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Ensure Safeguards for India's Carbon Market

Context

- The **contemporary development paradigm**, inherited from the Industrial Revolution, has propelled economic growth at an unprecedented pace but at a severe ecological cost.
- **While some propose degrowth as a corrective, this approach is neither just nor feasible** for developing nations that continue to struggle with poverty, hunger, and underdevelopment.
- The challenge, therefore, lies not in halting growth, but in **decoupling it from environmental degradation**.
- Within this context, **carbon credit systems** and **sustainable technologies** have emerged as potential tools for reconciling growth with ecological balance.

Decoupling Growth from Environmental Harm

- Economic growth and environmental protection have long been viewed as opposing forces.
- However, the need to achieve both simultaneously is increasingly urgent, especially for the Global South.
- Developing nations such as India cannot afford degrowth; instead, they must **pursue sustainable growth** that uplifts livelihoods while mitigating environmental harm.
- This can be achieved through **clean technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable agricultural practices**.
- **India's rapid expansion in solar energy** and micro-irrigation offers **tangible evidence that green innovation and economic progress can coexist**.
- These **examples illustrate the concept of green growth**, a model in which technological and policy interventions drive both environmental protection and inclusive prosperity.

Carbon Credits: Promise and Pitfalls

- **Promise**
- Among the various mechanisms designed to facilitate this transition, **carbon credits** have gained prominence.
- A **carbon credit represents a verified reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions**, tradable in markets to offset emissions elsewhere.
- In theory, **this allows firms, especially in industrialised countries, to finance low-carbon activities in developing regions**, rewarding sustainable practices such as renewable energy generation,

reforestation, and agroforestry.

- India's **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)** embodies this ambition, establishing benchmarks for emission intensity and creating a national registry and trading platform.
- By including voluntary offsets and methodologies for low-emission practices such as biochar and sustainable rice cultivation, **India seeks to position itself as a leader in equitable carbon trading.**
- **Pitfalls**
- The **global experience with carbon markets exposes a critical paradox**: projects meant to empower local communities often end up marginalising them.
- Despite the high potential of agriculture-based carbon projects, **only a fraction in India have successfully registered or issued credits.**
- Studies, such as those by **CIMMYT**, attribute this gap to **poor farmer engagement**, limited training, and weak institutional support, particularly among **smallholders and marginalised caste groups.**
- This pattern underscores a persistent structural issue: carbon markets risk reproducing inequalities if not designed with local realities and justice at their core.

Carbon Projects and the Shadow of Exploitation

- The danger of exploitation within carbon markets becomes starkly evident in the **Northern Kenya Rangelands Carbon Project**, a high-profile case intended to demonstrate community-led climate action.
- Despite claims of participatory governance, investigations revealed serious violations—lack of consent, weakened land rights, and opaque management.
- The project's suspension by Verra, following evidence of flawed carbon measurement and disregard for **free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)**, exposes systemic weaknesses in current carbon governance.
- The **Lake Turkana Wind Power Project**, also in Kenya, further illustrates this tension.
- Though lauded as a renewable energy success story, it displaced herders by fencing vast tracts of communal land, restricting access to grazing routes and water.
- **These cases reveal an unsettling irony**: sustainability initiatives, if not equitably structured, can perpetuate the very injustices they aim to correct.

Structural Vulnerabilities in India's Carbon Market and The Way Forward

- **Structural Vulnerabilities in India's Carbon Market**
- India's carbon market is expanding rapidly, yet it remains **vulnerable to power asymmetries.**
- Small farmers, tribal communities, and marginalised groups often face profound information gaps and limited negotiating power.
- Current regulations under the **CCTS** emphasise technical compliance, such as verification and accounting, but neglect critical issues like land tenure, FPIC, and equitable distribution of revenues.
- This **creates fertile ground for opaque contracts, elite capture, and greenwashing**, where companies project sustainability while perpetuating inequality.
- **Toward a Just and Inclusive Climate Transition**
- Building a credible carbon market demands not only sound economics but also ethical governance.

- A just transition requires **adaptive regulation, stakeholder engagement**, and **context-sensitive design**.
- **Policies must embed social safeguards, such as FPIC, transparent contracts**, and grievance mechanisms, to prevent the replication of extractive patterns.

Conclusion

- For developing nations like India, the path forward lies in **equitable decarbonisation**, achieving growth and poverty reduction while upholding community rights and environmental integrity.
- **Carbon credits and markets, though powerful tools, are not inherently just**; they become so only when grounded in fairness, participation, and transparency.
- **India can either build a carbon market that mirrors historical inequalities or pioneer a model that harmonises growth**, sustainability, and justice.
- The **choice will determine whether the green transition becomes a new form of extraction, or a genuine path** toward shared prosperity.

Ensure Safeguards for India's Carbon Market FAQs

Q1. Why is “degrowth” considered unjust for developing countries?

Ans. Degrowth is unjust for developing countries because they still face poverty and hunger, and need economic growth to improve living standards.

Q2. What is the main goal of decoupling growth from environmental harm?

Ans. The goal is to allow countries to expand their economies and reduce poverty without increasing pollution or damaging the environment.

Q3. How do carbon credits help in reducing emissions?

Ans. Carbon credits reward activities that reduce or remove greenhouse gases, allowing companies to offset their emissions while supporting sustainable projects.

Q4. What risk do carbon markets pose to local communities?

Ans. Carbon markets can exploit local communities if projects ignore land rights, lack consent, or fail to share benefits fairly.

Q5. What kind of regulation does India need for its carbon market?

Ans. India needs balanced regulation that ensures transparency and community rights without creating excessive bureaucracy.

Source: **The Hindu**

A Reading of a Revisionism in Constitutional History

Context

- **Some commentators now claim that Sir Benegal Narsing Rau**, the Constitutional Adviser to the Constituent Assembly, **was the true architect of the Indian Constitution**.
- **Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar**, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, **merely refined an already complete text**.
- It **reflects not only an effort to reinterpret history but also a conscious attempt to marginalise Dalit agency** and dilute the moral vision that Ambedkar infused into India's founding document.
- A careful reading of history reveals that while Rau and Ambedkar played complementary roles, **Ambedkar's leadership gave the Constitution its enduring soul**.

Rau and Ambedkar: Complementary Roles, Not Competing Claims

- As Constitutional Adviser appointed in July 1946, **Rau's task was technical and preparatory**.
- **Drawing upon his experience as a civil servant** and his involvement in drafting the Government of India Act of 1935, **he produced a working draft informed by comparative study** of constitutions from the United States, Canada, Ireland, Australia, and Weimar Germany.
- **In October 1947, he submitted this preliminary draft to the Constituent Assembly**, a framework that provided the foundation for subsequent deliberations. However, Rau held no political mandate.
- **His expertise was scholarly, not representative**; his document a starting point, not the final covenant of the Republic.
- **Ambedkar's task, by contrast, was profoundly political and moral**. As Chairman of the Drafting Committee, he inherited Rau's draft but had to transform it into a living document capable of uniting a newly independent, fractured nation.
- **He carried the Constitution through the turbulence of Partition, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi**, and the complex debates of the Assembly.

The Politics Behind Revisionism

- The **recent campaign to elevate Rau as the real author** of the Constitution **is not rooted in new archival evidence or scholarship**.
- Rather, **it reflects a discomfort with the prominence of a Dalit intellectual** at the heart of India's national founding.
- This **reinterpretation seeks to reclaim constitutional authorship** for caste privilege, recasting Ambedkar's radical social vision as a mere bureaucratic exercise.
- In doing so, **it attempts to domesticate the transformative potential of the Constitution**, reducing it from a manifesto of social justice to a technocratic manual of governance.
- **Such revisionism ignores the profoundly moral dimension** that Ambedkar brought to constitution-making.

The Moral Centre: Ambedkar's Vision and Legacy

- His intellectual and moral leadership turned the making of the Constitution into **an act of social redemption**.

- His imprint is **most visible in the provisions on Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles**, and affirmative action, mechanisms through which the Republic sought to dismantle centuries of caste-based exclusion and inequality.
- His **speeches in the Assembly articulated a vision of democracy** rooted not merely in institutions but in the moral conscience of society.
- **Ambedkar's warning remains one of the most powerful statements** in Indian constitutional history:

Memory and the Republic

- To elevate Rau above Ambedkar is to participate in **a larger project of draining the Constitution of its radical, transformative spirit**.
- It **reframes the founding of the Indian Republic** as a matter of technical competence rather than moral courage.
- Yet, **the Constitution was conceived not in bureaucratic serenity but amidst Partition's violence**, Gandhi's martyrdom, and the persistent wounds of caste oppression. To centre Ambedkar in this narrative is not symbolic generosity, it is historical truth.
- **India's founding leaders**, including Nehru, Patel, and Rajendra Prasad, **recognised Ambedkar's central role**.
- **None claimed that Rau was the principal author**. They understood the difference between drafting a text and shaping a nation's conscience.
- Rau deserves admiration as a constitutional engineer; **Ambedkar deserves reverence as the Republic's moral architect**.

Conclusion

- The **Indian Constitution is both a legal and moral document**, an affirmation of liberty, equality, and fraternity against centuries of hierarchy and exclusion.
- While Sir B.N. Rau's scholarship laid its technical foundations, **it was Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who breathed life into it, giving it purposes and conscience**.
- **To deny Ambedkar's primacy is not merely to misread history**; it is to betray the Republic's founding promise of justice and dignity for all.

A Reading of a Revisionism in Constitutional History FAQs

Q1. What is the main argument of the B.N Rau vs Ambedkar Debate?

Ans. While Sir B.N. Rau prepared the initial draft of India's Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar transformed it into a moral and political document that gave life to the Republic.

Q2. How were Rau's and Ambedkar's roles in the Constitution different?

Ans. Rau's role was technical and preparatory, while Ambedkar's role was political and moral, involving consensus-building and shaping the Constitution's final vision.

Q3. Why is the attempt to credit Rau over Ambedkar seen as problematic?

Ans. It is seen as an effort to diminish Dalit agency and weaken the radical, egalitarian spirit that Ambedkar

brought to India's founding.

Q4. What did Ambedkar warn about in his final speech to the Constituent Assembly?

Ans. Ambedkar warned that political democracy would fail if social and economic inequality continued to exist.

Q5. What is the Constitution's true nature?

Ans. The essay describes the Constitution as both a legal and moral document that embodies justice, equality, and fraternity rather than merely a technical framework of governance.

Source: **The Hindu**

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