Equality, Inclusion and Social Justice in India

An Impact Analysis of Post-Neo-Liberal Policies

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Abstract - After Independence, India adopted a constitution that guaranteed equality, justice, and protection from all types of exploitation. To ensure this, various strategies and programs were designed for the redistribution of national assets. Educational services, health for all, and social defence programs were implemented across India. Social Justice thus prevailed ensuring adequate budgets, infrastructure development, and public participation through public sector growth in many sectors.

New Economic Policy that was adopted in 1991 due to a deficit in the government treasury and ratified by the Indian parliament was an outcome of conditions imposed by international agencies like IMF (International Monetary Fund) and other agencies.

The impact of NEP-1991 has drastic effects due to LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalisation) policies on every unit of Indian society. Assessing the impact on traditionally Caste Affected Marginalised sections and minorities is the focus of this paper. After nearly thirty years, the effect has trickled down on these population in a diverse manner. "Has this challenged the Constitutional framework of Social Justice"? This question is continuously discussed in this paper.

Index Terms - Indian Constitution, New Economic Policy, LPG, Social Justice, IMF, Caste, Marginalised, Minorities, Discrimination,

I. INTRODUCTION

This research proposal focuses on the concept of Equality, Inclusion, and Social Justice in independent India after the neo-liberal economic policies were adopted. India has made great strides in economic growth during the post-independence period, but these gains have not been evenly distributed. The gap between the rich and the poor has widened, and the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities has led to an increase in social injustice. This research proposal seeks to examine the impact of neo-liberal economic policies on social justice and equality in India.

The research will focus on the effects of the liberalization policies, including the liberalization of labour markets, privatization of state-owned enterprises, and the reduction of trade barriers and tariffs. The research will also examine the impact of these policies on social and economic inequalities, particularly in terms of access to education, health care, and employment. The research will assess the impact of neo-liberal economic policies on social justice and equality in India and identify possible solutions to address the existing inequalities. The constitutional commitments promoted the policymakers, planners, and implementers to dispense high priority to the development and welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Referred as SC/ST) started right from the inception of the country's developmental planning introduced in the year 1951, as the First Five Year Plan. It is evident from the five-year plans and the various statutes of central and state government that tribal have been given innumerable rights and privileges. Even though they remain deprived of the benefits available out of such statutory provisions. There are many obstacles responsible for the low rate of SC/ST development among the focused group against the desired result. The ignorance and apathetic attitude from the enforcing agency, lack of awareness among these populations about various developmental programs of central and state government, etc. result in their continuous exploitation. Despite the effort made by the government, the desired benefit does not reach the ultimate beneficiary of the schemes.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Social justice enshrined in the Indian Constitution needs to be relooked at in changing times in the post-liberalization era. Through the Constitution, the Indian state promises equality to all its citizens. The various provisions of the Constitution elucidated in the chapters on Fundamental Rights (justiciable) and Directive Principles of State Policies (non-justiciable) delineate the state's obligation to provide equal opportunities to all its citizens in social, political, and economic spheres.

In India since 1970, many institutions were created by the state at the macro to meso level to elicit participation as per the constitutional mandate. In the process of stimulating participation, certain elites sin the villages and urban areas became alternative power centres to bureaucracy and the participation of socially excluded groups resulted in namesake and symbolism. However, after the policy reforms in 1991, these institutions were steadily affected due to the withdrawal of the state from certain sectors. These social & politically inclusive institutions are undergoing tremendous changes due to the development aims and processes led by the contemporary political leadership.

Social Development Goals 2030, talks about Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions along with Reduced Inequalities. Have we been able to achieve these goals? The answer is negative, as per the data of NCRB (National Crime Research Bureau of India).

Social Justice reflected during the last seven decades as follows:
- o Redistribution of resources land etc.

- o Creation of a just society through various social welfare schemes
- o Affirmative action and representation in jobs, education, and politics
- o Protection from exploitation and injustice

There are many other aspects of Social Justice, that are in the transition phase by the state mechanisms. The private sector has grown up and controlling certain resources, can Social Justice be introduced along with CSR as a special provision? Liberalisation has created private sector funds and property out of public engagement as consumers, can they ignore social issues of such inhuman practices and discrimination where women are raped, schools, colleges, and jobs are discriminated, and even burial grounds and the cemetery is denied to SC & ST (Scheduled Castes- Dalit - Untouchables and Tribal - Adivasis) people.

It will be significant to understand the perspectives of Indian sub-continent scholars about the *Caste Hierarchy* and post-liberalization redefining the role of the state. It will be a matter of analysis to explore the status and impact of post-liberal forces on state and weaker sections like SC/ST in the context of this study. Efforts will be made to explore the emerging trend and political economy of elites that are influencing the decision-making towards social justice.

There are significant caste differences in entrepreneurship across India with SC/STs under-represented in entrepreneurial activities. It is the responsibility of not only the governments but business chambers and the corporate world in India to fill those gaps. With the Covid-19 situation that has made millions unemployed, mostly from so-called lower castes, it is time for Indian businesses to step forward and make responsible decisions.

III. ISSUES IDENTIFIEED

Patterns of history plays crucial role in governance which are too often poorly understood or ignored by development agencies and policy makers. Historically Indian society has been caste dominant and major control over resources has been existed by dominant caste groups. After independence, power was transferred to community, that is powerful in the caste hierarchy traditionally. The powerful positions in the governance and access over resources has been enjoyed by these dominant caste groups since last more than seven decades.

1. Promoting the political participation of socially excluded groups and managing conflict between them and dominant caste groups.
2. Strengthening human rights and managing disparity through a participatory and transparent implementing mechanisms.
3. Is there a governance that is characterised by politicians striking informal 'bargains' with the private sector, post liberalisation that build on their relationships with particular social groups, but that frequently undermine formal state rules, laws and regulations based on social justice – with damaging the constitutional values effects for the country?
4. Patterns of inclusion or exclusion within the political organisations that control the state can go a long way toward explaining the outbreak of civil unrest and communal tension, where some social groups were permanently excluded from power on other side, inclusive bargains can explain the absence of conflict and unrest in some places.
5. Politics based on discrimination and favouritism can lead violence, corruption within governments, and corporate private sector that is indifferent towards issues of social justice.

IV. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research proposal is to examine the impact of neo-liberal economic policies on social justice and equality in India.

To achieve this objective, the following specific objectives are proposed:

1. To analyse the impact of neo-liberal policies on the distribution of resources and opportunities in India.
2. To evaluate the effects of liberalization on social and economic inequalities in India.
3. To identify possible solutions to address the existing inequalities in India.

V. METHODOLOGY

This project will advance with number of in-depth qualitative approaches, in the first phase: (1) policy documents, (2) relevant legislation and (3) the political impetus behind the emergence of new forms of policing will be analysed. Next, a number of focus groups in India will be held in order to ascertain the understanding of social justice process post-liberalisation era.

An extensive series of 'open' interviews will then proceed with senior government officers, social organisations members, policy makers, retired servicemen and other key players, such as members of the SC/ST panels, those are Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes protecting committees established by the government. The final phase of the research will consist of substantial periods of observational research of Social Justice Programs implemented by the government of India.

The research will be conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative research techniques, such as interviews and focus group discussions, will be used to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of neo-liberal economic policies on social justice and equality in India. Quantitative methods, such as surveys and statistical analysis, will be used to analyze the data collected.

VI. KEY CONCEPTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Concept of Caste: "Caste remains a key determinant of a person's future. This is perfectly reflected in India's labour market, which conclusions is more governed by the laws of social origin than by statutory legislation. Moreover, violation of caste rules by Dalits seeking to break caste-related employment barriers re prone to severe punishment from the dominant castes, including economic boycotts and even physical violence." (Indian Exclusion Report, 2014)

Concept of Social Justice: Social justice is fundamentally rooted in a project of democracy, whereby individuals can participate in the institutions that govern their lives as fully included persons, and receive an equitable share of resources (Fraser, 1997; Howe, 1997; Young, 1990).

Role of the State: State-created opportunities for public participation have huge potential to engage citizens, including those from poor communities, in India, they mostly belong to socially excluded groups. This has a long-lasting impact on debates about public policy – from local to a national level and in a range of sectors. But the mere existence of these spaces does not guarantee that they will be held open for substantive and sustainable engagement. Attention to their design and functioning, and the skills of those participating, is crucial.

Indian Corporate Dominated by the Upper Castes: According to a 2012 study, about 93 percent (of which 45 percent are Brahmins and 46 percent are Vaishyas of the Indian corporate board members are from the forward castes. In another study, it was found that most mergers and acquisitions occur between directors of the same castes. Wherever there is a way, there is caste stopping your way – this proverb cannot be truer than in the Indian corporate world. If corporate in India are serious about their mission and want to build value-driven companies, they must not only handle their employees and customers with care but must get involved in tackling societal problems such as caste discrimination. Caste plays an important role in the Indian economy so do the caste networks and it is time for Indian businesses to help the Dalit community proactively.

Architect of Indian Constitution on Caste: Dr. Ambedkar in Annihilation of Caste said that *"Caste is not just a division of labour; it is a division of laborers"*. More than ever now is the time that Indian businesses to commit to actual change and take substantial actions to end this division of laborers. Acknowledge the issue of caste that Dalits are exploited and do not get the same opportunities, listen to Dalit employees' concerns, show empathy and support them, ensure diversity, foster an inclusive workplace, develop future leaders from marginalized communities, declare your company's stand on caste discrimination, and commit to handling the caste discrimination in your organization. There are many things that Indian businesses should start doing right until it's not too late.

Response of the Government: The government has made special arrangements at all levels to protect the SC from their exploitation by the high caste and backward classes. But despite these arrangements, incidents or atrocities continue to be reported, mainly because of the adverse socio-economic climate, poverty, and illiteracy of the SC and their inability to muster energetic political and administrative support.

Studies investigating social justice refer to, exploring how to overcome inequalities, barriers, poverty, and privileges; the protection of individual; and collective rights (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Khondker, 2017).

VII. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the effects of liberalization on social and economic inequalities in India?

How have liberalization policies affected the distribution of resources and opportunities in India?

What measures can be taken to address the existing inequalities in India?

What has been the impact of neo-liberal economic policies on Equality, Inclusion, and Social Justice in India?

How should we approach social groups led by historical and cultural stigma towards the atrocities, social exclusion, and discrimination in the social, and economic lives of the victims?

VIII. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The expected outcome of this research is to gain a better understanding of the impact of neoliberal policies on social justice and equality in India. The research will also identify possible solutions to address the existing inequalities in India.

IX. THEMATIC CATEGORIES

o   Informal Institutions

Research shows that informal institutions and personalised relationships are pervasive, powerful and, in some circumstances, can contribute to progressive outcomes in poor countries.

Often dismissed as 'relics of "traditional" institutions that have not yet completely disappeared', such political structures can in fact be highly adaptive. "Some of these unorthodox organisational arrangements are of recent origin, and constitute (smart) adaptations to prevailing local circumstances."

o   Civil Society led by Socially excluded Groups

Is there a role for ordinary citizens in 'state building' or is that process driven only by elites? 'Good' governance requires the active involvement of citizens and civil society, a view reflected in the number of NGOs and 'participatory governance' programmes supported by many donors. Citizen engagement can, under certain conditions, contribute to conferring legitimacy, demanding accountability, influencing responsive policies, countering elite capture of resources, and implementing effective services. Citizens may engage with the state in a number of ways. This is not only through electoral processes as voters, but also through local associations and social movements outside of the state, as well as (the increasingly prevalent) formalised participatory governance or co-governance mechanisms.

-   Positive outcomes can be anticipated like:
-   The strengthening of socially excluded groups through building knowledge and awareness of rights.

- The strengthening of practices of participation, such as building alliances and relationships, and the emergence of new voices and issues in the public arena.
- Building responsive states and institutions through greater access to development resources, access to rights, and strengthened accountability.
- There are a range of concrete examples:
- New forms of Socially Excluded Groups involvement in national policymaking
- Community associations engagement in creating communal harmony.
- Mobilisation and social movements for confidence building measures among the victim community and problem creating groups with efficient use of media.

o <u>Women from Socially Excluded Groups</u>

- Women from socially excluded groups are still far behind in their overall representation of social life, education and industry with their dominant caste group women. In supporting women's participation, special attention should be paid to the following challenges:
- Building women's confidence, speaking skills and knowledge of the issues under discussion, as well as women's association and forms of mobilisation which support them in public spaces.
- Creating networks and linkages between women would-be political candidates and women in political office, between women in politics and women in movements and women's organisations,
- Addressing the barriers to women's participation in public life: the way women are treated in public and a host of other cultural and social dimensions.

o <u>Emerging New Social-Cultural Regional Organisations</u>
In the recent years, many local- regional groups are aggressively participating and mobilising their social groups for better representation in politics, jobs and education. Most of them culturally not deprived like other socially excluded groups such as SC (Dalit) or ST (Adivasi). These other backward classes are led and controlled by invisible elements as their activities are uncertain and vague. There political affiliation, strategies and goals need to be analysed.

o <u>Middle Class and their organisations:</u>

When organised, the middle classes – such as in professional associations of accountants, doctors or lawyers – combine organisational capacities and technical expertise to influence governments effectively to improve security, service delivery, and other development aims. They provide the bulk of the resources and capacities required to support a vibrant civil society (such as NGOs and social movements).

X. CONCLUSION

The post-liberalization age had a variety of effects on society, ranging from individuals to groups, in addition to smoothing day-to-day living through the widespread use of technology. Environmental degradation, urbanization, pollution, and industrialization have resulted in widespread employment loss, discrimination, exploitation, and social marginalization.

The government's primary role has been to preserve citizens' rights, and the government, with its power over permission and sanctions, has single-handedly regulated the private sector; LPG has also had an impact on the court system.

It will be significant to understand the perspectives of Indian sub-continent scholars about the Caste hierarchy and post-liberalization redefining the role of the state. It will be a matter of analysis to explore the status and impact of post-liberal forces on state and weaker sections like SC/ST in the context of this study. Efforts will be made to explore the emerging trend and political economy of elites that are influencing the decision-making towards social justice.

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