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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provided dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

# **LABOUR LAW REFORMS AND THEIR COMPATIBILITY WITH CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE**

AUTHORED BY- VIJIT SINGH

## **Abstract**

This research thoroughly evaluates the fundamental rights and the relationship between these rights and Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) in Indian labour law development. Through Articles 14, 19, 21, 23 and 24 along with the DPSPs the research demonstrates the protection of worker dignity and equality as well as freedom in employment contexts. The paper assesses how state welfare objectives under DPSPs especially Articles 38, 39, 41, 42 and 43 support the evolution of a welfare-oriented labor regime. The paper conducts a comprehensive examination of legal decisions to demonstrate how courtrooms redefine the protection of workers while respecting their alignment with all forms of justice including economic and political and social issues. The research demonstrates how India requires equitable constitutional interpretations which simultaneously protect business interests while preserving employee entitlements and provides policy suggestions on how to enhance labor welfare commitments.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Under the Constitution of India several crucial fundamental rights form the basis of both individual freedom and justice framework. The stated rights shield individual freedoms and social equality and justice to build a balanced society. Labor welfare protection exists through the Fundamental Rights which create a necessary legal structure for worker rights protection through legislation controlling their workplace environments. The development of labor laws and policies in India depends heavily on the Constitutional articles 14, 19, 21, 23, and 24.

### **Article 14: Right to Equality**

Under Article 14 of the Indian Constitution citizens have the right to obtain fair legal protection which denies discrimination. India stands firmly behind social justice through this constitutional provision which protects residents from state-sponsored discrimination towards



any person or people. In the context of labour welfare, Article 14 serves as a critical tool for the protection of workers from arbitrary and unjust treatment. The right to equality served as a fundamental component which influenced the establishment of Indian labour laws. Working condition regulations along with wage structures derive their basis from the legal fairness requirement described by the principle of equality before the law. Through Article 14 the equal pay for equal work provision requires employees to get the same compensation when they do similar tasks in similar conditions no matter their social or economic background.<sup>1</sup> The foundational principle appears in the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 to specify equal compensation for male and female workers who complete the same duties. The equality provisions in Article 14 need to be expanded by substantive equality standards for labor rights. Laborers require more than equal treatment from legal systems to properly resolve the social and historical disadvantages they encounter on the job. Workers from disadvantaged communities such as marginalization Dalits and women must benefit from preferential treatment to obtain equal opportunities for fair wages alongside decent working conditions. The proper execution of labour laws should ensure equal treatment and provide additional programs to counteract existing socioeconomic inequality between workers.

The Industrial Act from 1947 and the Factories Act from 1948 serve as two pieces of legislation that contain provisions for equal workplace treatment as well as regulations about industrial relations fairness and inequality. Despite these protective measures the main obstacle lies in tackling socio-economic gaps that exist in the workforce particularly at the informal end.

### **Article 19: Protection of Freedom of Speech, Assembly, and Association**

Under Article 19 of the Constitution the Indian people possess basic freedoms consisting of speech and expression alongside assembly rights and freedom to establish associations and unions. The ability of workers to create trade unions serves as their fundamental right because it allows them to defend their work rights together with achieving improved workplace conditions. Through Article 19(1)(c) workers obtain their constitutional right to establish unions which guide negotiations for fair wages and social security<sup>2</sup> benefits and improved

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<sup>1</sup> Legal Service India, *Constitutional Protection and Labour Laws*, <https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-13729-constitutional-protection-and-labour-laws.html> (last visited Apr. 16, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Mohammed Saud-ur-Rehman Siddiqui, *Bridging the Gap: Law Firms and Social Security Legislation in Modern India*, Centre for Labour Laws, <https://cll.nliu.ac.in/bridging-the-gap-law-firms-and-social-security-legislation-in-modern-india/> (Dec. 13, 2024).



working environment with their employers. The Trade Unions Act from 1926 establishes all necessary legal requirements for trade unions to form and register within India. Through workforce organization workers can negotiate with employers allowing them to improve their employment conditions. Under the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947<sup>3</sup> the Indian judiciary established unions as vital for dispute resolution and worker protection. The principle from Article 19 supports these legislative measures by giving employees the constitutional right to create unions for collective advocacy. Recent labour reforms implemented through the Industrial Relations Code of 2020 have introduced restrictions to the right to strike even though this right remains connected to the basic freedom of association. The Code of 2020 regulates essential service strikes through mandatory rules regarding the notice period before workers can initiate such action. These limitations seem to violate the basic right of both protesting and seeking better workplace standards. The provisions ensure both industrial peace and public order, but this can restrict worker collective bargaining strength which reduces their negotiating abilities against employers. Thus Article 19 gives vital protections to union formation and collective activism, but the restrictions placed on strike or protest activities create doubts about the effectiveness of these provisions to properly handle worker grievances and defend their rights.<sup>4</sup>

### **Article 21: Right to Life and Personal Liberty**

The right to life together with personal liberty protected by Article 21 of the Constitution was extended by the judiciary into the right to live with dignity. The right covers the entire lifespan of an individual beginning from their workplace conditions. Laborers have the right to live in secure and wholesome conditions that promote their wellness according to judicial interpretation of life and dignity protections. Proceeds from this essential legal measure safeguard employees' fundamental rights during the creation of Indian labor welfare legislation. Workers receive safe working environments and social security benefits through the combination of the Factories Act, 1948, the Employees' State Insurance Act from 1948 and the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961. Workplace legislation aims to protect employee safety by prohibiting dangerous work environments which compromise both health status and personal freedom and dignity of workers. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions

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<sup>3</sup> S.S. Rana & Co., *An Explanation to the Industrial Dispute Act, 1947*, <https://ssrana.in/corporate-laws/labour-laws-india/industrial-disputes-act-1947-india/> (last visited Apr. 16, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Jus Corpus, *Labour Laws and Human Rights: Forging a Unified Path to Justice and Equality*, <https://www.juscorpus.com/labour-laws-and-human-rights-forging-a-unified-path-to-justice-and-equality/> (last visited Apr. 16, 2025).

Code, 2020 functions as a major legislative instrument which merges workplace safety and health regulations while confirming worker access to environments that preserve their health and safety. The courts have extended Article 21 interpretations so the right to life covers the right to live in a healthy environment which directly affects industrial and occupational health standards. The Supreme Court asserted in *Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India* (1984) that the right to live implies the right to exist in an unpolluted environment alongside protective working situations. The Supreme Court approved the Workers' Right to Health and Safety as an essential element within the right to live with dignity. The Occupational Safety Health and Working Conditions Code 2020 enhances worker protection rights thus helping to fulfill Article 21 right to life protection. These laws face fierce obstacles during their execution which primarily affects workplaces in informal sectors thus requiring swift action.<sup>5</sup>

### **Article 23: Prohibition of Forced Labour**

The Constitution of India through Article 23 prohibits both forced labor and human trafficking because they represent violations of human dignity. This legal element demonstrates its key value to labor welfare because it ensures the reduction of workplace exploitation and coercion. The different types of forced labor include both bonded labor as well as human trafficking and exploitation in industries that expect workers to perform extensive hours without adequate payment. Two major Indian laws illustrate how the nation fights forced labor and trafficking through the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 together with the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. The laws enact the Article 23 constitutional requirements through a code that protects against abusive labor practices. India experiences ongoing forced labour challenges throughout its informal work sector because this sector lacks appropriate regulations and monitoring systems to protect its vulnerable workers. The successful execution of Article 23 demands strict enforcement procedures together with thorough inspections as well as broad public awareness initiatives to stop workers from experiencing coercive situations.

### **Article 24: Prohibition of Employment of Children in Factories, etc.**

Article 24 restricts child labor by making it unlawful for children younger than 14 years old to work in factories as well as hazardous occupations. This protection method recognizes the

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<sup>5</sup> Jus Scriptum Law, *Understanding Labor Laws in India: A Constitutional and Legislative Perspective*, <https://www.juscriptumlaw.com/post/understanding-labor-laws-in-india-a-constitutional-and-legislative-perspective> (last visited Apr. 16, 2025).

significance of safeguarding children from negative child labor practices that harm both their learning process and physical growth and psychological development. Among the main laws to protect children against hazardous occupations stands The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. This legislation follows the principles of Article 24. Even though laws exist to protect children from work-related exploitation child labor persists mostly in agricultural and mining sectors and manufacturing facilities that frequently use children as workers under inhumane conditions. Better enforcement and oversight together with stronger penalties should be established for violators under Article 24's provisions along with its supporting laws. Workers' rights in India find their foundation through five core Fundamental Rights laid out in Articles 14, 19, 21, 23 and 24. The Factories Act along with Trade Unions Act and Occupational Safety Codes need to be read together with constitutional provisions regarding equality and freedom of association to secure rights to safety and dignity and protection from exploitation for workers. Excessive challenges persist for efficient implementation of work rights particularly within the informal sector and systematic reform is required to achieve broad worker rights protection within the modernized socio-economic context. The judiciary has interpreted workers' fundamental rights through labour law definition, yet the final examination rests in their dedicated application across the entire economy. The progress of labor welfare in India rests mainly on the effective integration of these fundamental rights into the overall structure of labor laws together with their practical enforcement mechanisms.

### **Directive Principles of State Policy and Labour Reforms (Articles 38, 39, 41, 42, 43)**

Indian Constitution through its Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV presents the founding ideas of the framers toward creating a fair social structure. These non-justiciable principles serve as essential guidelines which direct national policymaking while guiding the administration of the country. The principles of worker justice and welfare and dignity emerge from Articles 38, 39, 41, 42 and 43 regarding labour law reform. Labor reforms need assessment through combination of economic measurements together with constitutional requirements for social and economic justice. This chapter performs an evaluation of how specific constitutional provisions direct present-day labour law reforms while validating their adherence to constitutional directives.

### **Article 38: State to Secure a Social Order for the Promotion of Welfare of the People**

Article 38 of the Constitution obligates State authorities to work toward the advancement of



people's welfare through a social system where justice reaches every national institution in economic as well as social and political dimensions. The constitutional mandate directs the State to reduce differences between people in both financial means and position along with their access to possibilities. Two newly enacted labor regulations referred to as the Code on Wages, 2019 and the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 aim to streamline complex labor laws for enhancing business ease. The evaluation process demonstrates that these simplification methods could potentially reduce workers' protective protocols. The enhanced limits on standing orders and government-free retrenchment authority dilutes employee protection rights according to collective bargaining institutions. The Supreme Court during *State of Kerala v. N.M. Thomas*<sup>1</sup> established that the Indian Constitution functions as more than a legal instrument since it serves as a means for social advancement. The goal of Article 38's social justice and substantive equality should be protected above any economic gains in order to develop labour laws.

#### **Article 39: Certain Principles of Policy to be Followed by the State**

Article 39 outlines three distinct policy targets which include providing citizens with sufficient earnings and stopping wealth monopolization as well as ensuring men and women receive equivalent remuneration for similar tasks. The consequences of the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 on industrial dispute management face criticism because they create conditions for unpredictable employment terms that might reduce job stability. Such employment instability compromises the constitutional principle for providing people with adequate livelihood resources referred to in Article 39(a). A wage gap continues to affect men and women despite the constitutional right to equal pay. The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 receives additional legal guidance from *Randhir Singh v. Union of India*. According to Supreme Court jurisprudence in *Randhir Singh v. Union of India* the goal of equal pay for equal work qualifies for constitutional enforcement through Article 14. Recent changes in legislation failed to resolve fundamental gender discrimination issues thus showing a constitutional failure. Recent market liberalization reforms that diminish labor protections appear to contradict the wealth distribution constraints mentioned in Article 39(b) and (c) thus challenging their status as constitutionally allowed reforms.

#### **Article 41: Right to Work, Education, and Public Assistance**

Article 41 instructs the State to protect employment rights along with educational possibilities and public help benefits for unemployed and sick people who age and need assistance in

mutually supportive ways that match State economic capabilities. The Supreme Court, in *Olga Tellis v. The Bombay Municipal Corporation* accepted that receiving a livelihood represents an integral part of Article 21 life rights. State officials need to inspect all labor law modifications to evaluate their effects on both employment rights and social support benefits. The new flexible employment contracts structured by the labour codes threaten stable job security primarily affecting both informal and gig workers.

The Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana<sup>6</sup> initiative along with other pension support programs falls short because they have no legal backing for enforcement against unorganized workers.<sup>7</sup> Public assistance schemes need to be designed for complete accessibility and legal enforcement to fulfil their constitutional promise under Article 41.

#### **Article 42: Provision for Just and Humane Conditions of Work and Maternity Relief**

Article 42 demands from the State both the establishment of fair employment conditions and assistance during pregnancies for workers. Through the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 workers gained an extended period of 26 weeks for maternity leave which fulfilled constitutional objectives. Workers in the informal and gig economies face restricted access to these benefits primarily because they do not have standard employer-employee contracts. The Occupational Safety Health and Working Conditions Code 2020 shows weaknesses in providing worker safety protections because it offers too much flexibility to employers. The Supreme Court in *Consumer Education and Research Centre v. The Supreme Court of India in Union of India* affirmed that people possess the right to health alongside safe working conditions through Article 21 of the right to life. The State should avoid labour reforms which minimize occupational health and safety protection since Article 42 prohibits such measures. Employers in the post-pandemic economy must follow humane work requirements because remote work alongside nearby work and new types of exploitation are becoming increasingly prevalent.

#### **Article 43: Living Wage, etc., for Workers**

The government must uphold living wages along with standard living conditions and

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Labour & Employment, Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana, <https://labour.gov.in/pm-sym> (last visited Apr. 16, 2025).

<sup>7</sup> iPleaders, *Social Security for Unorganised Workers, Gig Workers, and Platform Workers*, <https://blog.ipleaders.in/labour-laws-in-india-2/> (last visited Apr. 16, 2025).

recreational and cultural experience opportunities for workers per Article 43. Minimum wages at a national standard have been established through the implementation of the Code on Wages 2019. A minimum wage represents a separate category from living wage because a living wage enables workers to uphold dignity through everyday living expenses.

The Supreme Court established via its *Reptakos Brett and Co. Ltd. v. Workmen* ruling that workers deserve living wages which incorporate amenities that provide education opportunities and healthcare access along with cultural options. The present-day minimum wage rates across the nation do not provide sufficient earnings to fulfil basic living expenses in cities whereas Article 43 of the Constitution aims to address this issue. Labor reform strategies show insufficient commitment to creating recreational activities along with cultural opportunities and social outlets for workers even though these dimensions matter for developing people.

Labor reforms need to meet obligations outlined in the Directive Principles of State Policy to guide their operational standards. The combined effect of Articles 38, 39, 41, 42 and 43 requires the State to protect both labor rights and social justice framework when conducting economic reforms.

Recent labor reforms aim for economic growth alongside operational efficiency yet deviate noticeably from the constitutional principles established by India. The current drive towards deregulation and flexibility in work policy must use welfare measures to establish an egalitarian social system according to the Directive Principles.

Labour law reforms should work to maintain a proper equilibrium between economic advancement and worker protection so India's constitutional values regarding dignity and equity and worker welfare can be preserved during market efficiency endeavours.<sup>8</sup>

### **Judicial Approach Towards Labour Rights**

The judiciary in India has proven its transformative power by becoming a protectors of worker welfare when legislative guidance and government action are not available. The judiciary expanded constitutional provisions especially Fundamental Rights alongside Directive

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<sup>8</sup> JILS Blog, *Should There Be a Fundamental Right to Work?*, <https://jils.blog/2022/06/01/should-there-be-a-fundamental-right-to-work/> (last visited Apr. 16, 2025).



Principles of State Policy to establish labour laws with dynamic and progressive characteristics. Through numerous rulings the Supreme Court of India established a recognition of labour dignity alongside the practical application of social rights within a constitutionally strict framework. This section evaluates judicial development in labour rights through critical analysis of important decisions which defined the boundaries of Indian labour law.

### **State of Kerala v. N.M. Thomas (1976)<sup>9</sup>**

The fundamental case regarding labour rights is *State of Kerala v. N.M. Thomas*. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes workers sought promotional advantages through the case where officials relaxed employee requirements. The Supreme Court maintained the approval of the rule by declaring that Article 14 protective equality extends beyond formal equality toward promoting substantive equality standards. Justice Krishna Iyer expanded Article 14 interpretations to approve positive discrimination measures benefitting worker groups from disadvantaged communities. Under this judgment the Supreme Court supported labor-related reservation systems by interpreting equality within the constitution. The court established an essential principle that welfare initiatives serving disadvantaged communities represent an inherent constitutional obligation. This labour case established that constitutional principles accept the distribution of special benefits to underprivileged groups at work.

### **Randhir Singh v. Union of India (1982)<sup>10</sup>**

In *Randhir Singh v. Union of India*, A Delhi Police Force driver named in the petition sought pay equity with different drivers who conducted the same tasks. The Supreme Court admitted that Directive Principles of State Policy lacked court enforcement but recognized "equal pay for equal work" as one of the principles that can strengthen Articles 14 and 16 equality provisions. Justice Bhagwati asserted that judicial interpretation of Fundamental Rights should incorporate the three categories of justice as found in the Constitution. The Court sided with the petitioner therefore establishing constitutional backing for a fundamental right of workers. Through this important case the portion of labour welfare shifted between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles while creating justiciability of socio-economic rights to a certain extent.

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<sup>9</sup> *State of Kerala v. N.M. Thomas*, (1976) 2 S.C.C. 310.

<sup>10</sup> *Randhir Singh v. Union of India*, (1982) 1 S.C.C. 618

**Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985)<sup>11</sup>**

The landmark decision in *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation* concerned the eviction of pavement dwellers in Mumbai. The petitioners sought protection of their right to livelihood under the provisions of Article 21 in the Constitution. The Supreme Court acknowledged this interpretation which established that living includes having a sufficient means of survival. According to Justice Chandrachud any denial of employment deprived someone of their existence, which consists of fundamental components of life. This court decision transformed 'life' into meaningful living conditions which mattered for self-respect, so it enhanced legal protection for workers who are outside formal employment. Judicial discourse about labour rights takes shape because socio-economic rights constitute fundamental components of the right to life.

**Consumer Education and Research Centre v. Union of India (1995)<sup>12</sup>**

The judicial evolution of labour rights received substantial advancement from *Consumer Education and Research Centre v. Union of India*. The legal dispute focused on the health problems faced by asbestos factory workers because safety guidelines were insufficient. The Supreme Court declared health care rights as fundamental rights eligible under Article 21. As part of their order the Supreme Court instructed both state authorities and employers to establish protective systems which would secure workers' health. Justice K. Ramaswamy stated that social justice serves as an instrument to provide workers with complete health benefits. Through this judgment the court established that protecting workers from harm at the workplace becomes a legal requirement instead of being charitable thus solidifying safety parameters for the labor workforce.

**M.C. Mehta v. State of Tamil Nadu (1996)<sup>13</sup>**

In *M.C. Mehta v. State of Tamil Nadu*, During the Sivakasi match industry case the Court examined the use of child labor. Through reference to Articles 24 and 39(e) & (f) of the Constitution the Court mandated the State Government to design programs supporting children employed in dangerous industries. The judgment set rules for child labor control together with job reassignment options for families who had children working. This ruling established the judiciary as a proactive force for safeguarding socio-economic rights of vulnerable workgroups

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<sup>11</sup> *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Mun. Corp.*, (1985) 3 S.C.C. 545.

<sup>12</sup> *Consumer Educ. & Research Ctr. v. Union of India*, (1995) 3 S.C.C. 42.

<sup>13</sup> *M.C. Mehta v. State of T.N.*, (1996) 6 S.C.C. 756.

coming from labouring backgrounds. Through this judgment the Court established its readiness to derive enforceable rights from the Directive Principles and establish court-enforced safeguards for child workers.

#### **PUDR v. Union of India (1982)<sup>14</sup>**

In *People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) v. The Union of India*, the Supreme Court declared through its verdict 'The Union of India' that wage denial results in forced labor conditions prohibited by Article 23 of the Constitution. Justice Bhagwati established that workers should not be considered responsible for accepting inadequate wages because they have no alternative options. The crucial decision established that employers who use economic pressure to force workers become essential for recognizing forced labor. Through this judgment the Court enlarged Article 23 to catch exploitative labor practices that emerged from financial need regardless of traditional definitions of slavery and bonded labor.

#### **Judicial Trends and Contemporary Outlook**

Judicial trends during recent times demonstrate a growing readiness to implement socio-economic rights which mainly appears in labour-related decisions. Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution lead to the integration of Directive Principles as legally enforceable rights. Through active judicial intervention in minimum wage disputes as well as occupational health matters and challenges related to bonded labor and child labor and workplace safety in the informal sector the judiciary established standards for labor rights protection. A rising trend exists that suggests court systems increasingly give priority to executive actions as economic reforms and liberalization take place. The recent labour law reforms specifically the new labour codes face resistance since they may reduce existing protections for workers. The judiciary awaits clarification about how it will handle its traditional strong stance compared to emerging economic demands. The Indian judicial system continuously endeavours to combine Constitutional principles with economic conditions to protect labour rights. Judicial interpretations extending widely and sympathetically into Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles have upgraded the level of protection available to labourers through legal mechanisms. The judicial system successfully implemented labour rights and subsequently widened its scope to protect employee health alongside safety and dignity in addition to proper payment.

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<sup>14</sup> *People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India*, (1982) 3 S.C.C. 235.



## **Compatibility of Labour Law Reforms with Constitutional Principles of Justice**

### **Social Justice and Labour Welfare**

Modern constitutional democracies base their foundation on social justice which stands out crucially in matters concerning labour welfare. Indian labour rights stem from their constitutional pledge that protects justice features alongside economic, social, and political elements as described in the Preamble. The Indian Constitution establishes an orderly arrangement that achieves minimal inequality, so it protects vulnerable groups especially workers from exploitation. The need for social justice demands that labor laws together with policies should actively enhance worker's socio-economic situation to protect their rights while securing dignified and secure living conditions.

### **Constitutional Mandate for Social Justice**

The establishment of social justice in labour welfare depends on the unified application of Articles 14, 15, 16, 19(1)(c), 21, 23 and 24. The Article 14 provision requires legal equality that extends to guaranteeing equal treatment for workers. Workplace discrimination stands prohibited through Article 15 which creates an environment that welcomes all workers within the workforce. Working people have protection to form unions under Article 19(1)(c) which enables them to use collective bargaining in their employment matters, yet Article 21 gives workers the right to live with dignity which directly affects their work environment. Article 38 and Article 39 of the Directive Principles of State Policy direct the State to reduce income disparities and establish fair conditions for obtaining sustenance based on Article 39 of the directive principles. The State bears dual moral and legal responsibilities to serve and advance labour welfare since these various provisions both inform social justice.

### **Judicial Recognition of Social Justice in Labour Welfare**

The judiciary has consistently recognized the importance of social justice in interpreting labour rights.

In *Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India*, (1984)<sup>15</sup> During bonded labor proceedings the Supreme Court affirmed that dignity rights extend to basic needs for employment together with pleasant workplace conditions. According to court decisions the principle of social justice

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<sup>15</sup> Citation: LawBhoomi, *Case Brief: Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India and Ors.*, <https://lawbhoomi.com/case-brief-bandhua-mukti-morcha-v-union-of-india-uo-i-and-ors/> (last visited Apr. 16, 2025).

belongs to rule of law so judges must take action to preserve fundamental rights for marginalized workers.

Similarly, in *Workmen of Meenakshi Mills Ltd. v. Meenakshi Mills Ltd.*, (1992)<sup>16</sup> The Court made it clear that interpretation of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 should ensure social justice protection against arbitrary retrenchment. The judiciary views labour welfare as both a statutory mandate and a constitutional moral responsibility based on principles of social justice.

### **Labour Welfare Legislations as Instruments of Social Justice**

Several legislations reflect the commitment to social justice in labour welfare:

- Factories Act, 1948: Ensures health, safety, and welfare measures for factory workers.
- Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952: Provides for social security benefits.
- Minimum Wages Act, 1948: Guarantees minimum standards of living.

The Code on Social Security, 2020<sup>17</sup> merges numerous welfare laws to protect platform and gig workers as it adapts labor welfare standards to modern employment patterns. The fundamental principle of social justice drives the establishment of labour welfare legislation alongside their judicial execution.

### **Economic Justice and Labour Rights**

The Constitution of India funds economic justice among the fundamental principles of establishing social and economic democracy. The labor context needs to uphold economic justice through fair distribution of resources and secure employment combined with proper wages and workplace condition standards. Economic justice derives from labour rights because workers should receive respect as human beings with dignity while production factors alone cannot determine their status.

### **Judicial Pronouncements on Economic Justice and Labour Rights**

The Preamble states explicitly that economic justice should be accomplished. The DPSP through Articles 38, 39, 41, 42 and 43 establishes three requirements for the State: securing

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<sup>16</sup> *Meenakshi Mills Ltd. v. Meenakshi Mills Ltd.*, (1992) 3 S.C.C. 336

<sup>17</sup> Government of India, Code on Social Security Summary, MINISTRY OF LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT, <https://labour.gov.in> (last visited Apr. 16, 2025).

adequate livelihood opportunities and preventing capital concentration and establishing fair and humane work environments. According to Article 39(a) the State must make national policies that provide equal access to sufficient livelihood support to every gender. According to Article 41 of the Constitution the right to obtain employment along with educational opportunities, as well as social protection exists for the unemployed, elderly or sick and disabled citizens. The constitutional system integrates economic justice as its central foundation to steer all reforms of labour practices and workers' protections.

In *Sanjit Roy v. State of Rajasthan*, (1983) 1 SCC 525. Distinct employment generation initiatives cannot use wages under minimum wage standards according to the Supreme Court since they break Articles 21 and 23 of the Constitution. Economic justice stands strong against any form of exploitative worker conditions that arise from employment generation schemes.

In *People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India*, (1982) 3 SCC 235, The Court confirmed that Article 23 allows people to seek protection from all types of forced work such as bond labor combined with economic enslavement.

### **Challenges and the Way Forward**

Progress in economic justice advancement has occurred but obstacles continue to exist. Labor freedom together with weak industrial law enforcement and poor social support systems act as barriers toward achieving complete economic equality. Judiciaries need to monitor all actions by the executive and legislative bodies to verify that governmental initiatives protect the constitutional aims. The development of policy frameworks requires immediate attention to extend official job opportunities and provide universal social protection systems as well as maintain fair working conditions. Consumers must adhere to a rights-based approach founded on constitutional morality to successfully achieve economic justice for all workers in India. Social and economic justice functions as operational principles which should lead the process of labor rights interpretation and application. All labour welfare laws and judicial rulings together with modern legislative reforms need ongoing assessments against the criteria established through constitutional provisions. Workers' dignity and economic development should merge harmoniously to build a just equitable humane industrial society.