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'DESPAIR IS INEVITABLE': A CRITICAL REVIEW ON THE CONCEPT OF INJUSTICE BY DANIEL DORLING

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Abstract

The inequalities between the poor and the rich and the variant attitudes of social disparity result in great injustice across the world. The book, *Injustice: Why Social Inequality Still Persists* by Daniel Dorling looks at the phenomena driving these inequalities in the society and functions as a critical contribution to the current and on-going debate on growing social inequality and injustice. It perceives a set of beliefs of the powerful, such as, 'elitism is efficient', 'exclusion is necessary', 'prejudice is natural', 'greed is good' and 'despair is inevitable' that causes injustice. Through this review article, the reader critically analyses the last tenet of Dorling -'Despair is inevitable' - and perceives the progress of the argument how inequality and injustice related to this belief. It is a critical involvement and engagement in the enduring debate on mounting social inequality.

Keywords: Despair, injustice, inequality, social exclusion, discrimination, gender divide

Introduction

Certain beliefs shared broadly about what is socially just and unjust, what is fair and unfair, are pertinent in most societies. All deliberations of social injustice rightly point out that there is an inequality – an unfair treatment - which could be remedied if our social institutions were different. The book "Injustice: Why Social Inequality Persists" by Daniel Dorling explains why inequality enduring in the societies. It is a particular set of beliefs of the powerful, as Dorling sees, that causes injustice. And those beliefs are: 'elitism is efficient', 'exclusion is necessary', 'prejudice is natural', 'greed is good' and 'despair is inevitable'. This is an attempt to explain the last tenet viewed by Daniel Dorling, 'Despair is inevitable' and see how inequality and injustice related to this belief. Complete loss of hope is generally called Despair. The concept of despair and the related notions of desperation and despondency refer to a state of mind caused by circumstances that seem too much to cope with. The notion of despair suggests total loss of hope, accompanied by apathy and low spirit, whereas desperation is a state in which loss of hope drives a person to struggle against circumstances, with utter disregard of consequences. Thinking in this line, despondency is a state of deep gloom due to loss of hope and a sense of futility and resignation. To critically analyse these through the work of Dorling, this study, after introducing the whole book in a nutshell, first puts this theme into one's own context, then goes into some key texts of the author, followed by the arguments and remarks. It is concluded with a positive note of proposal for a better society.

Introducing the Book

The book "Injustice: why social inequality still persists" by the author Danny Dorling initially provides an analysis of contemporary issues and practices underpinning inequality. It also considers and identifies a concise interpretation of the main causes of the persistence of injustice across the world and especially in rich countries, and tries to contribute in a logical way the possible solutions to this phenomenon. The elaborative and deep-rooted scrutiny of the concept of growing inequality is the critical contribution of this piece of literature. The overarching question that revolves around this book is "why injustice still persists in rich countries?" The solution to this concern according to Dorling is in our minds, that it is "in our minds that injustice continues most strongly, in what we think is permissible." The five widespread beliefs, which according to Dorling, bolsters injustice are the efficiency of elitism, the necessity of exclusion, the naturalness of prejudice, the positive effects of greed, the inevitability of despair. This book is structured into five chapters that consist of these five beliefs respectively.

The focal point of this review is the fifth chapter – Despair is inevitable – which focus on increasing mental health problems experienced by especially teenagers and adults. The growing mentality of strict competition among the students increases their need for consumption, which bears negative effects on social life with the diminishing level of needed social trust and cooperation. At pragmatic level it enables the readers to act upon and against a social evil from our everyday life including our engagement with workplaces and neighbourhoods.

Pitching the Text in Reader's Context

Contextual reading considers a work in light of events taking place within the author's life. However, here the reader tries to put this text in his own context to understand and analyse it comprehensively. We all live in a context, a context in space and time. Though we are today in a most sophisticated world with all its peculiarities of money, power and luxuries, enjoying its maximum, we know for certain that still there are some uncertainties of life, whether we accept it or not, that comes to our way and that indeed put us in despair very often. In fact each one of us has experienced in one way or other the so called social evil of injustice in our own context where we come from. The reader is from India and is well aware of the amount of atrocities of injustice that most of the Indian poor people face every day because of the divergent social, cultural, political and economic scenarios. Before getting into Dorling, the reader attempts to brief here some phenomena from his context that recourse to social and cultural injustice in the society.

Caste Conflict

Caste differences and its consequent socio-cultural, political and economic discrimination still remains a heart-threatening issue leading to the practice of injustice in India. The four principal caste categories in the Indian varna system are: the Brahmins (priests and teachers), the Ksyatriyas (rulers and soldiers), the Vaisyas (merchants and traders), and the Shudras (laborers and artisans). A fifth category is known as 'untouchables' or Dalits who are often assigned tasks too ritually polluting to merit inclusion within the traditional varna system (Ghurye 2008). Though the negative discrimination on the basis of caste was banned by law in 1948 and the constitutional protection is enshrined to the assurance of its implementation, aspects of the system still continue to persist in many parts of India. It caused the untouchability and the segregation and segmentation of society into different groups in which the birth of a person to these particular groups determines the membership. This system of social, occupational, religious and economic hierarchy becomes the source of unjust practices among the societies. The racial discrimination in both the rural and urban societies is still in existence. The lower caste people and the untouchables become socially suppressed and the intensity of poverty seems to be higher in socially backward people.

Independent India has witnessed numerous caste-related violence and injustice. For instance, on 29 September 2006, four members of the Bhotmange family belonging to a Scheduled caste were murdered in a small village called Kherlanji in Maharashtra by a group of upper-caste men. Surekha, her 17-year-old daughter Priyanka, and two sons - Roshan and Sudhir - were dragged out. The women of the family, Surekha and Priyanka, were stripped, beaten and paraded naked through the village. The men were beaten so badly their faces were disfigured. All four died, eventually. The crime allegedly levelled against them was that the family had objected to their land being used as a throughway by upper-caste farmers (navayana 2006).

Gender Bender

Women in general and the Lower-caste women in particular are singularly positioned at the bottom of caste, class, and gender hierarchies. Women bear the burden and highly suffered impact of exploitation, discrimination, and physical attacks. Wage discrimination, Sexual abuse, physical harassment and other forms of violence are aired against women in many of the socio-cultural segments in India. Lower-caste women also suffer disproportionately in terms of access to health care, education, and occupational considerations as compared to women of higher castes. Dowry is one of the main issues upon which the women are treated very badly in India. Government statistics record a 15-fold increase in dowry related deaths since the mid-1980s - from 400 a year to around 6,000 a year by the mid-1990s. Since then, there has been a 170% rise. Unofficial figures put the number of deaths at 25,000 women a year. India also reports the highest total number of dowry deaths from across the world with 8,391 such deaths reported in 2010, meaning there are 1.4 deaths per 100,000 women. Female dowry deaths account for 40 to 50 percent of all female homicides recorded annually in India, representing a stable trend over the period 1999 to 2016 (The Indian Express 2020). The reason behind this scenario is that the so called 'crime' of not bringing enough dowries at the time of marriage (Angelfire 2008). Many women are in despair because of this and their life is terminated either by external force or by themselves.

Money Splurge

Along with the title of fastest growing economies in the world, India possesses also the label of the most unequal countries in the world. The economic inequality in India is being pertinent in Indian soil and society that is already fractured along the lines of caste, religion, region and gender. It is evidently reported that India's per capita gross domestic product increased five times between 2000 and 2019. However, the income is concentrated only in a few hands and others suffer great economic disparity and discrimination (Chaudhuri & Ghosh 2021). The poor and the marginalized sections of the society is forced to be in the same status with the misuse and exploitation of the social and economic resources and the use of enforced retaliatory violence. The law caste people and Dalits are physically abused and threatened with economic and social isolation and alienation from the community. These poor communities as a whole are summarily discriminated and become the victims of unfair treatment. They are cut off from community land and employment during the process of social boycotts.

It is evidently reported that for several years, a poor labourer has been in jail as an under-trial in a kidnap-cum-murder case just because his name was identical to that of an influential person in Haryana, who planned with local and Uttar Pradesh police to get the illiterate worker arrested in his place. Daily wager Sheoraj Singh, son of Attar Singh, is paying dearly for the crime allegedly committed by the wealthy Sheoraj Singh, son of Thakurdass)The Times of India, 2011). And the family of poor Sheoraj Singh went away from their village with sheer despair. These are the some ways how people are treated badly in the different context of social evils and inequalities. With these background setting, the reader present here the idea of Danny Dorling how and why the social inequalities persist and how the belief 'Despair is investable' become the part of this thinking. His main aim is to try to explain why inequality persists particularly in the developed world where given the abundance of resources that could be shared in a fair way. The belief 'despair is inevitable' by the powerful, as Dorling sees, is linked to the inequalities in health and wellbeing.

Textual Analysis

Daniel begins the chapter 'Despair is Inevitable' stating, "Despair is the result of untrammelled rise of inequalities of the affluent societies where more people are excluded or live partly in fear of being ostracised, where prejudice towards the lower begins to become normal and where greed is said as good" (Dorling 2010, 270). That means despair is a natural consequence that happened when elitism got strengthened, exclusion is grown, prejudice is raised and the greed is expanded. So despair in a way is the outcome of elitism, exclusion, prejudice and greed. To cut the story the reader would say that 'when what we owe one anther is not given or received, there arises the despair.' The most excluded might be most likely to experience despair, and despair prevents us from effectively tackling injustice.

Anxiety and Mental Health

First section of this chapter brings some evidences to show the rise in depression among children living in the most unequal of affluent countries. According to Dorling "All have an innate need for social connection and egalitarian community and it is shown that psychosis or mental ill health is a natural human reaction to being deprived of the sustenance of that need" (Dorling 2010, 271). When we live in social isolation, being deprived of feeling valued and connected together to others as equals, we are prone to be mentally ill, that means we cannot cope when not treated as equals.

Anxiety in adolescence is very much clear these days. There is a rise in the so called conduct problems among the adolescents. These problems include fighting, stealing, lying, disobedience, restlessness, fearfulness of new situation etc. The author says that it was changes in society that had harmed the mental health of so many adolescents, and even the recent study of how crucial differences in human geographical context are to social well-being also shows the same. It is said that depression in adolescents is rising in unequal affluent countries and the reasons found for this have been the collapse of a safe society and an increase in environmental dangers as perceived by children. The economic factors had so far played only a little role here but the study concludes that: "Until people feel both safe and connected to others, anxiety is likely to remain high" (Dorling 2010, 278). What increases the adolescent despair is that they often felt sad or tearful, were often anxious or stressed. The feeling of insecurity is the problem.

Mechanism behind Despair

The second section deals with the mechanism behind the rise in diseases of despair and that mechanism is identified as the anxiety caused by particular forms of competition. For example, the advertising makes the children in rich countries insecure. It makes people think that without their product you are a loser. Since the kids are emotionally vulnerable they are sensitive to that. Also advertising on television make children harmfully competitive and promote acquisitive individualism (Dorling 2010). Any concern of material gains for the self leads to the emergence of competition. Clearly, competitive interactions are target-specific because they are depended on situational context. Research on the development of social values suggests that children with different cultural backgrounds change from an essentially egocentric perspective to a competitive one, which involves a consideration of relative advantages in the specific situation, before moving on to cooperation. The label 'acquisitive individualism' is intended to emphasize the primacy of individual effort in this type of social pattern (Adamopoulos &Kashima 1999).

Evidence shows that those influenced most by the commercial pressures show higher rates of mental problems. Many make us and our children feel uncomfortable, to develop a feeling of failure, of lacking. So Dorling says that where competition is more there the health and social care is worse. He gives the example that every year around 100,000 people die in US because of lack of care, the care which one sought is denied. No other countries face such a pathetic situation and the author argue here, because no other country has competition as US has (Dorling 2010). Hence he concludes here that competition is inefficient. He gives also the example of Private Medicine which was counterproductive even for the rich. It deprives the poor from receiving some of the most basic services from doctors because it diverts these doctors from doing their job. So, as Dorling perceives, introducing a little competition and a market-based system into state healthcare is dangerous.

Culture and Social Well-Being

The third section illustrates the fractal geography that results from psychological damage and social inequality. The origin of inequality is traced back also in the geographical divides. Divides are everywhere in the world. Divides are not there because of lack of interaction, but because over the borders things move in particular direction (Affluent Countries – Exclusion on the basis of resources and economic progression). Here he gives the example of counties like Japan, Belgium and Norway who enjoy the best health and Congo being the worst. That means the position of capitalism also marks a difference. Even finance investors have little concern for the people whose jobs they destroy. Here comes the problem of unemployment and unemployment causes depression and consequently people are in despair.

Bird-Brained Thinking

In fourth section of this chapter shares that it is not just that mental health of human beings is damaged as social injustices increases, but our collective capacity to think well and work well together to do the right thing is also clearly much harmed. That is why the author calls it as a 'bird-brained' thinking to mean that silly or stupid thinking. It is a particular trait that humans have for not being able to think well ahead and for flocking in their behaviour in ways that can bring about catastrophe (Dorling 2010). When economic progress and money making only become the motive of people, then it is bird-brained thinking i.e., putting profit above caring. Some people acts with a kind of bird-brained thinking that is called hyperbolic discounting (Given two similar rewards, humans show a preference for one that arrives sooner rather than later. Humans are said to discount the value of the later reward, by a factor that increases with the length of the delay). It is clear in the society that avoiding the advice of doctors, some people still decides to forego survival and comfort in favour of the short-term pleasures of unhealthy foods and laziness.

Capitalism according to Dorling is a machine programmed to do one thing profit, there is no morality, no sentiments. So the idea of economic growth as essential is based on the belief that human beings cannot escape their bird-brained tendencies, the belief that we will always be greedy and stuff our faces given the opportunity. This is a counsel of despair that fails to recognise how simple it would be to eat more healthily.

Mass Medicating

The author ends this chapter with final section documenting the rise in mass medicating of populations that has resulted from this situation. Here he paints a gloomy picture of widespread mental ill health and use of prescribed medicines for depression. According to Dorling when you are no longer in control of your life you live in fear and in turn it leads to despair (Dorling 2010, 300). And that is why he argues that the imprisonment is the extreme case of losing one's control. Then he also explains some of the government initiatives and resp<mark>onds to rising distress</mark> by trying to treat the symptoms like employing the health trainers.

Summing up of Main Arguments

The reader here summarises the arguments that Dorling raises here for further reflection and consideration. The main arguments are:

- (1) The way we live our lives make us ill (anxiety).
- (2) Insecurity as beneficial is only a proposal of competition.
- (3) Societal well-being is also affected by culture and geography.
- (4) Seeking profit even above caring is only a bird-brained thinking.
- (5) Life expectancy is lower everywhere where economic inequalities are greater.

The final argument aired in this chapter is that: "As elitism incubates exclusion, exclusion exacerbates prejudice, prejudice fosters greed, and greed – because wealth is simultaneously no ultimate reward and makes many without wealth feel more worthless - causes despair. In turn, despair prevents us from effectively tackling injustice" (Dorling 2010, 310). Dorling's main concern is pretty clear that elitism, exclusion, prejudice and greed foster inequality and despair, and that inequality has become entrenched in our society and unless we challenge the assumptions on which our society is founded, then injustice will not only be with us, but will continue to grow.

Personal Appraisal with Critical Remarks

The book 'Injustice: why social inequalities persist' as a whole enables the reader to redefine injustice. As it is illustrated in the introduction of this book, while no one would claim to be on the side of injustice, without the continued spread of beliefs in support of injustice it would not survive long in its present form (Dorling 2010, 1). Dorling's thesis is that five new beliefs, or in his own words the five "modern evils" of elitism, exclusion, prejudice, greed and despair, are used to justify the way in which western societies are run, and they are at the root of the injustices we see in the World. We live in an increasingly hierarchical society, where some people are viewed below and some above other people. The author tries to call this hierarchy as a sham hierarchy which has been created by elitism, exclusion, prejudice, and greed. The consequent phenomena, therefore, is increasing amounts of despair among the

poor as well as among other groups like that of the children of aspirational parents. This particular chapter, 'Despair is Inevitable' gives us a realization that the social injustice still persists and rule over the world and that 'although none of us is superhuman, neither are any of us without significance.' Human dignity is much equally valued.

It is obviously experienced today that unjust thoughts and ideologies of inequality have seeped into everyday thinking. The empirical data given here is enough to see that the powerful indeed hold a belief presented in the chapter. But the reader doesn't find any substantial arguments to prove the connection between the despair and the injustice. That is to say it misses a clear analytical framework that properly anchors "social inequality" to "injustice". And the author here takes it for granted that where deep social inequality exists there must be injustice. Though it is said that along with elitism, exclusion, prejudice and greed the despair also is one of the latest incarnations of rising inequality, the readers are not provided with any viable keys to how to move forward against the current. Nevertheless, what is important here is that it does drop the veil from our eyes and at least allows us to see the problem. This theme of despair is inevitable also demarcates a mechanism behind the worldwide rise in bugs and syndromes of despair – depression and anxiety - as the insecurity caused when particular forms of competition are enhanced. It is also clear that the growing incidence of depression and anxiety has become symptomatic of living in our more unequal affluent societies. Here the reader suggests along with Wilkinson and Pickett that "Removing one symptom of the disease of inequality is no cure, but recognising inequality as the disease behind injustice, and seeing how all the forms of injustice that it creates, and that continuously recreate it, are intertwined is the first step that is so often advocated in the search for finding a solution" (Wilkinson & Pickett 2009).

The question, hounding my mind, 'how can we bring about meaningful and sustainable equality' is now quenched in rather extended way with this reflection. In the article "The Injustice of Inequality" the authors argue that, "inequality is detrimental to the security of property rights, and therefore to growth, because it enables the rich to subvert the political, regulatory, and legal institutions of society for their own benefit. If one person is sufficiently richer than another, and courts are corruptible, then the legal system will favour the rich, not the just. Likewise, if political and regulatory institutions can be moved by wealth or influence, they will favour the established, not the efficient. This in turn leads the initially well situated to pursue socially harmful acts, recognizing that the legal, political, and regulatory systems will not hold them accountable" (Glaeser, Scheinkman & Shleirfer 2003, 200). Similarly, the regular human conditions, inner aspired drives, and the subsequent anxiety, fear and other human concerns show that man cannot always be happy, but learning to live better with each other in solidarity and reciprocal thinking is beginning to be perceived as the key to learning to live better within our own minds and be more at ease with oneself. Hence, Dorling, as we see in the text, is in the right track when he says that everything it takes to defeat injustice lies in the mind. So what matters most is how we think.

Further Discussions and Comments

Few questions that can be discussed for further clarification and integration of various nuances on the matter: (1) Are we simply the docile recipients of the seeds of social change that others saw? Can we rise up to the level of being human regardless of social assumptions in relation to wealth, gender, caste, age etc.? (2) Can the rise of inequality and its fruit despair be erased through a rise in spirituality? The answer can be drawn from clarifying the questions like, are we following a deterministic world view (a passive recipient of a system)? It seems that we are only relatively free and to the large extend we are like passive recipient of the system and only very few are exceptional. Though few researchers are of the opinion that the rise of inequality can be erased through a rise in spirituality and spiritual movement, many researchers oppose this proposal and, on the contrary, explains that spirituality will not help radically for the eradication of injustice, because very often spirituality remains in the individual level and has no voice with regard to the structure of the society. Again we need to be clear enough about what sort of spirituality we propagate and the level of its functioning: deeper or peripheral.

Man is a rational being and in order to live his rationality, he needs freedom of action, self-respect, and reciprocal concern for each other, so that the rationality of all people are met and fulfilled. The greatest weakness in our society that hinders the development of any kind is injustice. It is spread everywhere, leaders to ordinary citizens, as a common disease. The democracy is used often to safeguard the vested interest of the rulers, and the unethical and immoral is made legal for their benefit. Now it is the case even with the bottom down clusters of our society. If this habit of injustice is removed somehow, within no time our society will turn into a dangerous jungle where there is no safety for us and our future generation. This decade of our life, hearing only the bangs of global development, marked by dizzying success in technological innovation and scientific advances, in a way failed to address the injustice and inequalities that prevails and loots our peace life.

Many ideologies and systems have been put forth in order to eradicate injustice in the world, such as communism and free market capitalism, etc. In the book "Counterfeit Gods," Timothy Keller says that "Whereas Communism (Marxist Form) supposedly eradicates all class lines and injustice by providing for the needs of its people through a centralized government, Free Market Capitalism puts power in the market, believing, when given free rein, human behaviour will automatically drive toward that which is most beneficial for society" (Keller 2009,105-106). But we ourselves are well aware of the consequences after its promulgation that nothing solid came out of it. The answer to solve injustice proposed by Timothy Keller is to mend our relationship with God, by which, we receive a new heart, a heart that abhors injustice and poverty, a heart that does not desire to assert its own selfishness for success and power over others. However, we must necessarily construct governments and social systems that serve both believers and non-believers. Certainly some social systems correspond more closely with God's law than others. So it is important to have God-fearing men who are knowledgeable concerning people and their needs directly involved in government and thinking through social systems.

Conclusion

Dorling presents reasonably that along with the unfair sharing of resources some growing belief system also fosters injustice. It is widely recognised now that rich countries could not simply allocate money to ease the symptoms of extreme inequality. There was also much agreement that: "Extreme social inequality is associated with higher levels of mental ill health, drugs use, crime and family breakdown. Even high levels of public service investment, alone, cannot cope with the strain that places on our social fabric" (O'Grady 2007, 62-63). It shows that Dorling's idea goes with the current thinking pattern. It is observed that injustice will not end without the millions of tiny acts required in order that we no longer tolerate the greed, prejudice, exclusion and elitism that foster inequality and despair. People should challenge the false assumptions for a better society and Let us be courageous enough to take the road seldom travelled. The Just and Fair acts require teaching and understanding, and forget not that "The human condition is fundamentally social – every aspect of human function and behaviour is rooted in social life. The modern preoccupation with individuality – individual expression, individual achievement and individual freedom – is really just a fantasy, a form of self-delusion" (Jonathan 2007, 182). This review is summed up quoting Mahatma Gandhi that "When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invisible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it – always" (Gandhi 1927).

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