

CASTE AND CLASS DYNAMICS IN PRIVATE RELIEF DISTRIBUTION

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Abstract

India is entering a new phase that actively includes diverse segments of society. This includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs), emerging private sectors under the banner of CSR India (Corporate Social Responsibility), and religious groups that play crucial roles in responding to disasters and crises. However, it is evident that there has not yet been an effective solution to tackle the persistent issues of ethnicity and class disparities in India. From this particular paper, it is realized that the outsourcing of transport services makes the expenses to be incurred and affects the sufficient distribution of the aid during calamities such as COVID-19 and any other possible calamities that may happen in a certain state or a certain territory. Sometimes it is given to 'the augmented, the ameliorated, the dignified, the documented – all which may refer to the middle class and the Brahmins of the modern India. Dalits, Adivasis, and the rural poor continue to remain largely invisible, not just because of poverty but also due to a history of social marginalization. Humanitarianism is frequently framed as a positive social action rooted in the principles of charity. However, this perspective can often mask the structural inequalities that persist. Many individuals may draw inspiration from the ideas of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Marxist theorists, yet they often lack the necessary impetus to drive genuine social transformation and critically examine the foundations of bourgeois democracy in society. The power designed for relief frequently devolves into a performative tool, diverging significantly from the genuine pursuit of justice. Therefore, if relief frameworks do not intentionally and inclusively tackle these concerns, it is reasonable to contend that such relief only reinforces the very inequalities it aims to address.

Keywords: Caste hierarchy, Social exclusion, Relief distribution, Dalit marginalisation, CSR, NGO aid, Neoliberalism, COVID-19, Philanthropy, Class inequality

Introduction

The Indian crisis is therefore a socially conditioned response – a response to a social response in India a country that is cast and class conscious. Among the labouring divisions of early India, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar grieves for those who survived and are coming into today's India as if entering into workplaces or even into relief operations. However, in the last three decades, some private players have also joined the events during crises. Therefore, only a handful of them are formulated to assist the needy within an equitable way. There are several excluded groups of the population who do not participate in the decision making body, they include the known SC & ST and the landless labour force is discriminated in the receipt of relief. These communities were living in

such racial densities and it would only make sense to say that they were living in the semi-tropical regions where such a calamity as AIDS is almost unheard of. In rural societies, the distribution of goods and services is predominantly governed by dominant caste groups, who typically assume the roles of lords and guardians within the community. This concentration of control over resources reflects a significant power dynamic that influences social and economic interactions. This is why private relief is advanced on the ground that institutional arguments it uses have the propensity of mirroring the structural defect evident in the government delivery systems. In addition, this paper also contributes the class consciousness to the political economy and contributed the rights to humanitarian aid rather than game of policies to charity.

Caste Consciousness Persists in All Structures

It also points out who in India will receive information concerning receiving a tool, relief, or respect in Indian context? This systematically fact is impressively defended in this regard of private giving as in case of disaster like the economic one due to COVID-19 in the year 2020 or any other natural calamity. Though the main paper points out that caste bias is no more a product of history, caste prejudice is still younger. This is exemplified by the fact that caste bias is a continuous feature of current India's Dalit and Adivasi society. Today, however, private relief is not even averse to caste: the only form of business that is deemed noble and a-religious is private. First, the role of a local gate keeper, a local village council and ration operations of a ration queue are the primary targets for information sharing and relations of the village with the donors. In case of SC/ST, the first aid to them is provided only in a hypothetical way as has been described above.

As pointed out earlier therefore the practise of discrimination based on the caste system cannot necessarily be direct. The process often goes unnoticed. When you undertake the task of identifying the nearest 'better' caste village for standardization, you may find yourself lacking information from Dalit neighbourhoods. Moreover, during the finalization of the beneficiary list, village officials might intentionally exclude individuals from lower caste backgrounds. This is stealth practise and in stealth practise, it could be under the pretext of aiding the caste, as if they are dominating them. The kinds of losses you stand here to incur are not losses in terms of artefacts but they are very big losses in any case. Families still remain unfavoured for they might miss foods, drugs, soap, newspapers or anything at the right time, survive or despair. Thus in order to insist that there is indeed no correlation between colour and the current citizens of India one must be sure that this is not a myth. But the caste feeling persists even if it is in the familiar social or in the architecture pre-culminating the relief profiles, at least where the dignity is concerned, and perhaps even the dignity which none has.

Urban Dalit Middle Class Disconnect

It is about middle class Dalit groups in urban India and capability is prescribed as the change or freedom. This newly emerged group has been increasingly dedicated to advocating for the Dalit agricultural and economically marginalized communities, as highlighted by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in

his 1956 speech, where he referenced these issues. It is a big gap in the distribution of relief to the urban dalit folks given the fact that the urban dalit elite are also guided by the same modality of operations as followed by the dominant castes even though this dispensation is one that does not allow the majority of the community.

Present paper also supports the argument that Ambedkar was highly against the so called Dalit elite who 'have come out to be the worthless lot with no social feeling for their own brethren'. Today, this sentiment is expressed in the working of urban-located private relief campaigns mostly managed by those from educated Dalit or other such origin though they themselves practically never go beyond their Dalit bastis or tribal hamlets, although more so in need of help. Thus, the concept of the urban-rural divide here is the gap between the moral and the representational. Many of such Dalits, who are looking for jobs or dwelling, education in urban areas, are likely to be discriminated in various spheres on caste basis and unlike rural Dalits, exercise their rights and engage themselves in digital, donors and policy making forums. But whenever they are not used to erase such societal structures, they are then used by such structures.

However, if such a process is carried out in private, especially when appropriate measures are taken at a time of the COVID 19 pandemic that involves the Dalits from the rural background, these are almost entirely left unnoticed in the structurally segregated rural Dalit in India who is most often left out in all things. This is not to deny, however, that the aid result only demolishes one kind of exclusion within state and caste dominant philanthropy while perpetuating others. There is also another dimension through which neoliberalism espouses individual success as something that is good. It turns into the latter kind of a project which is not a political task anymore. Second, if the urban Dalit middle class sans any Ambedkarite orientation to social justice is to participate in the acts of sympathetically helping the flood-affected people, they might perform social injustice on their part.

Neoliberalism and Selective Distribution

The freedom in the global markets, offers and individual competitiveness were delivered in India during the liberalised period of the 1990s and a new economic structure was granted. According to this neoliberal formation, your paper explains that this has created new forms of inclusion and exclusion framework in what has been considered as marginal societies. It is given to transfer, if not universally in need, then selectively in need, of visibility, paperwork, and market-defined deservingness of a private circulation. This neoliberalism process is deconstructed the historical and logical right framework by tying these resources with what is proper and/or sustainable in the realms of logic and history. Here, the private actors, NGOs, corporate social responsibility wings, and religious organisations turned out as important main-beneficiaries/ actors in the offering of the relief. The operations in question align with a neoliberal framework, characterized by urban-centric strategies and an emphasis on media engagement and resource optimization. Within this context, marginalized groups—including tribal communities, Dalits, Adivasis, and landless rural

labourers—face significant challenges. Their lack of digital participation and absence of formal identification systems (IDS) further exacerbates their disadvantages in accessing resources and opportunities within these optimized operational models. Thirdly, I perceive the paper as a critique of economic liberalism, advocating for an approach that promotes social mobility while also illuminating the caste and class divisions linked to merit and efficiency. Like many private relief organizations, these entities primarily engage with beneficiaries who are digitally connected and literate, thereby marginalizing those who lack access to technology, including individuals who have never used a mobile phone. As a result, the process of relief distribution is neither neutral nor purely humanitarian; rather, it embodies a neoliberal framework of worthiness. This dynamic compels individuals to substantiate their claim to assistance by "showing the papers" that demonstrate they are deemed the deserving poor, thus perpetuating existing inequities within the relief process. However, this model does not take these structures into account which denies most of the Dalit and tribal family from such systems. Good intentions to do this were as follows and it could not map relief to the needy Dalit hamlets but to the cluster of urban slums or the Voluntary migrant workers from among the visible social categories, whereas CSR undertaken by a corporate works only in those sectors that are less complicated politically and socially such as the caste based ghettos. It is problematic, first of all, that this selective distribution model replicates the very inequality that neoliberal promise was to decouple. Secondly, it raises ethical concerns regarding the fundamental principles of fairness and justice in resource allocation. By prioritizing digitally literate and connected individuals, the model not only reinforces existing power hierarchies but also undermines the potential for inclusive development. This selective approach perpetuates a cycle of exclusion, marginalizing those who are already disadvantaged and limiting their access to essential resources and opportunities for advancement. Ultimately, this approach challenges the legitimacy of relief efforts and calls into question the effectiveness of neoliberal policies in achieving genuine social equity.

Women at the Margins Suffer Twice

The females belonging to the Dalit as well as Adivasi community are most vulnerable as the pauper of the society as caste is not only associated with class but is also linked with gender negativity. From the main paper, one is alert that the rural Dalit women render themselves more to poverty as opposed to the upper cast women. This intersectional vulnerability is further brought out by the fact that while the private actors like NGO and CSR foundation(s) may have transmitted their efforts to include relief for the women. They are seriously gender and caste blind. The distribution of the private relief is a process in which these women, more particularly black are entirely excluded or completely marginalised. But it is quite surprising to come with the notion that there is no particular provision for women in the overall relief packages or no specific attention has been given to women born in cast or the women from the tribal area.

In the first place, even though there may be some representation of women like in the relief committee or in the distribution of aids there is no woman and especially the dalit and the tribes.

Therefore, when organizations such as the IGMAs, or any NGO predominantly led by upper-caste individuals, fail to comprehend the complex realities faced by these women or make unfounded assumptions about their lives, it exacerbates existing inequities. In scenarios where an outsider seeks to ensure safety—excluding the male head of the household, and ideally focusing on those in genuine need—these women risk being further obscured and marginalized within program frameworks. This dynamic not only reinforces systemic inequalities but also has detrimental effects on the structuring and narratives of interventions. A lack of nuanced understanding and representation ultimately undermines effective support efforts and perpetuates a cycle of exclusion and disadvantage among the very populations these organizations aim to assist. Unlike many discriminated cases, the caste system has not even a glimpse of independence and freedom where they can even talk and make some decisions and judgments, no right to speak and to decide anything in this private domain and even in the private domain, which is limited even to all women but particularly Dalit Women. That is why, in the context of private aid, Dalit women are often positioned merely as subjects rather than as active agents of recovery or leadership. This framing limits their capacity to engage meaningfully in decision-making processes and to assert their agency within interventions aimed at addressing their needs. The failure to recognize Dalit women as potential leaders perpetuates systemic marginalization and undermines the effectiveness of aid programs. For meaningful recovery and empowerment to occur, it is crucial to shift the narrative and actively involve Dalit women as integral participants and leaders in the development initiatives designed to support them. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily imply that there has been an eradication of gender stereotype in the specified organisation as woman employment may still need to be in an unfair and stereotypic manner referred to as ‘tokenism’.

Philanthropy without Justice is Performance

In the sphere of philanthropy and the private relief in India after the globalisation it can be said that these two are quite visible and can be to some extent said to be active. However, to this paper, it is about such efforts, when regarding the structural injustice aspects removed, these acts become mere benevolences performed by the desire of the face of the ‘giver’ and not the suffering. In this case, it has been realised that under the cover of the corporate social responsibility wing, the elite NGOs and a friendly person did something which brought relief out of the ‘caste class’ system of India. To whom this stuff is not given or withheld from distribution or is, and about the social assumption of such reinforced inquiry, there is no inquisition there. For instance DALITs and women are confined to the village and are barred from being a distributor of relief by castes or castes domination groups which according to Dr B. R. Ambedkar as cited before, need a social transformation before attaining a political revolution. Therefore, relief cannot be equal to justice as it is the case with humanitarian aid relief. Hence, if charitable altruism fails to mobilize private funding or institutional commitment, it ultimately relies on donor or organizational courage to confront and withdraw from entrenched caste discrimination. This includes addressing critical issues such as land rights, manual scavenging practices among sweepers, violence against women, and other politically sensitive topics. Without this proactive stance, efforts aimed at altruism

become counterproductive, as they reinforce existing power dynamics rather than challenge them. For meaningful change to occur, it is essential for organizations to adopt a courageous approach that prioritizes social justice and equity in their funding and operational strategies. Even marketing to the donors and growing an image larger than life for themselves is now overstated in the detriment to media marketing for the target beneficiary, the oppressed groups that are reduced to being voiceless vessels offering endless servitude. The relief resulting from an action, as opposed to its unconscious manifestations, transforms into a new form of relief—one that emphasizes the visibility of the action itself over its measurable outcomes. This shift prioritizes the act of being seen and acknowledged, rather than the accountability associated with tangible results. Such a focus may lead to superficial engagement, where the appearance of action takes precedence over the substantive impact or effectiveness of the intervention. This is especially so in the urban slums or the semi-rural areas whereby aid is selectively delivered in places that are evident in the port or that garners some outcome in the social media. It is great you have not given the chronological account in the paper but your paper is extremely specific to this hypocrisy of the upper and middle class behaviour (especially those who claimed to support upliftment but practically have no interaction with ground realities). But for philanthropy be more transformational, it would be wrong not to link it to anti caste frameworks and to find concrete links to the grassroots people's voice.

Conclusion

Despite the practise of private relief distribution in India being typically construed as a benevolent intervention, it also furthers the country's new and intractable caste and class structures. Aid rarely remains neutral, spreading across the key themes, and is the result of social hierarchies, already privileging dominant castes that exiling Dalits, Adivasis, and the rural poor, and caste consciousness at the awarding of aid, particularly in rural India where dominant caste groups have access. Relief efforts in most cases end up being funnelling out through these local power structures that disallow marginalised communities to be systematically excluded. The gulf between DALIT unlucky settlements in the remote and rural outside of cities, and urban, elite centric initiatives of regeneration and renewal, widens due to the latter being merely urban, elite centric. It has brought a 'pick and choose' model of deservingness based on who can be on the listing, documented, and able to access it digitally. The landless labourers, the tribal communities who cannot claim land and are hungry for someone to give it to them, and worse, the women from marginalised castes who are topper of the caste/class/gender intersection of the rocks and cannot lay claim to land, to resources, representation, or dignity, are ignored by donors and relief organisers. Where philanthropy is performance in such a framework, philanthropy is performance only if it doesn't solve the structural roots of inequality, without addressing or ignoring their needs entirely. Private relief needs to be conceptualised as an anti caste, justice lens, because as a matter of urgency real change is to be achieved through social revolution, which Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has propounded as a superficial reform. Any meaningful relief effort must include, not superimpose, the most marginalised, in a meaningful way, must be with, and must have the means we have to

keep ourselves to account. When it comes only then aid is just a temporary convenience, but it can only be turned into a first step.

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