

Semantic dilution of inequality: Creating a smoke-screen for philanthro-capitalism

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Abstract

One of the recent policy responses to the public concerns on inequality was to prod corporates into spending a fraction of their profits on projects that deliver access to basic human needs to the poor. Such policies are legitimized through a dogma called philanthrocapitalism that views greed as good business thinking, and that the state, is better suited to solve social problems. But for a stop-gap and fragmented attention, preferred by philanthropists, the meaning of inequality itself has to be reduced. Through a discourse historical analysis of Indian policy documents from 2004-2014 that explicitly seeks to address inequality, this paper charts how such a semantic dilution of inequality is done to suit corporate projects and how it gets translated into policy. While philanthrocapitalism can help the poor get access to basic needs, an adverse outcome is deflection of attention from human rights violation that's integral to accumulation the wealth used for funding these social projects.

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