

Peace and Eco-Social Justice: Failed Distributive Justice, Violence and Militancy in India

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Abstract

Eco-social Justice which emphasizes on the need for economic and social justice along with environmental protection would bring forth peace. Peace is condition where social justice is prevalent and Social Justice is another condition based on equality. Distributive justice will ensure social, economic and political justice. Violence and militancy are primarily the result of failed distributive justice. Analysing the emergence and growth of the 'naxalite' movements in India, it could be found that the negation of distributive justice was one of the major factor the led to these militant organizations. The activities of the militants as well as the counter militant activities of the state have resulted in the breach of environmental justice India. A relation between eco-social justice and militant movements could be traced here. An eco-friendly world could not be realized without settling conflicts and establishing peace and security.

Key Words: Eco-social Justice, Distributive justice, Violence, Militancy, Naxalite movements

1. Introduction

Peace is condition where social justice is prevalent and Social Justice is another condition based on equality. Eco- social justice remains on the peaceful condition established by distributive justice. The matter to be considered here is 'artificial inequality' rather than 'natural inequality'. The gender division is artificial where as the sexual division is natural. Similarly the uneven ownership of the natural resources is artificial. The violation for distributive justice could pave the way for social unrest in the society. Such social unrest when backed by ideological components would lead to militancy, a formidable challenge to peace. Plato in his "*Laws*" suggested that property should be divided among the people in almost equal proportions. Aristotle in his "*Politics*" reminds that equality of property as essential to preserve the community and to prevent seditions that could destroy a state. Machiavelli in his "*Prince*" warns the ruler that inequalities could lead to rebellions. A relation between the negation of distributive justice and militant movements like the Naxalitem could be found in India. The overlapping effect of the divisions (ideological and ethnic elements) further creates conflicts and confrontations in India. Is it rational to deal the militancy with armed forces alone? Unless distributive justice is ensured militancy can not be completely eradicated. Distributive justice is also the basis of economic justice. The problem of unequal opportunity is to be discussed here. The result of failed distributive justice is a social system of unequal opportunities. Under such a system economic justice and development will not be possible. Further that social system will be prone to social unrest and destruction of peace. Eco- social justice can bring forth peace and stability. Justice at such basic level is denied would widen the gap of inequalities and would endanger peace. The danger of the denial of the eco-social justice is that the benefit is not enjoyed by those who bear the cost. Here a point of reference could be made to the principle of distributive justice. As Burke (2010) points out "distributive justice demands that the benefits and costs of the community be distributed in proportion to the position or standing of individuals within that community". Factional conflicts arise because of disagreements over justice. There are two types of equality: numerical equality and equality according to merit. Disputes over different claims to justice can lead to conflict and revolution (Ross; 1921). There are ample evidences of conflicts and confrontations that have occurred due to widening inequalities in India. Therefore peace

would remain unstable without eco-social justice and eco-social justice could not be established without distributive justice

2. Distributive Justice

Aristotle maintains that distributive justice means each and every individual of a society should be given an opportunity to develop his inherent potentials. In the distribution of such material resources all person should have equal consideration and chances. Burke (2010) contents that distributive justice governs how a community distributes goods among its members. Distributive Justice contains the element of power. The distribution of the goods of a community among its members is the responsibility of individuals entrusted with authority to distribute them, so distributive justice pertains to the exercise of power. In distributive justice, there are two sets of obligations: (1) what a person owes to a community of which he is a member, and (2) what a community owes to its members. Distributive justice concerns socially just allocation of goods in a society. Distributive justice is conceptualized by John Rawls as fairness associated with outcomes decisions and distribution of resources that are available to the society. Distributive justice theory argues that societies have a duty to individuals in need and that all individuals have duties to help others in need. Many governments are known for dealing with issues of Distributive justice, especially countries with ethnic tensions. According to John Rawls the Difference Principle allows allocation that does not conform to strict equality so long as the inequality has the effect that the least advantaged in society are materially better off than they would be under strict equality.

Rawls (1971) proposes the following two principles of justice:

- Each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme for all; and in this scheme the equal political liberties, and only those liberties, are to be guaranteed their fair value.
- Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: (a) They are to be attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and (b), they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society. (Rawls 1971, pp. 5-6.).

Distributive justice is the base of all other justices. Economic justice, whether in participation or distribution of wealth, would remain unreachable without distributive justice. Because distributive justice provides for adequate distribution of wealth, which gives an opportunity to develop and participate economically in the society. Legal justice will be meaningless without access to it. Distributive justice can create a social condition where every one will be able to receive legal justice. It is not mere the distribution of wealth and property that distributive justice covers. Rather, in the present world, it would include education, employment and other necessities of life. Distributive justice, which conditions justice in other fields would help in removing inequalities and bring in social justice.

3. Why Distributive Justice failed in India?

The denial of justice in social, economic, political and legal systems in India is due to the failure of distributive justice in India. Despite the attempt to avert inequalities and provide justice in India there exist certain factors that cause failed distributive justice.

3.1 Uneven development of regions.

A very higher level of disparities could be seen in different regions in India. While the central India finds a better condition of development the Northeastern region is at the worse condition of development. Though the reason for this regional disparities may be directed to uneven distribution of natural resources it is the wrong developmental policies of the government the have accentuated the regional disparities. Leaders have not bothered to bring about a balanced economic and social development.

3.2 Inequality of opportunity

The constitution of India upholds the virtue of equality in social political and economic realms. A Several

provisions in the fundamental Rights and the directive principle of the state policies are aimed at eradicating inequalities in India. However, an analysis of the socio-economic conditions exposes the fact that a large number of people in India have been deprived of equal opportunity in the social, economic and legal arenas. There is uneven access to economic development, particularly exploitation of natural resources and employment opportunities. However, in spite of the high rate of employment generation in the services sector, poor performance in agriculture and in some industrial sectors has brought down the overall rate of employment generation (Pal & Ghosh ; 2007). Legal justice remains a dream unattainable to the lower sections of the society. The most important question that arises when discussing justice and the law in India is access to justice, or the lack thereof. India has had formal institutions in place for several decades, but common citizens are not able to use these institutions to ensure they receive justice. The delays, the expense, and the onerous structure of the courts seem designed to dissuade those who have neither the means nor the ability to maneuver the system (Saxena; 2008 : 7).

3.3 Economic inequalities and over exploitation of the natural resources

Economic inequalities particularly income inequalities in India is very wide. There are over ten Indians in the list of first hundred wealthiest people of the world. At the same time there are millions of people in India who remain in acute poverty. The UN report found that “inequality in the distribution of human development is distinctly pronounced in India” compared to other countries. This is the latest sign that despite government efforts, the benefits of India’s booming economy still haven’t spread widely among the country’s population (Stancati ; 2011). Based on indices of real Mean Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) by fractile groups, Sen and Himanshu showed that whereas the consumption level of the upper tail of the population, including the top 20 per cent of the rural population, went up remarkably during the 1990s, the bottom 80 per cent of the rural population suffered during this period (Pal & Ghosh ; 2007). Poverty and under development are two important realities that expose the presence of disparities in India. The study conducted by the National Council on Educational Research and Training shows that in 20 states and Union Territories the poverty ratio is less than the national average of 26. In other states the poverty ratios are higher than the national average.

4. Failed Distributive Justice and social unrest

If distributive justice is failed it would generate several social economic and political issues. A distributive justice stands for just and fair distribution of goods in the society it can create harmony in the society. The exercise of distributive justice promotes solidarity, which is the degree of integration or unity of a community (Burke; 2010). But the denial of distributive justice would cause inequalities and social unrest. Further this social unrest would become violent and militant movements. Whether it is religious, ethnic or ideological, the most of conflicts centered on economic and political issues. “Historians have documented violent incidents between Hindus and Muslims in India as far back as 1850. The overt reasons for communal clashes have centered on religious festivals and places of worship. However, below the pattern of hurt religious sentiments, several economic and political forces have accentuated and aggravated the divide between the two communities. These have included divisive British colonial policies, economic sanctions against Muslim textile workers in the 1930s, and other forms of economic competition pre-dating partition (Khanna, Renu : 2008). So the groups in the material world are competing and conflicting on the issues on the material world. The following factors point out how failed distributive justice could lead to social unrest.

4.1 Overlapping effect of inequalities

Often we speak of the greatness of the ‘unity in diversity’ of India. In fact this is one of the peculiar features of Indian nationalism. However whenever these diversities are overlapped by inequalities conflicts and riots have occurred in India. When one group is economically, socially and politically better off than the others, discontent arises in the other groups.

4.2 Feeling of insecurity by the inferior

It is quiet natural for the marginalized people to fear the powerful sections of the society. This fear would drive them first to devote to peaceful movements against the powerful section and later to violent and militant means. As Sumanta Banerjee observes “Non- violence as the only means of resistance had most often failed to achieve the goals of freedom and democracy in different part of the world” (Banerjee, 2008:35).

4.3 Exploitation by the superior

There is a higher possibility of suppressing the lower classes by the dominating groups in the society. The economic potentials of the powerful would be diverted to exploit the weaker. It will be seen that state and its institutions are inclined to take decision heavily loaded in favour of the powerful in resolving the conflict (Banerjee ; 2008: 36). Scholars have argued that due to unequal distribution of land and other assets, the benefits of the developmental programmes (eg. poverty alleviation programme) have been appropriated by the rich (NCERT; 2009).

5. Failed distributive Justice and violence: A formidable Challenge to peace

The Social unrest in the society has very often proved to encompass violence and militancy. The peaceful agitations in the initial phases would be replaced by violent means. The militancy that springs up in India form various ethnic, religious and ideological groups has its base cause in the problem of inequalities. The naxal movements which is found in different forms and factions in India, drawing their basic ideology from the radical communist (Maoists) primarily questions the inequalities in India. To understand the genesis of the Naxal movement, one needs to locate it within the framework of the Communist movement in India. The Naxalite movement traces its roots to Naxalbari, a small village in West Bengal. In March 1967, a tribal farmer was attacked by local landlords over a land dispute. A peasant uprising followed, led by revolutionaries of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) i.e. CPI(M) in several states of India, namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal (Nilakantan & Singhal ; 2010 : 6). Any study on the Naxal movement cannot overlook the importance of the rise and fall of the Telangana Movement (1946-51), since Telangana will always remain the glorious chapter in the history of peasant struggles for Indian communists (Rajat 2008) . The issue could be analysed from two angles. First the failure of distributive justice and creations of inequalities have been the cause of the emergence of these groups. Second the inequalities existing in the society provide them a better basis for perpetuating their strength. In his article "*Robin Hood or Al Capone, Asking a Different Question About The Naxalite Conflict*", William Ivey has argued that the "Shifts in natural resource productive benefits between social groups have created opportunities for Naxalites to emerge in these areas.

Under the reality of socio- economic backwardness of the marginalized groups it is very easy for the militants to recruit men to their organizations. Lack of opportunities in educational and employment areas have driven the youth of the underdeveloped regions to the militant camps. The Naxals and other militant groups find their support among the lower sections of the people who are economically and socially marginalized. Now the suppression of these groups have become a severe problem for the state institutions. The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, admits the spread of Naxalite movement to thirteen states of the Union, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka, Haryana and TamilNadu. (Singh, Prakash 2009). Maoists continue to spread their reign of violence and fear by imposing shutdowns and killing innocents across Chhattisgarh, bringing development efforts initiated by the central government to a virtual standstill. PWG is the most important among all the splinter groups representing the Naxal movement because the dominant line within the Naxal politics today, People's War based on Armed Agrarian Revolution is the only path for achieving people's democracy i.e. new democracy, in our country.” (Rajat 2008). Violence and militancy in India could be found in the armed warfare between the regional aspiration for secession and the Indian military force, inter-caste clashes, ethnic cleansing and class based armed confrontation between the landlords and the rural poor (Banerjee ;2010 : 36). The report published by Government of India shows that around 1995 incidents of naxalite violence have taken place in the 2010. The important factor behind these violence and militancy in India is the failure of justice, particularly distributive justice. These violence and militancy destruct peaceful conditions

6. Eco-social Justice : Violence and militancy

Violence, especially with arms and ammunition poses severe challenge to environmental justice and social justice. Militarization is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that affects every sphere of society in one way or another (Høbert, 2002: 4). The very existence life of both human being and other life species would be at stake by the militant deeds. Table 1 shows the loss of life in India during the last five years. Though the number of incidents has been reduced the casualties have been increased. Militancy involves the use of arms and weapons whether it is small or large. Analysing the ideology of Naxals, Rajat (2008) points out that armed struggle is the principal form of struggle and the armed guerilla squad, the primary unit of struggle. The environmental issue by the militant movements could be explored two ways. 1) The destruction it causes on the environment, (militant and counter militant activities damage the natural surrounding). 2) The diversion of the natural resources to destructive purposes, (both the militant and counter militant movements incur higher economic cost. Most of the militant organizations in India have their camps in forest and wild life centers. They carry out their training, which involves the use of small arms and weapons, in the forest covers and mountain ranges so as to conceal from the state force. Their dwelling in these places as well as the training destructs the natural habitat and biodiversity. The Naxalites and Militant groups were reported to control almost 20 percent of India's forests over an area two-and-a-half times the size of Bangladesh (Monika; 2009: 40). Similarly, as part of the counter militant movements the state institutions also use arms and ammunitions. The use of gun, grenade and other weapons in an encounter between the state force and militant groups inflicts severe damage to property and natural resources. Soil, water and atmosphere pollution also take place simultaneously. During the use of these small arms and weapons poisonous gas is emitted to the atmosphere and poisonous substances are buried in the soil. State as well as the militant organizations has incur substantial cost in their activities which are more over destructive. Social activists argue that the well being of civilians (including the lives of some) is put at stake by the cutbacks in social programs and government- sponsored medical research that go hand in and with increases in military budgets. (Høbert , 2002: 4).The natural resources and economic potential will be diverted from constructive activities. Compared to a synthetic control region constructed from states not affected by Naxalite violence, we find that states affected by Naxalite violence lost on average 12.48% of their per capita NSDP over the period 1980 to 2000 (Nilakantan & Singhal ; 2010 : 2). It is injudicious and irrational to use the natural resources to such destructive activities. Here the environmental justice or eco social justice will have to bear the cost

The militant movements leading to the displacement loss of livelihood of thousands of people is yet another issue to be addressed. Analysing the naxal and terrorist issues Mandal (2009) says that “Insurgency and retaliatory operations by security forces are a major factor of displacement in India”. The threat emanating from militancy, have forced many to migrate to other secure places. “In November 2003, communal violence displaced at least 18,000 people who fled to about 40 camps in and outside Assam” (Mandal ; 2009). This would affect the ecological and economical balance of the nation. This threat could be divided into two. One is the destruction of life and property and the other underdevelopment. The militant organization hampers the developmental programmes and activities of the government and NGOs in the region of their operation. The state developmental programmes such as the construction of roads, bridges, etc are inhibited by the militants so as to prevent the state forces reaching their region as well as to alienate the people from the government. There fore the unsafe and insecure socio-economic along with security threat have forced several people to migrate to other areas.

7. Conclusion

Peace is, in fact a necessary condition for providing eco- social justice and eco- social justice very essential for the protection the rich natural resources of the blue planet. Violence and militancy that come out as result of the violation Justice, particularly of distributive justice endangers peace. Ensuring distributive justice can bring forth peace. So the issues of the Eco –Social Justice should also be addressed from the angle of distributive Justice and peace. State administrative mechanisms and policy makers should divert their attention to justice and peace while dealing with eco social issues. The Government, both at the

centre and the states should carry out committed efforts to eradicate inequalities. Government must also take adequate steps to provide the various justices enshrined in the constitution of India. As Ketkar(2005) points out Governments fighting Naxal extremism should bear in mind that their campaign will succeed only if the socio-economic roots of the crisis are addressed. If not, the revolutionary rhetoric of extremist groups will draw marginalized sections into their fold Further, the governmental actions for combating militancy and violence should be devised such a way as to affect the environment in least possible way. The inferences that could be draw here are:-

- Eco-social justice is a necessary condition for Peace.
- The negation of distributive justice has caused the denial of social, economic, political and legal justices.
- The denial of justice has led to social unrest, violence and militancy in India.
- Violence and militancy have disturbed peace and brought about adverse impact on the environment, hampering eco-social justice.

Therefore, a peaceful condition devoid of violence and militancy would create a better condition for environment. An eco-friendly world could not be realized without settling conflicts and establishing peace and security. More over equitable distribution of resource and responsibility on just and fair principles as put forward by John Rawls, would make a suitable condition for the protection of the environment. Non-violence, as envisaged by Gandhi, can ensure environmental protection and eco-social justice.

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Table. 1 Naxalite violence during the years 2006-2010 (up to November 30, 2010)

Parameter	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
No. of incidents:	1509	1565	1591	2258	1995
Civilians Killed :	521	460	660	799	937
No. of Security forces Killed :	157	236	231	317	277
No. of naxalites killed :	274	141	199	217	161

(Source : Minisry of Home Affairs Government of India)

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