itself behind taste, tradition and common sense, and how dominated groups often participate in their own domination without choosing it freely (Bourdieu, 1991) [6]. Skocpol's comparative method anchors the historical dimension pushing the analysis to ask why similar patterns of domination emerge in different places and what conditions allow them to persist or fracture (Skocpol, 1979) [22]. This combination of close textual work and comparative synthesis keeps the talk focused yet relaxed, resisting the pull toward neat models. The approach accepts unevenness. It allows for tension. That is necessary. Systems of domination are not smooth and the theory used to study them should not pretend otherwise.

Ambedkar and the Global Grammar of Caste

Ambedkar's most enduring contribution to social theory lies in how he names caste not as a loose set of customs or beliefs but as a tightly organized system of graded inequality, one that fixes social worth in advance and then spends generations making that fix feel natural. This matters. It shifts the discussion away from attitudes and toward structure. In his book *Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar argues that caste survives not because people merely believe in it but because it is built into the basic rules that govern marriage, work, touch, food and even everyday social distance with endogamy operating as its central engine (Ambedkar, 1936) [2]. Endogamy does not simply preserve group boundaries; it locks hierarchy into

reproduction itself ensuring that inequality is passed on with birth rather than earned, challenged or even openly defended. Once marriage is controlled, everything else follows. Labor becomes hereditary. Status hardens. Mobility turns into a story people tell but rarely experience. This is why Ambedkar insists that caste cannot be reformed from within. Reform assumes flexibility. Caste is designed to prevent it. The hierarchy is then naturalized, wrapped in religious language, custom and moral stories that present inequality as order rather than violence. Over time, this naturalization becomes so complete that domination no longer needs constant enforcement. It runs on habit. It runs on silence. That is its strength. Nicholas Dirks's historical work helps clarify how this system was not frozen in some ancient past but was reshaped and codified under colonial rule, especially through administrative classification and legal recognition which turned fluid social practices into rigid identities while claiming to merely record tradition (Dirks, 2001) ^[11]. Yet Ambedkar's analysis goes further than colonial critique. He shows that even without colonial rule, caste possesses an internal logic that reproduces itself through social closure and moral ranking long before modern bureaucracy steps in. This is where caste begins to look familiar to readers of race theory. Like race, caste produces hereditary stigma. The mark is carried on the body and the name, long before action or intention enters the picture. One is born into a location that must then be defended or escaped. There is no neutral starting point. Occupational fixation follows naturally. Certain forms of work are declared impure and those assigned to them are treated accordingly not because of what they do but because the work is imagined as an extension of their being. This fusion of labour and identity is crucial. It ensures that economic exploitation is moralized, framed as destiny rather than arrangement. The denial of moral personhood completes the structure. Those at the bottom are not only excluded materially; they are denied full social recognition. Their suffering does not count in the same way. Their voices are heard differently, if at all. Ambedkar names this clearly when he describes untouchability not as a lack of contact but as a denial of humanity, a condition where one exists in society yet remains outside its moral community (Ambedkar, 1948) ^[13]. The parallel with race becomes harder to ignore here. Du Bois's description of the colour line and the veil captures a similar process where Black life is rendered visible as problem but invisible as full personhood where the self is constantly forced to negotiate an identity imposed from outside (Du Bois, 1903) ^[12]. Ambedkar does not use the same language but the structure aligns. Both systems rely on inherited stigma, occupational sorting and moral exclusion to reproduce inequality across generations. Yet Ambedkar resists simple analogy. He insists that caste is not merely another form of race. It is a system that divides the oppressed themselves, producing a ladder rather than a line where each rung looks down on the one below while aspiring upward. This graded nature makes caste especially resilient. It spreads complicity. It makes solidarity fragile. Dirks's historical analysis helps explain how this ladder was stabilized through colonial enumeration but Ambedkar's insight is sharper like caste survives because it trains people to protect the system even when it harms them. That training begins early. It works quietly. This is why Ambedkar rejects both reformist projects and recognition-based solutions. Reform assumes that caste can be softened, made less cruel,

more humane. Recognition assumes that dignity can be granted without dismantling structure. Ambedkar sees both as dead ends. In *Annihilation of Caste*, he argues that as long as caste exists, equality cannot, because the system itself is built to deny it (Ambedkar, 1936) ^[2]. This is not a rhetorical move. It is a structural claim. Annihilation, for Ambedkar does not mean chaos or revenge. It means removing the rules that allow hierarchy to reproduce itself as common sense. It means breaking endogamy. It means refusing the moral stories that make inequality appear natural. This is where his thought becomes radical in a precise way. He does not ask for inclusion within caste society. He asks for its destruction as a social form. That demand places him closer to the most critical strands of global theory than is often acknowledged. Like later critics of racial capitalism, Ambedkar understands that systems of domination cannot be redeemed by better intentions or symbolic gestures. They must be dismantled at the level where they organize life. This insistence makes his work uncomfortable. It still does. It also makes it globally relevant. In a world where inequality increasingly hides behind culture, tradition and choice, Ambedkar's grammar of caste offers a way to read domination as structure rather than prejudice. That grammar travels. It helps explain why certain hierarchies survive formal equality, why legal rights coexist with social exclusion and why dignity remains fragile even inside democratic frameworks. The point is not to collapse caste into race or to flatten their histories. It is to recognize that both operate through a shared logic of inherited worth, enforced distance and moral ranking, a logic that demands more than reform. It demands rupture. Ambedkar knew this. That knowledge still unsettles. It should.

Ambedkar and W. E. B. Du Bois: Caste, Race and Double Consciousness

Reading B. R. Ambedkar next to W. E. B. Du Bois feels less like an act of comparison and more like listening to two voices circling the same wound from different sides of the world. Du Bois begins *The Souls of Black Folk* with the colour line, a simple phrase that carries enormous weight naming a social boundary that cuts through law, labor, intimacy and the inner life all at once, and from there he develops the idea of double consciousness, the sense of always seeing oneself through the eyes of a society that refuses full recognition, a condition that does not merely hurt feelings but reshapes thought, ambition and self-trust at a deep level (Du Bois, 1903) ^[12]. This double vision is not chosen. It is learned early, enforced daily and sustained through what Du Bois calls the veil, a screen that allows proximity without equality, contact without understanding, visibility without moral acceptance. The veil does important work. It lets domination appear natural. It allows white society to claim ignorance while benefiting from exclusion. Ambedkar's analysis of caste begins from a strikingly similar place, though he uses different terms and writes under different pressures. In his early essay on caste and later in *Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar describes a social world where humiliation is not an occasional insult but a permanent condition, carried on the body, attached to name, occupation and even shadow producing a form of social exclusion that is intimate and relentless (Ambedkar, 1916; Ambedkar, 1936) ^[1, 2]. The untouchable like Du Bois's Black subject is forced to inhabit a divided self, aware of

their own humanity while being constantly reminded that society does not agree. This is not abstract. It is felt in posture, in movement, in speech, in the careful calculation of space. It becomes embodied stigma. That embodiment matters. It shows how domination moves from structure into sensation. Du Bois captures this when he writes of the 'peculiar sensation' of double consciousness that sense of being both inside and outside the world one inhabits (Du Bois, 1903) [12]. Ambedkar captures it when he describes how untouchability denies even the most basic forms of social presence, making dignity fragile and contingent rather than assumed (Ambedkar, 1948) [3]. The convergence between the two thinkers becomes sharper when attention shifts from experience to reproduction. Neither Du Bois nor Ambedkar treats race or caste as personal prejudice alone. Both insist that inequality is sustained through institutions that train people to accept hierarchy as normal. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* exposes how economic systems, law and political compromise worked together to rebuild racial domination after emancipation showing that freedom without structural change simply rearranges inequality rather than ending it (Du Bois, 1935) [13]. Ambedkar makes a parallel argument about caste showing how religion, endogamy and occupational fixation reproduce graded inequality even when overt violence recedes (Ambedkar, 1936) [2]. In both cases, domination survives because it adapts. It shifts form. It becomes harder to see. Knowledge and education emerge as crucial sites of struggle in both bodies of work. Du Bois places enormous faith in education as a tool for racial uplift but not education in the narrow sense of training alone; he imagines it as a means of cultivating critical consciousness, historical awareness and moral confidence, a way to break the hold of the veil by learning to name it (Du Bois, 1903) [12]. Ambedkar shares this belief but with a harder edge. Education, for him, is not only about uplift; it is about survival. It is a weapon against humiliation, a way to refuse the identity caste assigns and to claim intellectual authority in a society that denies it (Ambedkar, 1916) [1]. This shared emphasis on knowledge points to a deeper convergence as both thinkers see emancipation as impossible without a transformation of how the oppressed understand themselves and their world. Yet it is precisely here that a key difference appears. Du Bois often moves between critique and moral appeal, exposing injustice while also calling on the conscience of the nation to live up to its democratic ideals. His work carries a tragic hope, a belief that recognition might still be won through struggle, argument and time. Ambedkar is more skeptical. His critique cuts more sharply into institutions themselves. He does not trust conscience. He does not trust gradual reform. He insists that systems built on inherited hierarchy cannot be persuaded into equality because inequality is their organizing principle. This is why his institutional critique is so uncompromising. In *Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar rejects reformist Hinduism outright arguing that no amount of moral re-education can undo a system that depends on endogamy and graded inequality for its survival (Ambedkar, 1936) [2]. Where Du Bois still wrestles with the possibility of redemption within the nation, Ambedkar is prepared to break with the social order entirely even to the point of religious conversion, if that is what dignity requires. This difference does not weaken the comparison. It sharpens it. It shows how similar structures of domination can produce different political strategies depending on context, history

and available institutions. Morris's comparative work helps underline this point by showing how Ambedkar and Du Bois despite never fully sharing a political terrain, were engaged in parallel projects of naming oppression, building counter-knowledge, and insisting on the moral and intellectual capacity of those society had written off (Morris, 2015) [19]. Reading them together makes something visible that reading them apart often hides: caste and race are not marginal problems sitting at the edges of modernity; they are central to how modern societies organize value, belonging and worth. Both thinkers understood this. Both paid a price for saying it plainly. Their dialogue, even when imagined rather than direct remains one of the most powerful resources available for thinking about inequality today. It is not comfortable reading. It was never meant to be.

Ambedkar and Frantz Fanon: Violence, Dehumanization and Liberation

Placing B. R. Ambedkar beside Frantz Fanon brings the question of violence into sharp, uneasy focus because both thinkers refuse to treat domination as an abstract condition and instead trace how it presses into bodies, habits and everyday perception. Fanon begins from the inside. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he describes what he calls the epidermalization of inferiority, the moment when domination no longer needs to shout because it has already settled into the skin, into posture, into the way one anticipates rejection before it arrives producing a fractured sense of self that is learned through repeated social encounters rather than imposed by a single event (Fanon, 1952) [14]. This psychic injury is not private. It is made. It grows out of colonial structures that reduce entire populations to objects, turning them into things to be managed, disciplined or feared. Fanon insists that this condition amounts to social death, a state in which life continues biologically while moral recognition is withdrawn and it is from this condition that violence emerges not as chaos but as a response to a world that has already declared certain lives disposable (Fanon, 1961) [15]. Violence, in Fanon's account becomes a way of breaking the closed circuit of domination, a rupture that restores agency where speech and reform have failed. This is unsettling. It is meant to be. Ambedkar approaches violence from a different angle but the wound he describes is no less deep. His analysis of caste focuses on what might be called everyday structural violence, the kind that does not announce itself through spectacle but works slowly, through denial, humiliation and exclusion woven into routine social life. Untouchability, for Ambedkar, is not simply a set of prohibitions; it is a system that organizes space, law, moral worth so that certain bodies are marked as impure before action begins, producing a form of harm that is constant precisely because it appears normal (Ambedkar, 1948) [3]. There is no single moment of rupture here, no battlefield or uprising that captures the violence of caste. Instead, violence accumulates through blocked access to water, education, housing and safety, through the refusal of touch and recognition, through the quiet lesson that one's presence is always conditional. This is violence without drama. That makes it harder to see. It also makes it durable. Fanon and Ambedkar converge in their understanding that domination works most effectively when it reshapes the inner life. Fanon's colonized subject

learns to see himself through the colonizer's gaze, measuring worth against a standard that was never meant to include him (Fanon, 1952) ^[14]. Ambedkar's untouchable learns a similar lesson, absorbing the logic of graded inequality so early that resistance often feels like an act against nature itself. In both cases, misrecognition becomes internalized, turning social hierarchy into self-doubt, fear and caution. This is where Achille Mbembe's work helps sharpen the comparison. Mbembe's idea of necropolitics draws attention to how modern power decides who may live and who may be exposed to death, whether literal or social showing that domination often operates through slow abandonment rather than constant killing (Mbembe, 2003) ^[17]. Caste fits this frame uncomfortably well. So does colonialism. Both produce populations that are kept alive while being denied full participation in the moral and political community. Yet the paths Fanon and Ambedkar take from this diagnosis diverge sharply. Fanon's response is revolutionary rupture. He argues that colonial domination cannot be dismantled through negotiation alone because the colonial world is built on force, and only counter-force can undo its basic structure (Fanon, 1961) ^[15]. Violence, for Fanon, is not only destructive; it is creative, a way of remaking the self by breaking the imposed image of inferiority. Ambedkar does not share this faith in violence as liberation. His experience of caste leads him toward constitutional radicalism instead. This is not moderation. It is a strategic choice grounded in a clear-eyed view of how caste operates. Ambedkar understands that caste is not held together by a single ruling group that can be overthrown; it is sustained by everyday participation across the social order, including among the oppressed themselves. A violent rupture risks reproducing hierarchy rather than ending it. Law, for Ambedkar, becomes a tool not because it is pure but because it offers a way to break inherited privilege at the level where it reproduces itself, through rights, representation and institutional safeguards (Ambedkar, 1948) ^[3]. This does not mean he underestimates violence. He sees it clearly. He simply locates it differently. For Ambedkar, the most dangerous violence is the one that hides behind tradition and morality, the violence that convinces society that exclusion is order and humiliation is destiny. This difference between Fanon and Ambedkar is often framed as a contrast between radicalism and reform. That framing misses the point. Both are radical. They are radical in different terrains. Fanon writes from a colonial battlefield where the line between life and death is already drawn. Ambedkar writes from a society where death is social, slow and distributed unevenly across time. Their strategies reflect these conditions. What unites them is a refusal to accept domination as natural and a shared insistence that liberation must involve a transformation of both structure and self. Reading them together exposes a deeper lesson for global theory. Violence does not always look the same. Neither does resistance. Some systems of domination demand rupture. Others demand dismantling from within, through law, education and relentless critique. Fanon and Ambedkar offer two responses to social death, shaped by different histories but grounded in the same refusal to accept a world that denies dignity as normal. That refusal still matters. It still unsettles. It still asks difficult questions about what liberation costs and where it must begin.

Ambedkar and Contemporary Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory emerged from frustration rather than optimism from the sense that civil rights victories had changed the language of law without breaking the deeper patterns that kept inequality in place and this starting point already places it closer to Ambedkar than is usually acknowledged. CRT's core claim is blunt as racism is not an accident or a deviation from otherwise fair systems, it is structural, built into law, institutions and everyday decision-making in ways that survive even when explicit discrimination is outlawed (Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) ^[8, 10]. This view rejects the idea that equality naturally follows from neutral rules. Instead, it argues that law often stabilizes power by appearing impartial while protecting existing advantage. Derrick Bell's idea of interest convergence sharpens this critique by showing how advances for marginalized groups tend to occur only when they align with the interests of dominant groups and how those advances stall or reverse once that alignment fades (Bell, 1992) ^[4]. None of this would have surprised Ambedkar. Long before CRT took shape, he warned that legal equality without social transformation risks becoming hollow, a promise that sounds strong on paper but weak in lived reality. As the chief architect of India's Constitution, Ambedkar placed enormous faith in law but it was a wary faith. He understood law as a field of struggle rather than a neutral instrument capable of both enforcing domination and unsettling it, depending on how it is written, interpreted and defended (Ambedkar, 1948) ^[3]. This tension sits at the heart of his thought. He did not imagine rights as gifts granted by an enlightened state. He imagined them as tools wrested from an unequal order, tools that required constant vigilance because the same institutions that proclaim equality can also hollow it out. CRT's insistence on legal realism, its refusal to treat law as detached from power or history, echoes this position closely. Kimberlé Crenshaw's work on how legal frameworks often fail to see overlapping forms of oppression exposes the limits of formal equality, showing how rights that appear universal can still exclude those whose lives do not fit the law's narrow categories (Crenshaw, 1991) ^[9]. Ambedkar made a parallel argument about caste decades earlier. He warned that political democracy without social democracy is fragile because formal rights cannot function where social relations remain organized by inherited hierarchy. Equality before law means little if society itself refuses to treat people as equals. This is why Ambedkar's constitutionalism was radical rather than conservative. He used law not to preserve tradition but to break it, especially where tradition masked cruelty as order. Yet despite these deep resonances, CRT has rarely engaged caste seriously. This silence is striking. CRT has travelled widely shaping debates on race, policing, education and citizenship across the globe but caste often appears, if at all, as a regional issue, a cultural exception rather than a structural counterpart to race. That omission narrows the theory. It keeps CRT tied too closely to the histories of the Atlantic world and limits its ability to grasp how systems of domination operate beyond that frame. Ambedkar's work exposes this gap clearly. His analysis of caste shows how hierarchy can persist without phenotypical difference, how domination can be organized through birth-based ranking, endogamy and moral exclusion rather than skin colour alone, and how these mechanisms align closely with what

CRT identifies as structural racism. When CRT scholars describe how law reproduces inequality by favouring those already positioned to benefit from it, they are describing a process Ambedkar observed in caste society, where legal reforms often failed because they left untouched the social practices that enforced exclusion daily. This is where Ambedkar's relevance to global racial capitalism becomes clear. Caste, like race has been tightly bound to labour extraction, occupational fixation and the distribution of risk ensuring that the most dangerous, degrading and insecure work falls predictably on those marked as inferior. CRT's growing engagement with capitalism and political economy finds an earlier echo here. Ambedkar understood that dignity cannot survive where economic exploitation is justified through moral ranking and he argued that social equality requires not only rights but material transformation. The missed dialogue between CRT and Ambedkar is not simply an academic oversight. It reflects how global theory still decides which forms of suffering generate concepts and which are treated as data. Bringing Ambedkar into CRT does more than add a new case. It stretches the theory itself forcing it to confront domination without race as phenotype, to think harder about inherited hierarchy and to recognize that formal equality can coexist with deep enduring exclusion. This does not weaken CRT. It strengthens it. Ambedkar's work reminds us that law is never enough on its own but neither can it be abandoned. It is a battleground. CRT knows this. Ambedkar lived it. Their convergence points toward a more global critical theory of domination, one that can speak across caste, race and capital without losing sight of how each shapes everyday life. That conversation is still unfinished.

Comparative Synthesis: Caste, Race, Coloniality

Bringing caste, race and coloniality into the same analytical frame makes one thing immediately clear that these are not separate problems that occasionally resemble one another but different expressions of a shared logic of domination that works by fixing value, controlling movement and training people to accept hierarchy as normal life. This synthesis matters because social theory has often compared these systems descriptively listing similarities and differences without asking how they actually function. Here the focus stays structural. Caste, race and colonial rule operate through distinct histories but their mode of domination converges around inherited ranking, enforced distance, moral evaluation that precedes action. In caste, this ranking is graded internally spreading hierarchy across the whole social body rather than drawing a single dividing line; in race, the line is sharper, but no less durable; in coloniality, domination is organized through both difference and extraction turning entire populations into managed subjects. What links them is not appearance but mechanism. Each system relies on reproduction rather than constant force. Endogamy in caste, segregation and residential sorting in race and administrative classification in colonial regimes all serve the same purpose like they stabilize hierarchy by embedding it in everyday routines so that inequality reproduces itself even when overt coercion recedes. This is where Aníbal Quijano's idea of coloniality of power becomes useful because it shows how modern hierarchies survive formal decolonization by reorganizing themselves around race, labour and knowledge ensuring that domination continues without needing colonial rule in its

old form (Quijano, 2000) [20]. Caste fits this pattern uncomfortably well. It predates European colonialism yet colonial modernity reshaped and hardened it, folding caste into global systems of labour and value while presenting it as tradition. Gurminder Bhambra's call for connected sociologies pushes this insight further by arguing that social theory remains partial when it isolates histories instead of tracing how they shape one another allowing Europe to stand in as theory while the rest of the world supplies examples (Bhambra, 2014) [5]. Reading Ambedkar through this lens reveals his importance. He does not merely describe caste; he exposes how a system of domination sustains itself by making inequality feel deserved, inevitable, even moral. The mechanisms of reproduction he identifies endogamy, occupational fixation, ritual exclusion etc. function in the same way that race-based housing, labour segmentation and criminalization function elsewhere. They limit choice long before choice appears. They shrink futures quietly. Resistance strategies also show both overlap and divergence. In racial contexts shaped by slavery and segregation, resistance often took the form of mass movements, cultural assertion and, at times confrontation with the state. Under colonial rule, resistance ranged from everyday refusal to armed struggle. Ambedkar's strategy looks different but it is no less radical. He targets reproduction itself. He attacks the social rules that keep hierarchy alive especially those governing marriage, religion, and law. His insistence on constitutional safeguards, representation, the annihilation of caste practices is not faith in institutions as they exist but a calculated effort to force transformation at the point where domination renews itself daily. This is where Loïc Wacquant's work on advanced marginality adds depth. Wacquant shows how modern domination increasingly works through spatial containment, stigma and bureaucratic management rather than overt repression producing populations that are formally free yet effectively trapped (Wacquant, 2008) [24]. The parallels are striking. Dalit lives under caste, Black lives in segregated urban spaces and colonized populations under indirect rule all experience this condition differently but the structure repeats like freedom on paper, constraint in practice. Ambedkar's key contribution is to theorize this condition without relying on phenotype or empire as the primary explanation. He shows that domination can be fully internal to a society, reproduced by its members and justified through moral language rather than force. This is why his theory travels. It applies beyond India because it speaks to how hierarchy survives modernity itself. The comparative table implied here is analytical rather than descriptive as the mode of domination is inherited moral ranking; the mechanism of reproduction is everyday social practice stabilized by law and culture; resistance requires intervention at the level of structure not sentiment. That is the core argument. Ambedkar offers a structural theory of domination that does not depend on a single history or identity category. It explains why equality laws fail without social transformation, why recognition alone cannot undo hierarchy and why dignity remains fragile under systems that fix worth at birth. Global sociology needs this insight. Without it, race theory risks remaining partial, colonial critique risks missing internal hierarchies and inequality continues to be explained as failure rather than design. Ambedkar understood design. He named it. That clarity is

his enduring contribution and it belongs far beyond the borders it is usually confined to.

Contemporary Socio-Political Relevance

Ambedkar's relevance today does not sit quietly in archives or commemorative speeches; it shows up in movement spaces, classrooms, courtrooms and digital networks where questions of dignity, access and voice refuse to settle. This is especially visible in the global Dalit diaspora where caste travels even when people do, reshaping workplaces, marriages, student groups and religious spaces far from South Asia. Migration does not dissolve hierarchy. It often rearranges it. Dalit students and professionals in the United States, the United Kingdom and other parts of the Global North have repeatedly pointed out that caste discrimination survives under the cover of race-neutral or culture-neutral frameworks making it harder to name and harder to contest. Ambedkar's analysis helps explain why this happens. He understood that systems based on inherited worth do not need territory to survive; they need practice, memory and social recognition. That insight matters when caste discrimination appears in spaces that officially deny its existence. University debates on diversity and inclusion offer another sharp example. Many institutions now speak fluently about race, gender, and class yet struggle when caste enters the conversation often treating it as an internal matter of a single community rather than a structural issue tied to power and exclusion. This hesitation reflects a deeper problem in global equality frameworks which often rely on fixed categories inherited from Euro-American histories. Ambedkar's work unsettles that comfort. It forces a rethink of how inequality is defined and measured especially when discrimination operates without visible racial markers. Sharmila Rege's feminist reading of Ambedkar shows how caste and gender intersect in ways that standard diversity language fails to capture, especially for Dalit women whose exclusion cannot be reduced to a single axis without distortion (Rege, 2013) ^[21]. This matters because intersectionality debates while widely cited, often remain uneven in practice, strong on theory but selective in application. Ambedkar's insistence that social democracy must accompany political rights offers a corrective here. It reminds us that inclusion cannot be symbolic. It must change everyday relations. Anti-caste movements today draw heavily on this lesson. From student protests to cultural assertion through literature and art, Ambedkar's ideas circulate as tools rather than doctrine used to name exclusion, challenge respectability politics and refuse gradualism. Anand Teltumbde's analysis of contemporary caste politics shows how neoliberal reforms have not weakened caste but have instead created new forms of exclusion, especially through informal labour, urban precarity and the retreat of welfare making Ambedkar's warnings about hollow equality feel urgently current (Teltumbde, 2018) ^[23]. The language may have shifted but the structure remains. This is why Ambedkar also speaks directly to debates on human rights and global equality. Rights frameworks often assume that once discrimination is legally prohibited, justice will follow. Ambedkar never shared this optimism. He understood that law can promise equality while society quietly withdraws it. His work pushes human rights discourse to confront its limits especially in contexts where dignity is denied through custom, stigma and everyday practice rather than explicit policy. Gopal Guru's

writing on humiliation and dignity sharpens this point showing how the denial of respect operates as a political problem not merely a moral one, and why recognition without redistribution leaves the core of inequality intact (Guru, 2009) ^[16]. Decolonizing social theory brings these strands together. Calls to decolonize curricula and knowledge production often focus on adding voices from the Global South but Ambedkar demands something harder. He asks theory to confront internal hierarchies not just colonial ones, and to recognize that domination can be deeply local while still structurally global. His thought challenges the habit of treating caste as an exception and race as the norm pushing instead for a broader understanding of how hierarchy adapts to different histories while preserving its core logic. This is uncomfortable work. It disrupts easy solidarities and tidy categories. But it is necessary. Ambedkar today is not a symbol of the past; he is a guide for reading the present. His ideas help explain why inclusion policies stall, why diversity talk often feels thin and why equality remains fragile even inside democratic institutions. The relevance lies here. It lies in his refusal to separate dignity from structure, rights from social relations or theory from lived harm. That refusal still travels. It still speaks. And it still asks more than most frameworks are ready to give.

Conclusion

Ambedkar's work refuses to stay where it is usually placed. It slips past national frames, disciplinary borders and polite categories, and that refusal is precisely why it matters so much beyond India. Read globally, Ambedkar does not appear as a local reformer responding to a unique social problem but as a theorist of domination who understood, earlier than many, how modern societies organize inequality in ways that survive law, reform and even democracy itself. He shows that hierarchy does not need open hatred to function; it needs routine, moral language and social habits that make exclusion feel ordinary. That insight travels easily across borders. It speaks to caste, to race, to colonial and postcolonial power and to newer forms of inequality shaped by capitalism and bureaucracy. Sociology gains something crucial here. Ambedkar pushes the discipline to take structure seriously again not as an abstract system but as something lived through bodies, spaces, daily interaction etc. and he reminds sociologists that social facts wound, shape ambition and limit what people think they can become. For Critical Race Theory, Ambedkar offers both confirmation and expansion. His work supports CRT's claim that inequality is structural and that law often protects power while claiming neutrality but it also stretches the theory beyond its usual terrain forcing it to confront domination without phenotype and to recognize inherited hierarchy as a global problem rather than a regional one. That stretch is uncomfortable. It should be. It reveals how even critical traditions can reproduce silences about whose suffering generates theory and whose remains an example. Postcolonial studies, too, are challenged by Ambedkar's presence. His thought complicates the tendency to focus on colonial power alone by insisting that internal hierarchies demand equal attention that freedom from empire means little if society continues to organize itself through graded inequality. Ambedkar does not allow colonialism to be the only villain. He insists on looking inward, at religion, custom and social life, and this insistence unsettles easy

narratives of resistance and liberation. That is his strength. Across all these fields, the same lesson returns. Equality cannot rest on recognition alone. Rights cannot survive without social transformation. Democracy cannot endure where dignity is conditional. These are not abstract claims. They are grounded in lived experience, in humiliation, in blocked futures, in the quiet violence of being seen as less before one speaks or acts. Ambedkar understood this with clarity that still feels sharp. His demand was not for inclusion into an unequal order but for the dismantling of the order itself. That demand places him firmly within the most serious traditions of critical social thought. It also explains why his work continues to provoke resistance, discomfort and misreading. Ambedkar beyond borders is not a comforting figure. He does not offer easy solidarity or quick solutions. He offers a way of seeing domination clearly and a refusal to soften its edges for the sake of consensus. In a world where inequality increasingly hides behind diversity language, legal form and moral performance, that clarity is rare. It is needed. Ambedkar's global significance lies here in his ability to name structure where others see culture, to see design where others see failure, and to insist that dignity is not negotiable. That insistence still speaks, across contexts and struggles, asking sociology, Critical Race Theory and postcolonial studies to be braver, sharper and less selective in what they are willing to confront.

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