

Is right wing ideology (of India) more anti-constitutional than left wing ideology ?

August 28, 2020

Constitution of India provides enough space for individuals and political organisations to present and promote their own ideologies and world views. In this regard, our constitution being a liberal and organic document lays the foundation for all ideologies to grow upon it. But like all other constitutions, our constitution also lays down some ground rules for the game of politics. Every ideology and political establishment should follow these base rules in promoting their own world view.

Being unconstitutional is undermining these basic rules. And in my opinion, both Left and Right ideologies and ideologues at some juncture have questioned these basic rules of the game. Some examples of the same anti-constitutional behaviour are Naxalism on the Left ideological front and religion-based politics on the right ideological front. Though differing in their approach, intensity and impact both of these ideologies have battered the basic rules of the constitution.

But at the same time, we see examples of brilliant leaders like Jawahar Lal Nehru from the left and Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the Right who have upheld the principles and the base rules of our constitution with great conviction. So if we have a look at it now it feels like both ideologies have the good and the bad in them. But here I don't want to stop at the good, the bad but I also want to speak of the Ugly.

Now I will rise one more question in my answer. If both

ideologies are unconstitutional at one or the other point which ideology did more harm to our constitution?

The answer to this question needs a deeper peek into the Indian political scenario and Indian History. First I will have a look at the fallacies of the left as left battering is the standard model of criticism today. As pointed out earlier in my answer Naxalism is the worst form of left critique of our constitution. It is a rather violent form of undermining the Indian constitution. But if we have a deeper pondering at the basis of the movement and try to look at the questions that Naxalism as a movement has risen up we see that ends for which our constitution has stood for and the broader vision of Naxalism which is a benevolent society for the most vulnerable of us are surprisingly similar. This is the reason why NT Rama Rao the EX Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh had said that Naxals are the first Public servants of India. But in the means that Naxals use and the demonic incentive to keep the tribal areas underdeveloped for the movement to survive are a mockery of our constitution.

But even moderate left during the time of Indira Gandhi and her infamous emergency has undermined our constitution. It has distorted and questioned the very essence of our free liberal democratic institutions. But we have to always remember that the Imposition of Emergency itself is a constitutional act the provisions for emergency were well laid in the constitution. By saying this I am not trying to whitewash the tainted image of the Indian National Congress or Indira Gandhi. The Emergency is definitely a measure which has undermined the Indian Constitution. But we have to remember that Emergency led to the Electoral debacle of Indira Gandhi. The 44th constitutional amendment and the Supreme Court brought back the authority of the constitution.

Now we will shift our gaze towards the Right. Right-wing Ideology of India had a minimalistic role in the Independence movement of India. As a natural outcome, it did not play any

major role in the formulation of our constitution. Our constitution from the time of its enactment exuded a Liberal Left Ideology and the long span of Jawaharlal Nehru as our first prime minister has made Indian Constitutionalism tilt heavily towards the left. Right-wing and BJP has emerged as a political establishment by questioning some of the basic elements of this Constitutionalism(refer wiki for definition) particularly the doctrines of Secularism. Secularism as it is preached and practised post-Jawahar Lal Nehru has diverted from the true constitutional ideal of Principled Equidistance and took the form of Appeasement for Electoral advantage by Indian National Congress.

But BJP and right-wing political parties who challenged this distorted version of Secularism did not restore it to the correct Constitutional balance. What they did is that they pushed the envelope in the other more unconstitutional direction of questioning the very foundational value of our constitution that is secularism. They through their covert and overt means and methods are trying to replace Secularism with Majoritarianism. As with appeasement for INC, even majoritarianism is yielding brilliant Electoral returns for the BJP in the past decade. I have placed the evidence of unconstitutional behaviour in front of the readers now I will move to my value judgement on the extent of damage done by the Left and Right to the constitution and then move to a conclusion on which ideology, as practised in India, poses a greater threat to the constitution.

I agree that Naxalism openly challenges the constitution and tries to bring about an armed revolution in India. But because of its extremism and impracticality Naxalism as a movement has been pushed to the periphery of the Indian political scenario. With the development of technology for combing operations and more empowerment of the tribal sections of Indian Society Naxalism as a movement is moving towards its grave. It does not pose an insurmountable challenge to the constitution.

Next comes the unconstitutional behaviour and practices of the Left historically and today. The Emergency is time and again portrayed as the epitome of the unconstitutional behaviour of the Indian National Congress and its ruling family. True I do not question this idea. But the Constitutional balance has been restored long ago by an active Judiciary and the Emergency is the historical event which brought the first Non-Congress government to power at the centre. Emergency has inoculated us against authoritarianism and in fact, made the General Public of India understand the significance of Constitutional freedoms.

Now we move towards the unconstitutional behaviour of the right. Religion-based politics and majoritarianism are against the essence of our constitution. And the greatest damage done by the right and particularly NaMo is that they have mainstreamed Majoritarianism. BJP was very successful in diverting the public attention from the constitutional values to Development(Vikas). The PR exercise of BJP has set down a new set of basic rules for Indian politics which do not sync with the constitutional rules. According to these rules, elections can be contested by claiming the heritage of Hinduism, the prime minister of the country can be openly partisan towards a religion, Bills and Acts can be drafted and made to target a particular community (NRC and CAA), Politicians and Ministers can openly call for communal violence.

These kinds of ideas were doing the rounds even before but the public tolerance and acceptance for these ideas have helped BJP to win and retain power. Ideas in themselves are not a threat to the constitution but the power placed by the public in the hands of leaders who do not completely accept the ideas of the constitution is the real threat to Indian Constitution.

My final Conclusion is that Unconstitutional behaviour of one political establishment should never provide the justification to the unconstitutional behaviour of its opposition. If we

look objectively we understand that Left has historically challenged the constitution but it has been put in its place by the Indian Public and Courts. But the Right is posing numerous challenges to the constitutional values today and the most worrisome aspect is that the Indian Publics mood and allegiance are with the Right against the constitution and the Court is not taking up the role of the protector of Constitutional Values. With this kind of unbridled power, the right has the Vision and the capability to alter the constitution at a fundamental level so Right is more Anti Constitutional today than ever.