



DELHI DECLARATION





"Justice has always evoked ideas of equality, of proportion, of compensation. Equity signifies equality. Rules and regulations, right and righteousness are concerned with equality in value. If all men are equal, then all men are of the same essence, and the common essence entitles them of the same fundamental rights and equal liberty... In short justice is another name of liberty, equality and fraternity"

B.R. Ambedkar

*We shall overcome and success will be ours in the future.
The future belongs to us. ...*

SAVITRIBAI PHULE

*Man is equal to man. There should not be exploitation.
One should help the other. No one should harm
anybody...Everyone should live and let others live, with a
national spirit.*

PERIYAR E. V. RAMASAMY

*True education signifies empowering others and leaving the
world a little better than the one we found.*

MAHATMA JYOTIRAO PHULE

PREAMBLE

Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar once argued that “a nation is not a people synthesised by a common culture derived from common language, common religion or common race...Nationality is a feeling of oneness which makes those who are charged with it feel they are kith and kin...It is a feeling of “consciousness of kind”...it is longing to belonging to one’s own group. This is the essence of what is called a nationality and national feeling”.

Giving shape to that vision, and stemming from their experiences of the freedom struggle, India's founders consistently strived to forge a “consciousness of kind”. They ensured that each one of us was accorded equal opportunities to live with dignity and security, to have equitable access to a better life, and is an equal partner in this nation’s growth. This has been the foundation of India’s rapid growth in the last 70 years.

If India is to continue to rise to ever greater heights in the next 70 years, we must further the promise of the nation to all Indians through creative policies and constructive politics. We can only do that by:

- Reasserting the fundamental principle of one person-one value;
- Reclaiming our freedom, dignity and human personality;
- Comprehensively addressing the needs and aspirations of all Indians, especially those who are most vulnerable and marginalised, such as Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Women and Minorities;
- Celebrating the fact that we are stronger together, and because of each other.
- Overcoming the divisive politics that attempt to pit caste against caste, class against class, and community against community.

Process of Drafting Declaration

To actualise the above mentioned goals, it was decided to seek recommendations to deepen and further the promise of India. Leveraging the platform provided by the National OBC Convention, held on the 26 of November, 2021, the Delhi Declaration is a compilation of recommendations received from consultations held with academics, activists and policymakers, from discussions held prior to the Convention. This Peoples’ Declaration hopes to be a dynamic blueprint that addresses the needs and aspirations of all Indians, and a starting point for an “alliance of equity” of all progressive forces committed to safeguarding the idea of India.

Recommendations

1. Caste Census:

a. Commitment to conducting a caste census: A caste census would be instrumental in revising the benchmark for socio-economic and educational backwardness. It would also give a scientific basis for the recommendations of union and state level backward caste commissions. Given the UPA government spearheaded the Socio-Economic Caste Survey in 2011, it would be expedient for all progressive parties to commit to the State conducting a caste census, so as to deepen India's social justice paradigm.

b. Publish data of 2011 Socio-Economic Caste Census Survey: Given the 2011 SECC survey already mapped socio-economic and educational backwardness, the State shall immediately publicise the data of the Socio-Economic and Caste Census undertaken in the urban and rural areas.

c. The caste census should enumerate data irrespective of religion. Given Articles 340 and 341 of India's Constitution do not mention religion, the State should not discriminate against historically discriminated against and backward communities even if they belong to other creeds.

2. Equal Opportunities Commission: Given widespread inequities which include underrepresentation of OBCs/ SCs/ STs, Women and Minorities in employment, the State should establish an Equal Opportunities Commission which should adopt creative strategies and policies to achieve equity in the public and private sectors. The Chairpersons of the National Commissions for Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Minorities shall be members of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

3. OBC/SC/ST Special Component: A national legislation to ensure that a portion of the budget in proportion of to the population of OBCs, SCs and STs to support schemes to bridge the gaps in development of OBCs, SCs and STs when compared to the rest of the society should be brought out by the central government. These funds should be directly and exclusively meant for the welfare of OBCs, SCs and STs, and not include generic expenditure.

4. Proportional representation (Jiski jitni sankha bhaari, utni uski hissedari): if the caste census shows that the SC/ST/OBC communities (including Muslim OBCs and Christians OBC) are more than the 50% limit imposed by the Supreme Court, the natural question arises on whether reservations ought to be increased (as states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh etc. have done). The State must establish a Commission to prepare a White Paper on this, which must be discussed in Parliament and appropriately implemented.

5. Deepening reservations in employment: Despite four revisions of the income criteria since 1997, vacancies meant for OBCs and SCs are not being filled up. The State should therefore-

a. Fill up Backlog Vacancies in Reserved Posts: Despite numerous administrative measures, backlog vacancies in government, universities and Public Sector Undertakings remain a pressing concern. The State must therefore mandatorily fill up all the backlog vacancies in reserved posts within a year and such a drive shall be repeated every year.

b. Roster system: Backlogs should be filled up in universities based on the completed roster, from 1997 onwards.

c. Permanent, not Contractual Employment: OBCs, SCs, and STs in the rural and urban local bodies employed under the contract system should be provided permanent employment, by abolishing the contract system. Furthermore, all steps should be taken to stop manual scavenging in any forms in a time bound manner.

d. More representative judiciary: To ensure that the judiciary is robust and reflective of the social diversity of India, reservations for SCs/STs/OBCs in the higher judiciaries must be institutionalised. Furthermore, as per the recommendation of the National Judicial Commission, an All India Judicial Services should be created with provisions of reservation for SCs/STs/OBCs/women/minorities.

e. More diverse media: The Press Council of India should strive to ensure greater diversity in media houses by promoting representation of OBCs, SCs, STs, Minorities and Women at all levels.

f. Reservations in promotions: the UPA government had tabled a bill on this (only for SC/ST posts), but was unable to pass this. It would be expedient to demand this for SC/ST/OBC posts. Therefore, the State shall amend the Constitution, if necessary, so as to ensure reservations in promotion for SCs/STs/OBCs in all government and semi-government sector.

6. Reservations in the Private Sector: To ensure diversity in all sectors, the State shall bring in a legislation guaranteeing reservations for OBCs, SCs and STs in the private organised sector. An alternative methodology that may be considered is the linking of tax breaks/subsidies to greater diversity of OBCs/SCs/STs/Women.

7. Equitable Access to Reservations: The State shall put in place an appropriate institutional mechanism to ensure all the sub-castes among OBCs, SCs & STs enjoy equal access to benefits of reservations. This debate has already been opened up by the 2020 decision (Davinder Singh vs State of Punjab) on sub-categorisation within the SC category.

8. Accelerated Development of OBC, SC, & ST Dominated Habitations: Like the Multi-Sectoral Development Programme, the State should ensure that every OBC, SC, and ST household should get access to basic civic amenities, including power supply, tap water, sanitation and connectivity within five years.

9. Education:

a. Reservations for OBCs, SCs and STs in Private Higher Educational Institutions: Considering the expansion of higher educational institutions in the private sector, reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs in private institutions shall be made mandatory. Special provisions shall be made for women.

b. English Medium Education to OBCs, SCs, STs, Women and Minorities: To ensure these communities are able to stand as equals with forward castes, the State shall ensure access to quality English medium education.

c. Navodaya Type Residential Schools for all Vulnerable Children: To uplift and empower through quality education, one Navodaya type of residential school from class six to class 12 should be instituted in every district, block and sub-block level for all vulnerable children.

d. Universal Access to Hostels for OBCs, SCs and STs: To empower and give flight to their aspirations, access to hostels should be universalised for all SC, ST and OBC students. Special provisions shall be made for women.

e. Ensuring study of Dr. Ambedkar, Mahatma Jyotirao & Savitribai Phule, EV Ramasamy Periyar in School and College Curriculum: To inspire and educate future generations on ideas and movements of social justice, curriculum in schools and colleges should mandatorily include the study of the life and work of Dr. Ambedkar, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule and EV Ramasamy Periyar.

f. Special scholarships for OBC/SC/ST students: to empower OBC, SC, ST students, special scholarships for their tuition should be re-instituted and expanded. Special provisions shall be made for women. Scholarships shall also be instituted for overseas higher education.

10. Economic Empowerment of OBCs, SCs and STs:

a. Boosting Entrepreneurship among OBC/SC/STs: The State shall ensure adequate special funds to boost entrepreneurship among the OBCs, SCs and STs to ensure they attain economic liberty. The State shall also reserve at least 10 per cent of Stakes/Shares in PSUs/Corporations/Companies, for OBCs/SCs/STs to enhance their participation in the economic activities of the State. For this, the State shall create a special corpus fund for OBCs/SCs/STs to buy these stakes/shares. Similar other mechanisms to increase representations of OBCs/SCs/STs in Governments financial institutions should also be ensured.

b. Agricultural Land for Landless OBCs and SCs: Landless OBCs and SCs should be provided with agricultural land as a legal entitlement and special support should be provided so that agriculture becomes an economically viable occupation including the provisions for minimum agricultural income for all people engaged in agriculture. Special legislation should be passed to this effect.

c. Comprehensive Reform of Caste Based Occupational Vocations: All caste based occupational vocations must be comprehensively reformed so that they are modernised, formalised and it is ensured that those entering the particular occupation are not representative of a particular caste or community. At the same time, through the above mentioned educational and employment recommendations, the State should liberate people from caste based occupational oppression.

d. Reservations in Procurement and Contracts: There should be reservations in procurement and contracts for up to 100 lakhs. This will benefit OBC, SC, ST and women entrepreneurs.

11. Political Empowerment of OBCs, SCs and STs:

a. Dedicated Ministry for OBC welfare: Given OBCs may well be above 56% of the population, a separate and dedicated ministry for the welfare of the OBCs shall be constituted.

b. Reservation within party posts for OBC, SCs, and STs: Not less than 33% of the posts shall be reserved in different party posts for OBCs, SCs and STs. Special provisions shall be made for women.

c. Reservations in legislatures for OBCs: To promote enhanced diversity and representation, a constitutional amendment institutionalising reservations for OBCs to assembly and parliament should be passed.

d. Reservations for women, including OBC, SC and ST women: To promote gender parity in assembly and parliament, a constitutional amendment for reservations for women with an appropriate provision for representation of SC, ST, and OBC women, should be passed.

CONCLUSION

India's founders consciously chose to create a society where each individual - irrespective of caste, gender, ethnicity, region, religion, income capacities or ideological inclination - was to be recognised, by both the State and by every other citizen, as possessor of equal value and inalienable dignity. They sought to ensure that every person had equal access to the promise of this nation. In the last 70 years the leaders of modern India have strived to ensure that every citizen - especially OBCs, SCs, STs, Women and Minorities - enjoyed equal rights and that no one gets left out, or held behind.

Regressive social and political forces have consistently resisted and tried to undermine both the constitutional idea of India and the efforts of the State in the last 75 years. These forces also seek to homogenise India and restore the principles of hierarchy, patriarchy and fundamentalism that Babasaheb Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jagjivan Ram, Maulana Azad and other founders rejected at the birth of the nation. Now that they enjoy State power, they are systematically dismantling the institutions that are the foundations of our society, by undermining India's holistic welfare and affirmative action architecture and by destroying the pluralistic fabric of our nation. This poses a grave threat to the idea of India espoused by the freedom movement and as spelt out in the Constitution.

We need to address these concerns urgently, and resist these attacks boldly. India needs to return to its noblest ideals, the spirit of its Constitution. It is time for the Indian people to recognise the constitutional path we chose 70 years ago and dedicate ourselves to protect and enhance this legacy. In this quest, the Delhi Declaration hopes that all progressive forces, collectively and across party lines, will adopt and implement these recommendations to fulfil Babasaheb Ambedkar's, Mahatma Phule's, Mahatma Gandhi's, Jawaharlal Nehru's, Thanthai Periyar's, Maulana Azad's, Maulana Aasim Bihari's, Abdul Qaiyum Ansari's and Savitribai Phule's shared dream of an equitable, just and egalitarian society.

ABOUT SAMRUDDHA BHARAT FOUNDATION

THE SAMRUDDHA BHARAT FOUNDATION (SBF) WORKS TO RESHAPE INDIA'S SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE BY ENCOURAGING A TRANSFORMATIVE SPIRIT IN SOCIETY AND POLITICS. THROUGH THIS, SBF HOPES TO TRANSFORM INDIA INTO A COSMOPOLITAN AND PLURAL BEACON OF DEMOCRACY. THAT IS WHY SBF WORKS WITH INDIA'S FOREMOST ACADEMICS, ACTIVISTS, PROFESSIONALS, DIASPORA AND POLICY MAKERS ACROSS PARTY LINES TO



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"My final words of advice to you are educate, agitate and organize; have faith in yourself. With justice on our side, I do not see how we can lose our battle. The battle to me is a matter of joy. The battle is in the fullest sense spiritual. There is nothing material or social in it. For ours is a battle, not for wealth or for power. It is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of human personality"

B.R. Ambedkar



FURTHERING
INDIA'S PROMISE