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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Social Security: Politics of Food Security in Brazil.

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Abstract

The concept of social security has secured a prominent position in the policy formulation of many countries. The necessity to provide the required social support for reform programmes, to promote social justice and equity and protect its citizens against risks and to ensure basic acceptable livelihood standards for all are the main thrust areas behind the concept. The article aims to focus on social security scenario especially the current state of food security in Brazil and its political implications. It will give an overview of the various policy reforms and programme in the field of social security especially in making food secured for the poor that is the Fome Zero or the Zero Hunger Project under the administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva taking a cue from historical, analytical and descriptive methods. Brazil has set an example that by focusing efforts directly on hunger reduction, it becomes quite formidable to set in motion a much broader process of economic and social transformation. It not only emancipates the poor from hunger but also offers them a dignity of life. The commitment to end hunger also implies that utmost priority should be given in creating a nationwide social protection system that enables the poor to access the food they need for a healthy and productive life. Food and nutritional deprivations have adverse lifelong implications whether it pertains to health (both in terms of physical and cognitive development), for education (in terms of participation and cognitive functioning), for gender relations (women are generally the bearers of malnourishment and biasness) and in terms of employment and income generation as malnourished and weak people are less productive.

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Introduction:-

The meaning of 'social security' varies country wise and is considered a part of the total institutional pattern of the nation in which it exists and is in conformity with it. In the words of G. D. Cole, Social Security means that government, which is the symbol and representative of society is responsible for fixing a minimum standard of living. Social security systems and institutions of a particular country are influenced by the existing economic structure, the prevalent economic system, the stage of economic development and historical and social factors.

The contemporary debate on social security and social protection requires a comprehensive focus on poverty and its deprivation, inequality, income distribution and social inclusion. The policies and programmes are therefore based on a string of legal and regulatory frameworks and are in congruence with national development strategies to achieve inclusive, equitable growth and development. For any country, social security and protection forms a part of the broader field of social policy. Today, the core objective of social security in most countries is poverty alleviation and 'food security' as a policy reform has gained prominence in the international discourse in the mid 1970s global food crisis.

In the context of Brazil, the history of social security goes back to 1920s when the governmentally enforced social security protection policies were enacted for the private sector employees. It was under the fifteen years rule of

Gétúlio Vargas (1930-45), that the basic system of social security was considered to be a part of the 'systematic' set of pro-labour policies. The Brazilian ruling technocratic class during that period was heavily influenced by the reforms undertaken by the international organisations like the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Beveridge Report in England and therefore had its underpinnings on its social security policies. After the deposition of Vargas in 1945, Brazil entered a new phase of 'open politics' which lasted till the coup d'état of 1964. The new 'basic security law' (Lei Organica da Presidentia Social) became the embodiment of social security reform system. By 1971, the Brazilian government broke away with the early tradition of secluding the rural sector and undertook a broad based system of social protection for the rural workers. After the transition to civilian rule in 1985, the provisions of social protection which include social security, health and social assistance was enshrined in the 1988 constitution. It is observed that the adoption of market led export policies and the gradual decline of the import-substitution-industrialisation have profoundly affected the politics and public policy realm in Latin America. Social protection policies are built on historical forms of political consensus which are constantly being negotiated between various groups to respond to questions like: Who should and how should they be protected? And how much protection they should receive? Therefore, there is a need for a contextualised understanding of the realities faced by various groups in a country and to strategise policies in response to permanent and temporary shocks and vulnerabilities.

The centrality of food and nutritional security which ensures comprehensive social protection has gained prominence under the Lula administration since 2003. The non-contributory social protection in the form of social assistance is based on rights and citizenship based policy. The 1988 constitution which gave legality to social protection system in Brazil has established the provisions of human and social rights as a responsibility of the state, thereby guaranteeing universal rights in social security. In 2003, public policy making was premised to fight hunger and poverty and Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) became one of the defining policies of the Lula administration. The programme which is inspired by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals intended to provide regular supplies of food and cash aid to nearly 44 million people living under poverty line. The policies and programmes under Zero Hunger are articulated under four major axes: access to food, family farming promotion, income generation, and social accountability and mobilisation

Social Security: Historical Antecedents to Contemporary Debate:-

Since the inception of International Labour Organisation in 1919, it has adopted various resolutions, recommendations and conventions on various aspects of social security. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO), Social Security embodies those schemes and services that fulfill the following three objectives: the provision of curative or preventive health care; the maintenance of income in case of involuntary loss of all or part of income including income lost due to retirement and supplemental income to person having family responsibilities. The categories under which benefits can be received are medical care sickness, unemployment, old age, employment injury, maternity, invalidity and survivors benefit (ILO 1985). The primary objective of social security is therefore to give protection to poor and vulnerable section of the society ensuring that they have an acceptable life of living. The social security policies bank on identifying the vulnerable groups and also with its administrative and political dimensions in a particular country. The concept of social security has taken up a broad meaning which includes housing, safe drinking water, sanitation, food security, education and minimum wage which guarantees the workers with decent life. Today the core objective of social security in many countries is poverty alleviation which was not the case in the past.

In the industrial countries, policy making in the arena of social security are associated with mainly pension, health care and un-employment. But these parameters are not the only indicators that reveal the role and benefits social security plays in the developing countries. The evolution of social security in countries like Britain was result of the changing perception of identifying the vulnerable. These policies were also adopted to bring a sense of stability, as Bismarck introduced the social insurance in Germany. Depending on the prior objectives and goals the social security policies differ among the industrial countries. The basic test however remains that how well it has been able to pay benefits to target groups (Ahmed, 1991).

The experience of social security in Industrial countries can prove to be beneficial for developing once as they can analyse how the interaction among various programmes can impact the overall design of security system in a particular country. The inception of the social security systems in most of the Latin American countries can be traced to the pre- Columbian cultures and the Iberian colonial governments. But the modern system has evolved in the republican era since the 1920's (Mesa-Lago, 1976). The social security systems vary substantially in relative size

and degree of development in each country. It therefore reflects the differences in economic setup and socio-political environment (Mackenzie, 1998).

The history of social security in Latin America, Europe and United states are inherently related to the nature and the functions of the state and the patterns of economic development witnessed during the process of urbanisation and industrialisation. Therefore the pace of socio-economic and political process has greatly influence the adoption and expansion of social security programmes in Latin America (Mesa- Lago 1976).

Militarism and authoritarian rule has been the main stay of the Latin American politics. The survival and political influence of popularly elected governments have remained unstable and fragile due to coups and suppression by oligarchic and military factions (Stone 1975). However many of the popularly elected governments have sustained their duration of governance as they have provided an institutional mechanism for mass demands by adopting redistributive and warfare policies. Thus, social sector reforms and policies are pertinent for long term sustainability for economic reforms and is regarded as invaluable for democratic consolidation. The inter-war years of economic depression and post World War II saw the emergence of the new urban working class and lower class sectors that were becoming a great political force and also an extensive unionisation of labour. Most of this countries adopted import substitution strategy and their economic mantra and made concerted efforts toward social reforms

Economic and the political rationale behind the adoption of social security policies in Brazil:-

The early literature on social security system has focused on mainly on its legal frame work and their provisions thereby ignoring the political and economic factors. But after 1970's, focus was shifted on these two important factors like the role of the state and its machinery, role of pressure groups, and non-governmental organisations, civil society and economic effect of these policies on the state, the intended target group and the rest of society (Malloy 1979). The economic and socio- political factors therefore have an impact on the formulation of welfare and redistributive policies. The level of economic growth of a country generates national and domestic income with reduces the tendency on the part of the wealthy strata to obstruct and oppose these policies. There is an increase in the wealth and the power of the urban middle class and the and capitalist strata who are less antagonistic to or feel threatened by popular mass movements and were more in favour of public policies that tends to stimulates productive capacity and social level of the working class.

The Latin American countries can be classified in to three groups in terms of the adoption of social security programmes the first group are the pioneers like Argentina, Brazil Chile Cuba and Uruguay that have adopted fragmented programmes in the 1920's : The second group are the countries like Columbia , Costa Rica Mexico , Peru and Venezuela embrace these programs in 1940s and the last group consists of central and Caribbean countries where there policies appeared only after 1950s and 1960s. With the emergence of social security systems in the early decades of the 20th century, Latin America witnessed a wave of populism and populist states, expansion of political rights and the emergence of a wide network of social insurance policies. The emergence of social security was not the result of a universal approach but evolved in a piecemeal fashion as it was intended to target a certain sectors of working class.

Using the dependency perspective, James Malloy (1979), has divided the economic history of Brazil into four distinct periods: The period of authoritarianism of 1930 starting with the rule of Getúlio Vargas where 'social issues and questions' came to the fore. Vargas's Estado Novo (1932-1945) marked a large scale and systematic establishment of social security system and its extension from the urban employees to the rural masses. Brazil is one of the first countries in Latin America that experimented with governmentally enforced scheme of social protection for the private sector employees. Gradually, the Brazilian social reforms sought to create a universal social security institute which will provide uniform level of benefits to all the Brazilians. It is also perceived that the social security policies of Brazil are integral to the security doctrine in the sense that these programmes are instrumental in scaling down social conflict and enhances social cooperation (Malloy, 1977, 1979).

The adoption of economic liberalisation i.e market led export policies and the gradual decline of import-substitution industrialisation have profoundly affected the politics and public policy realm in the region (Kay, 1999). The importance of patronage in Brazil's political system is prominent in the sense that the legislators mostly bank upon individual rather than party support. The presidential system of government sometimes makes it difficult to command reliable support from the Congress and the open-list proportional representation further weakens party

discipline thereby inhibiting the formation of any solid majority to pass reform measures. And the federal structure makes it easy for the governors to advance regional interests than national needs (Weyland, 1996).

After the transition to civilian rule, the governments have inclined more towards the social-democratic model of welfare state. But, the organisational fragmentation in its polity and the inherent weaknesses in political parties prompted the policy makers to follow Pareto's principle as the basic rule of policy making. Therefore proposals and policies to improve the conditions of the poor sectors were passed only if they are in congruence with the furtherance of the better-off sectors. During this period the Brazilian government enacted distributive policies not redistribution (Weyland, 1996).

It is observed that the alteration in the rule of Catholic and left-wing parties promote social security effort. Now researchers are also looking into whether some political parties are inclined towards patronage i.e granting of divisible distributive benefits to particular business interests and favoured constituencies. Social policies to a great extent define and reshape politics. Thus once policies are enacted and implemented, they change public agendas and perception and thus the pattern of group conflict through which policy changes occur (Skocpol and Amenta, 1986).

The presidential election of 2002 which brought Lula to power was fought on the policy failures of President Cardoso regarding economic and social development. Terming his economic policies as 'neo-liberal and unfair' to the great majority of Brazilian citizens who still reels under poverty and destitution. The centerpiece of his campaign was poverty alleviation and hunger under his proposed plan "Zero Hunger". After becoming the president in 2003, Lula based his policies on "economic pragmatism with a human face". (Faro de Castro and Valladão de Carvalho, 2003).

Food Security: Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) Programme of Brazil and its Limitations:-

The two terms "social security" and "food security" expresses in itself the concepts of social contingencies or social deprivation of basic human capacities. Social contingencies results from a loss of income and the loss of the ability to provide for the family's basic needs. The common ground between the two concepts is therefore the mitigation of social risks (Delgado, 2012). The concept of food security emerged in the international discourse during the mid 1970s global food crisis. The way food security is understood by the policy makers gets reflected and addressed in the public policy (Bastian and Coveney, 2013). In common parlance the term food security is used by Government and nongovernmental organisation to describe, monitor and analyze and intervene in a food system that has not met the needs of the world's population for sufficient food that is culturally appropriate, affordable, accessible and nutritious (Mcmillan and Dowler, 2011).

At the 1974 World Food Summit, food security was defined by the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies a basic food stuff to sustain a steady expansion of the food consumption and the offset fluctuation in production and prices (United Nations, 1975). In the 1983 the horizon of the definition of food security was expanded to include the securing of access by vulnerable people to available supplies thus offering a balance between supplying and demand side of the food security equation. Thus ensures all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need (FAO, 1993). There was a revision to definition at the 1996 World Food Summit which states that Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, nutritious to meet their dietary needs to food preferences to active and healthy life (FAO 1996). The definition thus focuses on four main dimensions of food security: the physical availability of food; social and physical access to food; food utilisation; and the stability of the above dimensions over a period of time. The 2009 World Food Summit added the nutritional dimension as an integral component of food security.

Fome Zero (Zero Hunger):-

The programme is basically intended by its architects to bring about a fundamental change in the management in Brazilian economy, a programme that will lead to an inclusive growth taking all its citizens in the process of socio-economic development with strong upholding of their human rights. The programme was also in sync with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Access to adequate food was a fundamental concern of the Lula administration and one of the priorities of his election manifesto. To embark on the process of policy reforms and development, it has become imperative to address the social issues like the under lying structural causes of hunger malnourishment and poverty. So that in the long run all the Brazilians will have access to food without prior dependence on state machinery. In other ways it also meant freeing the people from the deep rooted chains of

dependency that has developed in the rural areas since the times of slavery (macmillan, 2011). The programme has garnered and consolidated public support for food security and nutrition.

The Zero Hunger Project (Fome Zero) has caught the attention of numerous countries and international organisations due to high success rate in fulfilling its desired objectives. The primary objective of the Zero Hunger Project is that all the people should have accessibility to food in sufficient quantity and quality to meet their basic nutritional needs and preserve their health on a daily basis and with dignity.

The right to food is considered as a prerequisite for citizenship. The right to adequate food entails the state to take necessary actions to protect, respect and fulfil the right. The state must not take any measures that obstruct its realisation but ensure that all individuals enjoy this right. Notions of social protection like food security needs to be converted into entitlements and standards which requires a sufficient level of consensus regarding the state's role, and the levels of risks and vulnerabilities that are unacceptable within the society and to ensure a policy framework which is effective, deliverable and sustainable in the long run (Norton et al, 2001). The hunger problem in Brazil in the 21st century is manifested from low demand of food in the country which prevents the commercial agriculture and agro industry from stepping up food production (Silva et al, 2011). The vicious circle of hunger is created as a result of unemployment; drop in purchasing power and lower food supply. The genesis of National Food Security Policy began during the administration of Itamar Franco (1993-1994).

The policy framework of the Zero Hunger Project is divided into three fronts: Structural policies, Specific policies and Local policies.

At the structural front, the Zero Hunger Project framework deals with the policies designed to generate jobs and increase income, to intensify agrarian reforms in the form of massive land distribution process as a structural development policy and making the social security system universal through the 1988 constitution. The structural policies also include incentives to family farming.

The specific policies underlined under the Zero Hunger Project are the Food Stamp Programme (Cupom Alimentação-PCA), expansion and rechanneling of the Workers' Food Programme (Programa de Alimentação do Trabalhador-PAT), fight against mother-child undernutrition, keeping up food security stocks, expansion of the school meal programme and to ensure that the safety and quality of food products is not compromised (Silva et al, 2011). The Local Policies include those set of policies that can be implemented by the states and municipalities in partnership with the civil society. At the metropolitan regions, local initiatives such as subsidised restaurants for the low income population such as restaurants populares are being opened. There are also facilities for food banks and new relationships with the supermarket chains are being created (Silva et al: 2011).

The Zero Hunger Programme is the strategy of the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy targeting the population that is prone to hunger and deprivation. Bolsa Família which has the largest budget in Zero Hunger and School Meals Programme are two of the most important components of Fome Zero regarding its extensive reach and coverage (Rocha, 2009).

The priority given to the food and nutrition security has therefore led to the creation of three bodies directly linked to the Presidency of the Republic namely 1. Ministry of Food Security and Hunger Combat (Mesa) 2. National Food Security Council (Consea) which comprises various governmental representatives and personalities from civil society organisations and 3. Special Advisory Body to the Presidency of the Republic for mobilisation of people around the Zero Hunger Programme (Aranha, 2011). Another important step taken in this direction is the setting up of the National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN) to integrate all policies related to food and nutrition security and providing financial and technical assistance and procuring the produce of the family farmers to be directly used in social programmes. Adriana viegaaranha has illustrated the Zero Hunger Programme under four articulating axes: Access to Food, Strengthening of Family Farming, Promotion of Productive Inclusion and Mobilisation Process. Thus it is a positive aspect in a bid to integrate the food and nutrition security with other public policies.

The state in a way has institutionalised the social policies in Brazil to overcome poverty and has adopted an inter-sectoral approach (Aranha, 2011).

But the implementation of social security policies in Brazil has not been a smooth ride. The institutional fragmentation of social organisations and the state machinery has hindered redistributive change. Persistent clientelism; weak party organisations that deter the articulation of social security policies; narrow interest associations that give privileges to the better sectors which are indulged in promoting their interests and an internally fragmented state that has often failed in bringing equity enhancing change are some of the other important factors. The implementation of Fome Zero was beset with serious problems that became apparent in the later phases of the programme. There was a lack of overall coordination as each programme operated independently. They have separate administrative structure, beneficiary selection process and banking contracts for payments. The other pertinent problems that the management had to face were the adoption of political criteria for selecting beneficiary families, a management system which is over-centralised, exclusion of eligible poor families, duplication of benefits and lack of updated information.

Despite Brazil's overall improvement in the level of absolute poverty, it still reels under absolute poverty and relative deprivation. Brazil has the seventh most unequal income distribution of the world which stands from the fact that the top 20 percent earns almost 64 percent of personal income and the bottom quintile just 2.3 percent. There is a growing sense of culture of dependence which is perpetuated through these safety net programmes as the poor can rely only on government handouts and support to meet their livelihoods. The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) schemes and policies take out a huge share from the government budget which may jeopardise spending on key areas of social infrastructure such as schools and hospitals (Hall, 2006).

Conclusion:-

Brazil over the years has made significant stride in reducing malnutrition, food in accessibility, poverty and inequality. Zero Hunger programme regarded as Brazil's national strategy on food and nutritional security, consists of more than 20 initiatives in four axes of intervention has been in the forefront in reaching the above objectives. Created in 2003, the programme was a milestone in the recognition of food and nutrition al security as a leading and cross-cutting priority on the political agenda. It had introduced major programmes such as the Bolsa Família, conditional cash transfer scheme and on the other hand incorporated a range of existing initiatives in an effort to put together a multi-sector array of public interventions to tackle hunger and guarantee universal access to quality food.

Despite making tremendous progress at the national level, there are significant internal disparities such as wide differences in all related indicators in terms of regions, urban and rural areas, and race. For example, the North and Northeast regions have the most critical socioeconomic conditions: 3.2 percent and 2.2 percent of children respectively in those areas are malnourished, against the national average of 1.8 percent in 2006 (Ministry of Health, 2009).

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