

A Critical Estimate on Structural Violence in India

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Abstract: *Structural violence is a permanent state of violence, which is embedded in the social, political and economic structures that make up a society. Due to the absence of concrete person and its camouflaged nature, it is also known as indirect violence. The structural violence is often accepted as norms in the society. Primarily, structural violence is the result of hierarchical relations within and between societies that privilege those who are on top and oppress, exploit and dominate those who are at the bottom. There are many examples of structural violence in the society. As for example, sexism, ageism, racism, classism, casteism etc. are systems of discrimination which directly or indirectly harm and disadvantages other sections of society. Sexism is a system of discrimination, wherein people are discriminated on the basis of their sex. In the patriarchal system women are discriminated on the basis of their sex. It creates gender discrimination and they face violence. Accordingly ageism is also a system of discrimination wherein aged people are respected more than children. They are not allowed to interfere in elder's conversations and to share their opinions. It is there in many societies especially in India, elders are respected within home or family. But at the same time, aged people are also discriminated and deprived from due share and care. Caste system also creates structural violence in India and other Asian African countries. It is also supposed to be a system of discrimination where lower caste people are harmed, discriminated and exploited by higher caste people. On the other hand, some of the easiest examples of structural violence involve police, military, or other state powers committing violent acts.*

Keywords: Structural, Violence, discrimination, embedded etc

1. Introduction

Structural violence is the way in which a social structure will harm people by not providing, by limiting or by barring people from receiving basic needs. It impacts people on the bottom rung of society.¹ People who live in poverty or are not considered being of a high social standing. This could be because of a person's age, sex, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, or any other aspect that makes them different from the majority of the population.² It is 'structural' because arrangements are made within the political and economic levels of the society that favors one person while acting as a disadvantage to another. It is 'violent' because it can cause injury to people.

2. Objectives of Study

Main objectives of study are

- 1) To understand theoretical meaning of structural violence.
- 2) To analyze manifestations of structural Violence in India.
- 3) To understand nature and elements of structural violence in India.

Methodology and materials

It is a historical and analytical study. Logic used here is both deductive and inductive. Materials used here from secondary sources like books, journals and electronic materials.

3. Discussion

Being a diverse and polymorphous society India is also not free from structural violence in various forms. India since time innumerable has been experiencing structural violence. Structural violence is the violence originated due to structural differences present in our society -- caste system, gender discrimination, poverty etc. When in an existing social structure of a society a group dominate and commit several systematic unfair treatment and the vulnerable group could not raised out of that systematic violence such

violence is called structural violence. This is committed not because of individual capacity but because of a social structure. Indian society is also fraught with such structural violence. As for example -- problem faced by weaker caste, women depriving of their human ambition, poor people not getting opportunity of self improving. These are happening because of an existing structure that underplays other group of people. Rich people try to monopolize to their favor knowingly that some one's opportunity is being blocked. Girl child is treated unequal to the boys and when she goes to her matrimonial house, they also live with a limited choice. This is happening because of a patriarchal structure exist and women suffer. In case of inter religion problem, the majority is always trying to pushed their agenda in the life of other by various restriction such as freedom of speech, food restriction, other social behavior. Patriarchy, dowry system, female infanticides present in society harms females. Economic system has given to raise income disparities whereby poor can't afford basic services. Caste inequalities led to inhuman treatment like untouchability, poor health and educational status, economic inequalities. These problems occur due to tyranny of majority. Majority groups enjoy social or economic, benefits themselves at the cost of minority groups. Traditional caste system has discriminated between higher and lower castes. Although it has been now abolished by constitution. But still oppression and inequalities are prevailing³

4. Nature and Elements of Structural Violence in India

Caste as a form of structural Violence

It is no hidden fact that the oppression of lower castes by the upper castes is still prevalent in our society especially in the rural regions. Dalits continue to face social discrimination and exclusion. Caste based violence can be called as structural violence as caste is inbuilt in Indian society which supports discrimination of lower castes. Evil social practices like "untouchability" and opportunist section dominate deprived section according to their interest. This leads to

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their exploitation and deprivation. The caste system places the lower castes at a disadvantage compared to the upper castes. Despite constitutional guarantees, Dalits are often denied access to places of worship.⁴

Patriarchy as a dominant structure of violence .

Patriarchy is also a dominant structure of violence. The patriarchal mindset of the people of our society inflicts various forms of violence towards the females. Right from their birth in the form of female infanticide, through their childhood in the form of neglect of their education till their adulthood in the form of dowry and domestic violence, they are curbed. Child marriages in few states like Rajasthan, increase in women harassment, neglect of pregnant women health, girl child nutrition and very less growth in women employment. Female child is still being discriminated against male child which is clear through the cases of female foeticide, infanticide, preference for male child. It reduces the chance of girl child getting good education, get good employment.

Communal and religious structure

Communal and religious flare-ups are one of the most common examples of structural violence. They are mostly instigated by the majority community, but sometimes the minority community is also at fault. Communalism has also become a biggest evil because people are now discriminated on the basis of religion and this is leading to conflicts in society. Views and beliefs of majority community are being forced on the minority community. Recent cases of ban on eating beef are one such example. It is often observed that majority group adopting chauvinism usually imposes its views, choices, cultural practices etc on the minority group, leading to tension in the society.

Government as a legal system of structural Violence

Structural violence is invisible. It is a hidden violence that comes out from “constraints agency” in the government system. In many times government or state uses its coercive machinery to maintain law and order situation. Government machinery is used to fulfill the interests of political class. In time of national emergency of 1975 union government of India restricts citizens from enjoying fundamental rights and democratic environment was totally paralyzed. In 1994, many villagers were killed and tortured in Assam in the name of operation against ULFA. Similarly in 2018 nine babies were died in Jorhat medical college. A pregnant mother died in Cinamora hospital due to lack of medicine is violence done by government. Similarly, children are not going for school due to lack of teacher in school is also consider as structural violence.

Poverty as a unseen structure of Violence

Poverty is creating violence in many forms for example female infanticides, looting, naxalism etc. On the other hand, Neo liberalism is also one of the major reasons of bringing income inequality, regional imbalances, it has created huge difference between poor and rich people. When a number of farmers are doing suicide in vidarbha due to debt is a form of structural violence. Hunger, income inequality, poverty are prime examples of what is describe as “structural violence” that is, physical and psychological harm that results from exploitive and unjust social political and

economic system. In India structural violence has become normal thing because of red tapism, corruption and neo liberalism.

Imposition of majoritarian view

The imposition of majority view is still prevalent with effects like bans on free speech, books etc. The killing of rationalists Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare and M M Kalburgi argues that structural violence encourages fundamentalist groups. Arrest of a group of intellectuals in the name of urban naxalism is another example of imposition of Hindu majoritarian view. Also the prevalence of moral policing by groups like RSS, Shiv sena and fatwas by religious leaders are in fact due to the majority tilted in their favor.

5. Critical Evaluation

Apart from aforesaid forces there are many structures causing structural violence in India. Since the earliest inception of working of Indian constitution many constructive remedies have been taken to abolish structural violence in India. In spite of having adopted a good number of mechanisms the above problems are yet to be fully solved. Nevertheless, certain safeguards have been provided in the Constitution under fundamental rights, directives to the states, fundamental duties and other provisions⁵. Similarly, legislative enactments like the Prevention of Atrocities Act, Prevention of Manual Scavenging Act, etc. as well as institutional arrangements like National Commissions for SCs, STs, Women and Minorities, seek to provide adequate protection against such violence or harm. However, to fight this evil, which has got intertwined in our social setup, we need to change our mindset and outlook. Measures like Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme of the government are right initiatives in this regard . Constitutional provisions seek to narrow the gaps between all sections of society, but structural violence are on rise which are often taken as norm. For fighting this form of violence there needs to be a bottom up approach in narrowing the difference among the various sections of society.

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