

INDIAN CONSTITUTION ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC EQUALITY

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Introduction:

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar is framer of the Indian Constitution and his commitment to Human Rights reflects in the preamble of constitution, including Justice, freedom, equality & fraternity. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar commonly regarded as ‘Father of the Indian Constitution.’ He was crowned posthumously with the highest civilian award the ‘Bharat Ratna’ in recognition of his services to the nation as a great freedom fighter, writer, educationist, scholar and constitutional expert. He was a great patriot who always used to say ‘I belong to this nation, India. I am an Indian’.¹

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was the chairman of the drafting committee of constitution. The Indian constitution is unique one in the world and many countries are borrowed the same. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the first law minister of the India. They describes several salient features in Indian Constitution. He was continuously fights for the social reservation till the end of his life. The word’s “Socialist” “Secular” “Democratic” and “Republic” have been inserted in the preamble which reflects as “Social welfare state.” Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar tried to turn the wheel of the law toward social justice for all.

The term ‘Justice’ in the preamble denotes following distinct forms social, economic & political which is protected by the various provisions of Part III i.e Fundamental Rights & Part IV i.e Directive Principles. The word ‘Social Justice’ indicates the equal treatment based on caste, race, religion, sex & so on

In D.S. Nakara V. Union of India² The Supreme Court has held that the principal aim of a socialist state is to eliminate inequality in income, status and standards of life. The basic framework of socialism is to provide a proper standard of life to the people, especially, security from cradle to grave. Amongst there, it envisaged economic equality and equitable distribution of income. This is a blend of Marxism & Gandhism leaning heavily on Gandhism socialism. From a wholly feudal exploited slave society to a vibrant, throbbing socialist welfare society reveals a long march, but, during this Journey, every state action, whenever taken, must be so directed and interpreted so as to take the society one step towards the goal.

The grave concern of Dr. Ambedkar for caste-ridden society marked by gross socio-economic injustice and his earnest endeavor to hold free India together through national integration is fully reflected in his concluding speech to the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949 as:

We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is complete absence of two things in Indian society. One of these is equality. On the social plane, we have a society based on the principle of graded inequality which means elevation of some and degradation of others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty. On the 26th of January 1950, we are entering into a life of contradictions. In politics, we shall have equality and in social and economic life we shall have inequality. In politics we shall be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall be reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible movement or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.

The second thing we are wanting is recognition of the principle of fraternity. Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians—Indians being one people. It is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life..... I am of the opinion that in believing that we are a nation, we are cherishing a great delusion. How can people divided into several thousand of castes, be a nation? The sooner we realize that we are not as yet a nation in the social and psychological sense of the word, the better for us. For them only we shall realize the ways of realizing the goal. In India castes are anti-national. They bring about separation in life and generate jealousy and antipathy between caste and caste. But we must overcome all these difficulties if we wish to become a nation in reality. For fraternity can be a fact only where there is a nation. Without fraternity equality and liberty will be no deeper than coats of paints. There are my reflections about the tasks that lie ahead of us.³

A bare perusal of Dr. Ambedkar's above speech and his candid comments on each clause of the Articles of the Constitution shows his concern for invoking constitutional means for ensuring social justice by wiping out grave socio-economic injustice writ large on the face of India. National objective (in the present context national integration) outlined by Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was to create a classless society—a society organized on planned and secular basis ensuring a reasonable cultural and material standard to all Indians. He wanted such a society free from social vices and economic infirmities of inequality which erode social fabric of a society culminating in its disintegration by relentless simmering of large majority of have-nots and socially ostracized. He wanted India to usher in egalitarian society-- a society in which all members are and will no longer be ranked in terms of prestige. No one will experience the satisfaction of occupying a high social status; on one will suffer the indignity of being relegated to a position which commands little respect. No longer will high status evoke deference and admiration or envy and resentment from those in less worthy positions. Wealth will be distributed equally among population. The rich and poor, haves and have-nots will be a thing of the past. The words such as privilege and poverty will either change their meaning or disappear from the vocabulary. In an egalitarian society the phrase 'power to the people' will become a reality. No longer will some have powers over others. Positions of authority and the obedience they command will disappear. Exploitation and oppression will be concept of history which have no place in the description of contemporary social reality. Men will be equal in the sight of God and in the eyes of their fellow men.⁴ He wanted national integration to take birth in the hearts of all Indians which could be done by a classless Indian society oblivious of its gory paste of four *Varnas* (Casted) and fifth group of outcaste whose members were known as untouchables which led India to foreign subjugation till August 15, 1947.⁵

As a builder of modern India, Dr. Ambedkar struggled relentlessly to set up a society based on democratic notions of equality, liberty and fraternity. He strived hard to remove sorrow from the lives of teeming hapless and helpless millions through social reconstruction and economic progress. As a pragmatist, he believed that in the absence of economic and social justice, political independence would not bring either social solidarity or national integration. He firmly believed that first step towards attainment of social solidarity or national integration. He firmly believed that first step towards attainment of social solidarity and national integration was the elimination of the hierarchical structuring of Indian society. He sought to achieve that, on democratic principles through constitutional means, by:

1. Making Indian Constitution workable, flexible to hold the country together both in time of peace and war;
2. Embodying exceptions and qualifications to the Fundamental Rights while advocating Preventive Detention

3. to the minorities and certain classes who are socially and economical backward; and emergency powers of the President of India;
4. Incorporating the principle of one man, one value and one vote;
5. Providing special safeguards
6. Abolishing untouchability and forced labour.
7. Guaranteeing the right to constitutional remedies for real realization of the rights.

The underlying objective of Dr. Ambedkar for providing these safeguards was to save Indian Democracy from confusion and anarchy on the one hand and communism and communalism on the other. He desired to flourish political polity on sound foundations of socio-economic democracy, Necessary guidelines for achieving cherished goals of social, economic and political democracy in free India, through national integration, have been provided by Dr. Ambedkar in Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Rights enshrined in our Constitution. For real realization on national integration through social justice, Dr. Ambedkar provided a complete Code in the Constitution.⁷ There is no conflict between the Directive Principles of the State Policy and the Fundamental Rights. Both, rather, supplement each other in aiming at the same goal of bringing about a social revolution and establishment of a welfare state which was envisaged by Dr. Ambedkar in the Preamble of the Constitution. Our courts are obligated to interpret the provisions of the Constitution as well as of welfare legislation in such a way so as to ensure enforcement of the laudable goals of socio-economic justice of the Directive Principles and to harmonize these with individual rights. This is the mandate of the Constitution not only to the legislature and the Executive only but also to the Courts as well.⁶

Let the basic objective of the Constitution of India be realized in the true sense by building a polity in which there is a justice -- social, economic and political—for all Indians as for Dr. Ambedkar casteism and untouchability are other forms of social and economic inequality. Unfortunately, the present trend of promoting casteism for cheap political gains portend perilous consequences as bloody casteist outrage in the form of retaliatory killings in Uttar Pradesh can engulf other sensitive parts of the country and pose a serious threat to the unity of the nation. Only Dr. Ambedkar's concept of social justice by banishing casteism can hold India together, i.e. national integration through socio-economic equality.

Notes and References

1. Ramesh chand, "Dr. Ambedkar : Life and Mission, "Yojana, May 15,1991, p. 28.
2. (1983) 1 SCC 305.
3. B.S. Rao, The Framing of Indian Constitution Vol. IV (1968), 944-45
4. For detail see, B.R. Ambedkar- Builder of Modern India by W.N. Kuber (1987) p.130, Constituent Assembly Debates, vol.II,316., Social & Political Ideas of De, B. R. Ambedkar by Chandra Barill (First Edition),p.87, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, A study in social Democracy by G.S.Lokhande(1982) p.xi, Dr. Ambedkar, Life and mission (1977), p.495, Social Stratification by H. Haralambos in sociology (1987 Indian Regime) p.24
5. Theory and practice of Democracy – B.R. Ambedkar(edited by K.P.Karunakaran,1978), p.119.
6. Constitutional Assembly Debates, vol.III, p.496.