

Influence of Warkari Literature on Formation of Indian Constitution

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Submitted: 06-May-2025 Revised: 21-May-2025 Accepted: 12-June-2025 Published: 30-June-2025

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2025-020304



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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.18532073](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18532073)

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18532073>

Volume: 2

Issue: 3

Month: June 2025

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

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How to cite this article:

Ganganmale, P. A. (2025). Influence of Warkari Literature on Formation of Indian Constitution. *International Journal of English and World Languages & Literature Paradigm Shift in International Research*, 2(3), 25–28.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18532073>

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Abstract

The formation of the Indian Constitution was a monumental endeavor that synthesized diverse social, linguistic, and geographical aspirations into a unified democratic framework. While its legal structure draws from global traditions, its moral and ethical foundation is deeply rooted in indigenous philosophies. This paper explores the significant influence of Maharashtra's intellectual and spiritual heritage on the constitutional process, specifically through the contributions of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the Warkari sect.

The study highlights how the Bhakti movement, spanning from Sant Dnyaneshwar to Sant Gadgebaba, pioneered concepts of social equality, humanism, and the rejection of rigid caste hierarchy's centuries before the modern era. By analyzing the Pasaydan and the abhangas of Sant Tukaram, the paper demonstrates a clear ideological lineage between the Warkari emphasis on universal welfare (Universal Welfare), brotherhood, and the abolition of untouchability, and constitutional provisions like Article 17 and the Preamble's promise of fraternity. Furthermore, it examines how Vaishnavite principles of devotion and accessibility informed Ambedkar's vision of an egalitarian society. Ultimately, the paper argues that the Indian Constitution is not merely a legal document but a reflection of a long-standing spiritual democracy that seeks to harmonize India's vast pluralism through justice and mutual respect.

Keywords: Constitutional Equivalent-Pasaydan (Universal Prayer) Preamble (Justice & Welfare) Bhakti (Devotion over Birth) Equality of Opportunity Vishwomay Jag (Unity of Beings) Fraternity & National Unity Internal Purity (Rejecting Anger)-Articles of Indian Constitution.

Introduction

The Constitution of India is not merely a legal code; it is a profound social document that seeks to bridge the gap between a deeply traditional society and a modern, egalitarian democratic ideal. Its drafting was a herculean task that required the harmonization of India's vast diversity—encompassing multiple religions, languages, and historical backgrounds—into a single, cohesive framework. While the Constitution is often lauded for its adoption of Western liberal-democratic values such as the rule of law and individual liberty, its "soul" is intrinsically linked to the indigenous ethical and spiritual movements that have shaped the Indian subconscious for centuries.

Central to this ideological formation is the state of Maharashtra, which provided both the chief architect of the document, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and a rich legacy of social reform. Dr. Ambedkar's intellectual genius did not operate in a vacuum; it was significantly informed by the Bhakti movement and the Warkari sect. From the 12th-century wisdom of Sant Dnyaneshwar to the 19th-century social activism of Sant Gadgebaba, the Marathi saints championed a "spiritual democracy." They used the vernacular language to challenge rigid caste hierarchies, preaching that human worth is defined by moral conduct and devotion rather than the accident of birth.

This paper examines the intersection of Warkari philosophy and constitutional principles. It explores how the Warkari emphasis on humanism, equality, and universal welfare—epitomized in Dnyaneshwar's Pasaydan—parallels the constitutional commitment to justice and fraternity. By analyzing the abhangas of Sant Tukaram alongside Article 17 (Abolition of Untouchability) and the Preamble, this study argues that the Indian Constitution is a modern manifestation of a long-standing cultural struggle for human dignity. Ultimately, it posits that the roots of Indian secularism and social justice are deeply embedded in the Vaishnavite traditions of brotherhood and the compassionate teachings of the Marathi saints. The formation of Indian Constitution is a thoroughly debated and a long process that utilized the intellect, time, genuine knowledge of so many stalwarts of India from all geographical areas of the nation. It was a herculean task that represented the social aspirations of crores of Indians having multiple religious, social, financial, geographical, historical, linguistic, cultural, and political backgrounds on one hand and representative ambitions on the other. So many aspects influenced the formation of Indian constitution as the features of above list.

Maharashtra played a vital and constructive role in the creation of Indian constitution through the major contributions of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and his comprehensive intellectual capacities. He, being the architect of Indian constitution, crafted each line with its impactful influence on the life of Indian people.

The ideological formation of the Indian Constitution reflects a rich blend of ideas drawn from India's freedom struggle and global democratic traditions. It is rooted in liberal-democratic values such as liberty, equality, rule of law, and individual rights, mainly inspired by the British and American constitutional systems. At the same time, it embodies nationalism, asserting the sovereignty of the people and the unity of the nation after colonial rule. A strong commitment to social justice, influenced greatly by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, is visible in provisions ensuring equality, abolition of untouchability, and affirmative action for historically disadvantaged groups. The Constitution also adopts secularism, guaranteeing freedom of religion and equal respect for all faiths in a religiously diverse society. Influenced by socialist ideas, it aims to establish a welfare state through the Directive Principles of State Policy and a focus on economic equality. Gandhian ideology further shaped its moral and social vision by emphasizing decentralization, village self-governance, and upliftment of the poor. Together, these ideologies form a balanced constitutional framework that seeks to combine democracy, social reform, national unity, and justice for all.

Warkari sect and its ideological theory, ideas, humanism, and a few other features influenced different parameters of Indian constitution. The saints from Dnyaneshwar of 12th century to Gadgebaba of 19th century gave the ideas of modern ideologies of constitution frameworks of a society. The Warkari sect is a prominent Vaishnavite bhakti movement that originated in Maharashtra around the 12th–13th century. It is centred on the devotion (bhakti) to Lord Vithoba (Vitthal), a form of Lord Mahadeva, whose main temple is in Pandharpur. The Warkari Sect or Movement or Marathi folk arts like Abhang, Kirtan, Bharudas of honorable saints like Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Tukaram, Sant Naamdev, Sant Eknath, Sant Gadgebaba, Sant Nivrutti, Sant Janabai, Sant Chokhamela and several others and scriptures like Dnyaneshwari is the rich sources of Indian ethics, philosophy of life and spiritualism that lead the life of common people towards a healthy and comprehensive life of democratic spirits. Warkari Sect preached the message of equality, brotherhood, justice, individualism, secularism, welfare and freedom through the Hindu religious traditions and worships of God Vithoba. Warkari sect followed the major Hindu traditions and scriptures like The Vedas, Mahabharata and Ramayana as their genuine source of the philosophy they believed and inculcated among the Warkari followers.

The ideological contribution of Marathi saints played a crucial role in shaping India's social, moral, and spiritual thought, especially through the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra. Saints like Sant Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram, Chokhamela, and Janabai emphasized devotion (bhakti) over rituals, challenging rigid caste hierarchies and priestly dominance. They preached equality of all human beings, asserting that devotion and moral conduct, not birth or caste, define a person's worth. By using the Marathi language instead of Sanskrit, they made spiritual and ethical ideas accessible to common people, promoting social awareness and unity. Their teachings stressed social harmony, compassion, simplicity, humility, non-violence, and service to humanity, encouraging ethical living in everyday life. Through abhangas, ovis, and kirtans, they spread values of tolerance and moral responsibility, fostering a democratic spirit long before modern constitutional ideals. Overall, the Marathi saints contributed significantly to the ideological foundations of social equality, human dignity, and cultural unity in Indian society. The Marathi saints, particularly from the Bhakti movement, had a profound influence on Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, shaping his social, ethical, and reformist ideas. Saints like Chokhamela, Namdev, Tukaram, and Sant Dnyaneshwar challenged the rigid caste hierarchy and emphasized spiritual equality, asserting that devotion and moral character mattered more than birth. Ambedkar drew inspiration from their rejection of untouchability and their insistence on human dignity and social justice. The Marathi saints' teachings on equality, moral courage, and social reform resonated with Ambedkar's vision for a just society where caste discrimination would be abolished. Moreover, their use of the vernacular language to communicate complex spiritual and ethical ideas aligned with Ambedkar's advocacy for education and awareness among marginalized communities. In essence, the Bhakti saints' emphasis on social equality, human dignity, and moral righteousness provided an ideological and cultural framework that reinforced Ambedkar's fight for the rights of Dalits and his efforts to shape a democratic, egalitarian India.

The Pasaydan, composed by Sant Dnyaneshwar, is a profound Marathi prayer that emphasizes universal welfare, moral righteousness, and spiritual sovereignty. Unlike ordinary prayers that focus on personal gain, Pasaydan invokes blessings for all living beings and the entire world. The repeated call for the removal of evil and the rise of righteousness reflects an understanding of sovereignty not as domination, but as the moral and spiritual authority of goodness. The prayer appeals for 'Universal Welfare' and it seeks the betterment of all beings, asking that creatures experience joy, friendship, and fulfillment, reflecting the idea of moral sovereignty over selfishness. It further comments on 'Destruction of Evil;' it calls for the darkness of sin to disappear, echoing the idea that true sovereignty involves justice, righteousness, and ethical order rather than mere power.

The soul of the prayer is 'Brotherhood and Equality' through friendship among all beings and respect for every creature, symbolizing a society where all beings enjoy spiritual and social equality, akin to a moral vision of sovereignty. Saints are described as guiding forces—like heatless suns or wish-fulfilling trees—who embody sovereignty through guidance, compassion, and moral authority, rather than coercion. By seeking that the world sees the sun of righteousness, Pasaydan emphasizes that true sovereignty aligns with universal laws and divine order, where authority is ethical and inclusive. In essence, Pasaydan presents a vision of sovereignty that is ethical, compassionate, and universal—power exercised through righteousness, moral guidance, and care for all beings, rather

than domination or oppression. It resonates closely with Indian constitutional values such as justice, equality, and universal welfare, showing how spiritual teachings of Marathi saints influenced broader social and moral ideals.

The Warkar Sect followed the Vaishnavism as the major guidance for its fundamental preaching. Many ideas, discussions, thoughts, rituals, and artefacts of Warkari sect have their origins in Vaishnavism. Many Saints started their bhajans, kirtans, and other presentations with their dedications to Lord Vishnu. Vaishnavism is one of the major traditions of Hindu philosophy which believes that Lord Vishnu is the Supreme God and the protector of the universe. According to Vaishnava ideology, devotion (bhakti) is the most important and effective path to attain spiritual liberation (moksha). Lord Krishna and Lord Rama are worshipped as the principal incarnations of Vishnu, and sincere love, faith and complete surrender to God are emphasized over complex rituals. Vaishnavism teaches that God is personal, compassionate and accessible to every devotee, and it encourages people to lead a moral life based on truth, non-violence, kindness and self-discipline. Through constant remembrance of God and pure devotion, a person can achieve inner peace and ultimate salvation. The true values of Vaishnavism are brotherhood, love, kindness, universal religion of humanity, utilitarian existence of God and religion through bhakti or devotion that is the right of every individual. God and religion are free to worship, follow, pray and preach. This essence of Vaishnavism is reflected in Indian Constitution as freedom of all Indians to pray their God. Right to Freedom of Religion includes freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion, freedom to manage religious affairs, freedom to pay taxes for promotion of any particular religion, freedom to attend religious instruction or worship in certain educational institutions

Equality is the prime component of Vaishnavism. Sant Tukaram says:

विष्णुमय जग वैष्णवांचा धर्म । भेदाभेद भ्रम अमंगळ ॥१॥
आइका जी तुम्ही भक्त भागवत । कराल तें हित सत्य करा ॥२॥
कोणा ही जिवाचा न घडो मत्सर । वर्म सर्वेश्वरपूजनाचे ॥३॥
तुका म्हणे एका देहाचे अवयव । सुख दुःख जीव भोग पावे ॥४॥

This abhang of Sant Tukaram rightly explains the true essence of Vaishnavism and the value of equality in Indian constitution. He says that the whole world is filled with Lord Vishnu, and Vaishnavism teaches that all differences and divisions are only illusions and inauspicious. The divisions based on any criteria is a wrong. He advises devotees to listen carefully and to follow what is truly good and righteous. The poem emphasizes that one should never feel hatred or jealousy towards any living being, because the real essence of worship of the Supreme Lord lies in compassion and unity. Hatred is not allowed in the sant literature and it is abolished in Constitution. Finally, Tukaram explains that all living beings are like different parts of one single body, and therefore the joy and sorrow experienced by one affect all.

Article 17 of Constitution of India is about Abolition of Untouchability. It says “Untouchability” is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of “Untouchability” shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

Sant Tukaram in another abhang says,
जप करितां राग । आला जवळी तो मांग ॥१॥
नको भोंवतालें जर्गी । पाहों जवळी राख अंगी ॥२॥
कुड्याची संगती । सदा भोजन पंगती ॥३॥
तुका म्हणे ब्रह्म । साधी विरहित कर्म ॥४॥

In this abhanga saint Tukaram is advising the devotee to control his anger. He is suggesting that the devotee should see that Brahman which lies beyond any karmas. If you get angry for some reason, for example, when someone disturbs you while doing japa with a japa mala, then treat that anger like an untouchable person. Don't see around you, with worry, to check whether an untouchable person will come and suddenly touch you. Instead, check that the anger, which is the real untouchable thing, should not stay in your heart. Protect yourself from that. Be careful to check if you are continuously staying in the company of and eating in the company of the untouchable anger. Tukaram preaches the untouchables are inhuman temperaments of human behaviors like anger and not the persons who are considered as untouchables. He compares the humans and temperaments and keeps the humans as supreme representatives God before us. We should abolish anger, greed, non-violence and other unwanted feelings and approaches that will diminish our personality.

The diversity and pluralism of Indian society through fostering a sense of community and collective participation, which aligns with the spirit of democracy by emphasizing inclusivity and shared values. There are several religions, languages, regions, cultures, social norms, customs and traditions however constitution maintains the existence of all in cooperative nature. All have right to follow their beliefs but have responsibility to respect the others. Preamble assures The Fraternity that ensures the dignity of the individual. Unity in diversity is one of the most important ideals reflected in the Indian Constitution. India is a country of many religions, languages, cultures and traditions, yet the Constitution unites all citizens under one common system of rights and duties. It guarantees equality before law, freedom of religion and equal opportunities to every citizen, irrespective of caste, creed, language or gender. At the same time, it respects and protects the cultural and linguistic diversity of different communities through provisions such as cultural and educational rights. Thus, the Indian Constitution promotes national unity while preserving the rich diversity of the nation, proving that people with different backgrounds can live together in harmony and mutual respect.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all those who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the completion of this research paper titled “Influence of Warkari Literature on Formation of Indian Constitution.”

I am thankful to my institution, Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil College, Urun-Islampur, for providing academic support and a conducive research environment.

I sincerely acknowledge the inspiration drawn from the teachings of the Warkari saints and the intellectual legacy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, which form the core foundation of this study.

I extend my gratitude to fellow scholars, researchers, and authors whose works have been referred to in this paper.

I am also grateful to my family and well-wishers for their continuous encouragement and moral support throughout the research process.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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