

ALL INDIA INSURANCE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION
LIC BUILDING, SECRETARIAT ROAD, HYDERABAD 500 063
(E-mail: aiieahyd@gmail.com)

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To,

All the Zonal/Divisional/State/Regional Units

Dear Comrades,

REMEMBERING DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR ON HIS 129TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Today is the 129th Birth Anniversary of the great visionary Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The AIEA extends Revolutionary Greetings to all insurance employees and the people of India at large on this occasion. But for the COVID-19 pandemic induced lockdown, the entire country would be celebrating this event with much fanfare. In the words of Babasaheb, "Humans are mortal. So are Ideas. An idea needs propagation as much as a plant needs watering. Otherwise, both will wither and die." Today there is a mad competition to appropriate the ideas of Dr. Ambedkar. Forces quite inimical to him and his idea of India are in the forefront of that competition. Therefore, it is all the more necessary to place his life and work in the proper perspective by discussing his Ideas of India.

Dr. Ambedkar led an uncompromising struggle against untouchability and caste discrimination. He was the architect of the Indian constitution. The Preamble of the Constitution set out in brief the enlightened values it enshrined and hoped to engender. His idea of India was based on democracy, equality, liberty and fraternity. The framers of the Indian constitution under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar were of the view that India is a nation of nations with multiple religions, multiple languages and diverse cultures. Therefore, they felt that India could remain united only by recognising this plurality. It is with this understanding that the Constitution of India promised its citizens, "**Justice**-social, economic and political; **Equality** of status and of opportunity; **Freedom** of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship. The Constitution not only defined the fundamental rights of the citizens but also defined the Directive Principles of State Policy. The Directive Principles clearly laid down that the State shall endeavour to achieve social and economic welfare of the people by providing adequate means of livelihood for both men and women; reorganising the economic system in a way to avoid concentration of economic wealth in few hands; securing equal pay for equal work for both men and women; taking steps to secure participation of workers in the management of undertakings; promoting education and economic interests of working sections of the people especially the SC and ST communities. The Constitution of India drafted by Dr. Ambedkar thus not only aims to establish political democracy but also socio-economic justice to the people through the establishment of a welfare state.

Parliamentary Democracy was probably the biggest contribution of Dr. Ambedkar through the entire constitution making exercise. He was a strong advocate of the parliamentary form of government right from the inception of the Government of India Act of 1935. It is wrongly believed that India blindly followed the British Constitution when it adopted a parliamentary

form of democracy in 1950, with a Cabinet led by a Prime Minister. The truth is that the spirit of democracy was inculcated among the people by the freedom movement itself. The love for democracy found expression not only in the countless petitions and memoranda that were submitted to the colonial government but also in the wide participation of the masses in the national movement. Dr. Ambedkar could sense this and firmly believed that parliamentary democracy alone can usher in an egalitarian society through the application of the principle of social democracy. That is why before his appointment as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution he submitted a Memorandum to the Constituent Assembly in March 1947 and pleaded for parliamentary form of democracy. The democratic aspirations of the people and the suitability of parliamentary form of democracy thus found their loudest expression in the Preamble to the Constitution itself when it started with **“We the People of India.....”**

At a time when minority rights are under increasing attack and all sorts of canards are being spread against them, it is interesting to note that Ambedkar was for absolute rights of the minorities. He said: “Rights for minorities should be absolute rights. They should not be subject to any consideration as to what another party may like to do to minorities within its jurisdiction”. His stand on the issue makes it absolutely clear that secularism for him was a universal value and therefore there was no need for it to be specifically mentioned in the Constitution. Article 30 dealing with the protection of minorities can be said to be his brainchild.

The nature of Dr. Ambedkar’s social questioning on issues relating to women was as radical as in any other issue. He said- “I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved”. Ambedkar saw women as the victims of the oppressive, caste based and rigid hierarchical social system. Therefore, he advocated empowerment of women. He believed that women had to be moved from a position of ‘enforced powerlessness’ to one of ‘power’.

Dr. Ambedkar was also alive to the plight of workers. He viewed the pernicious caste system of India as “division of labourers” and not “division of labour”. He opined that the caste system was the basis of assigning occupations and not the other way round. According to him, in a caste ridden society there is no willingness on the part of an individual to do what is best suited to him. This leads to both immobility of labour and capital and hinders optimal utilization of resources. The Constitution of India has given the workers the fundamental right to form Unions and Associations under Article 19 (1) (C). The dignity of human labour and the need for protecting and safeguarding the interest of labour has been enshrined in Chapter III (Articles 16,19,23 and 24) and Chapter IV (Articles 39,41,42, 43, 43 A and 54) of the Constitution of India in keeping with the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy.

At a time when public sector in general and public sector insurance industry in particular is under increasing attack from our ruling classes, it is instructive to know that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had strong views on the insurance business. In a document presented to the

Constituent Assembly titled “Democratic State Revolution”, Dr. Ambedkar made a strong plea that ‘insurance should be nationalized and managed by the State’.

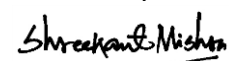
As the nation celebrates the 129th Birth Anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar, we see that the values that he espoused and held dear to his heart are under tremendous attack. There are clear strains on the parliamentary system of democracy with money power playing a big role in the formation of governments. There are also growing signs of authoritarianism where the ‘People’ are sought to be relegated to the background through the foregrounding of caste, communal and religious considerations. The ideals of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity were never threatened with as ferocious a vengeance as they are being done now. The Dalits, poor, marginalized, minorities and working people of India in general are in a state of shock because of the ascendancy of the corporate-communal alliance.

This is a time to bring the foundational principles of the Constitution into focus for national discussions and debate. The attack on the Constitution and all institutions set up to implement the values of the constitution are under attack. The Indian society was never so communalized and polarized as it is now. Politics has become a career rather than service to the people. It is unfortunate that when India along with the global population is fighting an unprecedented crisis due to COVID 19, there is a systematic attempt to stigmatise and marginalize the minority by those who control the levers of power today. Therefore, there is a great need for the working class to fight against these divisive forces to protect the unity and integrity of the country.

On the 129th Birth Anniversary of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, let the insurance employees pledge to protect the Constitution and its foundational principles and remain loyal to the ideals of this great visionary.

With Greetings,

Comradely Yours



General Secretary