The Indian Republic is, was, and will be in crisis. And perhaps the biggest issue that dogs the Republic is social and economic inequality. Seventy years of electioneering has not solved the problem. Successive governments and civil society groups have failed to address the issue of inequality. The social and economic inequalities manifest in the form of routinized violence and discrimination in everyday life for the marginalized and minoritized communities. The crisis will only deepen in the future if these inequalities remain unaddressed.

The routinized violence and discrimination against the marginalized and minoritized communities are not new; it is a way of life since the establishment of the Indian Republic. Ever since its founding, the Indian Republic has been unable to stop the discrimination and atrocities committed against its marginalized and minoritized communities. The most recent and shocking revelations of the death of Dr. Payal Tadvi, a resident doctor at a hospital in Bombay, exposes yet again the casteist way of life in India. Barely three years after the institutional murder of Hyderabad Central University scholar Rohith Vemula, Dr. Tadvi's institutional murder (now suspected to be cold-blooded murder) is déjà vu for those familiar with the discrimination, harassment, and violence against marginalized and minoritized communities.

The recent deaths contradict the democratic vision enshrined in the constitution of India. The routine violence and harassment fly in the face of political grandstanding about the greatness of Indian culture and its ability to harmoniously bond the various communities now and in the future. Fractures of caste and religion are often used—especially during elections—to polarize and scapegoat many marginalized communities. The result of almost seven decades of polarization, scapegoating, and a deepening of casteism is the spread of Hindu majoritarianism. Any attempts at realizing democracy and equality in India have to confront the juggernaut of religious majoritarianism—whether under the guise of secularism or a theocratic ideology.

The Indian Republic, emerging after the transfer of power from the British Raj, faced a crisis in the sharing of power with marginalized caste and minoritized religious groups. The elite Hindu groups, who controlled politics after the departure of the British, kept most of the power for themselves and their kin, while there were thousands of religious and caste communities, socially subordinated to the Hindu upper-castes, who expected to share power and influence in a new Republic. In such a scenario, the elite groups of the country, mostly Hindu, nurtured a political illusion of equal rights for all, while they maintained their hegemony. In other words, the Indian polity was actually based not on equality but

clientelism. Most of the marginalized caste and religious communities have to play second fiddle to one or more upper-caste Hindu communities.

The contradictory nature of the Indian Republic whereby the elites sought (and seek) to hold on to power while employing a language of liberalism, secularism, and democracy obstructed any meaningful changes in terms of social justice. The culture of the new Republic too was overwhelmingly upper-caste Hindu. Thus, communities which did not emerge out of an upper-caste Hindu location had to change their culture to make it compatible with Hindu, or euphemistically, Indian cultural forms. The public culture in the new Republic was also marked by those cultural forms deemed appropriate by Hindu culture in terms of food, drink, and dress.

With their hold on power, elite Hindus (as well as non-Hindu elites), ensure that insignificant social and economic mobility for marginalized caste and religious communities. True, the constitution of India provides many safeguards against oppression and promotes affirmative action, but the push-back from the elite sections has resulted in the dilution of the progressive vision of the constitution. In publicly-funded universities and government employ, persons such as Tadvi and Vemula face constant and vicious harassment. It is not an exaggeration to say that persons from marginalized castes and minority religions are often unwelcome in the public institutions of the Indian Republic.

The problem of an equal, or at least a fair, sharing of power has dogged the Republic since the beginning. If one thinks about politics—and not just elections alone—in the Indian Republic, the elites shared power only on limited occasions. They have done so begrudgingly if at all power has been shared in the first place. One could think of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission and the deep-seated resentment that many elites in the country feel even today, as an example. The resulting concentration of power within the hands of a few is the cause of the continued crisis facing the Republic.

The crisis that confronts the Indian Republic is an old one: How to eradicate the deep-seated inequalities to build a community that looks after its own and nurtures its citizenry to its full potential? It is this question that most public intellectuals do not confront. Of late, there is the talk of the fundamental ethos of the Indian Republic being in danger. There is no doubt that it *is* in danger. However, one must bear in mind that the progressive ethos of the Republic has always been in danger. There has always been strong opposition to any progressive politics that goes beyond just words, that actually empowers the weak and shares power with the downtrodden.

The way out of the crisis of inequality, violence, and minoritization is to recognize that chest-thumping nationalism—of any shade—only diverts attention from the real issues. It allows

those in power to engage in further polarizing the polity and permit the wholesale diversion of resources to crony capitalists from those who need them the most.

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