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Labour Rights under Constitutional Law and their Influence on Industrial Relations

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ABSTRACT

One of the basic purposes of the labor right building is the provision of a minimum standard of living to the workers and to set them free from exploitation and inequality, and to shine light on social justice. Both shielding workers from the excessive exploitation and sharing with them the national wealth and social activities are the two equally important elements in the role of these mechanisms. The constitution of India ensures the safeguarding of labor rights through a two-tiered system constituted of the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of the State.

The establishment of labour rights is a means of enhancing the dignity and well-being of all the acts of cooperation of the worker population and hence their inclusion in the social scheme of justice. Additionally these rights shelter the workers from exploitation and help them to be equally involved in the economic activities of the communities. The two forms of worker protection, which are the enforceable Fundamental Rights, and the non-binding State Policy Directions, were established in the constitution which has influenced labor laws and industrial relations tremendously.

The main discussion of this article is the constitutional tenets dealing with labour rights and their direct and indirect impacts on industrial relations through collective bargaining, dispute settlement, and others. The main focus of the paper is on the dynamic concept of labour rights and the way they are regulated under globalization. The legislative coverage of informal employment as shown through a lack of regulation of labor laws, weakening of trade unions as well as non-implementation of labor laws is the last issue being examined in this text. The paper also presents measures on a neutral, constitutionally based position on industrial relations with a primary concern on the welfare of the worker and the growth of the economy.

Keywords: *Labour Rights; Indian Constitution; Social Justice; Industrial Relations; Worker Exploitation.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Labour rights are fundamental to a fair, just, and humane industrial system and the working population. Equally important to the economic aspect are the human rights connections among the social labor force. They consist of dignity of social recognition, individual freedom, and partake of human development. Labor rights are required for the equilibrium of economic progress and social justice to remain intact, particularly looking at countries like India with a large and heterogeneous population that directly bases daily living on wage-related jobs. It should be noted that labor rights are regulated by laws and the right to a fair contract, safe working conditions, fair treatment, the right to join unions, and the mechanisms for lodging complaints are the core elements of them.

Indian law bestows both constitutional and moral status on these rights. The workers' exploitation and marginalization in society during the colonial rule were the conditions that were rectified in the Constitution of India. The builders of the Constitution knew very well the social, economic, and political conditions during the colonial days and they decided to come up with a constitution that was going to deal with all those that had been going to laborers before. The Constitution clearly mentioned that social and economic justice should prevail through the Preamble, Fundamental Rights (Part III), and Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV) which are foundational to the concept of labor rights.

Following India's independence in 1947, the country moved into planned economic development, which required industrial development and a permanent labour force. Industrialization led to increased economic inequalities, the advent of large scale factory economies, the exploitation of informal sector workers, and increasing industrial unrest. In these circumstances protecting worker rights and having stable industrial relations became paramount for national development. The Constitution provided a means not only of expressing sovereignty, but of transforming society by mediating between the imperatives of economic development and the larger principles of equality, justice and dignity in labour. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries globalization, and the gig economy, led to fundamental changes in the structure of work and employment, while the decline of trade unions and increasing informalisation of labour produced tensions in industrial relations. Amid this rapidly changing and at times unstable context, constitutional principles that defined worker rights have continued to provide an ethical framework for legislators and institutions, regulate the complexities of the employer-employee relationship, establish a framework for arbitrating industrial disputes, and preserving the rights of workers to associate and engage in collective

bargaining

This research study, then, aims to present an analytic and thorough understanding of the effect constitutional law has had on the state of labor rights in India. It is going to examine the trajectory of the development of these rights, their incorporation in domestic legislation, the role of the courts in interpreting them, as well as their immediate implications for workers and industrial relations. Particular focus will be given to processes like bargaining negotiations, resolution of industrial disputes and tripartite social dialogue, all of which are the prerequisites for industrial harmony and protection of worker rights. This study is linked to the Constitution to be able to provide the analysis of the basis of law, which is the reality of supportable, sustainable, and just work practices in modern India.

II. CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS OF LABOUR RIGHTS IN INDIA

The Indian Constitution presents a strong, multifaceted framework for the safeguarding and advancement of labour rights, combining legally enforceable obligations with fundamental moral principles. This framework is contained primarily in two important sections of the Constitution: the Fundamental Rights (Part III) and the predominant notions contained in the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs) (part IV). Together, these two elements represent the constitutional vision for constructing a more just, fair, and equitable society, where the dignity of labour is formally recognized and protected⁴. Article 19(1)(c) embodies one of the most critical constitutional protections to labour rights, which states that "all citizens shall have the right...to form associations or unions." This is one of the two fundamental rights from which unionism in India derives both its legal and moral foundations as collective worker organization rights. This moral and legal right prescribes workers to collectively organize and form trade unions, to negotiate collectively for wages and safe working conditions, and to exercise the right to protest against exploitation. In a country with immense income disparity and a large informal working sector, this right is of particular importance in enabling collective strength and power to negotiate pay equity and better working conditions for labourers, particularly in marginalized and unorganized sectors.

Article 14 is equally important. It guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws. Article 14 simply bars discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, place of birth, or other considerations including economic status. In the workplace, it preserves for every worker the right to equal treatment and equal opportunity, by overturning historical structures of exclusion and bias particularly against women, Dalits, and migrant workers. Equally powerful is Article

⁴ <https://thelegalschool.in/blog/difference-between-fundamental-rights-and-dpsp>

21, the right to life and personal liberty. The Indian judiciary has broadly interpreted Article 21 to encompass socio-economic rights integral to living a life with dignity. It has similarly affirmed that the right to life does not mean an assurance to merely live as an animal, but instead to live with dignity, which includes the right to fair wages, humane hours of work, safe and healthy working environments, rest, and leisure. The Supreme Court has made it clear in many cases that forced work, underpayment, or hazards in working conditions that lead to the loss of human dignity violate Article 21⁵.

Besides the rights that can be enforced, the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs) are moral, constitutional guidelines for the state to formulate policies and laws that protect the welfare of labour. Although these principles are not justiciable before courts, they are indicators of the socio-economic aspirations of the Indian state, constitutional morality, and public policy directions. For example, Article 39 provides that the operation of the economic system should not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production in few hands. It is one of the guiding principles for labour law in ensuring absolutist wages, wealth redistribution, and inclusive development.

Article 41 of the Indian Constitution directs the state to ensure the right to work, education, and assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness, and disablement. This provision deals with social security in its wider context and also gives a green signal to the law that sanctions unemployment pay and it offers rehab programs to displaced workers. Article 42 necessitates the state to take measures to ensure reasonable working conditions and maternity protection. This has been expressed as statutory laws such as the Factories Act, the Maternity Benefit Act, and many other clauses guaranteeing the safety and health of workplaces. Article 42 concedes the need to make a happy balance between productivity and the health, safety and the family responsibilities of workers. Article 43 states that the state shall endeavor by the way of suitable legislative or economic organization to secure to each worker not only a living wage but also a decent standard of living. This theory involves much more than just supplying mere sustenance wages and it therefore enables the labor force to live in dignity having received the necessary proper food, housing, and a cultural and recreational programme⁶.

The importance of worker involvement in industrial governance was additionally strengthened by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1976, which added Article 43A. Under the

⁵ <http://student.manupatra.com/academic/abk/constitutional-law-of-india/CHAPTER-7.htm>

⁶ <https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-41-right-to-work-to-education-and-to-public-assistance-in-certain-cases/#:~:text=Article%2041%2C%20Constitution%20of%20India,other%20cases%20of%20undeserved%20want.>

Constitution of India, Article 43A directs "the State to take steps, by suitable legislation or in any other way, to secure the participation of workers in the management of industries." It acknowledges that workers are not simply wage earners, but are stakeholders in the industrial process, deserving of institutional representation of their voice and their interests in the decision-making process. Although the DPSPs confer no rights which could be enforceable as a matter of law, they play an important role in formulating labour jurisprudence, meaning legislative intent in labour law, and guiding interpretation by the court. In this regard, courts often may interpret Fundamental Rights in conjunction with the DPSPs to further socio-economic justice, bridging the gap between enforceability and aspirational governance. For example, the right to minimum wages, humane working conditions and maternity benefits, though initially originating from DPSPs, have since become codified enforceable and statutory laws as a result of the interaction between the Constitution of India and the DPSPs⁷.

III. LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS INFLUENCED BY CONSTITUTIONAL LABOUR RIGHTS

The labour law framework in India has been greatly influenced by the Indian Constitution. The vision of providing social justice, equality, and dignity to labour that is enshrined in its Articles has been a guiding force behind many legislative interventions. These laws are intended not only to protect workers' rights, but also to provide for industrial peace and economic efficiency.

1. Industrial Disputes Act, 1947: Promoting Industrial Peace

The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 is one of the first and most important legislations on labour law developed by constitutional principles. While the Industrial Disputes Act was introduced before the Constitution was enacted, its significance acquired constitutional credence post-1950. The Act establishes ways to conciliate, arbitrate, and adjudicate industrial disputes and provides protections against arbitrary dismissal for workers. It gives material effects to Article 19(1)(c) of the Constitution supporting trade unionism and collective bargaining, which are necessary for fair and democratic labour relations.

2. Factories Act, 1948: Ensuring Workplace Safety and Welfare

The Factories Act of 1948 is also an important piece of legislation connected to Article 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) and Article 42 (just and humane conditions of work). This statute regulates working conditions in factories, covering aspects such as cleanliness,

⁷<https://www.scribd.com/document/789579488/Steel-Authority-of-India-Ltd-and-Ors-vs-National-Us000515COM235755-2>

ventilation, waste disposal, drinking water, safety machinery, working hours, and employment of women and children. Protecting human dignity and safe work environments is, thus, a constitutional commitment.

3. Minimum Wages and Wage Protection Laws

The Minimum Wages Act of 1948 embodies the essence of the mandate of Article 43, that is, timely payment of wages for all workers that leave a sizable component of their wage for a reasonable standard of living. The Minimum Wages Act specifically provides for the fixing and revising of minimum wages across sectors, for the very purpose of making sure that workers are not dispensed a wage below the subsistence level. The Payment of Wages Act of 1936 enforces timely payment of wages to workers without making any unauthorized deductions, while the Payment of Gratuity Act of 1972 provides for money upon an employee's retirement, again reinforcing the theme of economic justice that is indicated in Articles 38 and 39⁸.

4. Labour Code Reforms: Towards Simplification and Universality

In the past few years, Government of India has taken steps to modernize and simplify the labour law framework by consolidating many laws into four main Labour Codes. The Code on Wages, 2019 is of particular interest to us, as it combines four law relating to wages, including the Minimum Wages Act and the Equal Remuneration Act. The objective of the Code is to provide universal coverage for a minimum wage while ensuring that regional disparities based on wages were removed and that like work would result in like pay. In short, it endeavours to re-establish the principles within Articles 14 and 15.

5. Social Security Legislations: Protecting Worker Welfare

The idea of a welfare state is enshrined in the Constitution of India. The Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, and the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948, provide financial protection on the occurrence of retirement, sickness, disability, or death. These laws are in keeping with Article 21 (the right to life with dignity) of the Constitution as well as Article 41, which calls for state assistance in cases of unemployment and sickness⁹.

IV. GENDER JUSTICE IN LABOUR LAWS

In India, labour rights have been influenced by the constitutional mandate for gender equality. The Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 provides for paid maternity leave and guarantees employment protection during pregnancy. This law gives effect to Article 42 of the Constitution

⁸<https://clc.gov.in/clc/sites/default/files/MinimumWagesact.pdf>

⁹ <https://labour.gov.in/general-overview>

of India. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 was enacted as, and built on, judicial interpretations of Articles 14, 15 and 21 and guarantees that women working in India have safe, harassment free, working environment. Both of these statutes underscore the gender sensitive nature of constitutional labour rights¹⁰.

(A) Challenges in Implementation

The Constitution-crafted progressive legal system faces challenges in executing labor laws consistently. Informal employment rates combined with inadequate labor inspections and lengthy dispute resolution processes severely undermine these laws' effectiveness. Trade unions and labor activists express concern that the latest reforms aim to diminish worker protections to promote business interests. The Constitution's foundational principles serve as guiding beacons that influence both judicial rulings and policy alterations.

(B) Role of Judiciary in Expanding Labour Rights

The Indian judiciary emerged as a crucial protector and promoter of labor rights whenever legislative approaches stalled or executive actions failed. Through expansive and forward-thinking interpretations of constitutional provisions the judiciary has transformed labor rights from abstract concepts into enforceable legal claims. The courts as guardians of constitutional values often used Articles 14, 21, 23 together with Directive Principles to strengthen protections for workers and ensure justice for marginalized labor groups.

V. JUDICIAL RECOGNITION OF EXPLOITATIVE LABOUR AS A VIOLATION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

In *Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India* (1984)¹¹ the Supreme Court tackled the issue of bonded laborers suffering under harsh and degrading conditions and delivered one of the major judgments in this domain. The Court found these exploitative practices to violate Articles 21 and 23 of the Constitution which protect the right to life and personal liberty as well as the prohibition of forced labor. The court clarified that living with dignity requires both protection from economic exploitation and physical abuse. The case initiated a fundamental change in labor jurisprudence by shifting from narrow legalistic interpretations to a broader human rights approach.

¹⁰<https://www.mondaq.com/india/employee-rights-labour-relations/1402854/rights-of-working-mothers-under-maternity-benefits-act-1961>

¹¹ <https://www.alec.co.in/judgement-page/bandhua-mukti-morcha-v-union-of-india-air-1984-sc-802>

1. Minimum Wages and Forced Labour: Expanding Article 23

In *People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India* (1982), the Supreme Court established that withholding minimum wages constitutes forced labor and thus falls under Article 23. A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) focused on the mistreatment of contract workers during the construction of the 1982 Asian Games in Delhi served as the central issue in this case. The Court declared that labor extracted from the economy without minimum wage payment qualifies as unconstitutional forced labor. This case played a major role in securing rights for unorganized sector workers who typically lack formal legal protections.

2. Livelihood as a Constitutional Right: Olga Tellis Case

In 1985, the *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation*¹² case was a real eye-opener on how essential jobs are for a person's dignity. The highest court in the country adjudged that engaging in any work or business, trade or profession is a significant aspect of the right to life embedded in the provisions of Article 21 of our constitution. Though the case was fought over the eviction of some street dwellers, it cast light on a whole different matter. The Court emphasized that money is the only source of life and then any activity that has an impact on one's income should therefore be regulated to the firm and the law. With this judgment, the ball was set rolling for the recognition of the workers' rights and Article 21 was extended to embrace more social and economic issues.

3. Judiciary as a Catalyst for Labour Justice

India's labor rights jurisprudence has been shaped by the judiciary that has been the driving force behind many landmark decisions, recognizing the established rights and also, the new facets of justice, particularly in view of the changing socioeconomic conditions. In countless cases, the courts' decisions have impelled the legislature to take action, thereby leading to the formulation or fortification of labor laws. For example, the judiciary's concern over exploitation and unsafe working conditions has resulted in the improvement of inspection systems, the creation of more legally binding contracts for workers doing construction work and migrant laborers, and the strengthening of the regulations for occupational safety. More also the judiciary has been proactive in cases involving sexual harassment, child labor, and unsafe construction practices, thus strengthening the connection between fundamental rights.

4. Bridging Gaps in State Mechanisms

¹²<https://blog-iacl-aicd.org/new-blog-3/2022/6/17/olga-tellis-v-bombay-municipal-corporation-the-supreme-court-of-india-the-right-to-housing-and-the-interconnectedness-of-rights-jtgl8>

The courts are now taking a leading role in the legislature of a country that is frequently overcrowded or ineffective by the administrative mechanisms in both the rural and the informal sector. By suo motu cognizance, Public Interest Litigations (PILs), and the progressive interpretation, the courts have stood up against exploitative practices and have been a voice for the voiceless. The role they play becomes more profound in cases where the state may be involved in the violation of worker rights by policy lapses or neglect.

5. Influence on Industrial Relations in India

The Indian Constitution has significantly changed the balance and the way labor relationships are built and conducted in the country. Respect for social rights, through the Chapter on Fundamental Rights and the Principle of the Directive which both provide a firm basis for just and inclusive industrial regulation, is the key.

VI. EMPOWERMENT OF TRADE UNIONS THROUGH CONSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY

The provision of the Constitution, which recognizes and protects trade unions in Article 19(1)(c), which also allows the freedom of assembly and formation of associations and unions with others, is one of the most prevalent and direct influences on industrial relations. This constitutional right has empowered labor to collectively engage in wage negotiations and by doing so has provided workers with a platform to reconstruct their voices, negotiate fair wages, upgrading working conditions, a tool to resolve the grievances, among others.

(A) Institutional Mechanisms for Dispute Resolution

Problems in law like Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, lead to the enactment of labor courts, industrial tribunals, conciliation officers, as well as arbitration boards which are in place for that one purpose. They are mediators between employers having problems with workers and employees that would rather go on strike or lockout and consequently harm the public condition and economic processes¹³.

Establishing relations in the industry by providing private negotiation and dealing with the procedures on personal terms within the law's requirements in order to achieve a fair and proper result, securing an efficacious human interaction on employee-management terms. The procedures are reliable as they can accommodate workers with problems like unfair dismissals or with a situation of reinstatement or claim of unpaid dues. This is done by reflecting the constitutional principles of equality, non-discrimination, and access to justice.

¹³<https://viamediationcentre.org/readnews/NDQ5/Settlement-of-Industrial-dispute-through-Arbitration-and-Conciliation>

(B) Promotion of Participatory Governance in Industry

Article 43A was inserted into the Constitution in 1976 via the 42nd Constitutional Amendment and it is another major way in which it deals with the labor relations. With the respect to the clause, this is achieved by allowing the workers to take part in the management of the industry which in turn makes this clause to prefer a cooperative model to a strictly hierarchical one. Although it is part of the Directive Principles and not legally binding, it has operated as a moral and policy guide for both public and private enterprises. A lot of large public sector entities and companies have amended and implemented grievance redressal mechanisms, jmc councils, and works committees where workers can take part in the decision that affect their well-being. Although they have a quite limited range, the application of these consultative bodies has reduced the number of industrial unrests due to the trust and communication practices in a number of organizations.

(C) Balancing Labour and Capital through Constitutional Values

The function of industrial relations is that it should maintain a balance with respect to the interests of capital and labor. The state ought to protect the basic rights of workers, ensuring dignity as human beings and at the same time create a conducive atmosphere for economic growth and investor confidence. The Constitution includes the respect of the individual's right to choose any profession to secure his livelihood, as well as the right of workers to come together to get protection (Article 19(1)(c), Article 21, Article 23) which, hence, brings out this equilibrium.

Because of this dichotomy, industrial relations has developed into a negotiated arena where basic human rights are upheld while productivity and profitability are sought.

(D) Current Challenges in Constitutionally Guided Industrial Relations

Still, under the constitutional structure, the industrial relations of India find themselves still walking through lots of hurdles. The direct implementation of labor rights suffered from the enlarging of informal labor, the appearance of gig work on platforms, and the weakening of trade union structures. At the same time, other dynamic changes such as the labor codes, posing as the tool of compliance, are serious worries about the reduction of collective bargaining and dispute resolution procedures.

Furthermore, now the industries too have a two-tier system of permanent and temporary or casual workers. It's where those who have firm ground to stand on are the permanent workers, and those left vulnerable most of the time are the casual or the temporary workers as they are the ones that get affected by the problems of contractualization and outsourcing. As a result,

revamping the constitutional directive through reinterpreting and reenergizing is the way to cope with the new complexities and to secure solid industrial peace for all the stakeholders.

VII. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND GAPS IN REALIZING LABOUR RIGHTS

(A) Growth of Informal Sector and Exclusion from Legal Protections

Employment, which provides a job to almost 90% of the population, is the dominant part of the Indian economy and one of the biggest problems in the country. The majority of the employees are in industries that are not regulated. These workers do not have official contracts, social security, medical insurance or other facilities necessary for the resolution of conflicts. Although it constitutes a major part of the workforce, these workers are still mainly outside the realm of the labor laws, which the Constitution wishes to achieve its objectives of social justice (Preamble and DPSPs), equality (Article 14), and dignity (Article 21).

Stubbornly allowing social inequality to persist in the society, which violates the very provision of Article 39 of the Constitution that calls for equitable distribution of the wealth and Article 41 granting the right of employment and public assistance for all, is one reason behind the sufferings faced by the unorganized workers.

(B) Precarity in Gig Economy and Contractual Labour

The increase of the new challenge is another virtual work and gig economy platforms which include Swiggy, Uber, Zomato, and others. These categories of work are tech-driven and flexible but on a grey ground of legality, as they often operate in a legal grey zone, where workers are classified as "partners" or "independent contractors" rather than employees. This deliberate misclassification allows companies to bypass obligations under labour laws, effectively denying workers their constitutional rights to minimum wages, health benefits, job security, and collective bargaining.

On the one hand, Article 23 prohibits forced labour, and on the other hand, Article 21 guarantees the right to livelihood, yet gig workers frequently are in situations where their livelihood is a product of the algorithmic management, long hours, and performance-based incentives with no protection or representation. These trends have pulverized the essence of the constitutional guarantees against the background of the labor market's rapid transformation¹⁴.

(C) Persistent Gender Inequality and Workplace Discrimination

¹⁴<https://www.scobserver.in/cases/gig-workers-access-to-social-security-the-indian-federation-of-app-based-transport-workers-ifat-v-union-of-india/>

Gender inequality in the Indian workforce persists even though the humane working conditions and the constitutional exceptions for maternity relief under Article 42, as well as the equal opportunities guarantees under Articles 15 and 16, were granted on their own.

Presination of laws like the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2013 and the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 does not mean that their enforcement is done in uniformity. Getting the gender constitutional rights in the labour market is not a complete process now because of the untraceable nature of the women's job and the not having a safety umbrella.

(D) Continuing Child Labour and Bonded Labour Practices

Throughout the whole country, these abusive practices are still flaunted by a number of companies, among others in the mining, construction, textile, and agricultural industries, and this happens despite the permission given by the constitution to use child labor (Article 24) and bonded laborers (Article 23). Still, unfortunate to say, these illegal practices of child labor and bonded labor are still the order of the day mostly in rural and deprived localities, people have no jobs, are uneducated, and are lazy law enforcers so the situation is bad and involves corruption.

The times when judges overcame all the boundaries and punished the wrongdoers are also the times when there was some relief of the suffering of millions. Solid steps depend on both sides thus, the focus should not be just on making laws but also on the concrete actions of the implementers. There have been gaps in the systematic application of the constitution thus, there is a need for the implementation of more strict and labor law, higher rehabilitation, and better surveillance.

(E) Labour Law Reforms and Concerns of Dilution

The labor law reform process post-2020, a distinctive initiative in India, came out of the combination of 29 central labor laws into four comprehensive labor codes such as the Code on Wages, the Industrial Relations Code, the Social Security Code, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code. Hence, it has been one of the most contentious topics in recent years. Critics contend that the reforms disproportionately benefit employers at the expense of worker protections, despite the codes' stated goals of formalizing the workforce, making compliance easier, and simplifying the process¹⁵.

Moreover, the codes bring forth other complaints, including restrictions on access to dispute resolution forums, an increase in the threshold for layoffs and retrenchments without

¹⁵ <https://kpmg.com/in/en/blogs/2024/05/labour-codes-accelerating-indias-labour-law-revolution.html>

government permission, and a decrease in unionization rights. Such changes may be against the principles of social justice, employee participation (Article 43A), and exploitation protection.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The Indian Constitution is a great example of the principles of justice, equality, and human dignity. Labor rights that are the basis of an ethical industry provide a bridge to these lofty aspirations. The law's constitutional matrix makes the cause not only a matter of law but also a moral concept of the protection of labor, with the freedom of association as per 19(1)(c) as far as the right to life in 21 is concerned. More so, though they have no teeth, the Directive Principles of State Policy are still vital instruments for guiding legislative and policy actions that are aimed at making sure of social justice.

From the Industrial Disputes Act to the Maternity Benefit Act, the array of labor laws extended and adjusted to include constitutional norms has been the evolution of labor law in India. The law has been pivotal in the way of labor relations by fostering social dialogue, dispute resolution modes and workers' role in management. Through its advancements, the judiciary has not only made restrictions but developed the constitutional safeguards to bonded labour, unorganised sectors, and even gig economy workers to some extent.

Nevertheless, in spite of a strong legislative base and constitution, the labor market in India is still surrounded by numerous difficulties. The gap between the provisions of the Constitution and the actual scenarios is growing because of the informalization of work, gender disparity, manipulation in modern employment models, and concerns of rights dilution by the recent labor code reforms. The constitutional intent is under serious threat due to the exclusion of certain groups—women, contract workers, and informal workers—from the full range of labor rights.

For this reason, humane, respectful labor relations can be realised by the trade union, the employers, the judiciary and the political staff. Labor rights should not be regarded as the obstacles to economic growth but as an essential part of human dignity and sustainable development. Indian industrial relations should be premised on the constitutional pledge of justice for all employees, whether formal or informal, male or female, permanent or contractual rather than mere compliance.
