

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISPARITIES AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN INDIA -ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Differences between people have been in existence since the rise of human beings on this planet. The inequalities among the people are witnessed in different forms like race, colour, region, religion, caste, wealth, etc. Exploitation of the socially and economically unfortunate people has been identified in new forms after the World War II. Globalization process has changed the functioning of the government and private sector further creating the gap between the rich and poor people in the country. India is the second most populous country in the world and is a developing country. It is taking all the possible steps to provide safety, security, welfare, empowerment and so on to its population. The socio-economic policies meant for the welfare of the people living below poverty line is successful only to some extent. Majority of them face discrimination, hunger, unemployment, ill-treatment, underemployment and so on. They are exploited in one form or the other and especially the women and children are an easy target. Victims of regional imbalances are being exploited by several human traffickers. The human traffickers eagerly search for the victims from the affected areas like disasters, drought, slums, crowded areas viz., bus stops, railway stations, streets, etc. Educational backwardness and poverty is playing a prominent role in paving the way for the exploiters in the business of human trafficking in India apart from that terrorism, factionism, naxalism, insurgency, extremism are a few major instances that lead a way for human traffickers. To overcome this menace the implementation of laws related to curb human trafficking should be strictly followed by the administrative agencies. Above all the inequalities among the people should be lessened by adopting result oriented policies and by empowering them socially, economically and politically coordinating actively along with all the stakeholders at local, national and international levels.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, Poverty, Forced Labour, Exploitation, Inequalities, Violence.

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Introduction

The socio-economic disparities and its associated issues like human trafficking is just a part because the issue is multidimensional and needs holistic approach to curb it in all forms. Social hierarchical system is prevalent in India. Major differences are based on rigid caste system, religion, geographical area, colour, gender, race, rich, poor and so on. Several categories of people are given less important in decision making based on caste, gender, economical status, religion etc. The socio economic disparities originate from the economically sound people in the society trying to maintain their control and dominance upon the low income and less powerful people. This kind of attitude is majorly witnessed in the rural areas. The social structures in this country prevent the mobility towards upward to the socially weaker sections. It can also stated to be the beliefs that are gradually developed and well maintained in the social hierarchical system. This system is greatly encouraging the socio-economic differences in the Indian society and is playing a prominent role in hindering the development of the weaker sections inspite of the sincere efforts of the government to empower the weaker sections socially, economically and politically. This tendency of inequalities is being misused by the human traffickers and are targeting the victims of this socially and economically vulnerable people in India.

The concept of social inequality is defined as the struggle for political power, financial power, social power etc., between those who have the power and those who do not have the power. The various dimensions of the social and economic inequality and human trafficking can be studied better when combined and not as individual activities because of overlapping issues related to both in this era of globalization.

Due to globalization the world with many differences are economically integrating to develop their economies. Under its umbrella side by side many issues are thriving because its more rewarding for people like traffickers. The major cause of this issues is the availability of very cheap labour due to over population and unskilled nature of the job. Trafficking is a very complex issue and is attributed to the economic, social, environmental and cultural factors. The major factor like destabilisation and displacement of the people is witnessed as a major cause of trafficking. People in unorganised sector provide huge opportunities for traffickers for the purpose of sex trade. Online trafficking is increasing day by day due to the ineffectiveness of the

governmental agencies to penetrate the issues related to it due to lack of trained staff in preventing online crimes in the society. The traffickers are trying to lure the women by offering mundane recruitment advertisements in other countries. The major victims of this are the innocent, ill educated, poverty stricken women in the rural and urban areas.

Objectives of the study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To study the major interlinked factors related to socio-economic inequalities and human trafficking in the era of globalization.
2. To highlight the issues related to socio-economic inequalities and human trafficking.
3. To offer suggestions to overcome the issues related to socio-economic inequalities and human trafficking effectively.

Globalisation and Socio-Economic Disparities

Rapid economic changes have been witnessed since the 1992 in India due to globalization, privatization and liberalization. This has brought in development of the nation on one hand and on the other hand differences between the rich and poor especially from rural society have increased. The educated, skilled and semi-skilled majorly benefitted by this process whereas majority of the poor and from the rural areas are left behind. It can be witnessed to the access to various facilities enjoyed by the rich urban population compared to the poor from the rural society.

Disparities in class structure

The change in the class structure has come into existence increasing the socio-economic disparities. Numerous industries are cropping like mushrooms around the urban areas affecting the development of the rural areas drastically. Due to this process of industrialisation the farmers land has been converted to industrial land and later sold for minimum prices to the rich industrialists. The poor farmers dependent on the cultivable land as a primary source after selling his land and gradually spending the earned money for one or the other purpose finds its difficult to own a job because of the lack of skill and illiteracy. The salaries that are paid to the employees approximately surpass the annual income earned by a farmer with a land of 4-5 acers. This is

further creating the differences among the working class in industries, service and other corporate sector along with government sector. The standard of living cost has been risen due to many factors and those working in various technical, service other salaried job holders are able to sustain but the unemployed, unskilled, victims of exploitation are finding it difficult to maintain their living standards and often are becoming an easy victim of human traffickers.

Control over the produced goods

The labourers are being seen as a commodity in the market due to globalization. The developing countries are paying the labourer very less salaries and earning more. These less payments create wide discrepancy between the various classes of people. The workers working in the industries are not having any control over the product that is being produced in them. He is just working like a cog in a machine. Any additional demand may lead to lose his job thereby making to work him for whatever the payment is made or agreed at the time of appointment by the employers for the sake of his family and dependents.

Meagre income/salaries to the employees

Various labour organisations are there in the democratic countries like India but are bound by rules and regulations. They raise their voice for a limited number of issues related to the workers but are unable to control the marketing of the produced goods and sharing of profits. The marketing and the profits coming out of it are huge and the employees are just paid a part of it. This drastically creates the disparities in the society and their salaries are not increased as per the profits paying a huge drawback to the employees.

Growth of slums near industrial sector

The employees working in the industries and other sectors are living nearby the companies they work for or in the urban areas. The urban areas are severely being polluted and these rural areas and the people working in the companies are spending a huge amount to the maintenance of health due to pollution and other activities related to its effects this in turn minimising his/her income and the spending ability of the employees and the dwellers near the

industrial sites. The corporate sector is not considering its effects on the surrounding areas and the dwellers nearby it because it is mainly concerned about the profits earned by it and not the loopholes arising out of it in creating the slums and leading a way for human trafficking.

The diseases are increasing and the health sector especially the corporate health sector is making profit out of it due to the spread of various kinds of diseases. The people living near and inside the slums are facing huge health issues due to the open drainages, polluted water, chemically sprayed food grains and vegetables etc. These people are earning less but are forced to spend more due to the illness arising out their dwelling in those areas further decreasing their income and pushing them in the grip of poverty.

Environmental degradation and farmers plight

The effects of pollution on climate change and its effects on the cultivation and lifestyle of the population has its negative impact on the spending ability of the people and maintain a decent standard of living in the society. The farmers are suffering a lot due to drought, floods, diseases to crops, infertility of the soil, air pollution, water pollution, acid rains, ground water depletion, increasing temperatures and so on all because of the climate change due to industrial pollution around the globe. Its negative effects are slowing down the socio-economic progress of the poor, low and middle income category people drastically leading to a gap between the rich and the poor.

Unskilled and semi-skilled contract employees

The attractive employment opportunities in the corporate sector majorly demand the skilled labour for attractive pay. Most of the population is living in rural areas are illiterate, semi-literate or un-skilled and their chances of gaining an employment in these corporate sectors is difficult and the contract system for few months or limited period woos the affected people to the false promises of human traffickers for a better life thereby making their way for exploitation.

Hire and fire policy of the corporate sector

The security of the service of the employees is a severe issue taken into consideration for trafficking. The employees in corporate sector work not as a permanent employee. They can be

hired at any time and fired at any time by stating certain valid reasons in the organisation by the employers. Their payment is also very low as compared to the living standards in the urban areas. Majority of them live jointly or in slums as they are unable to bare the expenses in the cities. This situation is very exploitative especially to the women employees in the organisation as they are worried about the loss of job and many a time suffer mentally and several influential people may lead such victims to trafficking.

Cottage industries sector loosing its ground

The globalization era has paved the way for the establishment of the industries and the free flow of goods around the globe. This has led to the lesser demand for the goods produced from the cottage industries. Infact these goods cannot compete with the goods produced from the mechanised process in terms of quality, quantity and with low expenditure for labour, power and raw materials. These people are gradually under thereat and re losing their traditional livelihood opportunities as people are getting more attracted towards the mechanised products and these goods are also acting as the status symbols in the society. This is one of the major cause of driving these affected population who are in majority forcing them to migrate in search of alternate job opportunities and this kind of situation is paving the way for the human traffickers to exploit the poor victims family members.

Outsourcing of companies and loss of domestic jobs

The corporate sector companies with huge labour intensive sometimes due to the overburden of the expenditure shift their companies to the regions where they can reduce the cost of maintaining it for more profit. This situation of migration leads to the loss of jobs to the locally adjusted youth and many others dependent on it directly or indirectly leading a way for the difficulties of earning their livelihood and pushing them towards the clutches of poverty raising inequalities in the society and thereby trafficking.

Implementation of labour laws

The labour officers incharge of the implementation of the labour laws are overloaded with the work and busy in replying to the communications from the head offices. Inspite of several inspections and reports submitted by them for the action of the violation of hte labour

laws by the private sector organisations especially in mining, construction, hotel and other businesses. The imposition of fine by the court on such matters is very low with some directives. By the by the modern state is market favourable for the growth of the economy and less worried about the affected people. On several instances the corrupt officers compromise for a small amount and doesn't report it to the higher offices and to the court for necessary action paving the way for the issues of poverty to the victims of such act and paving the way for further exploitation and trafficking.

Migration of population

The population with fewer skills are migrating in search of jobs to the urban areas. These people due to poverty are adjusting themselves to the low level of living conditions. This is in fact increasing crime, trafficking, exploitation, corruption, inadequate payment, harassment, ill treatment and so on.

Major issues of socio-economic inequalities and human trafficking

Apart from the above issues several key issues are identified peculiar to Indian society due to globalization that are mentioned below:

- Distribution of funds to the state governments with the same political party at the centre and other than that generally faces the issue of inadequate funds in spite of the need to eradicate the disparities of the poor and vulnerable sections of the society.
- Several customs and traditions that encourage trafficking are still being blindly practiced in the rural areas and need to be curbed by passing legislation to this effect as the people voluntarily resist change.
- Obstruction to development and equal distribution of welfare schemes is caused due to internal and external issues like insurgency, naxalism, terrorism, factionism and so on and strict action against it has been futile so the strength of vigilance and judicial interference should be increased to curb it in all forms.
- Illiteracy and ignorance is a huge cause for the socio-economic inequalities and trafficking and people need to be made aware of this menace and report about such instances in advance rather than after suffering from its dangerous effects.

- Women are the easy victims due to poverty so they need to be educated and provided skill training to become self reliant and special awareness campaigns and frequent advertisements should be provided through mass media to curb its menace.
- Old laws and fines are proving to be fruitless and in place of them new and strict laws should be adopted and the fines for such crimes should be increased by attaching all the properties of their family including their relatives involved in this activity.
- Gender inequality is another factor that encourages this trafficking and this is posing hindrance to development socially and economically so the beneficiaries should be identified and should be empowered in order to overcome this vicious circle of crime and trafficking .
- Corruption is playing a key role in overcoming this menace as the corrupt officials receive monthly payment for allowing the traffickers to continue their business underground in spite of information so to tackle this issue the anti corruption units should watch these corrupt officials and curb this issue internally and externally.
- Involvement of some small and big local politicians and powerful business men are found to be encouraging this kind of activities in their areas and they should be identified and put behind the bars for the crime they are involved either directly or indirectly.
- Lack of pursuing education upto graduation has become costly and thereby leading to crimes like delinquency and trafficking and to tackle this free education should be provided along with some sort of skill training so that the poor sections get adequate benefits and may become socially and economically self reliant.

Suggestions to overcome the socio-economic disparities and issues of human trafficking in India

A few significant suggestions to overcome this menace are mentioned below:

- Strengthening of labour laws.
- Direct Benefit Transfers to the poor and vulnerable population as per the living standards at his/her residence.
- Shelter and timely assistance should be made 24 X 7.
- Dealing with such affected victims sensitively and lovingly and for this specially trained personnel should be appointed .

- Any form of forced labour should be carefully studied and thereby the soft approach should be adopted to deal with it.
- Live entertainment businesses should be strictly kept under watch as they may lead to the exploitation of women, children and men.
- Any kind of threats to any one should be encouraged to be reported and should be dealt with intelligence wings along with a team of experts.
- Agricultural and cottage industries should be freely provided mechanised services by the corporate sector that has established an industry because these industries cause indirect harm to the local crop production and increase pollution and as an understanding with the local people and as the corporate responsibility the industries should be made to come ahead to support the local farmers and vulnerable population and the required laws should be made by the government.
- The victims should be employed in anti-trafficking activities effectively because they can easily identify the people functioning in that business.
- Online sex crime should be strictly monitored and software professionals should be appointed to identify its business effectively and timely.
- The affected victims should be provided medical facilities, residence, trauma counselling services, free legal aid, pension or job opportunities.
- Law enforcement officers should be trained from time to time so that they become capable of dealing with its dynamic forms in this era of globalization.
- NGO's working in this field should be integrated effectively and joint efforts should be made to curb it effectively.
- Cases related to it should be dispersed shortly and the compensation to the victims should be enhanced as per the living standards of the residence of the victim.
- Anti-trafficking rules and regulations should be strictly implemented and should be spread widely through organising seminars/conferences/workshops in every nook and corner of the country.
- The wage structure should be changed and new pay structure should be evolved and needs to be revived from time to time and not for more than one year.
- Domestic violence should be controlled by surprise inspections by the local agencies to the houses of above poverty line who generally employ servant in their homes and licence system

should be provided to the servants and should be strictly monitored regularly about their wellbeing.

- Slums should be improved with the aid and support of the local industries because these are the main result of industries in that area.
- Emotional and psychological abuse should be curbed effectively.
- Skill development education should be provided to the affected victims along with scholarship and placement security after the course.

Conclusion

The increasing socio-economic inequalities among the people is creating a path for the growth of major global crimes like human trafficking. Development in this era of globalization are considered by experts to be a boon to the majority of the population on this planet. It cannot be exaggerated that it has both positive and negative effects on the developing and under developed countries like India. The only solution is that the government though giving priority to the industrialisation needs to enhance the share of it to the poor vulnerable population. They poor and vulnerable sections of the society should be empowered and supported by the governmental agencies with utmost transparency of disbursing the benefits thereby increasing the taxing of the industrialists both local and international because the effects of them are severely borne directly and indirectly by the people at large in the society they live in.

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