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Dated the 21st May 2016.

To,

Smt.Anandiben Mafatlal Patel,
Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Office of the Hon'ble CM,
Swarnim Sankul-1,
New Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar-382010.

**Subject: - Homage to Dr.B.R.Ambedkar by abolition of illegal and arbitrary
appointment of priests in government- administered temples and creation
of Gujarat Temple Service(GTS).**

Respected Chief Minister Madam,

The Central and State Governments of India have been emphasizing on the current relevance, urgent application for imperative fulfillment and efficacy of Ambedkarism in every day governance of our motherland. Numerous programs and projects are launched by the authorities for actualization of Ambedkar vision in all pertinent facets of public life. A declaration by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shree.Narendra Modi in Mumbai (Times of India dated 12th October, 2015) that he is “A torch bearer to carry on the work and principles of Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar” has enthused and rekindled the optimism of all striving for grassroots level implementation of Ambedkar's ideas.

(2) Salient features of Ambedkarism can be culled out from his extensive writings and speeches, particularly in books, viz. 'Annihilation of Caste', 'Riddles of Hinduism', 'The Untouchables', 'Buddha and Karl Marx', his various speeches in the Constituent Assembly, and so on. Ambedkarism is not a set of metaphysical concepts or dogmatic socio-political theories. It is a product of application of lofty Indian spiritual ethos of Buddhism, and liberal western political ideas from the days of the French Revolution (1789), the anti-colonial struggles and upheavals for establishment of representative democracy guaranteeing Fundamental Human Rights, Inclusive Distributive Justice and Equitable Service delivery to the people by the State.

(3) At the social level Ambedkarism clamored for creation of a casteless society by demolishing the scriptural and religious foundations of hierarchical birth-based "Graded Inequality" of Hindu Caste system. Sanctification of higher castes through malicious portrayal of Purusha Sukta of Rig Veda, (Book 10, Sukta 90, Sloka 12), was deemed by Ambedkar as a clever trap and organicist logic by making social group holier than the individual, since they were emerging out of the single cosmic divine being. This is in contrast to individual-centric creation theory in the Book of Genesis in the Bible. The ignominious impact of these so called holy concepts was suppression of individual liberty, initiative, assertion of identity, and development of faculty of art and science at the alter of sustenance of privileges of higher castes. So, anybody questioning such "Divine Order" was committing blasphemous sacrilege.

(4) Hindu society became a dirty pond where vertical and horizontal mobility is blocked for ensuring enjoyment of all good things in life by the upper castes in general and priestocracy in particular. This system had curbed any prospects of new inventions and discoveries for easing hardships of those engaged in various tiresome vocations (Shudras), and emergence of better means of production, along with technological sophistication.

(5) This situation should explain the factors responsible for defeat of Indians by all foreign invaders from the time of Alexander the Great to the establishment of colonial British Raj. For want of upward revision of Indian defense strategy and military hardware, our fighters (recruited not on meritocracy but caste) always remained inferior to invaders, despite the commitment and valour of individual soldiers. Indian failure to contribute anything substantial to the world reservoir of scientific knowledge and technical skills after Bhaskara, Aryabhata and Varahamihira of fourth century AD is another bitter and painful truth about the evil of caste system.

(6) Ambedkar in his epoch-making book “Annihilation of Caste”, published in 1936 had exhorted for reform in Hindu religion and suggested specific measures for heralding the emergence of egalitarian inclusive Indian society. Relevant portion of his counsel from the book is the following,

“It would be better if priesthood among Hindus were abolished. But as this seems to be impossible, the priesthood must at least cease to be hereditary. Every person who professes to be Hindu must be eligible for being a priest. It should be provided by law that no Hindu shall be entitled to be a priest unless he has passed an examination prescribed by the state and hold the sanad (Certificate or Diploma) from the state permitting him to practice”

“No ceremony performed by a priest who does not hold a sanad shall be deemed to be valid in law, and it should be made penal for a person who has no sanad to officiate as a priest.”

“A priest should be the servant of the state, and should be subject to disciplinary action of the state in the matter of his morals, beliefs, and worship, in addition to his being subject along with other citizens to ordinary law of the land.”

“The number of priests should be limited by law according to the requirements of the state, as is done in case of the ICS(Indian Civil Service).”

(7) Nearly 80 (Eighty) temples in Gujarat are administered by the state government. The temple staff engaged in ceremonial, ritualistic and religious functions are supervised by the Industry and Mines Department of Government of Gujarat. Temples in Ambaji, Aravali District, Somnath, Somnath District, Dakor, Anand District, Shamalaji, Sabarkantha District, Dwarka, Jamnagar District etc are frequented by devotees in large numbers. The administrative bureaucracy in these temples are appointed or deputed by the state government. The Constitution of India stipulated that imperatively all public and private institutions and bodies rendering multifarious services to the people have to fully adhere to the fundamental foundational ideals in basic law of the land, enshrined in The Preamble and Part-III (Fundamental Rights) of the Constitution. To illustrate, Article 13 of the Constitution has declared that all laws which include any ordinance, order, bye-laws, rule, regulations, notifications, customs or usage, in force, which are inconsistent with the provisions of The Fundamental Rights in part III be void.

(8) It is reliably learnt that those engaged in performing ritualistic worship and ceremonial duties along with temple staff employed for auxiliary services like providing articles of worship, preparation of prasad etc, are appointed to those posts exclusively from certain families from the caste of Brahmins. Further, no fool-proof, transparent and systematic selection procedure is, reportedly, adopted for selection of temple staff through standard merit assessment and skill/competence appraisal. Many devotees complain that some priests do not know and comprehend the conceptual, metaphysical and spiritual import of many Vedic Suktas and Slokas from Tantra Samucchaya of Parashurama, chanted during pooja (worship). In short, there is a lot of confusion in selection, training, appointment, promotion and streamlining of service condition of government managed temple staff, particularly in the cadre of priests performing rituals.

(9) Absolute reservation in appointment to the post of priests to persons from Brahmin caste, (surprisingly Brahmins by birth and not by tested merit or worth) is grossly violative of many Constitutional provisions, viz., Article 14(Equality before

Law), Article 15 (Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth and Article 16 (Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment). Obviously the prevailing system amounts to practice of untouchability, in public institutions like temples, akin to blocking and attacking dalits from using public roads frequented by caste Hindus.

(10) The metaphysical definition of a Brahmin is also not approving the present system of fixing a person's caste according to his parent's caste. The popular definition of Brahman in basic scriptures is as follows:

“Janmana Jayate Shudra,
Samskaro Dwaja Utbhavae,
Veda Padheti Bhavet Vipraha.”
Brahma Gnanami Brahmanaha

(At the time of birth, everybody is Shudra-Shudra means, a person kept away from knowledge – Srutat Dooraha Shudra – the etymologist Yaskan; by acquiring education/culture he becomes twice born (Dwaja); by mastering Veda (any set of knowledge), one becomes Vipra – A man of specialized knowledge – Vishesh Pragna; and by acquiring knowledge of Brahma (Brahma Gnanan – Spiritual Awareness), one becomes a Brahmin.)

Rig Veda (Book 10, Sukta 191, Sloka 3) is unequivocal on equality of all human beings and asserts, “Let the thoughts of all men be alike, let all live unitedly together, let their minds, their concentration and yagya rituals be the same, which means let all people live by mingling with each other”

(11) In the most popular scripture of the Hindus – The Bhagavad Geeta – Lord Krishna categorically declares “ Men of self – knowledge are same sighted on a Brahmana imbued with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste”, Chapter 5, Sloka 18. The great modern Indian saint, Ram Krishna Paramahansa observes,

“ Nescience creates plurality and difference among beings. Omniscience reveals unity behind the seeming multiplicity”. Thus it is conspicuous that the letter, and quintessential spirit of Hindu scriptures and the codified wisdom in the Constitution of India vehemently disapprove the practice of exclusivism and discrimination in the conduct of religious ceremony of government administered temples by denying the right to worship even to meritorious non-Brahmins among practitioners of Hindu religion.

(12) The intrinsically cardinal scriptures of Hinduism – Prasthanathrayam, viz., 1) Upanishads, 2) Brahma Sutras, 3) Bhagavad Geeta – do not validate birth based caste system. Lopsided comprehension and skewed interpretation of Purusha Sukta of Rig Veda by caste Hindu speculators had only resulted in creation of Smritis of Manu, Yagnavalkya, Parashara and Shankara, providing sanctity to caste discrimination and gender prejudice and consequent victimization of so called lower caste and those outside Varna Vyavastha (Four fold Division).It is widely accepted that Smritis do not have inviolable solemnity and status of “Scriptures”. In chapter 16,Sloka 24, the Bhagavad Geeta affirms, “Therefore, let the scriptures be your authority in deciding what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Having known what is said in the ordinance of the scriptures you should act here.”

(13) In this context, I request you for initiating action to constitute a Gujarat Temple Service (GTS), on the pattern of any self-contained government service cadre. A committee of experts can formulate rules and regulations for constitution of GTS.The present system of illegal monopoly of one caste in temple worship service is obnoxiously obscurantist, besides being repugnant of basic structure of the Indian Constitution and pre eminent Hindu scriptures. Qualified women should also be inducted as priests in GTS.

(14) Vedas had never permitted burning women on the funeral pyre of their husbands but this abominably atrocious practice, for economic reasons by male folk, for escaping from the responsibility of spending money for maintenance of widows, continued till Governor General of East India Company, Lord William Bentic, banned it in 1830s,at the instance of Raja Ram Mohan Ray. Moreover, any action to end injustice in practice of

priestocracy in the Hindu temples will be in tune with direction in Rig Veda (5/51/15) to stick to the path of justice. The relevant Vedic Sukta says “O man! Just as the Sun and the Moon move on the prescribed path with regularity, similarly man also should go on the path of Justice.”

(15) Democratization of temple services constitutes the nucleus of Ambedkar reform agenda. For operationalisation of the pith and substance of Ambedkarism, the Central and State governments of India should launch the followings programs besides allowing entry of non-Brahmin Hindus in cadre of priests in government administered temples. They are:

- a. Inclusion of primary concepts of Ambedkarism in curriculum of Indian schools.
- b. Introduction of the historic book “Annihilation of caste” as a secondary text book for students of Secondary School Certificate (SSC).
- c. Introduction of graduate and postgraduate courses on Ambedkarism in all Indian universities. Those who obtain these degrees would be suitable and skillful in implementation of governments programs for achieving social justice.
- d. Commencement of a special drive for total eradication of manual scavenging in the country.

Presently votaries of Ambedkarism feel that authorities are only engaged in displaying gestural obeisance and tokenist rituals of garlanding Ambedkar statues. Perhaps execution of above suggested five proposals would convince the people at large, the commitment and purposefulness of political elite of India to Ambedkar wisdom.

(16) Ambedkar was apprehensive of the evil designs of detractors of the Constitution of India and in March 1955 he said in the Rajya Sabha “The Constitution was wonderful temple we built for the Gods, but before they can be installed, the Devils have taken

possession.”(Quoted by Arundhati Roy in her essay: The Doctor and the Saint, incorporated as introduction to the book, “Annihilation of Caste” – published by Navayana Publication.)

Madam, you are well known for your style of constant accessibility and keenness to swiftly solve problems and enhance quality and impact of service and justice delivery to people of Gujarat. I hope that you will kindly appreciate my proposals and take necessary action for their implementation.

Kindly favor me with a reply about follow-up action on my suggestions in this letter, at your convenience.

Thanking You

Yours Faithfully,

R.B.Sreekumar.