Social Justice Issues in India

14

Dr. Ritu Rani

Abstract

Social justice means creating a society where all individuals are treated equally and fairly without discrimination based on caste, religion, gender, class, language, or economic status. It ensures equal rights, opportunities, and dignity for everyone. Social justice is about making sure everyone gets a fair chance, especially those who have been marginalized or oppressed in society. The essence of social justice in India lies in creating an equal and fair society. Social justice is a core principle of the Indian Constitution and is seen as essential for building a truly democratic and inclusive society. article 15, 16, 17 promotions of educational and economic interests of the weaker section.

Keywords

Opportunities, constitution, untouchability, inequality, democratic Fundamental, discrimination, fairness, reservation, and movements.

Introduction

Social justice is a fundamental concept that advocates for equal rights, opportunities, and treatment for all people, regardless of

Dr. Ritu Rani
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology, T.C.V.P. Degree College, Muzaffarnagar

their race, gender, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics. In today's world, social justice issues are more critical than ever, and movements addressing these concerns are shaping the future of our society. Social justice is an idea of creating a society or institution that is based on the principles of equality and fraternity, that understands and values human rights and that recognizes the dignity of every human being. To Terrified of the cruelty and discrimination of that society, the people started looking for a new medium for anchoring the society. Different parts of the world rose against feudal elements. At the time the concept of democracy was produced in this world which was based on the ideals of social justice. The Indian Constitution is unique in its contents and Spirit. Under this the use of social justice is accepted in a wider sense which includes social and economic justice. Social justice is a concept always necessary for the welfare state. The Indian constitution adopts this concept in various provisions including the preamble in the form of socialist social and economic justice, equality etc, that clearly indicates that the state is actively involved in the social welfare of people and endeavors to establish an equal society.

The concept of social justice

Social justice as a concept arose in the early 19th century during the industrial revolution and subsequent civil revolution throughout Europe, which aimed to create more egalitarian conditions and remedy capitalistic exploitation of human labor. Because of stark stratification between the wealthy and the poor during this time, early social justice advocates focused on capital, property and the distribution of wealth. By the mid-20th century social justice had expanded from being primarily concerned with economic issues to include other spheres of social life to include the environment, race, gender and the other causes and manifestations of inequality.

The concept of social justice in India is not just a constitutional ideal, but a continuous effort to build an inclusive, equal, and fair society. It aims to bridge the gap between the Privileged and the underprivileged and ensure that every citizen lives with dignity and equal opportunity, regardless of their background.

1. Social justice in the India Constitution;

- The preamble of the Constitution promises justice – social, economic, and Political- to all citizens.
- Social justice is reflected in both fundamental rights and directive principles of state policy

2. Elimination of caste – based Inequality:

- One of the core ideas of social justice in India is to remove caste – based.
- Article 17 of the Constitution abolishes untouchability.

3. Reservation system:

- The government provides reservations in education, employment, and politics for scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other backward classes.

4. Legal and social Reforms:

- Laws and policies such as:
- SC/ST (prevention of atrocities) Act.
- Right to Education Act (RTE).
- Women's rights laws.
- The Child Labour Prohibition Act is all aimed at promoting social justice.

5. Social reform movements:

- Great reformers like Dr. B R Ambedkar, Jyotirao Phule, Mahatma Gandhi, and Periyar led movements against inequality and worked for the upliftment of the oppressed.

3. Objective of social justice in India

Social justice is a foundational principle of the Indian Constitution. It aims to create an Inclusive, fair, and equitable society where every individual- regardless of caste, gender, religion, or economic status- has equal rights and opportunities.

Main objectives of social justice in India

1. Establishment of Equality

- To ensure equal rights and opportunities for all citizens.
- To eliminate discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, language, or region.
- Promote fairness in access to education, employment, and public life.

2. Empowerment of the Marginalized section

- Uplift historically disadvantaged groups like scheduled castes, (SC) scheduled Tribes, (ST) other Backward classes (OBC) and economically weaker sections (EWS).

3. Equal Access to Education and Opportunities

- Ensure everyone, especially the poor and underprivileged, has access to quality education, healthcare, and employment.
- Bridge the gap between Privileged and underprivileged groups.

4. Elimination of Discrimination and Exploitation

- To eradicate untouchability, caste- based discrimination, child labour, bonded l
- Labour, and gender inequality.
- To ensure every citizen lives with dignity and self-respect.

5. Equal access to justice

- To provide free legal aid to the poor and needy.
- To ensure that justice is available to all, not just the rich or powerful.

6. Promotion of social harmony and Fraternity

- To strengthen unity in diversity, and promote peaceful co-coexistence.
- To eliminate communalism, regionalism, and social division.

7. Upholding constitutional values

- Promoting the core values of the Indian Constitution: Justice, Liberty, inequality, and Fraternity.

- Enforcing Articles such as:
- **Article 14-** Right to Equality
- **Article 15**- Prohibition of discrimination
- **Article 16**- Equal opportunity in public employment
- **Article 17-** Abolition of Untouchability
- **Article 46-** protection of educational and economic interests of the weaker section

4. Indian constitution and social justice

The Indian Constitution is not just a legal document; it is a vision of social transformation. One of its core ideals is the establishment of a society where every citizen enjoys equality, dignity, and equal opportunities without discrimination. This vision is embodied in the concept of social justice, which aims to remove historical inequalities and ensure fairness for all, especially for the disadvantaged and marginalized.

Social justice and the views of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Social justice refers to a society where all individuals are treated equally, have access to the same opportunities, and can live with dignity- regardless of their caste, class, gender, religion, or background. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, one of India's foremost social reformers, and the chief architect of the Indian constitution, regarded social justice not just as a legal or political issue but as a fundamental human necessity. He believed that a society without justice would descend into disorder, and that justice is essential for peace, equality, and democracy.

Justice in political thought:

- In the history of political thought, justice is a central concept.
- Justice is not static or eternal- it changes with time, social context, and evolving human values.
- The idea of justice as defined in ancient scriptures is different from the idea of justice enshrined in the modern constitution.
- Many things that were once considered just (like untouchability or the caste system) are now seen as deeply unjust.

Ambedkar's view on social justice:

Dr. Ambedkar identified the caste system as the main obstacle to justice in Indian society according to him:

- Caste- based discrimination leads to inequality and injustice.
- Social justice means not only equal opportunity but also dignity and respect in everyday life.
- A truly democratic society cannot exist without social democracy- which includes liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Ambedkar's Movements for Social Justice:

Dr. Ambedkar didn't just speak or write about social justice- he led powerful movements against caste- based discrimination. Some of the key ones include:

1. Mahad Satyagraha (1927)

- A movement demanding the right of "untouchables" to access public water tanks.
- Asserted the principle of equal civil rights.

2. Burning of Manusmriti (1927)

- Ambedkar publicly burned the Manusmriti a Hindu scripture that legitimized the caste hierarchy and gender inequality.

3. Kalaram temple entry movement (1930)

- Protested the denial of temple entry to Dalits in Nasik.
- Aimed to establish religious equality.

4. Public space equality (1923)

- A resolution was passed in the Bombay legislative council stating that Dalits (untouchables) should have equal access to public spaces such as schools, hospitals, and water bodies, just like upper castes.

Gandhi Ji's views on social justice

Mahatma Gandhi made the eradication of untouchability and the upliftment of the so–called Harijans (a term he used for those labeled as untouchables) a central part of his life's work. He firmly

believed that unless we embrace the untouchables as our own, we have no right to call ourselves true human beings.

According to Gandhi, untouchability is not an inseparable part of Hinduism, rather, it is a curse, and every Hindu has a sacred duty to fight against it. Those who consider untouchability a sin must work to eliminate it, people should foster brotherhood with them through love and service, and develop genuine relationships with them. One must consider such action as a way of purifying oneself.

Gandhi emphasized the need to alleviate the suffering of the untouchables and patiently help them overcome the ignorance and social evils caused by centuries of oppression. He insisted that the stain of untouchability in Hinduism must be removed, and this cleansing is absolutely necessary.

Though Gandhi acknowledged that members of the Congress party had done a lot in this regard, her expressed sorrow that many of them saw it only as a political necessity, not a matter of faith or conscience. According to him, many Hindus failed to see this as   Gandhi urged that if Hindu Congress members took up this cause with pure intentions, it would have a far-reaching and powerful impact. He advised them not to approach orthodox Hindus s (sanatani) with a spirit of conflict, but rather with the friendly attitude that reflects the beauty of non-violence

5. Key takeaways

- Untouchability is a moral and spiritual evil not part of true Hinduism.

- Eradicating it requires compassion, brotherhood, and service-not political tokenism.

- Congress workers must act out of sincere belief, not just strategy.

- True change comes from personal action and nonviolent persuasion, not force or conflict. Challenges in the path of social justice in India

The pursuit of social justice in India is an ongoing and complex journey. Despite constitutional guarantees and legal frameworks, several deep-rooted social, economic, political, and cultural challenges continue to obstruct True equality and justice for all sections of society.

1. Deep-rooted social inequality

- Caste- based discrimination still persists in many parts of the country, especially in rural areas.
- Despite legal abolition, untouchability is practiced in subtle and overt forms.
- Many marginalized communities to face social exclusion and humiliation.

2. Limitations of the Reservation System

- Benefits of reservation often reach only the creamy layer within backward communities.
- Social tensions and divisions arise due to the perception of unfair advantage or favoritism.
- Lack of reservation in private sector jobs and the judiciary leaves a gap in equitable representation.

3. Inequality in education

- Marginalized groups often lack access to quality education due to poverty, infrastructure, and discrimination.
- The digital divide has worsened educational inequality, especially post-COVID.
- Cases of discrimination in school and universities, leading to mental health issues and even suicides.

4. Discrimination in Employment

- SC/ST and minority youth face bias and stereotyping in hiring processes.
- Lack of diversity and inclusion police in the private sector.
- Unequal representation in leadership roles and decision–making bodies.

5. Economic inequality

- A large section of marginalized communities lacks access to land, Capital, and employment opportunities.
- Economic justice is far from being a reality despite policy efforts.

6. Weak implementation of the law

- Existing laws like the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act are often poorly implemented.
- Victims of injustice frequently face denial of justice.

7. Political Exploitation and polarization

- Social justice is often used as a political tool for vote-bank politics rather than genuine reform.
- Real change is diluted by short-term populist measures.

6. Conclusion

The issue of social justice in India is complex and deeply rooted in the country's historical, social, economic, and political landscape. The Indian Constitution enshrines social justice as a core principle, aiming to ensure equality, dignity, and equal opportunities for all citizens- especially for marginalized communities such as Dalits, Adivasis backward classes women. And religious minorities.

Despite decades of policy initiatives- including affirmative action (reservation) land reforms, and efforts to improve access to education and employment- inequality and discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, and economic status continue to persist in many parts of the country. These issues highlight the gap between constitutional ideals and ground realities.

India has made significant progress toward achieving social justice, but much work remains. True social justice can only be realized when every individual- regardless of caste, gender, religion, or economic background- is guaranteed equal rights, opportunities, and respect. Achieving this goal requires collective effort from the government, civil society, and citizens alike.

Reference

1. Laxmikanth M. (Indian Polity), 2008, Pg. **29**.
2. Mukherjee Rabindranath, (Social Ideology) 2018.
3. https://www.socialsciencejournal.in
4. https://www.drishtiia.com.