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TOWARDS JUSTICE: FOSTERING SOCIAL EQUITY IN INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

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Abstract:

As India strides towards becoming a developed nation, the pursuit of social justice emerges as a pivotal component of its transformative journey. This research paper delves into the multifaceted dimensions of social justice within the context of India's development trajectory. Grounded in an exploration of theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, this paper seeks to elucidate the intricate interplay between social justice principles and the aspirations of a developed India.

Beginning with an examination of the foundational principles of social justice, including equality, fairness, and inclusivity, this paper proceeds to analyse the historical and contemporary challenges that hinder the realization of these principles in India. Drawing upon a diverse range of perspectives from academia, policy, and grassroots movements, the paper scrutinizes key areas such as education, healthcare, employment, and access to justice, exploring the entrenched inequalities and systemic barriers that perpetuate social injustice.

Furthermore, this paper examines the role of governance structures, policy frameworks, and institutional mechanisms in fostering an environment conducive to social justice and equitable development. It critically evaluates existing policies and initiatives aimed at addressing social disparities, while also identifying gaps and opportunities for reform and innovation.

Moreover, the paper investigates the inter-sectionality of social justice with other dimensions of development, including economic growth, environmental sustainability, and cultural diversity.

Ultimately, this research paper endeavours to articulate a vision for a developed India that is synonymous with social justice, where every individual enjoys equal rights, opportunities, and

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dignity. By synthesizing theoretical insights with practical implications, it aims to contribute to informed discourse and policy deliberations aimed at advancing the cause of social justice and fostering inclusive development in India.

Keywords: social, justice, law, contribution, nation.

Introduction:

As India strides towards becoming a developed nation, the imperative to weave the rich tapestry of social justice into the fabric of its growth narrative has never been more critical. The nation stands on the cusp of transformation, marked by rapid technological advancement, economic growth, and socio-political evolution. However, the dream of development remains incomplete without the foundation of equity and justice for all its citizens, transcending the barriers of caste, creed, gender, and economic disparity. This research paper delves into the vision of social justice in a developed India, exploring the multifaceted dimensions of equitable development and the pathways that can lead towards realizing this vision.

The concept of social justice, deeply rooted in the principles of fairness, equality, and respect for diversity, serves as the cornerstone for building a society that offers equal opportunities and rights to every individual. In the context of India, a nation adorned with a kaleidoscope of cultures, languages, and traditions, the pursuit of social justice becomes a complex yet vital endeavour. This paper aims to unfold the layers of this complexity, examining the historical legacies, current challenges, and future prospects of social justice in India.

Through a comprehensive review of literature, policies, and case studies, we embark on a journey to understand how social justice is defined, perceived, and implemented within the Indian socio-economic framework. We scrutinize the role of government initiatives, civil society movements, and individual actions in shaping a society that prioritizes the well-being and dignity of its most marginalized members. Moreover, we investigate the impact of globalization, technology, and economic reforms on the social justice landscape, identifying both opportunities and obstacles in the path towards a more equitable society.

The vision of a developed India, enriched with social justice, demands a collective and conscious effort to dismantle the structures of inequality and discrimination. This paper proposes a multi-dimensional approach, encompassing legal, educational, economic, and

cultural strategies, to build an inclusive society where every citizen can thrive. By highlighting successful models of social justice from within India and around the world, we seek to inspire innovative solutions that can be adapted and implemented in the Indian context.

In conclusion, "Equitable Horizons: The Vision of Social Justice in a Developed India" aims to contribute to the discourse on development and social justice, offering insights and recommendations that resonate with policymakers, scholars, activists, and the broader public. As we envision a future where India's growth is measured not just by its GDP but by the well-being and empowerment of its entire people, this paper calls for a renewed commitment to the principles of equity, justice, and humanity.

By charting a course towards an equitable horizon, we reaffirm our belief in the potential of a developed India to emerge as a beacon of social justice, not only for its own citizens but for the world at large.

Defining social justice:

As per the United Nations, "Social justice may be broadly understood as the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic growth."

As per the National Association of Social Workers, "Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. The key and defining elements in every definition of social justice are fairness and equality."²

Historical Context and Policy Analysis:

A detailed examination of India's historical context, focusing on post-independence policies, economic liberalization, and recent reforms, highlights their impact on social equity. This analysis critically assesses the success and failures of various government initiatives in addressing the needs of marginalized communities.

Envisioning Social Justice in a Developed India presents an ambitious framework, aiming not only at economic growth but also at rectifying deep-rooted inequalities. This vision is underpinned by the historical context of India's struggle with social injustice and the policies that have aimed to address these challenges. Below is an exploration of the historical context

² Divya Raisharma, What is social justice, <https://blog.ipleaders.in/what-is-social-justice/>

and policy analysis that informs this vision:

i. Historical Context:

- a. Colonial Legacy:** The British colonial period left a legacy of economic exploitation and social stratification, exacerbating pre-existing caste divisions and introducing new forms of administrative discrimination. This period set the stage for independent India's social justice challenges, including unequal access to resources and opportunities.
- b. Post-Independence Era:** Post-1947, India embarked on a journey to forge a new identity, with leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and B.R. Ambedkar focusing on creating an egalitarian society. The constitution of India, drafted with Ambedkar's leadership, aimed to lay the foundation for social justice through various articles and provisions for the protection of marginalized communities.
- c. Green Revolution:** The Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s transformed India's agrarian landscape, boosting food production and promoting self-sufficiency. However, it also led to unequal benefits, favouring the well-off farmers of certain regions over others and exacerbating rural inequality.
- d. Economic Liberalization:** The economic reforms of 1991 were a turning point, leading to unprecedented economic growth. However, this growth was not evenly distributed, with significant disparities emerging between the urban elite and the rural poor, as well as between different regions and states.

ii. Policy Analysis:

- a. Affirmative Action:** Policies such as reservations in education and government jobs for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) have been pivotal. These policies, while controversial, have made significant strides in providing historically marginalized communities with better opportunities.
- b. Right to Education Act (2009):** This act made education a fundamental right for children aged 6 to 14 years, aiming to improve access to quality education for underprivileged children and thus address educational disparities.
- c. Economic Policies:** Various schemes aimed at financial inclusion, rural development, and poverty alleviation have been launched. Initiatives like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

and Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana aim to provide a safety net to the vulnerable.

- d. Healthcare Initiatives:** Efforts to bridge the healthcare gap include the National Health Mission and the Ayushman Bharat scheme, which seek to provide accessible and affordable healthcare to the underserved population.
- e. Digital India Campaign:** Launched to ensure government services are available to citizens electronically by improving online infrastructure and by increasing Internet connectivity, aiming to reduce gaps in access to information and services.

iii. Moving Forward: For a vision of social justice in a developed India, policies must continue to evolve. This includes not only sustaining and refining existing initiatives but also innovating new solutions to emerging challenges. Key areas of focus should include:

- a. Technology and Inclusion:** Leveraging technology to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that the benefits of India's IT boom reach all sections of society.
- b. Sustainable Development:** Balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability and ensuring that the benefits of development are equitably shared.
- c. Urbanization and Housing:** Addressing the challenges of rapid urbanization, including housing, sanitation, and urban poverty.
- d. Gender Equality:** Ensuring women's rights and participation in the workforce are central to policy formulations, recognizing the role of women in India's development narrative.

Equitable Horizons requires a multifaceted approach, recognizing the complexities of India's social fabric. The vision of social justice in a developed India rests on a foundation of inclusive growth, equitable distribution of resources, and the empowerment of all its citizens.

Constitutional Mandate:

The vision of social justice within the context of a developed India is both a guiding principle and a goal, deeply rooted in the country's constitutional mandate. This vision extends beyond mere economic growth, encompassing the broader dimensions of equality, equity, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination and social injustice. It's a vision that aims to ensure every citizen, regardless of their background, has access to the resources and opportunities

needed to lead a fulfilling life. This vision, while ambitious, is embedded in the fabric of India's Constitution and is reflected in various articles and provisions that seek to safeguard and promote the welfare of all its citizens, especially the marginalized and underprivileged.

- i. Constitutional Mandate for Social Justice:** India's Constitution, adopted on January 26, 1950, lays down the framework for a republic aimed at securing justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity for all its citizens. The Preamble itself sets the tone for a country that aspires to eliminate social, economic, and political inequalities and promotes the well-being of its entire people.
- ii. Directive Principles of State Policy:** Part IV of the Constitution, which includes the Directive Principles of State Policy, serves as a guide for the state to promote social and economic democracy, aiming to create a welfare state. These principles, although not justiciable, are fundamental in the governance of the country and obligate the state to work towards:

Promoting the welfare of the people by securing a social order permeated by justice — social, economic, and political — and minimizing inequalities in income, status, facilities, and opportunities (Article 38).

Ensuring equality before the law and providing equal protection of the laws to all individuals (Article 14).

Preventing discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth (Articles 15 and 16).

Uplifting the socio-economic conditions of the weaker sections of society, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and protecting them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46).

Promoting education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, especially Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and protecting them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Articles 45 and 46).

- iii. Fundamental Rights:** The Constitution also enshrines Fundamental Rights that are enforceable by the courts, safeguarding the rights of individuals and promoting social justice. These rights include:

Right to Equality (Articles 14-18), which includes equality before the law, prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, equality of opportunity in matters of employment, and abolition of untouchability and titles.

Right to Freedom (Articles 19-22), which encompasses freedom of speech and expression, assembly, association, movement, residence, and the right to practice any profession or occupation.

Right against Exploitation (Articles 23-24), prohibiting all forms of forced labour, child labour, and human trafficking.

Right to Freedom of Religion (Articles 25-28), ensuring freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion.

Envisioning an Equitable Horizon: The vision for an equitable India is a multifaceted endeavour that requires the concerted effort of the government, civil society, and the citizens.

It involves:

- i. **Ensuring Access to Education and Healthcare:** Making quality education and healthcare accessible to all, especially the marginalized and economically disadvantaged, to enable them to lead healthier, more informed lives.
- ii. **Economic Empowerment:** Through policies and schemes aimed at uplifting the economic status of the poor and marginalized, ensuring equal opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.
- iii. **Social Equity:** Addressing and rectifying social imbalances and discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, or economic status.
- iv. **Environmental Justice:** Ensuring equitable access to natural resources and protecting the rights of communities affected by environmental decisions.

The vision of social justice in a developed India, guided by the constitutional mandate, is not just about achieving high GDP growth rates but ensuring that the growth is inclusive, sustainable, and equitable. It's about building a society where every citizen has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from India's development journey.

Role of Judiciary:

Beside the State, the Judiciary also plays a significant role in dispensing social justice while interpreting relevant statutory and Constitutional provisions³, adjudicating upon rights of parties involved, and providing remedies⁴. Therefore, Judicial attempts to interpret law is in a manner which ensures the attainment of social justice without any deprivation of legal rights⁵. Similarly, it seeks to harmonize the rival claims and interests of different social groups while bearing in mind social welfare and common good⁶. In aiming to secure social justice, the Judiciary 'refuses to yield blindly to abstract notions' and 'adopts a realistic and pragmatic approach' while devising remedial frameworks for parties concerned⁷. Therefore, in **Sadhuram Bansal v. Pulin Behari Sarkar**⁸, SCI, in furtherance of pragmatic socialism, they allowed the petitioners, who were originally trespassers on impugned land, to competitively bid for that land. This case also evidences that Courts seek to adjudge even the private disputes involving socialist claims viz. attainment of livelihood (including equitable wage structure)⁹, accommodation, maternity relief¹⁰, industrial disputes¹¹, etc. through the pragmatic lens of social justice. Insofar as 'Social Justice' is a species of the genus 'Justice'¹², SCI's and the High Courts' inherent power to do complete justice (in accordance with Articles 32, 136, 142 and 226 of Constitution) includes the power to interpret, ascertain, evolve and declare such law, and to pass such directions, orders or other remedies which are socially just¹³. Nevertheless, social justice cannot be administered through the exercise of such power in supersession or contravention of applicable statutory or constitutional provisions¹⁴.

Therefore, while there is no universally acceptable definition of what is Social Justice¹⁵, Constitutional directives and judicial decisions provide useful insight into what may constitute

³ S.P. Gupta v President of India and Ors. [1982] AIR 149 (SC) 26

⁴ Sadhuram Bansal v. Pulin Behari Sarkar [1984] AIR 1471 (SC)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Crown Aluminum Works v Workmen [1958] AIR 30 (SC); R.S. Swamiji v State of Mysore [1966] AIR 1171 (SC)

⁷ J.K. Cotton Spinning & Weaving Co. Limited v Labour Aellate Tribunal of India [1964] AIR 737 (SC) 743

⁸ [1984] AIR 1471 (SC)

⁹ Workmen v. Reptakos Brett [1992] AIR 504 (SC)

¹⁰ Municipal Corporation of Delhi v Female Workers (Muster Roll) [2000] 3 SCC 224, 32, 33

¹¹ Supranote 9; N.S. Giri v Corporation of City of Mangalore [1999] AIR 1958 (SC)

¹² Consumer Education and Research center and others v Union of India and others [1995] AIR 922 (SC)

¹³ G.M., O.N.G.C. Ltd. v Sendhabhai Vastram Patel and Ors. [2005] Su (2) SCR 448

¹⁴ Vishrut Kansal, Supreme Court of India Social Justice Bench: Maiden Dichotomy Between Equity and Law in Indian Jurisprudential History, Law, Social Justice & Global Development, October 2015, Issue 1, p. 6, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/elj/igd/2015-1/kansal/igd_2015_1_kansal_pdf.pdf; also see; Supreme Court Bar Association v Union of India [1998] 4 SCC 409

¹⁵ Prakash Cotton Mills (Private) v The State of Bombay [1957] 59 BOMLR 836 (Bombay High Court)

Social Justice. While, microcosmically, it means rectification of injustice in personal relations between people; social justice in its macrocosmic form indicates complex and dynamic social change, in the edifice of a welfare state, aimed at: harmonizing rival claims and interests of different groups, and reconciling individual conduct with general social welfare; removing social, economic and political imbalances (and all forms of inequalities) from social order; and/or providing distributive justice and proportional equality to all, especially the deprived sections of society (Lahoti 2004, p.100; Raju 2006, p. 2-3; Singh 2015)¹⁶. Even though the illustrations annexed to the SCI's Notification are (apparently) of Social Justice in its macro form only, it will be a travesty to assume that SJB will not have jurisdiction to entertain private disputes involving socialist claims. Therefore, both these dimensions of social justice assume importance qua SJB.¹⁷

In effect therefore, the conceptualization of Social Justice is undeniably plausible, but its concretization is not. The obscured semantics of Social Justice will indeed allow SJB to resolve the definitional questions by interpreting it either expansively or specifically tailor-made to facts and circumstances. This, however, will also result in certain undesirable outcomes: first, uncertainty in the litigant's assessment of suitability of his cause of action before SJB; second, deliberate abuse of such uncertainty by the litigant either in an attempt to be heard by a sympathetic bench¹⁸ (i.e. bench-hunting) or in an attempt to delay hearing of the matter by the proper bench; and third, unpredictability in even SJB's own assessment of suitability of any cause of action arising before it. It is interesting to note that one of the primary objectives behind the constitution of SJB was to expedite delivery of social justice¹⁹. This objective may however, be eclipsed by bench-hunting, which is highly likely given the obscured contours of Social Justice.²⁰

¹⁶ Crown Aluminum Works v Workmen [1958] AIR 30 (SC); Muir Mills Company Limited v Suti Mills Mazdoor Union [1995]

1 SCR 991; Consumer Education and Research center and others v Union of India and others [1995] AIR 922 (SC); Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Ltd. and Anr. v Union of India (UOI) and Ors. and Suresh Kumar and Ors. v Union of India (UOI) and Ors. [1996] 10 SCC 104; Air India Statutory Corporation, etc. v United Labour Union and others [1997] AIR 645 (SC); Gajaji Gopalji Jadeja v State of Gujarat [2005] 2 GLR 1142 (Gujarat High Court)

¹⁷ Supranote 13, pp. 6-7.

¹⁸ SJB, being a specially constituted bench for securing social justice, will readily grant remedies sought by the petitioner even in borderline cases.

¹⁹ Notification issued by Supreme Court of India 2 <http://supremecourtindia.nic.in/FileServer/2014-12-17_1418816381.pdf> accessed 01 February 2015.

²⁰ Supranote 13, p.7.

Legal Policies in India:

Creating a vision of social justice in a developed India involves the formulation of comprehensive legal policies aimed at reducing inequalities, ensuring equitable access to resources, and promoting the well-being of all its citizens. Here are several policy suggestions that could help in realizing this vision:

1. Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Laws:

- a. **Enact and Enforce Stronger Anti-Discrimination Laws:** Broaden the scope of existing laws to cover discrimination based on education, economic status, gender identity, and sexual orientation, in addition to caste, religion, and gender. Implement rigorous penalties for violations to deter discriminatory practices.

2. Education Reform and Access:

- a. **Right to Education Enhancement:** Expand the Right to Education Act to guarantee free education up to the college level, including vocational training, to ensure that higher education is not a privilege of the economically well-off alone.
- b. **Inclusive Education Policy:** Develop policies that specifically address the inclusion of marginalized communities, including the differently-abled, in mainstream educational institutions.

3. Healthcare Accessibility:

- a. **Universal Healthcare Policy:** Implement a universal healthcare system that guarantees free and equal access to healthcare services for all citizens, regardless of their economic status.
- c. **Mental Health Legislation:** Introduce comprehensive mental health legislation that not only provides for mental health services but also integrates mental health education and awareness into public health initiatives.

4. Economic Equity and Employment:

- a. **Minimum Wage Legislation:** Enact and strictly enforce a national minimum wage that is indexed to inflation to ensure that all workers can afford a basic standard of living.
- b. **Equal Pay Laws:** Strengthen laws to ensure equal pay for equal work,

regardless of gender, caste, religion, or other discriminatory factors.

- b. Social Security Expansion:** Expand social security benefits to cover the unorganized sector, providing safety nets such as unemployment benefits, health insurance, and pensions.

5. Housing and Urban Development:

- a. Affordable Housing Policy:** Launch initiatives aimed at increasing the availability of affordable housing for low-income families and develop schemes for the homeless, including temporary shelters and long-term housing projects.
- c. Slum Rehabilitation Programs:** Implement slum rehabilitation projects that focus on providing permanent housing solutions without displacing communities, ensuring access to basic services like water, electricity, and sanitation.

6. Environmental Justice:

- a. Sustainable Development Policies:** Integrate environmental justice into all development policies to ensure that marginalized and vulnerable communities are not adversely affected by environmental degradation and have access to clean air, water, and land.
- b. Climate Change Adaptation:** Develop legal frameworks to protect communities vulnerable to climate change, including policies for disaster-resilient infrastructure and support for displaced populations.

7. Digital Inclusion:

- a. Digital Literacy and Access:** Promote digital literacy and ensure equitable access to digital resources and the internet, particularly in rural and underserved areas, to bridge the digital divide.

8. Judicial Reforms:

- a. Fast-Track Courts for Social Justice:** Establish fast-track courts to deal with cases related to social justice issues, ensuring timely justice for victims of discrimination and abuse.
- b. Legal Aid Expansion:** Expand the scope and accessibility of legal aid services to ensure that marginalized and economically disadvantaged groups have access

to justice.

Implementing these policies requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society, including the government, civil society organizations, the private sector, and communities themselves. It is crucial for these policies to be backed by strong political will, adequate funding, and efficient implementation mechanisms to ensure that the vision of social justice in a developed India is realized.

- c. Technological Innovations and Social Justice:** This segment examines how technology, especially digital innovations, can be harnessed to advance social justice. It discusses the potential of digital literacy, e-governance, and social media as tools for empowerment and advocacy.

Thus, many governments in various countries have a concerned department of social justice, such as the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of India. This department is entrusted with the welfare and social justice of marginalised communities. They also have a say in governance and oversee the integration of social justice into government policies²¹.

Schemes promoting social justice in India are:

- i. Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY)
- ii. Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE)
- iii. Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS)
- iv. Dr. Ambedkar Scheme of Interest Subsidy on Educational Loan for Overseas Studies for OBCs & EBCs²²

The government also takes up social justice initiatives by way of:

- i. Taxation laws with the progressive and proportional tax system (Eg. The Income Tax Act, 1961).
- ii. The government subsidy schemes for the promotion of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities.
- iii. Infrastructure development in underdeveloped areas (Eg. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana).
- iv. Anti-discrimination laws (Eg. Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955).

²¹ Supranote 2.

²² Supranote 2.

- v. Minimum wages policies (Eg. Minimum Wages Act, 1948).
- vi. Uplifting living standards of the poor by way of Slum Rehabilitation [Eg. Maharashtra Slum Areas (Improvement, Clearance and Redevelopment) Act, 197]
- vii. Reservation at educational institutions or official government positions for weaker sections, etc. [Article 15(4), Article 16(4) and Article 16(5)]²³

Challenges and Pathways Forward: Identifying the major challenges—such as political will, resource allocation, and societal attitudes—that hinder the achievement of social justice. This section proposes a multi-stakeholder approach that includes policy reforms, education, and inclusive governance as pathways towards a more equitable society. Here are some potential challenges and pathways forward that could be explored in such a discussion:

Challenges:

- a. **Economic Disparities:** India faces significant economic disparities, with a large portion of the population living in poverty while a small segment enjoys immense wealth. Addressing these disparities is crucial for achieving social justice.
- b. **Caste System:** The caste system continues to have a profound impact on social hierarchy and access to resources in India. Overcoming caste-based discrimination is essential for promoting social justice.
- c. **Gender Inequality:** Despite progress, gender inequality remains a significant challenge in India, affecting women's access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.
- d. **Regional Disparities:** Regional disparities in development persist, with some states lagging far behind others in terms of infrastructure, education, and healthcare.
- e. **Access to Education:** While strides have been made in improving access to education, quality education remains out of reach for many due to factors such as poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and social norms.

Pathways Forward:

- a. **Policy Reforms:** Implementing policy reforms aimed at reducing economic disparities, promoting social inclusion, and ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens.

²³ Supranote 2.

- b. Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Enforcing existing laws and implementing new legislation to combat discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, or ethnicity.
- c. Empowering Marginalized Communities:** Providing marginalized communities with access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities to uplift them socioeconomically.
- d. Promoting Gender Equality:** Implementing measures to empower women, such as promoting women's education, providing support for women entrepreneurs, and enforcing laws against gender-based violence.
- e. Investing in Infrastructure:** Investing in infrastructure development, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas, to reduce regional disparities and improve access to essential services.

These are just a few potential challenges and pathways forward that could be explored in the context of achieving social justice in a developed India. The actual challenges and solutions would depend on various factors such as political will, societal dynamics, and economic conditions.

Conclusion:

The concluding remarks reiterate the centrality of social justice in realizing the vision of a developed India. The need will be a sustained commitment from the government, civil society, and citizens to work collaboratively towards building an inclusive, equitable, and just society.

While fulfilling the dreams of social justice within the framework of a developed India, the concept of Equitable Horizons emerges as a guiding light. It encapsulates the vision of a society where every individual, regardless of their background, enjoys equal opportunities, rights, and dignity. Achieving such a vision requires concerted efforts on multiple fronts, including economic, political, and social dimensions.

Economic equity forms the cornerstone of Equitable Horizons. It entails creating an environment where wealth and resources are distributed fairly, ensuring that no individual or community is left behind in the march towards prosperity. This necessitates not only equitable access to education, employment, and healthcare but also addressing systemic barriers that perpetuate inequalities. Policies promoting inclusive growth, targeted welfare programs, and robust social safety nets play a crucial role in narrowing the wealth gap and fostering economic empowerment.

However, economic equity alone is insufficient without addressing the underlying structural injustices ingrained in society. Political equity is indispensable in ensuring that marginalized voices are heard and represented in decision-making processes. This entails not only electoral reforms to enhance inclusivity but also dismantling power structures that perpetuate discrimination and marginalization. Empowering marginalized communities through political participation and advocacy is essential for fostering a more just and inclusive society.

Furthermore, social equity is integral to the realization of Equitable Horizons. It requires challenging ingrained prejudices, stereotypes, and biases that perpetuate discrimination based on factors such as caste, gender, religion, or ethnicity. Building a culture of inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for diversity is paramount in fostering social cohesion and harmony. Education, awareness campaigns, and community outreach programs are vital tools in promoting social justice and challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

Equitable Horizons is not merely an abstract concept but a tangible vision that requires collective action and commitment from all stakeholders – government, civil society, private sector, and individuals alike. It demands a paradigm shift in our approach to development, prioritizing human well-being and dignity over mere economic growth. It calls for bold policies, innovative solutions, and unwavering dedication to the principles of fairness, equality, and justice.

As India embarks on its journey towards becoming a developed nation, it must not lose sight of the imperative of social justice. Equitable Horizons offers a roadmap for realizing this vision – a vision where every individual can aspire to a better life, unencumbered by the shackles of poverty, prejudice, or inequality. By embracing this vision and working together towards its realization, India can truly fulfil its promise of being a land of opportunity and prosperity for all.

Conclusion and Path Forward: Towards Justice in India's Development Journey:

The concluding remarks reiterate the centrality of social justice in realizing the vision of a developed India. The need will be a sustained commitment from the government, civil society, and citizens to work collaboratively towards building an inclusive, equitable, and just society.

We cannot deny that the pursuit of social equity is fundamental to India's development journey. As the nation is growing towards economic growth and progress, it's our responsibility as a nation that it must be ensured that the benefits of development are shared equitably among all its citizens. The result will be addressing historical injustices, socio-economic disparities, and systemic barriers that hinder marginalized communities from realizing their full potential.

And we have to ensure that achieving social equity is not merely a matter of policy but a commitment to justice and inclusivity. However, in this path there will be various challenges is it due to caste, gender, economic status, or geographic location—demand targeted interventions and a holistic approach. No doubt efforts have been made in recent years, including legislative reforms and social programs, significant gaps remain. The recognition of rights, provision of opportunities, and fostering of inclusive practices are essential to building a just society.

It has to be ensured that the call for social equity must resonate at all levels of governance, civil society, and within communities. It is imperative that the voices of the marginalized are heard and that they are active participants in shaping policies that affect their lives. By promoting equitable access to resources, education, and opportunities, India can pave the way for sustainable development that benefits all.

Path Forward:

We as a society can take following steps to strengthen the path of social justice:

- 1. Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Revise and strengthen existing laws to ensure they effectively protect the rights of marginalized communities. This includes enforcing anti-discrimination laws and expanding affirmative action policies to cover a broader range of social injustices.
- 2. Enhancing Access to Education:** Implement targeted educational initiatives that address the specific needs of marginalized groups. Scholarships, vocational training, and inclusive curricula can empower individuals and enhance their employability.
- 3. Promoting Economic Opportunities:** Foster entrepreneurship and job creation in underserved regions. Support for small businesses, access to credit, and skill development programs can provide pathways out of poverty.

4. **Community Engagement:** Engage communities in the decision-making process, ensuring that policies are reflective of their needs and aspirations. Participatory governance can help build trust and accountability.
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish robust mechanisms for monitoring the impact of social equity initiatives. Regular evaluations can help identify gaps, measure progress, and inform policy adjustments.
6. **Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about their rights and available resources. This can empower individuals to advocate for themselves and their communities.
7. **Intersectional Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration between government, civil society, and the private sector to create comprehensive solutions to social equity challenges. Collective efforts can leverage resources and expertise for greater impact.
8. **Focus on Sustainability:** Ensure that social equity initiatives are aligned with sustainable development goals (SDGs). This holistic approach can address environmental justice alongside social justice.

The journey towards social equity in India is both a moral imperative and a necessity for sustainable development. By fostering an inclusive environment that prioritizes justice and equality, India can realize its vision of a society where all individuals have the opportunity to thrive. Together, we can build a future that is just, equitable, and reflective of the diverse tapestry that is India.

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