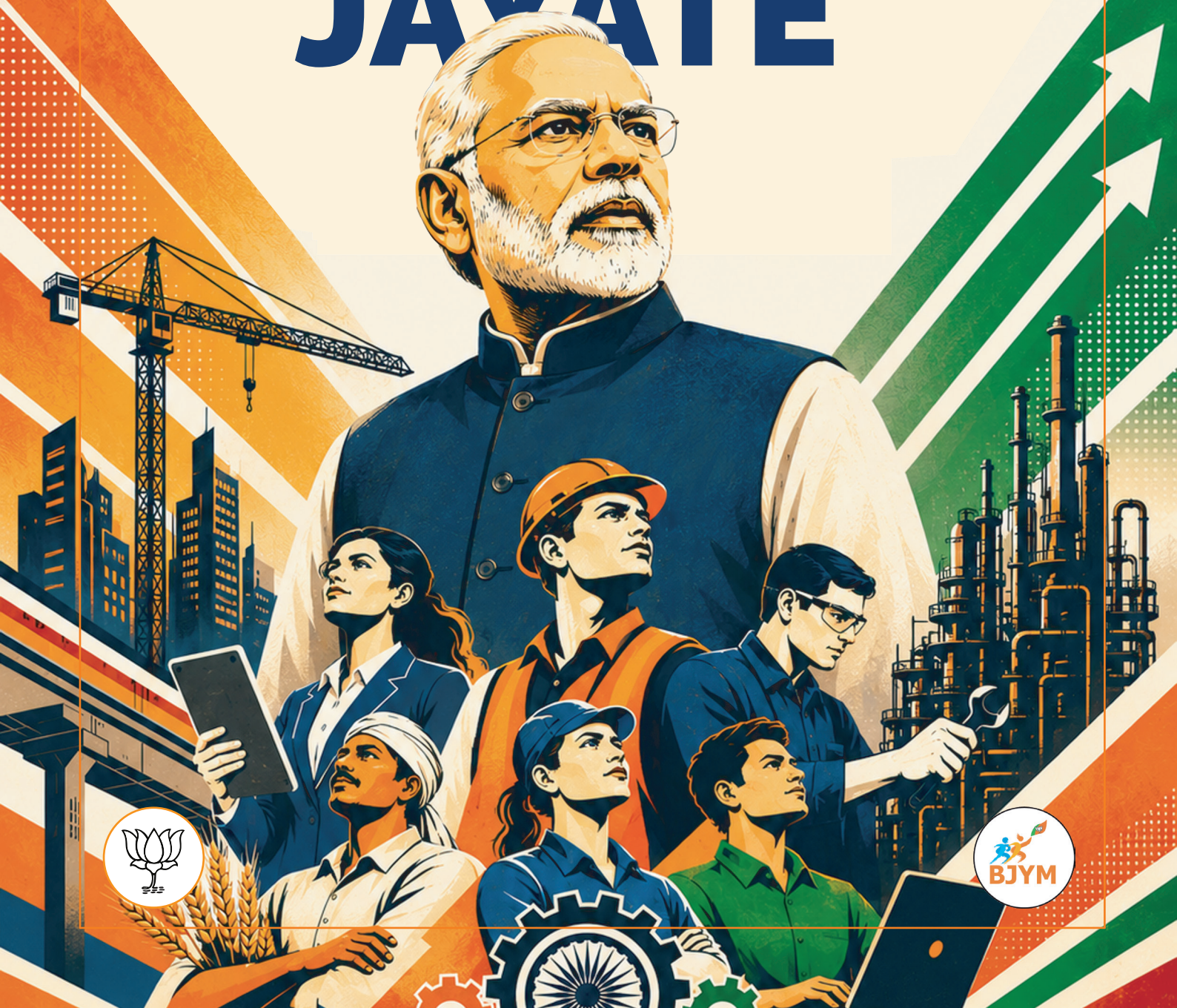


BJYM *Magazine*

JULY 2026 VOL 58

NEW LABOUR CODES | NEW RIGHTS | NEW INDIA

SHRAMEV JAYATE



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Shri Narendra Modi

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सामाजिक सुरक्षा
डॉ. मिथिलेश कुमार पाण्डेय



**Our Government has
given effect to the Four
Labour Codes. It is one of
the most comprehensive
and progressive
labour-oriented reforms
since Independence.**

श्री नरेंद्र मोदी

Prime Minister
Shri Narendra Modi

Remarks of the Prime Minister **Shri Narendra Modi**

Shramev Jayate! Today, our Government has given effect to the Four Labour Codes. It is one of the most comprehensive and progressive labour-oriented reforms since Independence. It greatly empowers our workers. It also significantly simplifies compliance and promotes 'Ease of Doing Business.'

These Codes will serve as a strong foundation for universal social security, minimum and timely payment of wages, safe workplaces and remunerative opportunities for our people, especially Nari Shakti and Yuva Shakti.

It will build a future-ready ecosystem that protects the rights of workers and strengthens India's economic growth. These reforms will boost job creation, drive productivity and accelerate our journey towards a Viksit Bharat.

Source: Post on X



भाजपा के राष्ट्रीय
अध्यक्ष
श्री नितिन नबीन
का वक्तव्य

.....



“

अंतरराष्ट्रीय श्रमिक दिवस
की आप सभी को हार्दिक
शुभकामनाएँ।

देश की प्रगति की हर कहानी
में हमारे श्रमिक भाई-बहनों
की मेहनत, अनुशासन और
समर्पण की महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका
रही है। उनके अथक प्रयासों
से ही विकास की गति निरंतर
आगे बढ़ती है और समाज
सशक्त बनता है।

मैं सभी श्रमिकों के सम्मान,
सुरक्षा और समृद्धि की
कामना करता हूँ।

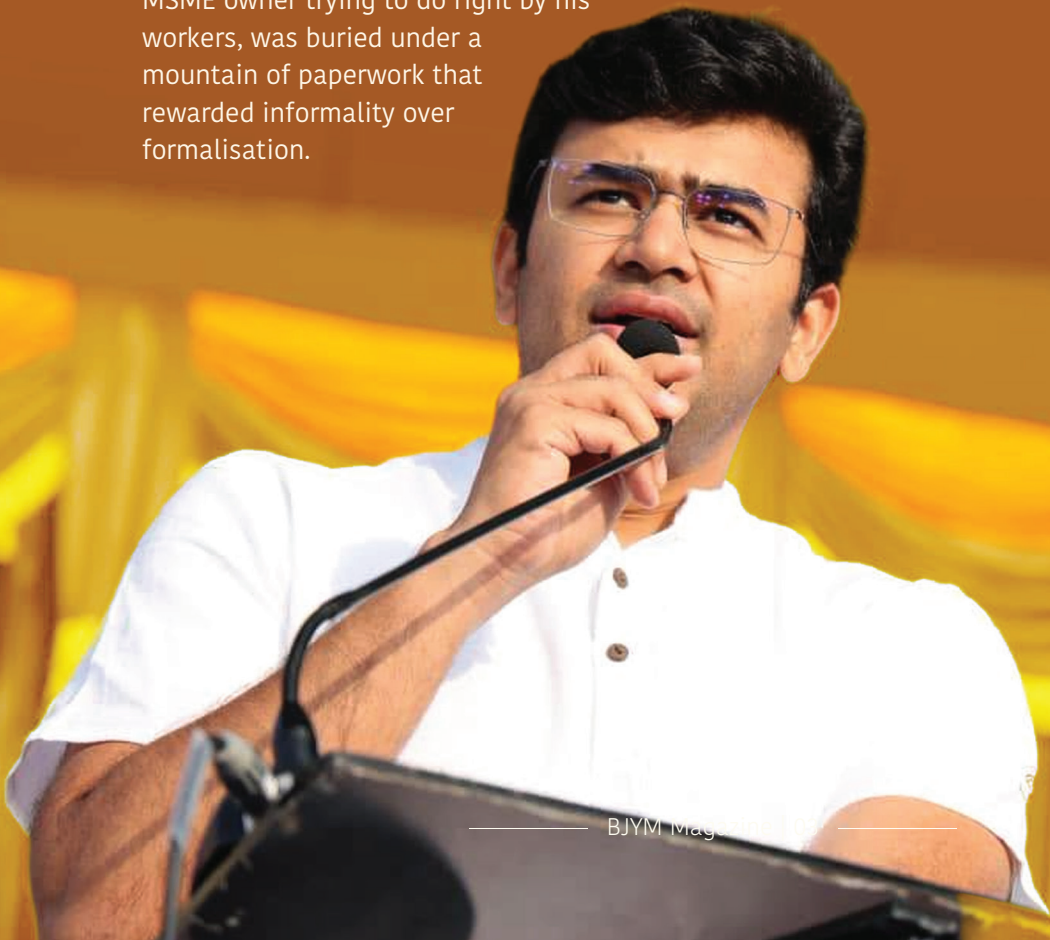
स्रोत: फेसबुक पर की गई पोस्ट

When Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi stood before India's workers in 2015 and called them Vishwakarmas, it was not merely a gesture of recognition. It was a declaration of governance philosophy. It was a statement that in the India we are building, the dignity of labour is not a footnote to development; it is its very foundation.

For too long, India's labour laws reflected a different era an era of colonial suspicion, bureaucratic complexity, and fragmented legislation. Twenty-nine separate central laws, each with its own definitions, compliance requirements, and inspectors, had created a system that served neither the worker nor the enterprise. The worker in the unorganised sector had no legal identity. The gig worker, the platform worker, the delivery partner navigating our city streets none of them existed in the eyes of the law. And the small entrepreneur, the MSME owner trying to do right by his workers, was buried under a mountain of paperwork that rewarded informality over formalisation.

Message
from the
BJYM National
President
Shri Tejasvi Surya

.....



This was the inheritance. And this is what the Modi Government chose to transform.

The consolidation of twenty-nine central labour laws into four comprehensive Labour Codes the Code on Wages, the Industrial Relations Code, the Code on Social Security, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code is among the most consequential structural reforms in independent India's history. It is a reform that took vision, political courage, and an unwavering commitment to the idea that Shram Shakti is Rashtra Shakti the strength of labour is the strength of the nation.

What makes these reforms historic is not merely their scale, but their spirit. For the first time, gig workers and platform workers have been brought within the ambit of social security. For the first time, a universal floor wage has been established across all sectors. For the first time, women workers have been empowered to work across all establishments and shifts, not by removing protections but by replacing paternalistic restrictions with genuine choice backed by enforceable safeguards. For the first time, the migrant worker who builds our cities while living on their margins has been placed at the centre of the legal framework, not left at its edges.

The vision of Antyodaya, articulated by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, holds that true development must begin with the last person in the queue. These four Labour Codes are Antyodaya in legislative form. They ask a simple but profound question: does every worker in the factory, on the platform, at the construction site, in the field have dignity, security, and opportunity? And they answer that question with enforceable law.

As the youth wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party, BJYM has always believed that India's demographic dividend can only be realised when every young Indian who enters the workforce finds a system that is fair, transparent, and protective of their rights. We believe that Viksit Bharat is not a destination that will arrive on its own; it will be built, brick by brick, shift by shift, by the labour of crores of Indians who deserve nothing less than the

full protection of the Republic they serve.

This edition, devoted to India's landmark labour reforms, reflects our commitment to engaging seriously with the reforms that are shaping the lives of working Indians, from the unorganised sector worker registering on e-Shram for the first time, to the young woman who can now take up a night shift with legal protection, to the MSME owner who can finally hire and formalise without fear.

Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, these words have moved from inspiration to institution. I recommend this edition to every reader who believes that a strong India is, above all, a nation that honours its workers.

Vande Mataram!

Tejasvi Surya

MP Lok Sabha,
Bengaluru South



There is a particular kind of reform that does not announce itself loudly. It does not arrive with the drama of a surgical strike or the spectacle of a landmark verdict. It arrives instead through the patient, painstaking work of legislative consolidation through the unglamorous but essential task of tearing down a broken architecture and building something better in its place. India's four Labour Codes are that kind of reform. And it is precisely because they are structural rather than spectacular that their significance warrants serious examination, careful argument, and wide communication.

For seven decades after independence, India governed its workforce through twenty-nine separate central labour laws a maze of legislation inherited from the colonial era, amended piecemeal across successive governments, and increasingly disconnected from the realities of a changing economy. The Factories Act of 1948 could not have anticipated the gig worker. The Minimum Wages Act did not know the platform economy. The Industrial Disputes Act was designed for a world of large, organised factories, not the sprawling informal sector that employs the overwhelming majority of India's working population. The result was a system that satisfied almost no one: too rigid for employers to navigate, too fragmented to deliver meaningful protection for workers, and too outdated to keep pace with the world as it actually exists.

The consolidation of these twenty-nine laws into four comprehensive codes covering wages, industrial relations, social security, and occupational safety is not, therefore, merely a legislative housekeeping exercise. It represents a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between the Indian state, its workers, and its enterprises. The question the reformers asked was deceptively simple: what does a modern labour framework actually need to do? It needs to ensure that every worker, regardless of sector or geography, receives a minimum wage. It needs to bring the vast informal workforce the construction labourer, the domestic worker, the delivery partner, the street vendor within the reach of social protection. It needs to make compliance straightforward enough that the honest small entrepreneur does not find it easier to remain informal than to do right by his workers. And it needs to do all of this while remaining flexible enough for a twenty-first-century economy that does not run on the nine-to-five rhythms the old laws assumed.

On each of these counts, the four Labour Codes represent genuine progress. The Code on Wages establishes a universal floor wage for the first time, replacing a patchwork of sector-specific minimums that left millions unprotected. The Code on Social Security does something historically unprecedented: it gives legal recognition to gig workers and platform workers, acknowledging that the economy has changed and that the law must change with it. The Occupational Safety Code replaces paternalistic restrictions on women's employment that kept women out of night shifts and high-growth sectors in the name of protection with a framework of genuine choice backed by enforceable safeguards. The Industrial Relations Code simplifies dispute resolution and introduces fixed-term employment, giving enterprises the flexibility to respond to market realities without forcing workers into the precarity of informal arrangements.

None of this is without complexity. Labour is a concurrent subject, and the full realisation of these reforms depends on states framing their own rules and investing in implementation. The gap between

legislation and lived reality is always the hardest distance to close. Trade unions have raised concerns about specific provisions, and those concerns deserve serious engagement rather than dismissal. The Inspector-cum-Facilitator model, which replaces the old inspector raj with a more collaborative compliance framework, will only work if it is backed by genuine capacity-building at the ground level. The portability of social security benefits through e-Shram, through the Universal Account Number, through the integration of schemes like One Nation One Ration Card with the broader labour welfare architecture requires sustained administrative coordination that cannot be assumed.

What can be said with confidence is that the direction is right. The philosophy that animates these reforms that worker welfare and economic growth are complementary rather than competing, that formalisation serves both the enterprise and the employee, that the last worker in the queue deserves the same legal protection as the first is a philosophy whose time has come. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's vision of Antyodaya asked us to measure development by its impact on the most marginalised. These four Labour Codes are an attempt to embed that standard into the architecture of law itself.

India is building toward Viksit Bharat 2047. That destination will not be reached by GDP numbers alone. It will be reached when the migrant worker carrying the nation's cities on his back can access his ration card anywhere in the country. When the young woman on the factory floor earns the same wage as the man beside her and works her shift knowing the law stands behind her. When the gig worker who delivers our groceries and drives our cabs has a pension to look forward to.

Shramev Jayate is both a declaration and a demand. This edition is our attempt to hold that demand seriously to examine what has been achieved, what remains to be done, and why the dignity of labour must remain at the centre of India's development story.

From Protection to Participation

How Labour Codes Are Rewriting the Contract with Women Workers

Anima Sonkar

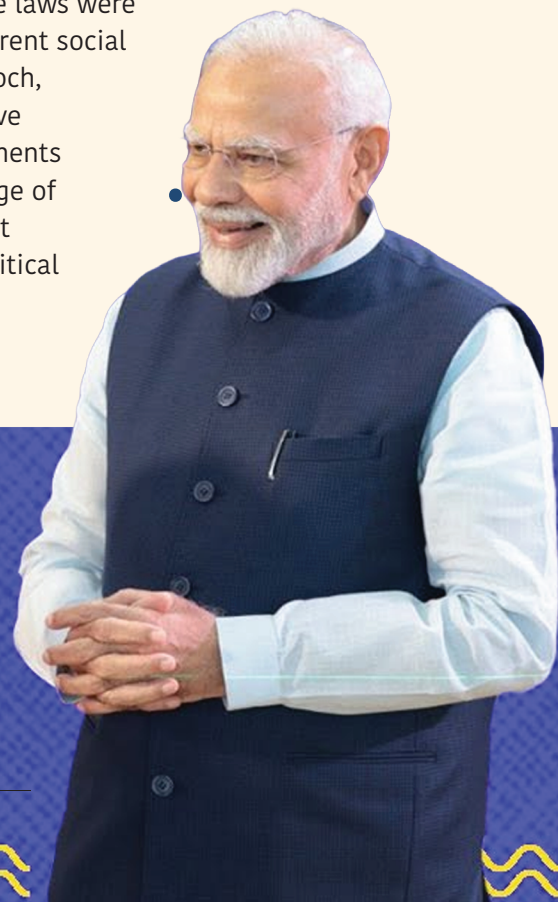
National Social Media
Head, BJP SC Morcha and
Assistant Professor of
Political Science at the
University of Delhi

The four Labour Codes enacted by Parliament under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi are a prime example of this approach. Instead of tinkering piecemeal with 29 complex and archaic central labour laws, the Modi Government has replaced a fragmented, colonial-era labour system with a single modern framework, one that upholds the dignity of workers, and especially of women, and brings transparency, formalisation and social security to the labour market.

The significance of these reforms cannot be overstated, especially for women workers, as they represent a paradigm shift in the approach of the government from a protectionist to a participation, because, together, the provisions for equal wages, non-discrimination, freedom to work in night-shift, maternity benefits and a safer work-place demonstrate the Modi Government's resolve that no woman should be denied an economic opportunity because of her gender.

Correcting the Legacy of an Outdated Labour System

For decades, India's labour framework has been a jumble of laws, licences, registers and regulatory contradictions, and most of these laws were crafted for a different social and industrial epoch, because successive Congress governments spoke the language of labour welfare but never had the political will to carry out a thorough reform.



This has led to a regime that has failed both workers and enterprises, because it has imposed an impossible number of regulatory requirements on enterprises and forced them to circumvent them at the cost of workers. Consequently, millions of workers, especially in the unorganised sector, women workers, migrant workers, workers in the platform and gig economies, were left outside the purview of any protection.

Restrictions on women working at night, in factories, mines, or in certain industrial occupations were initially justified in the name of protection; however, these provisions limited women's employment opportunities. In industries which operate on multiple shifts, employers would rather hire male workers because women were legally or administratively barred from working beyond certain hours.

The Modi government has confronted this paternalistic approach with a clear reform philosophy: women don't need to be permanently excluded from opportunities in the name of safety, because what they need are safe workplaces, equal opportunity, and the freedom to make their own professional choices.

Equal Wages, Equal Dignity

The Code on Wages 2019 imparts statutory force to the existing provision that there shall be no gender discrimination in the matter of wages payable to workers as between men and women workers. The Modi Government's reform agenda aims to address this anomaly by ensuring that equal remuneration is not just a legal right but a reflection of Shram Samman, because the dividend of a woman getting fair compensation for her work does not stop at her income alone, but rather translates into empowerment of the household, better education of children, greater nutrition and health care, and most importantly, the family's economic resilience.

This is where the BJP government's approach differs from the politics of tokenism, and the goal is not just to announce schemes in the name of women, but to create long-lasting institutional structures

that empower women to make real economic choices.

Expanding Opportunity through Night-Shift Employment

One of the most important provisions for women is the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, which allows women to work in all establishments and in all types of work, and to work before 6 a.m. and beyond 7 p.m. with their consent and prescribed safeguards.

The reform is expected to greatly expand women's employment opportunities in information technology, electronics, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, hospitality, aviation, logistics, e-commerce and export-oriented industries.

India's new economy does not work from nine to five, because global capability centres, hospitals, airports, digital services, manufacturing units, logistics networks - all work across shifts and time zones, and therefore, if women are not allowed to work in these hours, they are effectively debarred from a large and growing slice of modern employment.

.....
*The Labour Codes
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.....

The Modi Government is right in doing away with prohibition and replacing it with choice because a woman should have the right to decide whether she wants to work at night or not, but that choice must be based on genuine consent. At the same time, the employer has to be responsible for safe transport, proper sanitation, emergency support, protection from harassment, and a workplace environment in which women can work with dignity and confidence. This is reform with responsibility.

Safety as a Non-Negotiable Responsibility

Women's empowerment is not the removal of legal restrictions, but about creating a workplace where women can work with dignity, without fear, intimidation, or discrimination.

The Labour Codes also place a specific obligation on

the employer to ensure that the prescribed safeguards are in place for women engaged in night work, including safe transportation, adequate lighting, proper sanitation facilities, emergency-response systems, and effective protection from harassment.

Workplace safety also means grievance-redressal mechanisms that work, supervision that is sensitive to women, security personnel who are trained and in sufficient numbers, and laws against sexual harassment that are enforced strictly, and contractors, transport providers and intermediary agencies must also be held accountable so that the responsibility for the safety of women does not get diluted or passed on.

Protecting Motherhood, Preserving Careers

The biggest challenge for women in India isn't to get into the workforce, but to stay in it post-marriage, after childbirth, or when family responsibilities take over, because women are frequently forced to drop out of the workforce when their offices don't offer proper maternity support or childcare facilities.

Labour reforms retain and augment important maternity benefits, such as paid maternity leave in eligible cases, nursing breaks, crèche-related provisions and the option of work from home, where the nature of employment allows it.

From Women's Welfare to Women-Led Development

The most important contribution of the Modi Government is that it has redefined the very grammar of women's empowerment; while the earlier approach treated women as passive recipients of welfare, the present approach sees them as active agents of economic growth and national transformation.

This philosophy is evident in several schemes, including financial inclusion through Jan Dhan accounts, cooking gas for all under Ujjwala, sanitation for all under Swachh Bharat, support to women's self-help groups, promotion of entrepreneurship, increase in housing ownership, increase in participation of women in the armed forces, and increase in participation of women in

emerging sectors.

The Labour Codes are a part of this larger vision, which wants to bring women from the informal to the formal sector, from unequal wages to equal remuneration, from restricted occupations to increased freedom of choice, from vulnerable to secure, from marginal to leadership, and from the fringes of the economy to the forefront.

This is the real spirit of women-led development, and Nari Shakti is not an incrementally small part of India's growth story; rather, it is central to the country's demographic strength, its manufacturing ambitions, its service-sector growth, and its technological rise.

Shram Samman is incomplete without Nari Samman

The dignity of labour has been a constant theme in the BJP's vision of national reconstruction, and PM Modi has again and again honoured workers, sanitation staff, artisans, construction labourers and many others whose toil was hitherto marginalised by elite political discourse.

The Labour Codes take this philosophy further into the institutional domain because economic growth has to be accompanied by fairness, formalisation and dignity.

For women, these reforms are a journey from exclusion to participation and from symbolic respect to enforceable rights; when women receive equal wages, work in safe conditions, exercise real professional choice, and continue their careers without being forced to sacrifice motherhood, Nari Samman becomes a reality.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, labour reforms are creating the base of a new social compact where enterprise and labour are not antagonistic but complementary, where growth and justice go together, and when Nari Shakti becomes an equal and active force in India's Shram Shakti.

The Great Reset

How the BJP's Labour Codes Are Replacing Decades of Dysfunction

Dr. Manish Jangid

Director of the Institute
for Inclusive Policy and
Governance (IIPG)

Introduction

Labour laws form a fundamental pillar of industrial relations by reconciling the interests of workers, employers and the State. India's labour regulatory system has a colonial legacy that has been progressively dismantled and reformed through time in fits and starts. Historically, Indian labour regulations were spread across twenty-nine separate federal acts, administered by successive Congress-led governments. This traditional model has now shifted with the introduction of four comprehensive labour codes enacted under the ruling BJP administration. The codes were adopted on 21 November 2025 and fully enforced by May 2026. The implementation of these labour codes is seen as a significant reform to ease compliance for businesses, provide more social security to workers and boost overall economic growth. This article discusses the competing ideologies and beliefs regarding the changes to India's labour laws.



The Congress Era Labour Law Legacy

Earlier, Labour laws such as the Industrial Disputes Act, Minimum Wages Act, Factories Act, and Employees' Provident Fund Act originated in the post-independence period. They were designed to promote social justice by providing job security and protecting workers from exploitation through rights such as the right to collective bargaining and protection against arbitrary lay-offs. These laws gave the state a bigger role in regulating wages and working conditions, based on the philosophy that free markets were not suitable for determining employee compensation and terms of employment. Additionally, workers' organisations such as labour courts and the Indian Labour Conference were critical components of the system as they gave Indian labour unionisation a formalised platform to operate. On the other hand, most opponents argued that it failed to achieve its goals because it was overly complicated, consisting of over 29 separate Acts and creating confusion and discouraging the formalisation of labour contracts, especially for small organisations. Furthermore, large corporations were reluctant to expand their workforce since any layoffs required government permission, a scenario referred to as the 'small firm trap.' Additionally, although the system was intended to benefit all Indian workers, it primarily catered to the needs of the roughly 10% of Indians who worked in the formal sector. Finally, the Indian Labour Conference, which was meant to serve as a think tank for labour laws, had not convened since 2015, indicating poor governance and the system's failure to meet current demands.

The BJP's Reforms

On 21 November 2025, the BJP government consolidated the 29 Central labour laws into 4 Labour Codes, namely, the Code on Wages, the Industrial Relations Code, the Code on Social Security and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code. The codes were intended to provide benefits to all Indian workers while simplifying the regulatory framework and reducing

compliance complexities. It was argued that these were a step forward in the direction of Viksit Bharat by improving the Ease of Doing Business, attracting investment, creating employment opportunities, and enhancing India's competitiveness while reducing the quantum of controls and simplifying procedures. This viewpoint holds that the new laws will benefit a larger percentage of the population since they cover gig workers and those in the informal sector and provide minimum wage requirements that are applicable to all industries and to both men and women. Additionally, supporters claimed that the codes would make India's business environment more attractive by encouraging global companies to establish operations in the country, thus creating jobs. The codes also give more flexibility to businesses by allowing them to lay off workers more easily, subject to provisions of the law.

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However, the reforms also attracted criticism from opposition parties and unions, who argued that they unfairly favoured employers over workers' interests. Additionally, socialists stated that the government adopted the changes without adequate consultation with stakeholders and took advantage of the fact that the parliamentary session was winding down to enact

the changes without debate. Some Critics argued that the codes allowed greater use of contract workers, reduced worker protections, and made it easier for businesses to lay off employees by requiring government approval to dismiss fewer than 300 workers. Furthermore, critics argued that the implementation of the codes was not uniform around the country and that there was considerable resistance at the state level since fewer than two-thirds of the states had ratified the changes by early 2026. Labour union leaders also argued that the codes prevented workers from striking or negotiating salaries collectively by imposing overly strict procedures on such actions.

Comparison and Contrast

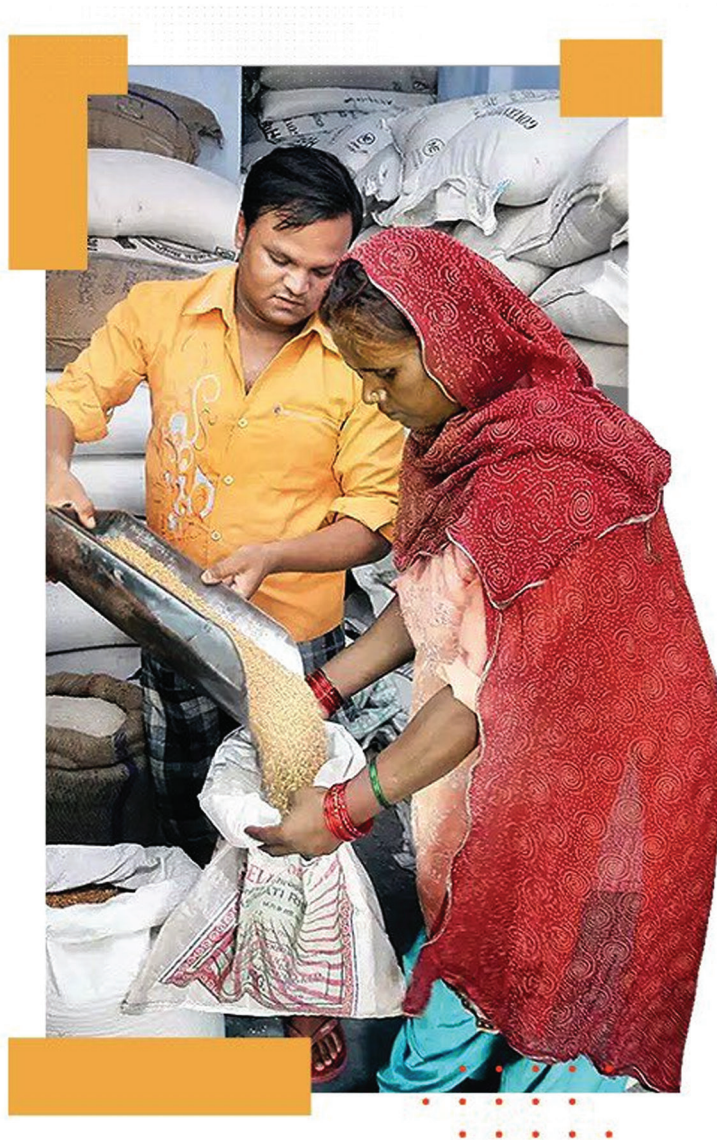
The main point of contention between the

supporters and opponents of the Labour codes revolves around differing views on balancing socio-economic factors. A comparison of the views expressed by supporters of the Congress-era Labour law legacy and supporters of the BJP's reform agenda shows that the former focused primarily on protecting workers in the organised sector, while the latter was concerned about the needs of the majority of Indians who worked in the informal sector. Another difference between the two approaches is that the Congress-era system did not allow much flexibility for businesses to lay off workers, unlike the BJP's agenda, which covers a wider set of workers, including those in the informal, gig and platform sectors. The new code, on the other hand, has provisions that leave more scope for managerial autonomy and less regulatory burden on the business, with the goal of promoting investment and job creation. In addition, while the Congress system resulted in the creation of institutions such as the Indian Labour Conference to participate in the law-making process, the BJP's Labour Codes consolidated 29 Central labour laws into four Codes, and many believe it will lead to a more simplified, transparent, and efficient labour market that protects workers' interests while promoting business and economic development. Supporters also believe that reform will be an important step towards Viksit Bharat by improving employment, enhancing productivity, and creating a healthy working ecosystem for workers, industries, and the economy. Additionally, the Congress government allowed strikes and shutdowns with little interference from company officials, while the BJP's Labour Codes aim to promote industrial peace by imposing stricter conditions for work stoppages in order to promote economic growth, despite accusations of curtailing fundamental labour rights.

Conclusion

The development of India's labour laws is inseparable from its shifting economic demands and the evolving needs of its workforce. The Congress model both satisfied some of the requirements of India's workers and created several challenges for businesses while providing limited benefits to the majority of India's informal sector workers. The Labour Codes, on the other hand, are

designed to further India's interests by satisfying most of the needs of the informal sector, including tier gig and platform workers, while also providing social security to a vast majority of India's working population. Labour Codes have faced several challenges at the state level, but they have the potential to transform India's business landscape while bolstering its economy. If effectively enforced, Labour Codes will promote India's emergence as a new global business powerhouse, increase investment, create jobs, and boost sales of Indian goods and services, all while ensuring social security and protecting workers' interests. If effectively enforced, the Labour Codes can open up new vistas of opportunities for the workers as well as the industry by creating an environment conducive to investment, employment generation, and formalisation of the workforce. By embarking on this reform process and by ensuring its effective and efficient implementation through the collective effort of the Centre, the States, the employers and the workers, India can indeed make this a cornerstone of its Viksit Bharat, thus contributing to a robust economy, social security and overall development of the nation.



One Card, No Borders

How Portable Ration Rights Changed the Grammar of Migration

Rajendra Rajput

Intern at the Nation First Policy Research &
Change Foundation (NFPRC Foundation)

“ From
Bundelkhand to
Bengaluru, a
ration card no
longer knows a
border; it only
knows a citizen.”

For decades, there was a cruelty embedded so deep in India's welfare architecture that it had almost come to feel natural. A poor family in Bundelkhand or Bahraich would be issued a ration card which acted as a lifeline, and a promise from the Republic that they would not go hungry. But the moment their breadwinner boarded a train to Surat, Ahmedabad, or Delhi in search of a livelihood, that promise stayed behind, folded into a drawer in the village home.

The same Shramik who mixed the cement for a flyover, who baked the bricks for a school, who carried the sand for a bridge, could not, at the end of a punishing day, walk into a ration shop in his city of toil and claim the grain that was promised to him. His citizenship, in effect, stopped at the state border. His hunger did not.

This was not a small administrative gap. It was, for nearly six crore internal migrants, a daily negotiation between dignity and hunger. It forced workers to rely on costly open markets, reduced wages intended for their children's education and subtly conveyed to India's most mobile and industrious citizens that the Constitution's guarantee of food security was contingent upon their remaining in one place.

One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC) changed that grammar entirely. Launched under the Department of Food & Public Distribution and rolled out nationally under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, it is not merely a technical upgrade to the Public Distribution System. It is a socio-economic emancipation, a quiet but profound assertion that a citizen's rights travel with them, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, in the spirit of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas.

Three Pillars of Empowerment

True Portability: The Split-Ration Revolution

Consider a mason from Bihar working on a construction site in Mumbai. Under ONORC's split-rationing feature, he can walk into any Fair Price Shop near his worksite and lift his share of subsidised food grain, while hundreds of kilometres away, his ageing parents or his wife would be able to draw the remaining family entitlement from their home-village shop on the very same ration card. Food security, for the first time, moves at the speed of the worker's own migration.

Freedom from Exploitation: Dignity by Design

For generations, the ration shop dealer held near-total power over a family's monthly grain, a power that would often include rudeness, short-weighting, or outright denial. This unfair hurdle has been overcome through ePoS devices and Aadhaar-linked biometric authentication.

According to PIB, more than 5.43 lakh ePOS-enabled Fair Price Shops are now networked nationwide. This means a worker, instead of being a captive to mistreatment at one counter, can simply walk to another, transforming him from a helpless supplicant to an empowered consumer.

The Digital Backbone: MERA RATION

The government's MERA RATION mobile application, available in 13 languages, has put this entire architecture into a worker's palm, letting him locate the nearest shop, check entitlements, and track transactions in real time, in his own tongue, whether that is Bhojpuri-inflected Hindi, Odia, or Tamil.

Two Lives, Transformed

The positive changes to the lives brought by the ONORC can be understood from the following incidents documented by the Centre for Labour Research and Action-

For twenty years, Lokesh Ravidas has migrated from his home district of Chitrakoot, Uttar Pradesh, in search of work, the last two of which were at a brick kiln in Bhilwara, Rajasthan, alongside his family. Before the implementation of ONORC, providing food for that family at their workplace required purchasing grain from local merchants at unchecked market prices.

There was a second indignity too: after a long absence, his name would routinely be struck off his village's ration rolls, forcing him into repeated trips to a government office just to get reinstated. Today, Lokesh draws his subsidised ration from a Fair Price Shop near the kiln itself, no market markup, no bureaucratic limbo, no punishment for having gone where the work was.

At the same Bhilwara kiln works, Pramod Manjhi, who migrated from Banka district in Bihar. He no longer has to return home again and again just to draw his monthly ration from a nearby dealer to maintain his food security entitlements, easing a financial pressure that once ate directly into his family's earnings.

Before ONORC, an absence of a year or two would mean a dealer telling him his name had been quietly deleted from the list, triggering the same cycle of office visits, lost wages, and anxiety that Lokesh describes. Pramod puts it simply: the scheme has made life easier and lighter for migrant workers like him.

The Numbers Behind the Story

The scale here is staggering: ONORC today underwrites food security for roughly 80 crore beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act, with over 100 crore portable transactions recorded since inception.

An independent review showed that the changes on the ground are significant; a report from the Asian Development Bank on ONORC looked at migrant households and found that 75% of them spent less on food, saving about ₹574 each month, while also experiencing better food security through tough financial times and easier access overall.

Behind this sits one of India's largest tech-driven welfare deployments: the same ADB study found 94% of surveyed ration cards had been successfully seeded with Aadhaar, with 96% of those beneficiaries satisfied with the process.

A Resilient, Unified India

ONORC's quiet ambition reaches beyond India's borders, too; it is a concrete Indian contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of Zero Hunger by 2030, proof that cooperative federalism, when paired with technology and political will, can solve problems that seemed permanent for seventy years.

A ration card was once a piece of regional paper, a document that bound a poor man to his village even as his labor built the nation's cities. Today, it is something else entirely: a portable symbol of national citizenship, carried in a Shramik's pocket from state to state, guaranteeing that wherever Bharat is being built, the builder himself will not go hungry. That is the promise of Antyodaya, the rise of the last person, made real, one fair-price shop at a time.



India's four Labour Codes are among the biggest steps taken by the government to modernise the country's labour system. These laws were passed by Parliament between 2019 and 2020, replacing a framework that had been in place for almost a century. By combining twenty-nine central labour laws into four major codes, the government has created a more transparent, efficient, and worker-friendly employment system.

For decades, India's labour laws became excessively complicated due to overlapping rules. A range of industries had to follow different regulations, workers and employers were subjected to multiple rules, and the overall system was difficult to navigate and understand. This had led to increased complexities, decreased compliance, reduced productivity, and lowered industrialisation rates

Realising the need for radical changes

The government formulated four new labour codes on wages, industrial relations, social security, and occupational safety, health, and working conditions. The new laws did not create a new system but helped make the existing ones more simplified, coherent, and easier to follow.

Code on Wages: Ensuring Fair and Transparent Pay

The Code on Wages sets a common definition of wages across all sectors. It requires basic pay and dearness allowance to account for at least 50% of an employee's total income, making salary structures more transparent and preventing unfair cuts in benefits.

This reform helps provide long-term financial security by increasing contributions to the provident fund and gratuity, improving retirement benefits for millions of workers.



Some important changes don't grab much attention when they first come into play, but they can greatly affect the lives of millions."

A Century Overhauled Understanding India's Four Historic Labour Codes

Dr Dinesh Ashok

Associate Professor,
Chandigarh University,
Mohali, Punjab



It also sets a national minimum wage that no state can go below, ensuring a basic level of pay protection throughout the country. By merging four earlier wage-related laws into one, the government has made it easier for employers to follow the rules while protecting workers' financial rights.

Industrial Relations Code: Promoting Employment and Industrial Growth

The Industrial Relations Code promotes employment and industrial development by simplifying the process for resolving disputes, acknowledging the fixed-term nature of employment and expediting regulation, and introducing a re-skilling fund for laid-off workers.

This code will foster industrialisation and job creation and improve the business environment by reducing the time taken to adjudicate disputes and addressing ambiguities in legal procedures and regulations. The new code also seeks to provide stability by offering a more predictable industrial relations framework that will promote investment and economic growth while facilitating the skills upgrading of laid-off workers.

Social Security Code: Bringing Every Worker Under the Safety Net

One of the most significant changes is the Social Security Code, which for the first time in India's history recognises gig workers and platform workers.

Millions of delivery riders, cab drivers, and other app-based or digital-platform workers are added to the social security net. The Code provides for the creation of a Social Security Fund, to which the digital platforms will contribute, and from which benefits such as life insurance, disability, health and maternity, and old-age benefits will be paid.

Workers may register on the e-Shram portal, which has been created for that purpose, and avail state welfare benefits in a digitised, organised manner. By clubbing 9 social security laws into one, the government ensures that workers in the organised and unorganised sectors receive greater benefits.

Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code: Code for a Safer Workplace

Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code consolidates 13 laws related to factories, mines, plantations, ports, construction, etc., regulating the working conditions of workers in various sectors.

The new code covers a wider set of workers, including inter-state migrant workers. It specifies norms for medical check-ups in various sectors and mentions issuance of appointment letters to workers by their employers, among other changes. The new code makes workplaces safer and more transparent.

A New Era of Labour Reforms

The implementation of the four Labour Codes marks one of the most significant labour reforms since India's independence.

By replacing twenty-nine old laws with four new codes, the government has rationalized the labour system, boosted worker protection, and at the same time made it easier for businesses to operate.

In addition, these measures are expected to raise the level of formal employment, attract investments, increase productivity, enhance social security, and create room for a progressive labour system that serves the interests of both employees and employers. They also show the government's goal of building a modern, globally competitive economy with stronger legal protections, better financial security, and more respect for workers.

India's Labour Codes are not only legal reforms but also significant steps in India's future development towards a well-established and competitive workforce.

India's Labour Codes will have a massive impact on employment, economy, and development as states begin to adopt them, ultimately helping India become the developed and self-sufficient country it aspires to be.

From Informal to Inclusive Securing Every Worker, Strengthening New India

Riya Bhardwaj

Policy Consultant at Nation
First Policy Research and
Change Foundation and an
Advocate

It is fair to say that, for decades, a significant contribution to India's economic growth came from the unorganised workforce. This workforce, which consists of street vendors, construction workers, artisans, domestic workers, delivery partners, and gig workers, drove the invisible engine of the country's economy. Unfortunately, these contributors often had no access to health insurance, pensions, or financial security. A single accident or illness could push an entire family into hardship.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, this reality is changing. Guided by the vision of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, the Government has taken historic steps to ensure that every worker, whether employed in a factory, driving a cab, delivering food, or running a small enterprise, has access to dignity, protection, and opportunity.

A landmark step in this journey was the Code on Social Security, 2020, which for the first time gave legal recognition to gig workers, platform workers, and unorganised workers. This act, along with acknowledging the changing nature of employment in a digital economy, also laid the foundation for extending social security to millions who had long remained outside the formal system. The Code additionally provides for the creation of social security funds for gig and platform workers, ensuring that economic progress is accompanied by worker welfare.



e-Shram: India's Digital Social Security Revolution

One of the Modi Government's most transformative initiatives has been the launch of the e-Shram Portal, the world's largest national database of unorganised workers. By registering on the portal, workers receive a Universal Account Number (UAN) linked to Aadhaar, enabling them to access government welfare schemes regardless of where they live or work.

Whether a worker migrates from one state to another or changes occupations, their identity and social security benefits remain portable. This marks a major shift from fragmented welfare delivery to a digitally connected and inclusive ecosystem.

Today, over 30 crore workers have registered on e-Shram, bringing millions into the formal social protection framework.

Building a Strong Social Security Net

To provide financial protection to workers at every stage of life, the government has complemented its landmark labour law reforms with a comprehensive social security architecture. Through the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan (PM-SYM) scheme, eligible unorganised workers are assured a guaranteed monthly pension of ₹3,000 after attaining the age of 60, with matching contributions from the Central Government, thereby strengthening old-age income security.

To protect families from unforeseen contingencies, the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) provides life insurance cover of ₹2 lakh at a nominal annual premium of ₹436, and has recorded over 27.43 crore enrolments, while the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) offers accident insurance cover of ₹2 lakh (₹1 lakh for partial disability) at an annual premium of just ₹20, with over 58 crore enrolments.

Additionally, healthcare security has been significantly expanded through Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), under which eligible beneficiaries receive cashless

health coverage of up to ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalisation; by March 2025, more than 36 crore Ayushman Cards had been issued.

At the same time, the PM SVANidhi scheme has strengthened the livelihoods of street vendors by providing collateral-free working capital loans, coupled with incentives for timely repayment and digital transactions, reducing dependence on informal moneylenders and promoting financial inclusion. Since its launch, the scheme has sanctioned over one crore loans to street vendors across the country.

Collectively, these initiatives have created a multi-dimensional social security framework that provides protection against old age, illness, accidents, and economic distress, while reinforcing the broader objective of inclusive and dignified livelihoods for India's workforce.

Empowering the New-Age Workforce

India's rapidly expanding digital economy has created millions of opportunities for gig and platform workers. The Modi Government has ensured that these workers are not left behind in the country's growth story. By combining legal recognition, digital identity through e-Shram, affordable insurance, pensions, healthcare, and financial inclusion, India is building a modern labour ecosystem that balances flexibility with social protection.

The journey from an informal economy to an inclusive workforce is central to the vision of Viksit Bharat. Through bold reforms, technology-driven governance, and people-centric policies, the Modi Government has transformed the way India supports its workers. From the village artisan to the app-based delivery partner, from the street vendor to the construction labourer, millions are now becoming equal partners in India's development journey.

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*A nation can
become truly
developed only
when every
citizen has the
opportunity to
work with dignity
and the
assurance of
social security.*
.....

From Protective Laws to Empowering Women

Will India be able to become a Viksit Bharat by 2047 when millions of its women remain out of the formal workforce? The answer is self-evident. No country has been able to sustain economic prosperity by excluding half of its human resources. The process of development in India is not only about creating jobs, but rather about creating safe, dignified and accessible opportunities for women. This is where the merging of 29 Central labour laws into four Labour Codes comes into play. These reforms are more than a legislative exercise; they aim to redefine the relationship between labour, enterprise, and the State, as an old system of compliance-heavy labour and economic development is replaced by a new system that hopes to strike a balance between worker welfare and economic growth.

The New Labour Compact

Placing Women at the Centre of Viksit Bharat

Sanya Vats

Political Science
Postgraduate and
Researcher



These reforms find a philosophical basis in the ideas of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya about Antyodaya, whereby the final individual in the queue would be the first beneficiary of development. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has repeatedly stressed that the model of development in India should be based on the principle of: Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas. This bigger vision is captured through labour reforms, especially insofar as women are concerned, by appreciating that unless women are given equal opportunity, dignity and security in the workplace, inclusive growth will remain elusive.

This aspiration was expected long ago in the Constitution of India. Articles 14, 15 and 16 assure equality before the law, outlaw discrimination based on sex and guarantee equality of opportunity in state employment. Article 39(d) urges the State to give equal pay to equal work, whereas Article 42 urges the State to give humane conditions of work and maternity relief. It is not the Labour Codes that establish these ideals, but they attempt to render constitutional morality into the reality of the workplace.

Equality Must Mean Opportunity, Not Restriction

Over decades, labour laws tended to perceive women as a protectionist issue rather than a source of empowerment. Bans on night shifts, strict compliance controls, and disjointed labour legislation often shrank the workforce, especially in manufacturing, supply chain, hospitality, and new service industries that are 24/7. Although such provisions were put in place with good intentions, they propagated stereotypes that women needed to be excluded, not empowered.

Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 is a notable change in this line of thinking. It allows women to work in all establishments, even on night shifts, as long as they are willing and there are proper safeguards for safety, transport, and working conditions. This will be a significant shift away from paternalistic

control to choice-enabling. Gender equality is not about limiting women to play, but about making workplaces secure enough for them to make that choice of their own will.

No less important is the Code on Wages, 2019, which strengthens the idea of equal pay between men and women engaged in similar tasks. Equal pay is not only an economic problem; it is an acceptance of equality of dignity. According to the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law 2024 report, women enjoy only 64% of the legal protections that men have access to around the world, and no country has yet achieved full legal equality in the workplace.

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*When every worker
 is secure, every
 family becomes
 stronger. And when
 every family moves
 forward with
 confidence, India
 moves closer to the
 dream of a
 developed and
 self-reliant nation.*

These reforms in India come at a crucial moment in history. They recognise that equality can only be on paper and must finally become equality in practice.

Nari Shakti Is India's Greatest Economic Opportunity

The discussion of whether women should be employed should not be limited to social justice; it is also an issue of economic change. As the McKinsey Global Institute

predicts, increasing gender equality may add up to US\$28 trillion to the global GDP by 2025, with some of the biggest potential beneficiaries being countries such as India due to their demographic makeup. Similarly, the World Bank reckons that by bridging gender employment gaps, the world could greatly enhance economic development.

In India itself, positive trends have been observed. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) found that female labour force participation has grown significantly over the past years, from 23.3 in 2017¹⁸ to 41.7 in 2023²⁴. Although economists are right in noting that a large portion of this growth is due to self-employment and informal work, as opposed to salaried jobs, it does show that more women are joining economic activity than ever before.

The issue facing policymakers is thus no longer to take women into the labour force, but to ensure



that they get decent jobs with good wages, safe working environments, and social welfare. In this case, the Labour Codes offer a legal basis by ensuring formalisation, making compliance easier, and extending protection to more significant groups of workers, including those involved in the gig and platform economy.

The policy is in line with the Government's wider focus on women-led development. Some of these efforts include the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Stand-Up India, PM Mudra Yojana, Skill India, and PM Vishwakarma initiatives, which aim to enhance women's access to education, entrepreneurship, and skills. These efforts are enhanced by labour reforms that ensure that once women enter the labour market, they are governed by a more contemporary and fairer legal system.

All this does not imply that laws can change workplaces. Safer transport, affordable childcare facilities, more efficient grievance redressal systems, and stronger implementation are equally vital. In fact, the World Bank warns that nations have laid down one-fourth of the institutional machinery that is required to implement gender-equal laws. This applies to India, too: what Parliament has passed will not be the real success of the Labour Codes, but how they are carried out by governments, employers, and society as a whole.

The Road to Viksit Bharat Runs Through Women's Empowerment

The concept of labour reforms is commonly referred to as compliance, inspections or industrial relations. But they have another meaning. They symbolise a change in the development philosophy of India-it is no longer about controlling labour but rather about empowering workers; no longer may women be seen as vulnerable actors in the development of the nation but as equal partners.

The vision of Shram Shakti, Shram Samman cannot be separated from the vision of Nari Shakti. The moment a woman is paid the same amount of money, she empowers not only the family income but also the productivity of the country. By being able to work safely during a night shift when transport, safety and work protection are provided, the economy learns another competent professional. Once she enters formal work and has access to social security, the principles of Antyodaya shift from political philosophy to reality.

A Viksit Bharat will not be built by men or women alone. It will be built when Shram Shakti and Nari Shakti march together, transforming India's demographic potential into its greatest national strength.

From Victorian Morality to Viksit Bharat

How Labour Law Finally Made Workplaces Safe for Women

Soumili Das

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Research and Change
Foundation

India's labour network consists of a diverse workforce across all sectors, and women are not peripheral to this diverse pool. But what constitutes their safety? Traditionally in Indian lower-income families, the confinement of women in a so-called 'protected' enclosure has been the definition of 'safety'. This had a considerable influence in discouraging them from pursuing work, because doing so would, of course, mean crossing the confines first. No doubt, the physical enclosure has historically depicted the normative restrictions imposed upon women.



However, women's labour has often been considered a convoluted issue in itself. The colonial period, especially from the 1880s to the 1930s, had seen ample participation of women in labour. These were not isolated incidents; women had to sustain a double income in the crumbling colonial economy and also project a facade of independence by leaving the confines of their homes. They did not shy away from resisting the totalitarianism of the colonial government and also their landlords.

An Evolutionary Perspective on Women in Labour Industry

Colonial historians argue that they had to resist these vices of the society at the same time. Women labourers led revolutions and protests and were also vocal about their working conditions, along with their political views. They had to take on the difficult task of handling home and the outside world at the same time. Also, motherhood must have been a challenge for them. As seen in the Tebhaga Movement (1946), women labourers inculcated action-oriented groupthink among themselves.

The post-independence scenario was vulnerable to women labourers like before. Keeping aside a few policy changes that shall be discussed later in the article, they had a pivot in the post-liberalisation scenario in the 1990s. Liberalisation welcomed globalisation with open arms, and that's when there was a need for a large, educated pool of workers in India. Women were a part of this group as well.

Improving Metrics

This had reflections on several current indices. The Monthly Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) recorded the all-India Female Labour Force Participation Rate (for ages 15+) at 32.7% as of June 2026. Also, India's annual Usual Status FLFPR rose from a low of 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% in 2023-24. Women acting as "helpers in household enterprises" surged from 9.1% (2017-18) to 19.6% (2023-24). Women working as "own-account workers" rose from 4.5% to 14.6% over the same

period. The Economic Survey of India, conducted by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, and the World Economic Forum, reveals that women spend an average of 299 minutes per day on unpaid care work, compared to 97 minutes for men. This also points to a stark pay gap.

The statistics point to a stark quantitative change, but also reveal a distress-driven surge in the self-employed and unorganised sectors. In this scenario, policy-driven changes at the grassroots need to be studied to convert economic vulnerability into economic security.

How Law Shaped Women's Working Conditions

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The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 reframed the issue of night shifts concerning women.

'Safety' has different interpretations for women from a diverse workforce. The concept of safety itself has evolved over time. The colonial view saw women's morality through a Victorian lens. Hence, it was unbecoming of a woman, as per policymakers, to take up unconventional roles and work late at night. Section 66(1)(b) of the Factories Act, 1948, which banned night work for women. Safety was

often translated through a unique colonial avoidant bias and was used as an ulterior motive to tweak Indian mill outputs. Excluding women from night shifts perhaps did little to improve workplace safety. Similarly, the Mines Act 1923-29 banned onsite work for women at mines. This made women in mine-rich areas like Raniganj suffer. Victorian norms dominated colonial labour laws concerning women.

However, a 'paternalistic' attitude to women's work safety was introduced in the post-independence era in 1948. The Factories Act, 1948, codified Section 66, prohibiting women from working in factories between 7 PM and 6 AM. For over six decades, this provision restricted female employment in high-growth industrial and logistics sectors. The case in point was the Maternity Benefit Act 1961, which was later amended in 2017, and the Vishakha Guidelines, 1997. The former condones paid maternity leave and motherhood care as a basic right, while the latter introduced the concept of



workplace safety to a country that was yet to see the coming of MNCs. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 (POSH) shifted from criminal law remedies to a civil, workplace-embedded redressal framework. t

According to Companies (Accounts) Second Amendment Rules, 2025, companies are now legally required to disclose detailed POSH complaint statistics. This has integrated POSH with government scrutiny. This promotes more corporate accountability for workplace safety.

While both POSH, 2013 and OSHWC, 2020 are landmark judgments in formulating grievance redressal at formal workplaces, the unorganised sector does not benefit from it. It does not yet have the privilege of defining what a 'workplace' constitutes. A female worker who refuses a night shift may be passed over for promotions or quietly pushed out. This can be addressed by setting up GPS transit, dedicated security, and creches for just a few female night-shift workers is cost-prohibitive.

Upwards and Onwards: A Safe Working Environment for Women

Recent policy changes, like integrating social

security with the e-Shram portal, have bridged the gap between safety and informal sectors. Social security benefits directly go to informal women workers without requiring a traditional corporate employer as a middleman. However, more action is needed in both formal and informal sectors to make workspaces more gender-inclusive and diverse.

We can state that Indian labour laws concerning women's safety have transformed from being Victorian-morality logbooks to progressive and pragmatic codes that reflect the vision of Viksit Bharat of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji and the motto "Sabka saath, sabka vishwas, sabka vikaas". An inclusive and all-abiding policy change can further help India develop its safety infrastructure that attracts more women stakeholders.

India's progress has always been driven by the hard work, determination and dedication of its people. Whether in factories, farms, offices, construction sites or the rapidly growing digital economy, every worker contributes to the nation's development. The Modi Government has placed "Shram Shakti, Shram Samman" at the centre of its development agenda, recognising that the dignity of labour is the foundation of a strong and self-reliant India. Among its many reforms, consolidating 29 labour laws into four Labour Codes stands out as a landmark step towards creating a labour system that is simpler, more inclusive, more empowering for workers, and better suited to the needs of a modern economy. More importantly, these reforms reflect a long-term vision of ensuring that the benefits of growth reach every section of society. As India moves towards the goal of Viksit Bharat 2047, the journey, implementation and impact of these labour reforms have been commendable.

“योग: कर्मसु
कौशलम्” —
*Excellence in
work is Yoga.*

The Code for a New India

Labour Reform as the Foundation of Viksit Bharat 2047

Jahnavi Bharadwaj

Sociologist & Policy
Enthusiast



Sankalp: the vision

India's economy has undergone remarkable changes over the last decade. This has included the emergence of new industries, the transformation of the workplace and technology, and millions of new aspiring young minds entering the workforce. The nature of work has evolved with the rise of start-ups, e-commerce, logistics and the platform economy, creating new opportunities for employment.

Keeping this changing landscape in view, the Modi Government recognised the need for a labour framework that could meet the expectations of the world's 4th largest growing economy while safeguarding the interests of workers. The objective was not simply to amend existing laws but to create a legal system that was easier to understand, more transparent and capable of extending welfare to every section of the workforce. This vision marked the beginning of one of New India's most significant labour reforms—the consolidation of 29 Central labour laws into four comprehensive Labour Codes, laying the foundation for a labour ecosystem that supports both economic progress and the dignity of every worker.

Sankalp se Siddhi

The Modi Government undertook the historic task of consolidating 29 Central labour laws into four Labour Codes covering wages, industrial relations, social security, and occupational safety and health. This landmark reform brought greater clarity and consistency to India's labour framework by introducing common definitions, simplifying compliance procedures and reducing unnecessary legal complexities. The new framework also embraced digital governance, making registration, record-keeping and compliance more transparent and accessible. By recognising the changing nature of employment and bringing gig workers, platform workers, and unorganised sector workers, these reforms expanded the scope of labour welfare and focused on social security. They have also combined simplicity with inclusivity and laid the foundation

for a labour system that is well equipped to meet the needs of both workers and employers in a rapidly changing economy.

Shramik Sashaktikaran: Empowering Every Worker

The true measure of any labour reform lies not only in the laws it introduces but also in the confidence it creates among workers. The Four Labour Codes reflect a shift towards recognising the aspirations of India's modern workforce. Apart from expanding the scope to the unorganised sector, gig economy, and platform workers, these reforms also place greater emphasis on timely wages, safer workplaces and wider access to social security, ensuring that the benefits of development are not limited to a few organised sectors but gradually reach each and every worker contributing to India's economy.

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*Labour reforms
are not only
about improving
workplaces; they
are equally about
strengthening
India's economic
foundation.*
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India's workforce is diverse and rooted in different backgrounds. The new labour codes place greater emphasis on extending social security to gig and platform workers, while migrant workers stand to benefit from improved portability of welfare through initiatives such as One Nation, One Ration Card. Minimum wages and related measures have broader applicability, especially for women, as they encourage safer and more inclusive workplaces and reflect an effort to ensure that the benefits of labour reforms reach every section of the workforce.

India's labour market indicators have also improved. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), the overall Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for persons aged 15 years and above increased from 49.8% in 2017-18 to 60.1% in 2023-24, indicating greater participation in the workforce alongside broader efforts towards labour formalisation and employment generation.

Under the Congress government for decades, labour laws expanded through multiple pieces of legislation, often resulting in a system that was complex to administer and difficult to navigate for both workers and employers. The Modi Government focused on simplification, transparency and wider



coverage. The labour reform is not merely a legal exercise; rather, it is linked with employment generation, formalisation of the workforce and inclusive economic growth. This reflects a governance model where workers are viewed not merely as beneficiaries of welfare schemes but as equal partners in India's development journey, strengthening the vision of SABKA SAATH, SABKA VIKAS, SABKA VISHWAS.

Sashakt Bharat Viksit Bharat

Labour reforms are not only about improving workplaces; they are equally about strengthening India's economic foundation. With this modern labour framework, businesses gain the confidence to expand, new investments are encouraged, and conditions for generating more employment are created. For India's MSMEs, which are the backbone of the country's economy and provide employment to a large number of people. These reforms have helped labour courts create an environment where enterprises can focus more on innovation, productivity, and growth because of the greater clarity on labour regulations.

The Modi Government's larger vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, Make in India and Viksit Bharat 2047 are

also complemented by these reforms. A modern and transparent labour ecosystem is India's greatest strength in its vision of becoming a global manufacturing hub and an emerging engine of economic growth. By encouraging enterprise, supporting innovation and creating quality employment, the Four Labour Codes are helping build an economy that is competitive, inclusive and future-ready. A confident nation has laid its foundation: a confident workforce, and this spirit will play an important role in India's journey towards becoming not only an economic powerhouse but also a Vishwaguru that inspires the world through inclusive development, good governance, and respect for the dignity of labour. As Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee envisioned, "कदम मिलाकर चलना होगा"—the path to a stronger India lies in moving forward together, where every worker becomes a partner in the nation's progress.

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*Our workers are the
architects of a
developed India.
Their hard work and
dedication are the
foundation of the
nation's progress”*

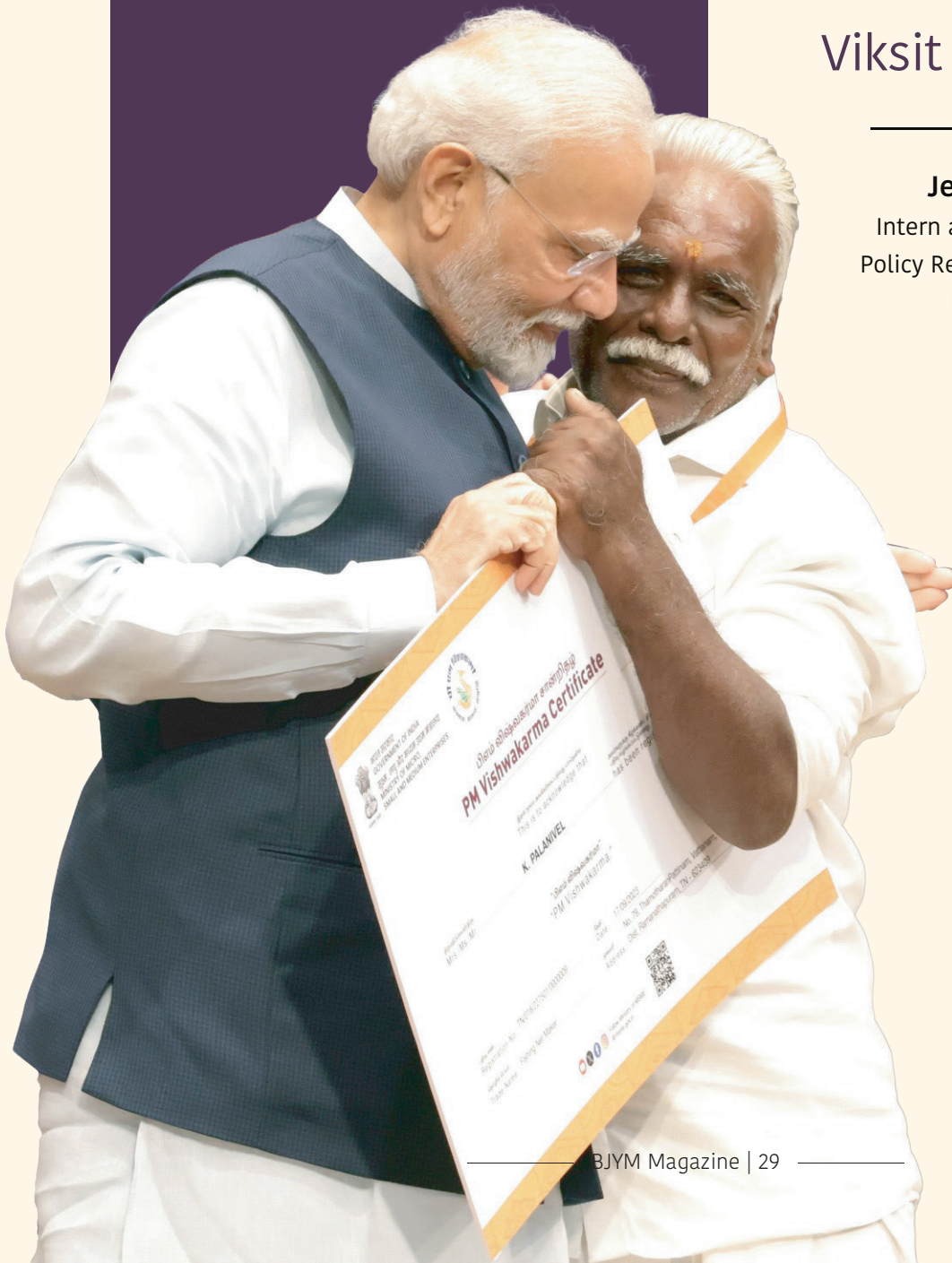
**- PM Shri Narendra
Modi Ji**

Honouring the Vishwakarma

Labour Reform as
the Foundation of
Viksit Bharat 2047

Jessica Saini

Intern at the Nation First
Policy Research and Change
Foundation



On 20th July 2015, at the 46th session of the Indian Labour Conference, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji stood before a packed hall and addressed India's workers not merely as labourers, but as "Vishwakarmas". He expressed deep conviction about how outdated laws and systemic challenges have held back businesses and workers alike and said that India must overcome these barriers so that our udyogs can grow and our shramartha can work in peace and dignity. He said, "India would not prosper until its Vishwakarmas prosper."

And today, in 2026, that promise is being fulfilled, despite opposition, numerous consultations and structural obstacles; India's Labour Codes are finally here. These codes represent a new beginning for India's labour laws, which seek to cut through complexity, simplify compliance, and build confidence. In short, a government that has shown vision and has delivered on its word.

MSMEs: As Pillars Of Growth

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are central to this transformation. MSMEs form the backbone of India's industrial economy. As per the Economic Survey 2025-26, they account for approximately 35.4 per cent of manufacturing, around 48.58 per cent of exports, and 31.1 per cent of GDP in the country. With over 7.47 crore enterprises employing over 32.82 crore persons, the sector holds its position as the second-largest employer after agriculture. Despite this scale, MSMEs have historically operated in an informal environment.

These challenges stem from structural issues such as narrow profit margins, limited administrative bandwidth, and fluctuating labour demand. Previously, complex regulations imposed heavy compliance costs, discouraging formal hiring and restricting growth. This polarised the labour market, leaving roughly 90% of India's workforce in the informal sector, largely without legal protections or social security.

What The Labour Codes Change

The new Labour Codes attempt to address these structural constraints through a combination of simplification and inclusion. First, they significantly

reduce regulatory complexity by replacing 29 laws with four codes. Prior to this, a typical MSME faced 1,450 obligations annually involving 59 types of inspectors that came at different intervals with different requirements. Around 45% of the compliance burden for MSMEs came from labour laws. The new framework replaces this fragmented system with a unified compliance architecture that involves a single electronic return instead of 31 filings, consolidation of registers from 84 to just 8, and a single registration and licence valid across India.

The earlier system rooted in laws like the Factories Act 1948 and other inspector-driven statutes, relied on discretionary, often opaque inspections that created scope for rent-seeking and harassment, particularly for small firms. The inspection regime has been reoriented from a punitive 'inspector raj' to an Inspector-cum-Facilitator model supported by web-based, pre-notified inspections.

Second, the new codes are a big step forward for worker protections. The old system was a confusing mix of outdated laws like the Minimum Wages Act of 1948 that were often applied unevenly and left many informal workers behind. The Code on Wages 2019 changes this by replacing that patchwork with a clear, universal statutory floor wage that applies to everyone, no matter the sector or location.

Similarly, the Code on Social Security 2020 marks a departure from historic laws like the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1952, which mainly covered only formal, organised-sector workers. By explicitly including unorganised, gig, and platform workers, the new framework acknowledges the actual dynamics of a 21st-century labour market and attempts to bridge the social security divide.

Third, the code makes hiring easier by correcting distortions created by earlier laws. Previously, firms relied heavily on contract labour under the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1970 to bypass rigidities in permanent hiring, often leading to a dual workforce with stark inequality in wages and benefits. The Industrial Relations Code 2020 formalises fixed-term employment (FTE), allowing

firms to adjust workforce size in response to seasonal demand without resorting to informality, while the workers get parity in wages, including gratuity after one year of service.

Fourth, the reforms reduce compliance thresholds that historically acted as “growth ceilings” for firms. In the past, under the Industrial Disputes Act 1947, if a business hired more than 100 people, it faced a mountain of red tape and needed Government permission just to make basic staffing changes. This created a “growth ceiling” where owners were afraid to expand. The new codes raise this limit to 300 workers, giving MSMEs the breathing room to scale up and create more jobs without immediately getting hit by complicated legal hurdles.

The Opportunity: Formalisation At Scale

The significance of these reforms lies in their potential to reduce disincentives for MSMEs to grow. Historically, MSMEs avoided formalisation because the cost of compliance outweighed its benefits. By reducing the administrative burdens and offering more flexible employment options, the Labour Codes seek to make formalisation economically rational rather than just legally mandatory. This could help in solving India’s ‘missing middle’ problem where micro and small enterprises chose to stay small and are reluctant to expand.

If implemented effectively, the labour codes can trigger a virtuous cycle of formalisation, productivity, and employment growth in India’s MSME sector. The economic logic is straightforward: when firms move from informality to formality, they gain access to credit, markets and the ability to scale efficiently, while the workers gain stability, which in turn raises productivity.

This is central to realising India’s demographic dividend. India has a large young population that enters the labour market every year and needs jobs. The Economic Survey of India estimates that the country needs to generate roughly 78.5 Lakh jobs annually to absorb them. Without formalisation, these workers are absorbed into low-productivity and informal

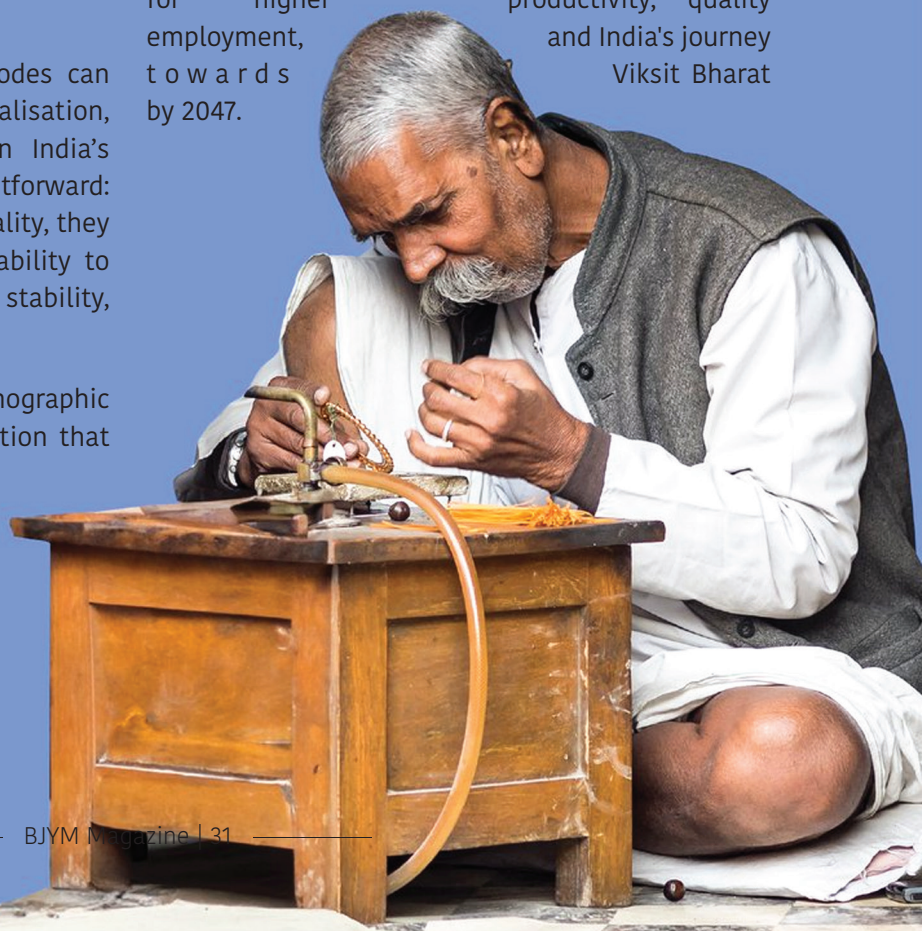
employment, diluting the demographic advantage. However, if MSMEs are enabled to scale and formalise, they can act as the primary absorbers of this workforce, transforming demographic pressure into productive capacity.

However, the success of the Labour Codes depends on whether state Governments show the same conviction that the Government of India did. Labour remains a Concurrent List subject, and full implementation depends on states notifying their own rules. Uneven adoption across states could dilute the intended uniformity of the reforms.

Conclusion

The Labour Codes lay the foundation for a more modern, predictable and inclusive labour market. By consolidating 29 central labour laws into four Codes, they simplify compliance, strengthen worker protections, and create a more coherent regulatory framework.

As global supply chains diversify and investment becomes increasingly competitive, efficient labour markets are a strategic advantage. A transparent and predictable regulatory framework enhances both competitiveness and worker welfare. A decade after the call to honour India’s Vishwakarmas, the Labour Codes provide the institutional foundation for higher productivity, quality employment, and India’s journey towards Viksit Bharat by 2047.



Rights That Travel to Work

Labour Reform and the New Legal Charter for Women

Jagdish Trivedi

Advocate and Columnist

Historically, women in India have faced barriers to labour-force participation, including occupational restrictions, unequal pay, and concerns regarding workplace safety. The Labour Codes aim to address these issues while balancing economic growth and ease of doing business. These Codes represent one of the most significant consolidations of labour legislation since Independence. By merging 29 central labour laws into four comprehensive codes, the reforms seek to simplify compliance while strengthening worker protection. Among the most notable features are provisions affecting women's participation in the workforce, including equal remuneration, expanded employment opportunities, safer workplaces and improved social security.



Our Vision

The Bharatiya Janata Party has consistently articulated women's empowerment as a central pillar of governance through its vision of "Nari Shakti" and "women-led development." Over the past decade, this philosophy has been reflected in a series of legislative and policy initiatives aimed at expanding women's opportunities, strengthening their legal rights, and increasing their participation in public life and the economy. These include the enactment of the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, which extended paid maternity leave, the criminalization of instant triple talaq through the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019; the enactment of the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam) providing for the reservation of one-third of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies after delimitation; and at present the introduction of the four Labour Codes, which seek to strengthen equal remuneration, expand employment opportunities, improve workplace safety, and enhance social security for women workers.

One of the most significant conceptual shifts introduced by these four Labour Codes is their underlying philosophy towards women's employment. Traditionally, labour legislation often sought to protect women by imposing restrictions on the nature, timing, or location of their work. While those restrictions were considered to be enacted with concerns for safety, they had the consequence of limiting women's access to employment opportunities, career advancement, and higher-paying sectors. These Labour Codes seek to move beyond this restrictive approach by adopting an empowerment-oriented framework. Rather than excluding women from certain occupations or working hours, the Codes permit broader participation while requiring employers to implement appropriate safeguards relating to safety, working conditions, transport, sanitation, and welfare. This reflects the understanding that women's economic empowerment is best achieved

not by restricting their choices, but by enabling them to exercise those choices in a secure and dignified working environment. The reforms therefore attempt to balance workplace flexibility with statutory protections, recognising that labour welfare and economic growth are complementary objectives rather than competing priorities.

Wages

The Code on Wages, 2019 extends wage-related protections across employment and prohibits discrimination in matters relating to wages on the ground of gender for the same work or work of a similar nature. It also prohibits discrimination in recruitment except where employment of women is restricted or prohibited by law. A significant reform is the introduction of a uniform statutory definition of 'wages'. A common definition reduces ambiguity across labour laws and simplifies calculation of wages and statutory benefits.

Night shifts and Employment opportunities

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 marks an important shift by permitting women to work in all establishments and for all types of work, including before 6 a.m. and beyond 7 p.m., subject to their consent and prescribed conditions relating to safety, holidays, working hours and other safeguards. Earlier, laws imposed broader restrictions on women's night work in several sectors. The Central Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Rules, 2020 prescribe safeguards such as adequate lighting, security arrangements, transportation where applicable, CCTV in specified circumstances, and grievance mechanisms. States may prescribe additional conditions while implementing the Code.

Safer and healthier Workplaces

The OSH Code consolidates multiple safety laws and requires employers to maintain workplaces that are safe and free from health hazards. It provides for welfare facilities, sanitation, drinking

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For women, the reforms emphasise equal wages, wider employment opportunities including night shifts with safeguards, safer workplaces and stronger social-security architecture.
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water, first-aid arrangements and, where applicable, crèche facilities and welfare officers. These measures are particularly significant for increasing women's workforce participation. Protection against sexual harassment continues to operate through the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The Labour Codes complement, rather than replace, this legislation by strengthening overall workplace safety obligations.

Social Security

The Code on Social Security, 2020 consolidates social-security legislation covering employees' provident fund, insurance, gratuity and maternity benefits. Maternity Benefit provisions are incorporated into the Code, preserving statutory maternity protections. The Code also expands the legal framework to include gig workers, platform workers and unorganised workers through enabling provisions for social-security schemes.

Economic Impact

Higher female labour-force participation contributes to economic growth, household incomes and productivity. By reducing legal barriers to employment while requiring safety safeguards, the Labour Codes seek to encourage greater participation of women across sectors including manufacturing, services and logistics.

Constitutional Values

The reforms embodied in the Labour Codes are firmly rooted in the constitutional vision of equality, dignity, and social justice. Labour Codes should therefore be viewed as statutory mechanisms through which these constitutional principles under Article 14 (equal protection of laws) and Article 15 (non-discrimination on grounds of sex and equality of opportunity in matters of public employment) are progressively realised. The Directive Principles of State Policy reinforce these constitutional values by directing the State, under Article 39(d), to secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women, and under Article 42, to ensure just and humane conditions of work along with maternity relief. The provisions relating to equal remuneration, prohibition of gender-based

wage discrimination, workplace safety, welfare measures, and maternity protection strengthen the legal framework for implementing constitutional guarantees in the modern labour market.

Conclusion

In recent years, the policies of the Central government under PM Modi's leadership have emphasised women-led development, reflecting a shift from viewing women primarily as beneficiaries of welfare schemes to recognising them as active participants in economic growth and nation-building. These codes align with this broader vision by seeking to remove structural barriers that have historically limited women's participation in formal employment while preserving statutory safeguards relating to wages, safety, welfare, and social security. Measures such as permitting women to work across all sectors, facilitating employment during night shifts subject to prescribed safeguards, strengthening equal remuneration provisions, and expanding access to social security collectively reflect an enabling legal framework that supports greater economic participation. In this context, the reforms are part of a broader policy effort to harness the productive potential of India's women as equal contributors to the country's economic progress and long-term development.

The four Labour Codes seek to combine labour-market flexibility with worker protection. For women, the reforms emphasise equal wages, wider employment opportunities including night shifts with safeguards, safer workplaces and stronger social-security architecture. Effective implementation by state governments, employers and workers will determine the full realisation of these objectives.

“ *The Labour Codes are among the most comprehensive and progressive labour reforms since Independence. They protect workers while making it easier to do business in India.*”

— **Prime Minister
Shri Narendra Modi**

Growth and Justice, Together

The Vision Behind India's New Labour Regime

For decades, Bharat's labour law framework was characterised by complexity. 29 Central labour laws, enacted over different eras to address different industrial realities, had created a maze of overlapping definitions, multiple registrations, numerous compliance requirements and fragmented enforcement mechanisms. While these laws were claimed to protect workers, they also imposed significant compliance burdens on employers and often failed to extend meaningful protection to the vast majority of Bharat's workforce employed in the informal sector. Recognising the need for a modern labour ecosystem, the Government of India enacted four landmark Labour Codes, marking one of the most significant structural reforms in Bharat's labour governance since Independence.

Far from presenting a choice between economic growth and worker welfare, the Labour Codes demonstrate that the two are complementary. A business-friendly environment encourages investment and job creation, while stronger worker protections create a more productive, secure and inclusive workforce. The Labour Codes therefore lay the foundation for a modern labour ecosystem aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat, Atmanirbhar Bharat, and Make in India.

Mahiman Tiwari
Advocate and Social
Worker



Simplifying the Regulatory Maze

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Labour Codes lies in simplifying Bharat's labour regulatory architecture. Instead of navigating twenty-nine separate laws, employers and employees now operate within four integrated Codes covering wages, industrial relations, social security and occupational safety.

The reforms introduce a uniform definition of "wages", reducing disputes over provident fund, gratuity and bonus calculations. Digital maintenance of registers, electronic filing of returns, online registration, technology-enabled inspections and simplified licensing reduce procedural complexity while improving transparency and accountability.

Equally significant is the transition from the traditional Inspector Raj to the Inspector-cum-Facilitator model. Rather than acting solely as an enforcement authority, inspectors now play a facilitative role by assisting employers in complying with labour laws while retaining the power to enforce legal standards where necessary. This reflects the broader governance philosophy of Minimum Government, Maximum Governance, in which technology, transparency, and trust replace unnecessary procedural hurdles.

Vinod, a 38-year-old textile manufacturer in Maheshwar, had to navigate multiple registers, varying definitions of wages and several compliance requirements under different statutes. Today, simplified digital compliance would allow small businessmen like Vinod to devote more time to improving production, adopting new technologies and expanding employment instead of navigating procedural complexities.

The Industrial Relations Code introduces nationally recognised fixed-term employment, allowing enterprises to respond more effectively to seasonal demand and project-based work while ensuring that fixed-term employees receive wages and statutory benefits comparable to permanent workers for the

duration of their employment.

The Codes would also reduce litigation through harmonised definitions and streamlined compliance, while rationalising penalties in several minor procedural violations and permitting compounding in appropriate cases. Such measures encourage voluntary compliance without diluting worker rights.

These reforms are particularly significant as Bharat seeks to position itself as a global manufacturing hub. International investors often evaluate countries on regulatory certainty, labour flexibility and administrative efficiency. By modernising labour governance, Bharat strengthens its competitiveness while supporting flagship initiatives such as Make in India, Digital India and the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) programme.

Expanding Worker Welfare and Social Security

While simplifying compliance for businesses, the Labour Codes simultaneously broaden the scope of worker welfare. The Code on Wages extends statutory minimum wage

protection beyond the earlier system of scheduled employments and empowers the Central Government to prescribe a floor wage, below which state minimum wages ordinarily cannot fall. It strengthens provisions relating to timely payment of wages and continues the commitment to equal remuneration, thereby promoting both economic security and gender equality.

Sunita, a housekeeping employee in Bhopal, previously worked without a written appointment letter or clarity regarding statutory entitlements. Under the modern framework, she would be entitled to formal employment, wage protection and digital record-keeping, which enhances transparency and provides workers like her with stronger legal recognition.

The Code on Social Security represents one of the most forward-looking aspects of the reform. For the first time, Bharat's labour legislation expressly

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prosper; and
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recognises gig workers, platform workers and unorganised workers, acknowledging the changing nature of employment in a rapidly digitising economy. The Code creates an enabling framework for governments to introduce schemes relating to pensions, insurance, disability benefits, maternity assistance and other social security measures for these categories of workers. Similarly, eligible fixed-term employees benefit from a shorter qualifying period for gratuity, ensuring that temporary employment does not come at the cost of long-term financial security.

Economic development must be accompanied by safe and dignified working conditions and thus the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code establishes comprehensive standards relating to workplace safety, sanitation, ventilation, drinking water, welfare facilities and occupational health. It also strengthens provisions concerning inter-state migrant workers, recognising the importance of ensuring that labour mobility is supported by legal protection and welfare measures.

The Labour Codes further promote gender inclusion by enabling women to work across all sectors, including during night shifts, subject to their safety, welfare and consent. This reflects a progressive understanding that economic empowerment should expand opportunities while ensuring workplace safety and dignity.

Recently, an electronics manufacturing unit in the NCR region improved safety standards, digital compliance and better welfare facilities to not just protect workers but also improve productivity, reduce workplace accidents and enhance employee confidence. These real-life cases clearly indicate that worker welfare and industrial efficiency reinforce one another rather than standing in opposition.

Formalising Bharat's Workforce

Perhaps the most transformative vision underlying the Labour Codes is the formalisation of Bharat's workforce. For decades, millions of workers remained outside institutional protection despite the existence of numerous labour laws. Simplified

compliance, digital governance and expanded social security encourage enterprises to formalise employment relationships. Formalisation gives workers legal identity, greater access to social security, retirement benefits and institutional grievance redressal, while simultaneously improving productivity, financial inclusion and economic resilience.

This reflects a broader development philosophy: economic growth becomes meaningful only when its benefits reach the worker on the factory floor, the delivery partner navigating city streets, the migrant labourer building national infrastructure, and the young entrepreneur creating tomorrow's enterprises.

These labour codes reimagine Bharat's labour ecosystem comprehensively through this legislative consolidation. The earlier system, fragmented, overburdened with paperwork, and full of regulatory uncertainty, has been transformed into an integrated governance system that works through digitally administered processes with legal clarity and broader social security. Most importantly, they recognise that the prosperity of workers and the success of businesses are inseparable. India's labour minister has observed that labour reforms should empower both industry and labour: "when workers prosper, industries prosper; and when industries prosper, the nation prospers." This philosophy lies at the heart of the new labour codes.

By modernising labour governance, encouraging entrepreneurship, expanding worker protections, attracting investment and promoting formal employment, these reforms lay a durable institutional foundation for a stronger, more competitive and more inclusive Bharat. These nation-building reforms embody a vision in which economic efficiency and social justice move forward together, strengthening our journey towards becoming a Viksit Bharat - a developed, resilient and globally competitive nation where growth is not only faster but also fairer, broader and more sustainable.



Dignity as Jurisprudence

The Constitutional Vision Behind the Four Labour Codes

Adv. Ankita Ganga Deb

State Executive,
BJYM Odisha

From Colonial Fragmentation to Consolidation

India's labour law architecture, for decades, bore the imprint of colonial governance- fragmented, compliance-heavy, and often adversarial in nature. The coexistence of 29 central labour legislations created a labyrinthine system that was not only difficult for employers to navigate but also inadequate in delivering meaningful social security to workers, particularly those in the unorganised sector. The enactment of the four Labour Codes the Code on Wages, 2019; the Industrial Relations Code, 2020; the Code on Social Security, 2020; and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 marks a transformative moment in India's labour jurisprudence. These reforms reflect a decisive shift toward harmonisation, formalisation, and the constitutional promise of dignity of labour.



Constitutional Foundations of Labour Welfare

At the constitutional level, labour welfare is not merely a policy choice but a mandate. Articles 14, 19(1)(c), 21, 23, 38, 39, 41, 42, and 43 collectively form the bedrock of India's labour rights regime. The Supreme Court has consistently expanded the scope of these provisions to secure humane working conditions and social justice. In *Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India* (1984), the Court emphasised the State's obligation to eradicate bonded labour and ensure dignity under Article 21. Similarly, in *People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India* (1982), it was held that non-payment of minimum wages amounts to forced labour under Article 23. These precedents underscore the principle that economic vulnerability cannot be exploited under the guise of contractual freedom.

The Code on Wages, 2019: Universalising Wage Protection

The Code on Wages, 2019, seeks to universalise wage protection by extending the concept of minimum wages across all sectors, unlike the earlier regime which applied selectively. This aligns with judicial pronouncements such as *Unichoyi v. State of Kerala* (1962), where the Supreme Court upheld the fixation of minimum wages as a legitimate restriction on the freedom of trade, reinforcing that the right to carry on business cannot override basic human dignity. By introducing a statutory wage and ensuring timely payment, the Code operationalises the Directive Principles under Articles 38 and 43, which envision a living wage and a decent standard of life for all workers.

The Code on Social Security, 2020: Widening the Safety Net

The Code on Social Security, 2020, represents perhaps the most forward-looking aspect of these reforms. For the first time, gig workers, platform workers, and unorganised labour are formally recognised within the legal framework. This is a significant departure from the traditional employer-employee binary, which had left millions outside the ambit of social protection. The Supreme

Court, in *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation* (1985), recognised the right to livelihood as an integral part of the right to life under Article 21. Extending social security to informal workers is a natural corollary of this jurisprudence. Moreover, the Code introduces provisions for the creation of social security funds and mandates contributions from aggregators, thereby embedding accountability within the digital economy.

The Industrial Relations Code, 2020: Balancing Capital and Labour

The Industrial Relations Code, 2020, seeks to balance the competing interests of capital and labour by simplifying dispute resolution mechanisms and redefining thresholds for layoffs and retrenchment. While critics argue that raising the threshold for prior government approval may dilute worker protection, it must be viewed in the broader context of economic growth and employment generation. The Supreme Court in *Excel Wear v. Union of India* (1979) recognised the employer's right to close a business as part of the freedom to carry on trade under Article 19(1)(g), subject to reasonable restrictions. The new Code attempts to harmonise this right with safeguards for workers, including notice periods, compensation, and reskilling funds.

Further, the recognition of trade unions and the introduction of negotiation unions aim to institutionalise collective bargaining in a more structured manner. In *All India Bank Employees' Association v. National Industrial Tribunal* (1962), the Court clarified that while the right to form associations is fundamental, the right to achieve the objectives of such associations is subject to statutory regulation. The Industrial Relations Code builds on this principle by providing a legal framework that encourages dialogue while minimising industrial unrest.

The OSH Code, 2020: Safety and Health as

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four Labour Codes represent a paradigm shift in India's labour law regime. They are not merely legislative consolidations but instruments of socio-economic transformation.
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Fundamental Rights

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, consolidates multiple laws to ensure uniform standards of safety and welfare across sectors. This is particularly significant in light of judicial observations in *Consumer Education and Research Centre v. Union of India* (1995), where the Supreme Court held that the right to health and medical care is a fundamental right under Article 21. By mandating safety standards, health check-ups, and welfare facilities, the Code reinforces the State's duty to protect workers from hazardous conditions, especially in sectors like mining, construction, and manufacturing.

Women in the Workforce: Equality and Safeguards

A critical dimension of these reforms is their impact on women in the workforce. The Codes provide for equal remuneration, allow women to work in night shifts with adequate safeguards, and emphasise safe working environments. This aligns with the constitutional guarantee of equality under Articles 14 and 15, as well as international commitments such as the ILO conventions. The Supreme Court's jurisprudence in cases like *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan* (1997) laid the foundation for workplace safety and gender justice. The Labour Codes build upon this legacy by integrating gender-sensitive provisions into the broader labour framework.

A Shift in Governance Philosophy

From a political standpoint, these reforms represent a clear ideological departure from the Congress-era approach, which often prioritised regulatory control over economic dynamism. While earlier laws were well-intentioned, their complexity and rigidity discouraged formalisation and investment. The Modi Government's approach reflects a governance philosophy rooted in minimum government and maximum governance. By reducing compliance burdens, digitising processes, and promoting transparency, the Labour Codes aim to create an ecosystem where both employers and employees can thrive.

Formalisation and the Demographic Dividend

The emphasis on formalisation is particularly crucial for India's demographic dividend. With a

large proportion of the workforce engaged in informal employment, the absence of legal protections has historically perpetuated inequality and insecurity. The Labour Codes seek to bring these workers into the formal fold, thereby expanding the tax base, improving productivity, and enhancing social security coverage. This transition from "jugaad" to formalisation is essential for achieving the vision of a Viksit Bharat.

Implementation: The Federal Imperative

Critically, the success of these reforms will depend on effective implementation. Labour is a concurrent subject under the Constitution, and the role of states in framing rules and enforcing provisions is pivotal. The need of the hour is cooperative federalism, where both the Centre and the states work in tandem to realise the full potential of these Codes. Capacity building, awareness campaigns, and robust grievance redressal mechanisms will be key to ensuring that the benefits reach the intended beneficiaries.

Conclusion

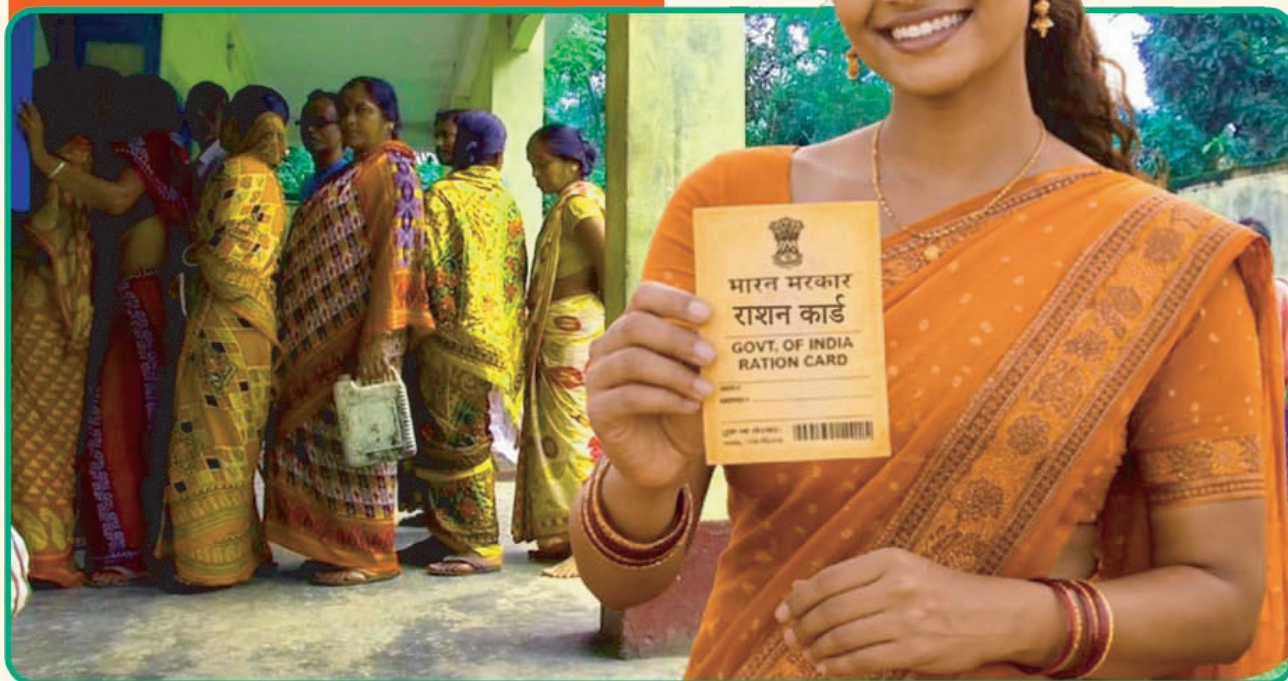
In conclusion, the four Labour Codes represent a paradigm shift in India's labour law regime. They are not merely legislative consolidations but instruments of socio-economic transformation. By aligning legal frameworks with constitutional values and contemporary economic realities, these reforms seek to uphold the dignity of labour while fostering growth and innovation. As India moves toward its goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047, the empowerment of its workforce will remain central. The Labour Codes, in this regard, are a testament to the Government's commitment to Shram Shakti and Shram Samman—ensuring that no worker is left behind in the journey of national progress.

श्रम गतिशीलता का नया अध्याय वन नेशन, वन राशन कार्ड

अतुल ठाकुर
भाजयुमो हिमाचल प्रदेश
प्रवक्ता

“प्रवासी श्रमिकों के
हक अब उनके साथ
चलते हैं”

बिहार के एक छोटे से गाँव से पंजाब की मंडी तक का सफर तय करने वाले रामलखन को हर साल एक ही डर सताता था — राशन कार्ड घर पर छूट गया है, तो परदेस में पेट कैसे भरेगा? दशकों तक यही कहानी करोड़ों प्रवासी मजदूरों की रही। राशन कार्ड किसी एक राज्य, किसी एक दुकान से बंधा होता था, और रोज़ी-रोटी की तलाश में जो मजदूर अपना गाँव छोड़ता था, वह अक्सर अपने हक भी वहीं छोड़ आता था। सरकारी योजनाएं थीं, अनाज का कोटा भी तय था, पर पता नहीं होता था कि हजार किलोमीटर दूर वह कोटा कैसे मिलेगा।



यही वह दरार थी जिसे भरने के लिए 'वन नेशन, वन राशन कार्ड' (ONORC) योजना लाई गई। अगस्त 2019 में चार राज्यों से शुरू हुई यह योजना आज देश के सभी 36 राज्यों और केंद्रशासित प्रदेशों में लागू है। असम इसमें शामिल होने वाला अंतिम और 36वां राज्य बना, और उसके साथ ही खाद्य सुरक्षा पहली बार पूरे देश में 'पोर्टेबल' हो गई। आज इस योजना से जुड़े लाभार्थियों की संख्या लगभग 77 से 81 करोड़ के बीच है — यानी राष्ट्रीय खाद्य सुरक्षा अधिनियम के तहत आने वाली लगभग पूरी आबादी। आधार से जुड़े राशन कार्ड और देशभर की 4.5 लाख से अधिक उचित मूल्य दुकानों में लगे ई-पॉस मशीनों के ज़रिए अब कोई भी मज़दूर बायोमेट्रिक सत्यापन से अपना अनाज कहीं से भी ले सकता है — पूरा या आंशिक, जैसी ज़रूरत हो। योजना शुरू होने के बाद से अब तक 71 करोड़ से अधिक पोर्टेबल लेन-देन हो चुके हैं, जिनके ज़रिए करीब 40,000 करोड़ रुपये मूल्य का अनाज-सब्जि डी लाभार्थियों तक पहुँचा है। 'मेरा राशन' मोबाइल ऐप, जो 13 भाषाओं में उपलब्ध है, इस पूरी प्रक्रिया को मज़दूर की जेब तक ले आया है।

श्रम संहिता से जुड़ता एक बड़ा दायरा

यहीं पर यह कहानी केवल राशन की नहीं रह जाती। 21 नवंबर 2025 को मोदी सरकार ने चार श्रम संहिताएं — वेतन संहिता, औद्योगिक संबंध संहिता, सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता और व्यावसायिक सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य एवं कार्य-दशा संहिता — लागू करके 29 पुराने, बिखरे और औपनिवेशिक दौर के श्रम कानूनों को एक आधुनिक ढांचे में समेट दिया। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने इसे स्वतंत्रता के बाद के सबसे व्यापक श्रम-केंद्रित सुधारों में से एक बताया। इनमें से सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता, अंतर-राज्यीय प्रवासी मज़दूरों को पहली बार कानूनी रूप से केंद्र में रखती है — चाहे वे सीधे नियोजित हों, ठेकेदार के माध्यम से आए हों, या खुद अपने दम पर काम की तलाश में निकले हों।

इस संहिता के तहत प्रवासी मज़दूरों को समान वेतन और कल्याण लाभ, अपने मूल राज्य लौटने के लिए वार्षिक यात्रा भत्ता, एक समर्पित टोल-फ्री हेल्पलाइन, और सबसे महत्वपूर्ण — राज्यों के बीच सामाजिक सुरक्षा व राशन लाभों की पोर्टेबिलिटी का अधिकार मिला है। आधार से जुड़ा यूनिवर्सल अकाउंट नंबर अब पीएफ, पेंशन और बीमा जैसी सुविधाओं को भी मज़दूर के साथ-साथ चलने वाला बनाता है, ठीक वैसे ही जैसे ONORC ने राशन कार्ड को बनाया। यानी ONORC अब अकेली योजना नहीं, बल्कि एक बड़े ढांचे — 'पोर्टेबल कल्याण' के विचार — की पहली सफल मिसाल बन चुकी है, जिसे नई श्रम संहिताएं आगे बढ़ा रही हैं। सरकारी आंकड़ों के अनुसार, सामाजिक सुरक्षा का दायरा 2015 में महज़ 19 प्रतिशत कामगारों तक सीमित था, जो 2025 तक बढ़कर करीब 64 प्रतिशत हो चुका है — और श्रम संहिताएं इस विस्तार को और तेज़ करने के लिए डिज़ाइन की गई हैं।

ज़मीन पर बदलाव कितना असरदार

एशियाई विकास बैंक के एक सर्वेक्षण में सामने आया कि ONORC का लाभ उठाने वाले 86 प्रतिशत प्रवासी मज़दूरों ने इसे उपयोगी बताया, और इनमें से तीन-चौथाई ने कहा कि इससे उनके मासिक

भोजन-खर्च में औसतन कुछ सौ रुपये की बचत हुई। यह छोटी-सी रकम किसी मज़दूर परिवार के लिए दवा, बच्चों की फीस या घर भेजे जाने वाले पैसों में बदल जाती है। साथ ही, टेक्सटाइल, निर्माण और लॉजिस्टिक्स जैसे क्षेत्रों में लगे ठेका और प्रवासी मज़दूरों को अब स्वास्थ्य बीमा, नियुक्ति पत्र और एक वर्ष की सेवा के बाद ग्रेच्युटी जैसी सुविधाएं भी मिलनी शुरू हुई हैं, जो पहले केवल स्थायी कर्मचारियों तक सीमित थीं।

हालांकि यह तस्वीर पूरी तरह चमकदार भी नहीं है। श्रम एक 'समवर्ती सूची' का विषय होने के कारण राज्यों को भी अपने नियम बनाने होते हैं, और कई राज्यों में यह प्रक्रिया अभी अधूरी है। सर्वेक्षणों में यह भी सामने आया कि उचित मूल्य दुकानों के आधे से अधिक विक्रेता प्रशिक्षण के बावजूद योजना की सभी बारीकियों से परिचित नहीं हैं, और दूर-दराज़ इलाकों में बायोमेट्रिक सत्यापन तकनीकी दिक्कतों का सामना करता है। ट्रेड यूनियनों ने औद्योगिक संबंध संहिता के कुछ प्रावधानों पर भी चिंता जताई है। एक सच्चे, निष्पक्ष आकलन के लिए इन कमियों को नज़रअंदाज़ करना सही नहीं होगा — बल्कि यही वह जगह है जहाँ आगे का काम बाकी है: जागरूकता अभियान, राज्य स्तर पर नियमों को तेज़ी से अंतिम रूप देना, और दुकान स्तर तक तकनीकी क्षमता पहुँचाना।

विकसित भारत की दिशा में एक कदम

फिर भी, जो बदलाव पिछले कुछ वर्षों में हुआ है, वह किसी छोटी उपलब्धि से कम नहीं। जिस मज़दूर के लिए राज्य की सीमा पार करना कभी अपने अधिकारों को पीछे छोड़ देने जैसा था, अब वही सीमा उसके हकों की राह में रुकावट नहीं बनती। ONORC ने साबित किया कि तकनीक और नीयत साथ मिलें तो शासन की सबसे पुरानी दीवारें भी गिराई जा सकती हैं, और नई श्रम संहिताएं इसी सोच को रोज़गार, सामाजिक सुरक्षा और गरिमा तक विस्तार दे रही हैं। एक विकसित भारत की कल्पना तभी पूरी होगी जब देश का हर मज़दूर — चाहे वह अपने गाँव में हो या किसी परदेसी शहर की गली में — बिना डर के यह कह सके: मेरा हक, मेरे साथ है।

श्रमेव जयते

चार श्रम संहिताओं से विकसित भारत की राह

अतुल व्यास
अधिवक्ता, लेखक एवं
पीएच.डी. शोधार्थी

भारत का इतिहास केवल राजाओं, साम्राज्यों और युद्धों का इतिहास नहीं है; यह करोड़ों श्रमिकों के परिश्रम, त्याग और पुरुषार्थ का भी इतिहास है। खेत में अन्न उगाने वाले किसान से लेकर कारखानों में उत्पादन करने वाले मजदूर तक, सड़कें बनाने वाले निर्माण कर्मियों से लेकर डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था को गति देने वाले प्लेटफॉर्म कर्मियों तक—भारत की प्रगति का प्रत्येक अध्याय श्रम की शक्ति से लिखा गया है। यही कारण है कि विकसित भारत @2047 के लक्ष्य की प्राप्ति के लिए श्रमिक के सम्मान, सुरक्षा और सशक्तिकरण को केंद्र में रखते हुए श्रम कानूनों में ऐतिहासिक और व्यापक सुधार किए गए हैं।

स्वतंत्रता के बाद भारत की श्रम व्यवस्था लंबे समय तक औपनिवेशिक सोच और जटिल कानूनी ढांचे में उलझी रही। ऐसा प्रतीत होता था मानो श्रमिकों के अधिकारों और उनकी सामाजिक सुरक्षा की जिम्मेदारी किसी की प्राथमिकता ही न हो। अनेक अलग-अलग श्रम कानून, सैकड़ों प्रावधान और हजारों अनुपालन प्रक्रियाएँ न केवल उद्योगों के लिए कठिन थीं, बल्कि श्रमिकों को भी अपेक्षित सुरक्षा और न्याय नहीं दे पा रही थीं। असंगठित क्षेत्र के करोड़ों श्रमिक सामाजिक सुरक्षा से वंचित थे, जबकि नई अर्थव्यवस्था में कार्यरत गिग और प्लेटफॉर्म कर्मियों का तो कानूनों में स्पष्ट उल्लेख तक नहीं था।



प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने श्रमिक को केवल उत्पादन का साधन नहीं, बल्कि राष्ट्र निर्माण की सबसे बड़ी शक्ति के रूप में देखा। "श्रमेव जयते" की इसी भावना के साथ व्यापक अध्ययन, विभिन्न हितधारकों से संवाद, जमीनी वास्तविकताओं के विश्लेषण तथा भविष्य की आवश्यकताओं को ध्यान में रखते हुए 29 अलग-अलग श्रम कानूनों को चार व्यापक श्रम संहिताओं (Labour Codes) में समाहित किया गया। यह स्वतंत्र भारत के सबसे बड़े संरचनात्मक सुधारों में से एक है।

यह केवल कानूनों का सरलीकरण नहीं, बल्कि शासन की उस नई सोच का प्रतीक है जिसमें श्रम को बोझ नहीं, बल्कि राष्ट्र निर्माण की सबसे बड़ी शक्ति माना गया है। चारों श्रम संहिताएँ—वेतन संहिता, औद्योगिक संबंध संहिता, सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता तथा व्यावसायिक सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य एवं कार्यस्थल परिस्थितियाँ संहिता—भारत की बदलती अर्थव्यवस्था की आवश्यकताओं के अनुरूप तैयार की गई हैं। इनका उद्देश्य श्रमिकों के अधिकारों की रक्षा करना, उद्योगों के लिए अनुपालन को सरल बनाना तथा रोजगार सृजन को गति देना है।

इन सुधारों का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण पक्ष सार्वभौमिक सामाजिक सुरक्षा है। पहली बार गिग वर्कर्स, प्लेटफॉर्म कर्मियों, ई-कॉमर्स डिलीवरी कर्मियों, ऐप आधारित ड्राइवरों तथा असंगठित क्षेत्र के श्रमिकों को सामाजिक सुरक्षा के दायरे में लाने का स्पष्ट प्रावधान किया गया। आज जब भारत डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था की ओर तेजी से बढ़ रहा है, तब यह परिवर्तन भविष्य की कार्य संस्कृति को ध्यान में रखकर किया गया दूरदर्शी सुधार सिद्ध होता है।

वेतन संहिता ने न्यूनतम वेतन की अवधारणा को अधिक व्यापक बनाया है। पहले न्यूनतम वेतन केवल कुछ निर्धारित रोजगारों तक सीमित था, जबकि अब वेतन संहिता ने न्यूनतम वेतन की अवधारणा को सभी क्षेत्रों के कर्मचारियों तक विस्तारित करने का कानूनी आधार प्रदान किया है। "समान कार्य के लिए समान वेतन" की भावना को भी इससे नई मजबूती मिली है।

महिलाओं की आर्थिक भागीदारी बढ़ाने की दिशा में भी यह सुधार अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है। सुरक्षित कार्यस्थल, समान वेतन तथा आवश्यक सुरक्षा उपायों के साथ रात्रिकालीन कार्य की अनुमति जैसी व्यवस्थाएँ महिलाओं को अधिक अवसर प्रदान करती हैं। यदि भारत को विकसित राष्ट्र बनना है, तो महिलाओं की श्रम भागीदारी बढ़ाना केवल सामाजिक आवश्यकता नहीं, बल्कि आर्थिक अनिवार्यता भी है।

श्रम सुधारों पर अक्सर यह आरोप लगाया जाता है कि वे केवल उद्योगों के हित में हैं। किंतु यदि इन श्रम संहिताओं का निष्पक्ष अध्ययन किया जाए, तो स्पष्ट होता है कि इनका उद्देश्य उद्योग और श्रमिक के बीच संतुलन स्थापित करना है। उद्योगों को सरल नियम, डिजिटल अनुपालन और कम प्रशासनिक बोझ मिलता है, वहीं श्रमिकों को बेहतर सुरक्षा, सामाजिक सुरक्षा और स्पष्ट अधिकार प्राप्त होते हैं। किसी भी राष्ट्र की अर्थव्यवस्था तब तक मजबूत नहीं

हो सकती, जब तक उद्योग और श्रमिक दोनों समान रूप से सशक्त न हों।

सूक्ष्म, लघु एवं मध्यम उद्यम (MSME) भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था की रीढ़ हैं। रोजगार सृजन में उनकी भूमिका अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है। जटिल श्रम कानूनों के कारण छोटे उद्योग अक्सर औपचारिक व्यवस्था से दूर रहते थे। नए श्रम सुधारों ने अनुपालन को सरल बनाया है, जिससे एमएसएमई क्षेत्र को गति मिलेगी, औपचारिक रोजगार बढ़ेगा, अधिक श्रमिक सामाजिक सुरक्षा के दायरे में आएंगे और भारत की उत्पादक क्षमता में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि होगी।

लोकतंत्र में किसी भी बड़े सुधार पर चर्चा और मतभेद स्वाभाविक हैं। विभिन्न श्रमिक संगठनों और विशेषज्ञों ने भी कुछ आशंकाएँ व्यक्त की हैं। किंतु किसी भी सुधार का मूल्यांकन केवल आशंकाओं के आधार पर नहीं, बल्कि उसके उद्देश्य, संरचना और दीर्घकालिक प्रभावों के आधार पर होना चाहिए। इन श्रम संहिताओं की सफलता अंततः उनके प्रभावी, पारदर्शी और संवेदनशील क्रियान्वयन पर निर्भर करेगी।

यदि राजनीतिक दृष्टि से देखा जाए, तो लंबे समय तक श्रम कानूनों में केवल आंशिक संशोधन होते रहे, किंतु व्यापक संरचनात्मक सुधार का साहस नहीं दिखाया गया। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में पहली बार श्रमिक कल्याण, आर्थिक विकास, निवेश, रोजगार सृजन और वैश्विक प्रतिस्पर्धा को एक समग्र दृष्टि से जोड़ते हुए श्रम सुधारों की व्यापक परिकल्पना प्रस्तुत की गई। यह परिवर्तन केवल वर्तमान की आवश्यकता नहीं, बल्कि 21वीं सदी के भारत की आकांक्षाओं और भविष्य की कार्यसंस्कृति को ध्यान में रखकर किया गया दूरदर्शी सुधार है।

यदि इन सुधारों को भारतीय चिंतन की दृष्टि से देखें, तो इनकी प्रेरणा पंडित दीनदयाल उपाध्याय के "अंत्योदय" दर्शन में स्पष्ट दिखाई देती है। अंतिम पंक्ति में खड़े व्यक्ति का उत्थान ही वास्तविक विकास का मानदंड है। श्रमिक केवल आर्थिक गतिविधि का माध्यम नहीं, बल्कि राष्ट्र निर्माण का सशक्त सहभागी है। जब श्रमिक सुरक्षित होगा, तभी उद्योग सुदृढ़ होंगे; उद्योग सुदृढ़ होंगे तो अर्थव्यवस्था सशक्त होगी; और सशक्त अर्थव्यवस्था ही विकसित भारत की आधारशिला बनेगी। यही दर्शन "श्रमेव जयते" के मंत्र को व्यवहार में उतारता है।

आज भारत एक ऐसे युग में प्रवेश कर रहा है जहां "श्रम गौरव ही राष्ट्र गौरव" केवल एक नारा नहीं, बल्कि राष्ट्रीय विकास की रीति बन चुका है। चारों श्रम संहिताएँ इसी सोच को संस्थागत स्वरूप प्रदान करती हैं। विकसित भारत @2047 की यात्रा केवल आधुनिक अवसंरचना, ऊँची इमारतों या बढ़ती जीडीपी से पूरी नहीं होगी; यह तब पूर्ण होगी जब प्रत्येक श्रमिक को सम्मान, सुरक्षा, सामाजिक न्याय और प्रगति के समान अवसर प्राप्त होंगे। जिस राष्ट्र में श्रम का सम्मान होता है, वही राष्ट्र विश्व का नेतृत्व करता है। मोदी सरकार की श्रम सुधार यात्रा इसी राष्ट्रदृष्टि का एक ऐतिहासिक कदम है, जो भारत को आत्मनिर्भर, समावेशी और विकसित राष्ट्र बनाने की दिशा में मजबूत आधार प्रदान करती है।

नए श्रम कानून सुधारों की नई दिशा

प्रिया झा

हिंदी भाषा विशेषज्ञ,
नेशन फर्स्ट पॉलिसी
रिसर्च एंड चेंज
फाउंडेशन



“एक बगल में चाँद होगा एक बगल में रोटियां”...

यह पंक्तियाँ दर्शाती हैं भारतीय श्रमिकों के वास्तविक जीवन संघर्ष को। जहाँ एक ओर हैं उसके सपने ‘बेहतर जीवन की तलाश’, तो दूसरी ओर हैं उसकी ज़िम्मेदारियाँ। जीवन के इन्ही दो पाटो के बीच पिसता है एक मज़दूर, जो अपने कंधों से सींचता हैं देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को, देता हैं गति देश के विकास को। इसलिए श्रम कानूनों से होने वाले परिवर्तनों की पहुँच केवल दफ़्तरों तक नहीं होती यह पहुँचती हैं देश के उन श्रमिकों तक जो समाज की आखिरी पंक्ति में खड़े हैं अपना संघर्ष लिए।

भारत में लंबे समय तक श्रम व्यवस्था 29 अलग-अलग केंद्रीय कानूनों पर आधारित रही। समय के साथ उद्योग बदल गए, तकनीक बदल गई, रोजगार के नए स्वरूप सामने आए, लेकिन कई कानून पुराने ढाँचे टूटे ही नहीं, बने रहे। इन्हीं चुनौतियों को ध्यान में रखते हुए इन 29 कानूनों को समाहित कर चार नई श्रम संहिताएँ बनाई गई हैं। इनका उद्देश्य हैं श्रमिकों के अधिकारों की रक्षा करना, उद्योगों के लिए नियमों को सरल बनाना और बदलती अर्थव्यवस्था के अनुरूप श्रम व्यवस्था को आधुनिक बनाना।

चार श्रम संहिताएँ; एक नई सोच

पहली श्रम संहिता है ; वेतन संहिता (Code on Wages, 2019)। इसका उद्देश्य यह सुनिश्चित करना है कि कर्मचारियों को समय पर और उचित वेतन मिले तथा समान कार्य के लिए समान वेतन के सिद्धांत को पूर्णतः बढ़ावा मिले।

दूसरी श्रम संहिता हैं ; औद्योगिक संबंध संहिता (Industrial Relations Code, 2020)। यह कर्मचारियों, ट्रेड यूनियनों एवं नियोक्ताओं के बीच बेहतर संवाद और विवादों को सरल समाधान के साथ दिशा देने का एक प्रयास है।



तीसरी श्रम संहिता हैं; सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता (Code on Social Security, 2020)। आज जब गिग और प्लेटफॉर्म आधारित रोजगार तेजी से बढ़ रहे हैं, तब सामाजिक सुरक्षा का दायरा बढ़ाना आज के समय की मांग है, यह संहिता अधिक से अधिक श्रमिकों को सामाजिक सुरक्षा के दायरे में लाने का प्रयास करती है। आज का युवा डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्म पर काम करने की ओर बढ़ रहा है। यह पहली बार है जब इन संहिताओं ने गिग वर्कर्स और प्लेटफॉर्म श्रमिकों को सामाजिक सुरक्षा (Social Security) के दायरे में लाकर उनके भविष्य को सुरक्षित करने का क्रांतिकारी कदम उठाया है।

चौथी श्रम संहिता हैं; व्यावसायिक सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य एवं कार्य परिस्थितियाँ संहिता (OSH Code, 2020)। यह कार्यस्थल को अधिक सुरक्षित, स्वच्छ और श्रमिकों के लिए सम्मानजनक बनाने पर बल देती है। यह कानून महिलाओं के लिए रात की पाली (Night Shifts) में विशेष सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करता है और सभी कार्यस्थलों पर 'समान कार्य के लिए समान वेतन' के अधिकार को कानूनी रूप से और अधिक मजबूत बनाता है।

भारत में श्रम सुधारों की दिशा में एक क्रांतिकारी कदम उठाते हुए 29 पुराने श्रम कानूनों को समाप्त कर चार नई श्रम संहिताएँ; वेतन संहिता, औद्योगिक संबंध संहिता, सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता, और व्यावसायिक सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य एवं कार्य परिस्थितियाँ संहिता लागू की गई हैं। इन संहिताओं का मुख्य उद्देश्य श्रमिकों के अधिकारों की रक्षा करना, कानूनों को सरल बनाना और कार्यस्थलों को अधिक सुरक्षित व आधुनिक बनाना है, जो अंततः 'विकसित भारत' के निर्माण की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण योगदान है।

बदलाव क्यों थे ज़रूरी ?

नई अर्थव्यवस्था में केवल स्थायी कर्मचारी ही नहीं, अपितु डिलीवरी पार्टनर, कैब चालक, फ्रीलांसर और डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्म पर काम करने वाले लाखों लोग भी श्रमबल का हिस्सा हैं। ऐसे में पुराने कानून बदलते समय की नई आवश्यकताओं को पूरा नहीं कर पा रहे थे। चार श्रम संहिताओं का उद्देश्य श्रम कानूनों को सरल बनाना, अनुपालन आसान करना और श्रमिकों के कल्याण के साथ आर्थिक विकास को गति देना है। न सुधारों का एक बड़ा पहलू 'अनुपालन में सरलता' (Ease of Compliance) है। अब 29 अलग-अलग कानूनों के स्थान पर 'सिंगल रजिस्ट्रेशन', 'सिंगल लाइसेंस' और 'सिंगल रिटर्न' की व्यवस्था होगी। इससे न केवल उद्योगों के लिए काम करना आसान होगा, बल्कि यह भारत में स्टार्टअप्स और उद्यमिता को भी नई गति प्रदान करेगा, जो 'ईज ऑफ डूइंग बिजनेस' के विज़न को साकार करता है।

अवसर और अपेक्षाएँ

इन श्रम संहिताओं से यह अपेक्षा की जाती है कि कर्मचारियों को बेहतर वेतन सुरक्षा, सामाजिक सुरक्षा और सुरक्षित कार्यस्थल मिलेगा। वहीं उद्योगों को भी सरल और एकीकृत नियमों का लाभ मिल सकेगा। वहीं दूसरी ओर, कुछ श्रमिक संगठनों और विशेषज्ञों ने इनके कुछ प्रावधानों पर चिंताएँ भी व्यक्त की हैं। यही कारण है कि इन संहिताओं की वास्तविक सफलता उनके संतुलित और प्रभावी

क्रियान्वयन पर निर्भर करेगी।

ये नए श्रम कानून सिर्फ कागज़ों पर नहीं, बल्कि हज़ारों जिंदगियों में बदलाव की नई सुबह लेकर आए हैं। इन वर्गों को होगा लाभ ;

- महिलाओं के लिए: नाइट शिफ्ट में सुरक्षा का भरोसा और 'समान काम-समान वेतन' का हक अब कानूनी अधिकार है।
- गिग और प्लेटफॉर्म वर्कर्स: पहली बार इन्हें एक नई पहचान और भविष्य को सुरक्षित करने के लिए 'सोशल सिक्योरिटी' का सुरक्षा कवच मिला है।
- सामान्य श्रमिकों के लिए: समय पर वेतन मिलने की पक्की गारंटी और बेहतर स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं का वादा।
- स्टार्टअप्स और उद्योगों के लिए: पुरानी कागजी उलझनों से आजादी अब काम करना और भी आसान और सुविधाजनक हो गया है।

ये बदलाव किसी एक वर्ग विशेष के लिए नहीं हैं, हर उस व्यक्ति के लिए है जो अपने श्रम से देश की नींव को मजबूत करता है।

श्रम का सम्मान ही राष्ट्र की शक्ति

महात्मा गांधी ने कहा था; "श्रम ही सच्ची पूँजी है।"

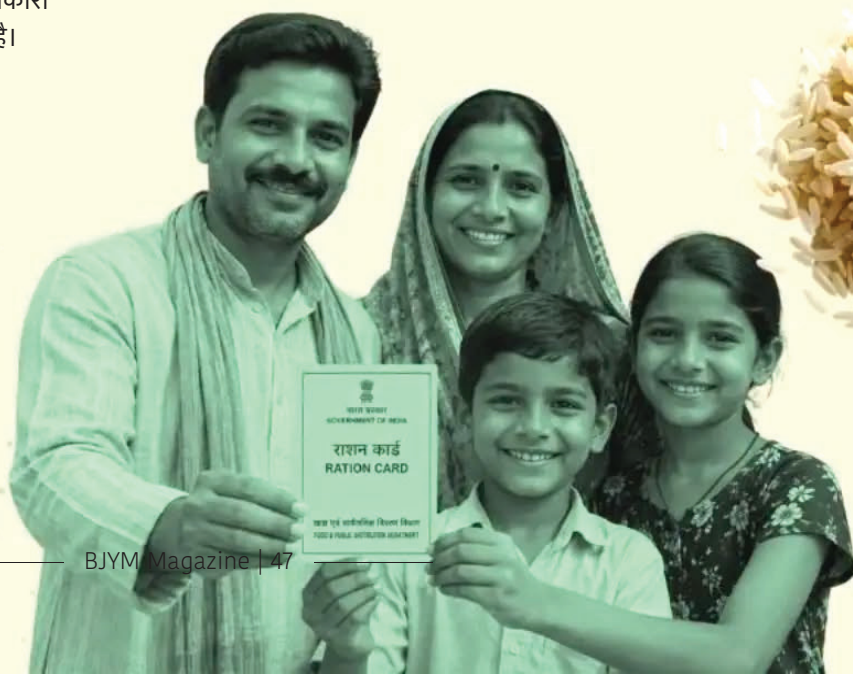
यह विचार आज भी उतना ही प्रासंगिक है। किसी भी राष्ट्र की प्रगति केवल बड़े उद्योगों से नहीं, बल्कि उन करोड़ों श्रमिकों से होती है जो प्रतिदिन अपने श्रम से भारत के विकास की नींव को मजबूत करते हैं। प्रसिद्ध अर्थशास्त्री Guy Standing अपनी पुस्तक The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class (Bloomsbury Academic, 2011) में लिखते हैं कि बदलती अर्थव्यवस्था में काम करने वाले लोगों को केवल रोजगार ही नहीं, बल्कि गरिमा और सामाजिक सुरक्षा भी मिलनी चाहिए। यह विचार आज भारत के श्रम सुधारों की चर्चा में भी महत्वपूर्ण माना जाता है।

निष्कर्ष

चार श्रम संहिताएँ केवल कानूनी बदलाव नहीं हैं, बल्कि भारत के कार्यस्थलों को अधिक सरल, सुरक्षित और आधुनिक बनाने की दिशा में एक बड़ा कदम हैं। इनका उद्देश्य श्रमिकों और उद्योगों के बीच संतुलन स्थापित करना है। यदि इनका प्रभावी और संवेदनशील ढंग से क्रियान्वयन किया जाता है, तो ये केवल कानूनों का परिवर्तन नहीं, बल्कि 'विकसित भारत' के निर्माण में श्रमिकों के विश्वास को और मजबूत करने का माध्यम बन सकती हैं। ये श्रम सुधार केवल कानूनी संशोधन नहीं हैं, बल्कि 'विकसित भारत 2047' के संकल्प को धरातल पर उतारने की दिशा में एक अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण और दूरगामी कदम हैं।

अर्थात् शासक का वास्तविक सुख और हित प्रजा के सुख एवं हित में निहित है। यह सिद्धांत आधुनिक लोककल्याणकारी शासन की उस अवधारणा को पुष्ट करता है जिसमें राज्य की नीतियों का केंद्र नागरिकों का सामाजिक संरक्षण और गरिमापूर्ण जीवन होता है। इसी दृष्टि से प्रवासी श्रमिकों के लिए कल्याणकारी लाभों की पोर्टेबिलिटी अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है।

डॉ. मिथिलेश कुमार पाण्डेय
सहायक प्राध्यापक, रामजस कॉलेज,
दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय



इसी व्यापक दृष्टिकोण के अंतर्गत 'वन नेशन, वन राशन कार्ड' (One Nation, One Ration Card-ONORC) व्यवस्था सामाजिक सुरक्षा के क्षेत्र में एक महत्वपूर्ण संस्थागत सुधार के रूप में उभरी है। यह व्यवस्था राष्ट्रीय खाद्य सुरक्षा अधिनियम, 2013 (National Food Security Act, 2013) के अंतर्गत पात्र लाभार्थियों को देश के किसी भी e-POS सक्षम उचित मूल्य की दुकान से आधार प्रमाणीकरण के माध्यम से खाद्यान्न प्राप्त करने की सुविधा प्रदान करती है। वर्तमान में यह व्यवस्था देश के सभी 36 राज्यों एवं केंद्रशासित प्रदेशों में लागू है तथा राष्ट्रीय खाद्य सुरक्षा अधिनियम के अंतर्गत आने वाले लगभग 80 करोड़ लाभार्थियों को राशन की राष्ट्रीय पोर्टेबिलिटी उपलब्ध कराती है। इस व्यवस्था के अंतर्गत लाभार्थी अपने हिस्से का राशन कार्यस्थल पर प्राप्त कर सकता है, जबकि आवश्यकता होने पर शेष खाद्यान्न परिवार के सदस्य गृह राज्य में प्राप्त कर सकते हैं। यह सुविधा विशेष रूप से उन प्रवासी श्रमिकों के लिए उपयोगी सिद्ध हुई है, जिनका रोजगार निरंतर स्थान परिवर्तन से जुड़ा रहता है।

इस व्यवस्था का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण पक्ष 'पोर्टेबिलिटी ऑफ वेलफेयर बेनिफिट्स' अर्थात् कल्याणकारी लाभों की स्थान-स्वतंत्र उपलब्धता है। पूर्व में यदि उत्तर प्रदेश, बिहार, झारखंड, ओडिशा अथवा अन्य राज्यों का कोई श्रमिक रोजगार के लिए दिल्ली, गुजरात, महाराष्ट्र, कर्नाटक या तमिलनाडु जाता था, तो राशन प्राप्त करने में उसे अनेक प्रशासनिक कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ता था। ONORC व्यवस्था ने इस संरचनात्मक समस्या का समाधान डिजिटल तकनीक और आधार-आधारित प्रमाणीकरण के माध्यम से करने का प्रयास किया है। परिणामस्वरूप, खाद्य सुरक्षा अब केवल निवास-स्थान पर निर्भर न रहकर लाभार्थी के साथ चलने वाले अधिकार के रूप में विकसित हो रही है।

यह परिवर्तन केवल प्रशासनिक सुधार नहीं है, बल्कि सामाजिक न्याय की दृष्टि से भी महत्वपूर्ण है। खाद्यान्न पर होने वाले व्यय में कमी आने से प्रवासी श्रमिकों की सीमित आय का बड़ा भाग शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और आवास जैसी आवश्यकताओं पर व्यय किया जा सकता है। इससे उनकी आर्थिक स्थिरता और जीवन की गुणवत्ता में सकारात्मक सुधार की संभावना बढ़ती है। साथ ही, यह व्यवस्था श्रमिकों में सम्मान और विश्वास की भावना को भी सुदृढ़ करती है, क्योंकि उन्हें स्थान परिवर्तन के कारण अपने वैधानिक अधिकारों से वंचित नहीं होना पड़ता।

प्रवासी श्रमिकों के सामाजिक संरक्षण की चर्चा चार श्रम संहिताओं (Labour Codes) के संदर्भ में भी प्रासंगिक है। यद्यपि वन नेशन, वन राशन कार्ड और श्रम संहिताएँ अलग-अलग विधिक ढाँचों के अंतर्गत संचालित होती हैं, फिर भी दोनों का व्यापक उद्देश्य श्रमिक-केंद्रित सामाजिक सुरक्षा को सुदृढ़ करना है। विशेष रूप से सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता, 2020 (Code on Social Security, 2020) असंगठित, गिग, प्लेटफॉर्म तथा प्रवासी श्रमिकों के पंजीकरण और सामाजिक सुरक्षा के विस्तार की दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण प्रावधान प्रस्तुत करती है। दूसरी ओर, ONORC खाद्य सुरक्षा की पोर्टेबिलिटी सुनिश्चित करता है। इसी प्रकार ई-श्रम पोर्टल

असंगठित श्रमिकों का राष्ट्रीय डेटाबेस तैयार करने का प्रयास है। यदि भविष्य में ONORC, ई-श्रम तथा अन्य सामाजिक सुरक्षा प्लेटफॉर्मों के बीच प्रभावी डिजिटल समन्वय स्थापित होता है, तो सामाजिक सुरक्षा की पोर्टेबिलिटी और अधिक व्यापक एवं प्रभावी बन सकती है।

यद्यपि ONORC ने उल्लेखनीय उपलब्धियाँ प्राप्त की हैं, तथापि इसके समक्ष कुछ व्यावहारिक चुनौतियाँ अभी भी विद्यमान हैं। अनेक क्षेत्रों में इंटरनेट कनेक्टिविटी, e-POS मशीनों की कार्यक्षमता, बायोमेट्रिक प्रमाणीकरण तथा लाभार्थियों की जागरूकता से संबंधित समस्याएँ देखी जाती हैं। कुछ प्रवासी श्रमिकों को भाषा संबंधी कठिनाइयों तथा डिजिटल प्रक्रियाओं की सीमित जानकारी के कारण भी लाभ प्राप्त करने में बाधा आती है। इसके अतिरिक्त, विभिन्न राज्यों के प्रशासनिक तंत्र के मध्य समन्वय को और अधिक प्रभावी बनाने की आवश्यकता बनी हुई है। अतः तकनीकी अवसंरचना के सुदृढ़ीकरण, बहुभाषी सहायता प्रणाली, शिकायत निवारण तंत्र तथा व्यापक जन-जागरूकता अभियानों पर निरंतर ध्यान देना आवश्यक है।

आगे की दृष्टि से भारत की सामाजिक सुरक्षा व्यवस्था को 'पोर्टेबल सोशल प्रोटेक्शन' के सिद्धांत पर और अधिक विकसित करने की आवश्यकता है। श्रमिक का अधिकार उसके निवास-स्थान तक सीमित न रहकर उसके साथ चलने वाला अधिकार बने—यही भविष्य की समावेशी नीति का आधार होना चाहिए। खाद्य सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य बीमा, सामाजिक सुरक्षा, कौशल विकास तथा श्रमिक पंजीकरण जैसी व्यवस्थाओं के मध्य तकनीकी अंतर्संचालनीयता (Interoperability) स्थापित कर एक समेकित सामाजिक सुरक्षा पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र विकसित किया जा सकता है। इससे न केवल प्रवासी श्रमिकों की संवेदनशील आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति होगी, बल्कि श्रम गतिशीलता (Labour Mobility), औपचारिककरण (Formalisation) और समावेशी आर्थिक विकास को भी प्रोत्साहन मिलेगा।

अंततः, 'वन नेशन, वन राशन कार्ड' केवल सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली में तकनीकी परिवर्तन नहीं, बल्कि सामाजिक सुरक्षा के सार्वभौमिक, समावेशी और पोर्टेबल स्वरूप की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण संस्थागत पहल है। यह व्यवस्था प्रवासी श्रमिकों के खाद्य सुरक्षा अधिकार को अधिक व्यावहारिक, सुलभ और प्रभावी बनाती है। साथ ही, श्रम संहिताओं, ई-श्रम जैसे डिजिटल प्रयासों तथा सामाजिक सुरक्षा सुधारों के साथ इसका समन्वय भविष्य में एक ऐसे कल्याणकारी तंत्र के निर्माण की संभावना प्रस्तुत करता है, जिसमें श्रमिक का अधिकार उसके कार्यस्थल, निवास या राज्य की सीमाओं से बंधा न होकर उसके साथ निरंतर बना रहे। ऐसी व्यवस्था श्रम की गरिमा, सामाजिक न्याय और समावेशी विकास को सुदृढ़ करते हुए विकसित भारत की परिकल्पना को सार्थक आधार प्रदान कर सकती है।





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