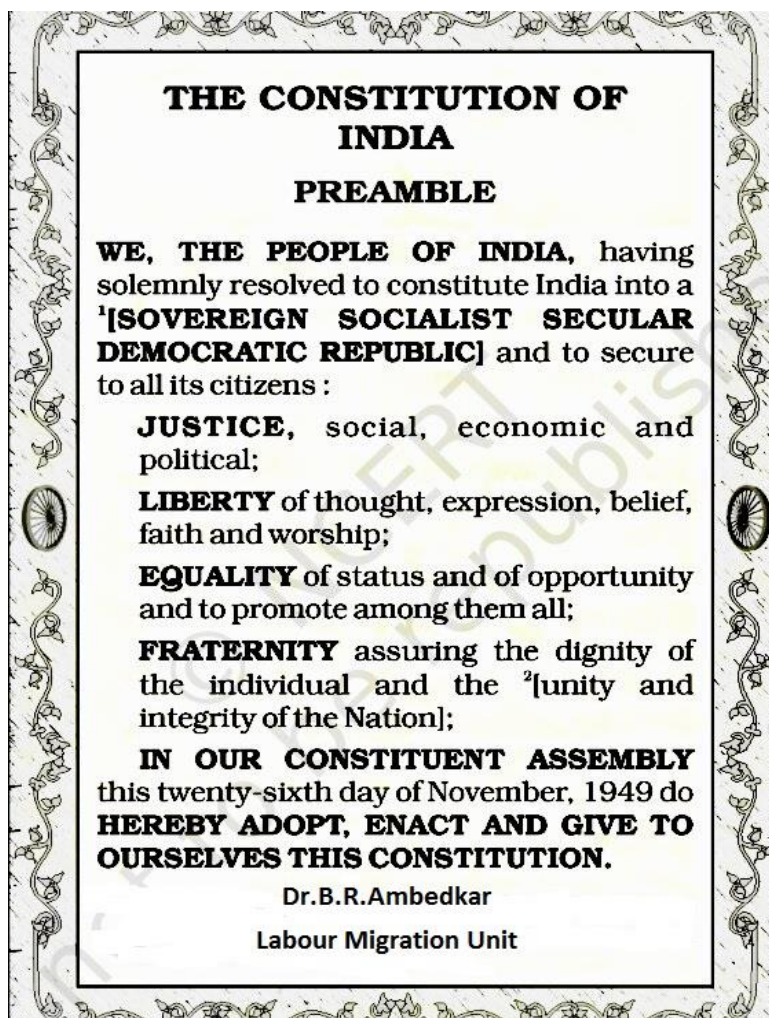




# Social Disharmony in India Today is the result of a systemic dismantling of the Republic and the only possible solution rests in the hands of people in the 2024 General Lok Sabha Election

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**Introduction:** We are just close to the General Lok Sabha Election 2024. We are aware that the socio-economic political and religious situation in India has narrowed down our electoral choices. Polarization of divide and rule has affected every aspect of our life. The choice today is not merely one of choosing a political party or an alliance for the governance of the country. Rather it is more importantly, also one of choosing the foundational principles on which 'we the people' should be governed.



Since the time of BJP came to capture the power at the centre forming the Government, the Indian Republic is being dismantled systematically. How are we going to respond to this situation? We need to speak out for our continued faith in the constitutional democracy and the idea of India enshrined in our constitution.

We need to understand why the General Lok Sabha Elections 2024 is one of reclaiming the republic and to know the major fault lines that need to be addressed both in the short run and long term. It is very sad to note that this country is moving from democracy to theocracy or towards a dictatorial democracy. Knowing that the secular nature of our country is under threat and the minorities are not considered as people, our only hope rests in protecting the secular and democratic values enshrined in the constitution. We need to assert the sovereignty of the people of India – The Republic.

### **The journey of the Republic - “We the people”**

India is a Republic in which the People (the ‘public’) are Sovereign. It is ‘We the People’ who gave to ‘Ourselves’ the Constitution, which is republican in nature. Some of its key elements are: Democracy, Equality, Fraternity, Unity and Diversity, comprehensive Justice, Socialism and Secularism.

Deepening of these foundational principles is an ongoing task and much is yet to be achieved. The task of “*Rashtra Nirmaan*” was complete when we gave to ourselves our Constitution on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1949 and promulgated it on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950. Since then, India has achieved a good deal of progress in all spheres of life following the path we took. But now the path is diverted and very much constricted from every principle in the constitution. Actually the Constitution of India and the values enshrined in it are influenced by the movement for Independence and for social equality led by India’s tallest leaders like M.K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, Vallabai Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Abulkalam Azad etc. But now the Hindutva philosophy which emanates from RSS forms the political ideal of the ruling Government the Bharatiya Janatha Party - BJP. It is time for us the people of India galvanize all our strength to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement for Independence from the clutches of the Hindutva forces operating in India.

Looking at the journey of our country since Independence, there is no doubt in us that it is the democratic nature of governance of the country and the ideals contained in the preamble to the constitution that best served the wellbeing of the people in general and of the poor in particular. The socio-economic and political upward mobility, although only partially, achieved by those at the bottom is because of democracy and the egalitarian principles of the constitution. There is no other model of governance than democracy and no other idea of India than the constitutional idea of India that can ensure the wellbeing of all the people in this country.

The truth of India is ....it is a country with diversity in all aspects. Diversity in culture, ethnicity, language, origin, religion, ways of living and so on so forth. Unity is the consensus we the people from the diversities have agreed in the process of our freedom struggle and movements for social equality. It is not that the unity gives consensus for diversities, rather it is the diversities that accommodates unity for the wellbeing of all in this country. Do we understand this fact? This consensus is central to our republic. This basic truth of our country confirms that there is no other way that India can be governed as a unity other than respecting the consensus that ‘we the people’ –

the diversities - had arrived at in the process of we becoming a democratic republic: that is one of constitutional democracy as enshrined in the Constitution. India should remain committed to this and work towards a greater expansion of the idea of India enshrined in our constitution especially democracy, secularism, fellowship and egalitarianism. The consensus given by the Republic – the people of India respects coexistence of differences and plurality. Hence the unity of this country can't be replaced by uniformity by the efforts of those who try to dismantle the fundamental principles and values of the Constitution.

### **Dismantling “We the people”**

At the moment, however, India is witnessing a real threat to its constitutional democracy. The *Rashtria Swayam Sevak Sang* - RSS had derided the egalitarian principles of the constitution from the start of India got its independence from the British and had been working committedly on the *Hindu Rashtra Project* even after we gave ourselves a Constitution. Its efforts intensified after the landslide electoral victories of the BJP, both in 2014 and in 2019 General Lok Sabha Elections in India. The RSS fervently makes every effort to impose the principles of a *Hindu Rashtra* on the Republic, which the country had rejected unequivocally at the making of the Republic in 1950s.

Resulting from the above, we encounter deep economic, social, political and emotional distress in the country in the form of inflation, unemployment, agrarian crisis, and polarisation of rich and the poor on the economic front and social & communal hatred, ethnic animosity, prejudice, enmities, violence, etc. on the socio-political front. We do experience emotional distress resulting from an environment of fear, anxiety, hatred, insecurity, violence, and vilification. Increasing income and power inequality and the politicians strengthening their nexus with the corporates has eroded the constitutional principles of an egalitarian society.

Majoritarian hyper nationalism has created violent mobs. Democracy is replaced with mobocracy of majority which is visible from the street fights to the parliament proceedings. Violence, fear, hatred and anxiety have overtaken the nation jeopardizing social peace and harmony in India. The four pillars of Indian democracy and constitutional institutions (Legislature, Executive, Judiciary and Media/Press) meant for their fairness, authenticity, accountability and transparency have become subservient to the government led by the RSS. Critical and progressive thinking of the civilians is replaced with mob mentality. Scientific inquiry with superstition and superficial religiosity, efforts towards national reconciliation with efforts to spread falsehood and communal hatred invade the minds and hearts of people. It's shocking to observe that the true spirit of nationalism is portrayed with incendiary and provocative slogans. The democratic governance has become a fascist governance.

The mainstream electronic and print media, on the whole, has become a part of the propaganda machinery of the government having alliances with and serving the interest of the RSS and capitalists/corporates. The mainstream media in spreading outright lies callously and that too with overt or covert effort to sensationalize and communalize the issues happening around us.

## Godi – Media

The fourth pillar of Indian democracy is Media/Press. It supposed to be the voice of the people and should function democratically independent of any lucrative influences. But unfortunately this (Media) is not the real voice of the people of India rather it serves the ulterior purpose of the ruling Government. Media lost its neutral stand to speak the truth against all biases. Hence Indian media at present is considered as Godi – Media. It is a pejorative term coined and popularised by journalist Ravish Kumar for the sensationalist and biased TV news media channels, which supports the currently ruling BJP Government.

A subservient media is, in fact, a threat to the idea of India enshrined in the constitution. We need to evolve a counter social media platform to challenge the mainstream media that shamelessly and out rightly supports the present ruling government.

When media fails to be objective and impartial then there is a danger to the security, unity and wellbeing of the nation. At the root of all, there is an orchestrated, seemingly fascist, and aggressive move to impose the idea of Hindu *Rashtra* upon the nation replacing egalitarian and democratic spirit of the constitution. It is for this reason that the General Lok Sabha Elections 2024 should be seen more as an election to reaffirm our choice for democracy and constitutional principles than merely as one of choosing a government. The great challenge before us is inviting the people of India for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Independence of our country from the clutches of the *Hidutva* ideologues. We, therefore, cannot be ‘silent spectators’. We are called upon to stand up and make every effort to save the Democracy and to save the Constitution of India. To stand for Democracy and Constitution is to electorally defeat the agenda of *Hindu Rashtra* unleashed on our country by the RSS and BJP its political wing of the present ruling government at the Centre and in many other states.

## Not “Silent spectator”

This is not the time for us to remain as silent spectators. An ‘Ostrich-like approach’ will not help” the nation. We need to confront the danger and conquer our fears. We need to be vocal and visible at this moment. We need to use our ‘intellectual heft’, connections and resources to combat the all-pervading hate with Love, Peace and Reconciliation. So it would be good for us to take stock and see what has gone wrong, where and how.

We must accept that there is a great deal of fear among us. I am not totally wrong if I say that our actions are born of fear and not of convictions and truth. This fear keeps growing as we realize that the noose around our necks is tightening. There is a fear of speaking up because we think that it could result in the government unleashing its agencies upon us. If anyone criticizes or speaks not in favor of the ruling regime could be easily accused of treason and implicated under UAPA. Any moment the E D or I T can barge into our premises to initiate raids on the houses and properties of those who criticize and comment upon the present ruling Government. The members of minority communities especially those who stand for justice and truth and oppose human right violations are gripped with fear of unlawful arrest, incarceration and imprisonment. Many NGOs and people movements have the fear of losing their FCRA is strong as well. Fear has entered in our hearts, in our leadership, intellect and our



commitment. Many NGOs, media personnel and those individuals who lead people's movements are targeted and are considered working against the Government.

There is an ideological confusion and political illiteracy among the common people. We the members of the civil society have not developed political consciousness and political engagement in consistent with our life. Many of us have failed to participate fully in the civic-political processes and we have not understood the power of the ballot box and the importance of democracy and democratic institutions. Hence we have not taken elections and political empowerment seriously. There seems to be a lack of understanding of the dynamics between power and politics, a lack of knowledge regarding 'non-party politics' and being apolitical, which we are actually a part of. There is a way in which we can engage with the political parties and the bureaucracy in a non-party political format.

In the light of these fault lines:

We need to consider very seriously.....

- to look Fear in the Eye. "Fear feeds on itself," says Harsh Mander. In overcoming our fear by directly confronting it, we shall have rediscovered our convictions, leadership, commitment and our VOICE.
- to undertake an ongoing program to define and inculcate in us a political consciousness and political engagement that is consistent with our day-to-day life. First of all, we need to think political then only we can act political. Political engagement is exercising power for the common good of the people (Pope Francis).
- to engage with civil society and begin to co-operate, collaborate and network with them. There are any number of secular persons and groups willing to partner with and journey together. We should join hands with the secular groups in their creative initiatives.
- to speak up, resist and get involved. This has to happen soon and on a large scale. We need to engage in the politics and spirituality of 'active engagement' with the life of the nation. We must speak up whenever Justice is trampled upon. Injustice prevalent in anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.
- to cultivate Responsible Citizenship. There is a need to be responsible citizens by participating in the civic-political processes that includes taking part in the elections regularly but also trying to work for a robust electoral and constitutional democracy in our country. A part of this responsibility is to make sure that the electoral processes result in the victories of democratic candidates and parties.
- to build new capacities in us. Living in 'New India' as we see it unfolding before our eyes is going to be a huge challenge. There will be pressures on our way of life, our institutions and personnel. Litigation against us, false accusation, societal violence is bound to erupt amidst the climate of hate and suspicion. Fear and insecurities will increase. Hence, those holding positions of power for the common good of the people will have more problems on hand. They will have to manage their own fears and anxieties as well as of those in their care.

## Conclusion

When our Republic is being dismantled, we should be more and more engaged in as many ways as possible to halt its destruction. We are accountable to the present and future generations. We cannot afford to be silent spectators or, worse, be misled by people into believing that things are after all not so bad. Our spirituality spelt out as a 'Faith that does Justice', and our Mission of 'Peace and Reconciliation' should impel us to save our Republic. It is possible! another and a better world is possible...! 'We the people must be optimistic, never lose Hope. In doing this, as a first and important first steps, we must address the question of our stand/position and kind of participation in the upcoming General Lok Sabha Elections 2024.

## Our Task before us is....

- To look at why people are unable to be capable for a quality life.
- Who and what prevents them from having a quality life?
- What is my response to people at present in such condition?

We are left with our only choice that is to elect a party or an alliance that forms the Government at the Centre which is capable of saving the democracy and saving the fundamental principles enshrined in the Constitution of India.