



Social-Justice: Indian context

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Abstract

The concept of social justice is rooted in and directly opposed to the phenomenon of social inequality. It is hypothesized that there exists in society a dominant minority which enslaves the majority of people for perpetuating its own interests, that is, for keeping itself in positions of power and maintaining its social and cultural supremacy. From to intense humanitarian concern for other is a sure index of the operation of the principle of spontaneous social justice, and therefore a clean index of normative upgrading/ social development.

Keywords: social justice, humanitarian, distributive justice

Introduction

The concept of social justice is rooted in and directly opposed to the phenomenon of social inequality. It is hypothesized that there exist s in society a dominant minority which enslaves the majority of people for perpetuating its own interests, that is, for keeping itself in positions of power and maintaining its social and cultural supremacy. Therefore, the groups of people experiencing various forms of humiliation, and who constitute the majority of any given population, will, at some time or the other, start making efforts to come on par with their superiors. Social justice as a goal is said to have been achieved when this minority of social, economic, cultural and political superiors come to terms with the majority (inferiors), and willingly agree to treat them as their equals in all these respects.

The social- justice approach to development aims to socially enable those who were socially disabled because of tradition or for other reasons. The social development through social justice approach gives precedence to the development of the human material or human resource coming particularly from the underprivileged or the downtrodden sections of society. Also that it precedes the development of material elements. Conditions of exploitation and oppression are detected and liquidated at each level, apparent or subtle, to restore social justice.

Some authors regard social justice purely as a problem of distribution of wealth, offices, opportunities and other resources available in society, thus equating it with distributive justice. D. Miller (1976) identifies various models of social justice according to the different views regarding such distribution eg. According to rights and needs. When we speak of economic growth with social justice, we mean it in the sense of distributive justice, implying thereby that the benefits of economic growth are justly distributed among various sections of society, particularly so that they percolate to the lower strata of society. In fact the process of securing social justice cannot be divorced from the process of securing social development.

Social justice represents the developmental concepts in

another sense also. For instance, John Rawls (1973) concept of social justice as fairness comprehends for it a regulated free- economy, with a reasonable concentration of wealth. Here justice is treated as a matter of adjustment between the conflicting claims of the contending parties in a political situation. On the contrary, developmental concept of social justice represents a humanist aspiration, treating justice as a matter of improving the conditions the oppressed and underprivileged social groups not by placing them in a competitive situation but by creating more congenial conditions for the downtrodden. Thus developmental concept of social justice covers all its essential aspects; it represents social justice as the voice of the oppressed, as a humanist philosophy and also as a force behind structural changes in society.

In the Indian context, it precisely means equal treatment to be meted out to the dalits, tribals, women, minorities and various other weaker sections of society. The policy of social justice adopted by the Union Government and its states is declaredly based on the ideology of protection of human dignity. It has been unambiguously asserted that liberty, equality and fraternity are those primordial values on which the notion of social justice rests, and the Constitution of India guarantees all of them as the fundamental human rights for all the citizens of India. Abolition of social disabilities like unsociability and exploration in all its forms provide further testimony to this policy. These fundamental rights and their explanations are spread through articles 13 to 23, of the Constitution in order to protect them, the judiciary has been kept independent of state control. Thus all forms of social, economic, political and cultural disabilities from which the former shudras suffered have been meticulously sought to be abolished by the state.

The practical implications of the policy of social justice in India operate through article 330 to 335 of the Constitution, which guarantee reservation of seats to the members of the scheduled castes/ tribes in the Lok Sabha and the state legislatures, and also ensure reservation to them for appointments in jobs of various kinds. Now this policy has to

a large extent been extended to the members of other backward castes after the government's acceptance of the Mandal Commission's Report (1990).

However, the real success of the policy of social justice as the crucial indicator or requirement of social development depends more on the attitudinal changes marked by a sense of fraternity between and among various castes when exhibited spontaneously in the behavioural patterns of both the upper and the lower castes, that is when the upper castes start treating the lower as their natural equals and the latter start treating the former with brotherly trust. There is evidence to show that the caste system does not inherently lack in the required resilience and the desired adaptability. Mutual tolerance and intercaste marriages are likely to increase in conjunction with the other forces of modernization like education, science, technology, mass media and democratization of the public mind through various means and measures.

This observation can be further elaborated by pointing at the fact that in India, the planned economic development blended with the spirit of social justice has led to various social structural changes. A few examples as following ones would suffice to bring out the present day changing reality in so far as the landed aristocracy stands abolished as a class; the power structure in the villages has passed almost completely from the traditional rural elites to a new rural middle class. A new class structure has emerged in the villages and a peasant middle class, which is aggressively entrepreneurial, has quickly adopted scientific methods and techniques of agriculture. The monopoly in higher education, previously a privilege of the upper castes and classes has now slowly started percolating to the middle and lower class and castes in the villages.

In the foregoing analysis, an attempt has been made to formulate a more adequate construct of social development by including in it the normative dimension of social justice as its supreme indicator; the more we achieve it, the higher the level of social development achieved in any specific society.

So what is needed is the internalization of the norm of social justice, that is, others before self in the personality integration of the members of society. It is this sentiment that leads us to the importance of normative upgrading of society. From to intense humanitarian concern for other is a sure index of the operation of the principle of spontaneous social justice, and therefore a clean index of normative upgrading/ social development. Needless to assert that it is all the more required in modern times in view of its preference for an unbridled indulgence in material pleasures and consumerism, having lost in large measure its sensibilities towards others suffering. Surely, a society devoid of its concerns for social justice cannot be regarded as a developed society.

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