



**Sri Ramakrishna Hegde Chair on Decentralization and Development
&
Centre for Human Resource Development (CHRD)
Institute for Social and Economic (ISEC)**

Dr. VKRV Rao Road, Nagarbhavi, Bengaluru 560072

Concept Note

National Seminar on

**Social Justice and the Working of Panchayats in India:
Revisiting the Concern of Ambedkar School of Thought**

ಭಾರತದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ನ್ಯಾಯ ಮತ್ತು ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿಗಳ ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಹಣೆ:

ಅಂಬೇಡ್ಕರ್ ವಿಚಾರಧಾರೆಯು ಈ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಹೊಂದಿರುವ ಕಳಕಳಿಯನ್ನು ಪುನರಾವಲೋಕಿಸುವಿಕೆ

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the champion of social justice in India. In his opinion, the main cause of injustice in Indian society is the caste system. In India, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes face denial of their basic human rights and equality in status. Dr. Ambedkar thought that all types of social oppression, denial of human rights, economic exploitation and other injustices can be removed with the help of the affirmative action by the Government. As Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, he incorporated a number of provisions in the Constitution to safeguard the interests of the downtrodden and oppressed groups and to ensure social justice. Provisions in the Constitution to strengthen the process of inclusion of the excluded communities can be found in several articles (e.g. Article 14, 15, 16,17,19,21, 39(a),39(d),39(e) 42, 46, 51A (e), 330, 332 335, 338 and 338 (A). Equally, he was sensitive to the interests of religious minorities and children.

Incorporating all these provisions in the Constitution Dr. Ambedkar said, “On 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter in to a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall by 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 by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy, which this Assembly has so laboriously built up”. Though the structure of political

democracy in its procedural form has been kept intact till date the clamor for social justice continues to be raised time and again.

Social justice means equal opportunities available to everyone to develop his/her personality and potential fully. A just society, according to Dr. Ambedkar, is one based on equality, liberty and fraternity. Social justice involves the creation of a just and fair social order. The aim of social justice is to remove all types of inequalities based on caste, race, sex, power, position, and wealth. The aim of social justice is to reduce unequal distribution of the social, political and economic resources of the community. He treated social justice as a true basis for developing the sentiment of patriotism and nationalism. Dr. Ambedkar strongly believed that the root cause of social injustice experienced by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is the caste system.

Dr. Ambedkar's notion of social justice is based on equal rights and human dignity through a modernist and legal framework. The Constitution grants equal right to all largely due to his perseverance. He was the first person to demand separate electorates and reservation system for Scheduled Castes at the Round Table Conference. To him affirmative action is only way to improve the plight of the marginalized communities. Dr. Ambedkar was concerned about over all development of vulnerable sections of the Indian society and to demolish caste- based discrimination by suitable legal means. Hence, all regulatory frameworks which seek to ensure social justice valid from the point of view of Dr. Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar was highly skeptical of Panchayati Raj at the grass root level since he saw Panchayats as mere reflections of the caste discrimination practiced in the rural areas. He said: "A population which is hidebound by caste; a population which is infected by ancient prejudices, a population which flouts equality of status and is dominated by notions of gradations in life; a population which thinks that some are high and some are low-can it be expected to have the right notions even to discharge bare justice?"

While drafting the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, these concerns were factored in. That is how certain mandatory provisions in the Constitution to ensure the participation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and a better involvement of them in local governance have been made. Article 243D provides that seats shall be reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to the size of their population. As per Article 243D (2) not less than one third of the total number of the seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be reserved for women. Article 243 D (3) provides that not less than a third of the total elected seats in the PRIs shall be reserved for women. Article 243D(4) provides for the reservation of posts of chairpersons of PRIs for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes proportionate to the size of their population in the State and for the reservation of not less than one third of such posts for women. Majority of the States have improved on this mandate and reserve 50 percent seats for women in PRIs. Reservation of posts in proportion to their population also has been ensured for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by the State legislatures. Again, Article 243D entrusts Panchayats to prepare plans for economic development and social justice.

A quarter of a century has passed since the Constitutional Amendments and the inauguration of the New Panchayat System. At present there are more than thirty lakhs elected functionaries in the Panchayats across all tiers and almost half of them are women. Dr. Ambedkar was apprehensive of the viability of Gram Panchayats only, but would not have opposed Panchayats at District and Intermediate levels to the same extent as Gram Panchayats. It is necessary to find out to what extent Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have found their voice and concerns in the governance of three-tier Panchayats. Whether the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes elected functionaries are able to exercise power in an unencumbered fashion needs to be investigated in the light of many narratives of such representatives being heckled or humiliated by upper or dominant castes. Women Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes functionaries are doubly disadvantaged as far as exercising their powers are concerned. Added to that is the question of whether the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes get the outcomes of social justice and their due share from the resource envelope devolved and the rate of expenditure of Special Component Plan (SCP) ,Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) and Gram Panchayat Development Plan(GPDP) . The proposed seminar is expected to discuss the extent to which social justice has been meted out to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes through the New Panchayats with particular reference to Karnataka and other States, particularly southern States.

The National Seminar on “**Social Justice and the Working of Panchayats in India: Revisiting the Concern of Ambedkar School of Thought**” (“ಭಾರತದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ನ್ಯಾಯ ಮತ್ತು ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿಗಳ ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಹಣೆ: ಅಂಬೇಡ್ಕರ್ ವಿಚಾರಧಾರೆಯು ಈ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಹೊಂದಿರುವ ಕಳಕಳಿಯನ್ನು ಪುನರಾವಲೋಕಿಸುವಿಕೆ”) will be jointly organized by Sri. Ramakrishna Hegde Chair on Decentralization and Development and Centre for Human Resource Development (CHRD), Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bengaluru. Papers are invited on themes related the topic bearing particularly on Karnataka. There will be a separate technical session on Kannada language.

Proposed Sub-themes of the Seminar:

- ❖ Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Social Justice and Decentralised Local Governance among Indian States (with special reference to Karnataka): Achievements and Challenges
- ❖ Dr. Ambedkar’s notion on Social Justice and its manifestations in the Constitution with reference to the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts.
- ❖ Dr. Ambedkar’s view on Decentralisation
- ❖ Social Justice and working of Panchayats among Indian States with special reference to Karnataka
- ❖ Regulatory framework and inclusion of excluded communities in the Local Governance
- ❖ To what extent, marginalised communities including differently abled find their voice and concern in Panchayat Raj System

- ❖ A quarter century experiences of elected functionaries including Women, especially from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Local Governance (with narratives)
- ❖ Working of Special Component Plan (SCP), Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) and Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) with special reference to Karnataka
- ❖ Electoral reforms within Local Governments and its impact on Social Justice
- ❖ Provision on qualification norms (educational norms, sanitation norms and child norms etc.) of marginalised communities with regard to Local Governments
- ❖ Whether the proposal of “One Nation One Poll” is favourable to the election of Local Governments and marginalised communities
- ❖ Inclusion of excluded communities in Local Governance: Policy Suggestions for the state of Karnataka
- ❖ Comparative perspectives on the related theme with lessons for other states from Karnataka and lessons of other states to Karnataka.
- ❖ Any other sub-themes related to the seminar title are also welcome.

Important Dates for the Proposed National Seminar

<i>Last Date for Receipt of Abstract:</i>	<i>9 August, 2019</i>
<i>Communication of Acceptance of Abstract:</i>	<i>10 August, 2019</i>
<i>Last Date for Submission of Full Paper:</i>	<i>5 September, 2019</i>
<i>Seminar Date:</i>	<i>18 & 19 September, 2019</i>

Abstract and Papers may be Submitted to

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