Social Exclusion

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INTRODUCTION

There have been major shift in thinking regarding social progress and its measurement since 1960. The concept of social exclusion has increasingly replaced the concept of poverty within the EU policy. Social exclusion is a process by which individuals or households experience deprivation either of resources or of social links to the wider community or society. The notion of social exclusion has meaning only by implicit reference to normative ideas of what it means to be a member of and participate in society (Silver, 1994, 96). According to Silver, exclusion must include the following: a livelihood, secure and permanent employment, earnings, property, credit or land, minimal or prevailing consumption levels, education, skills, and cultural capital, the welfare state, citizenship and legal equality, democratic participation, public goods, the nation or the dominant race, family and sociability, humanity, respect, fulfilment and understanding. The term arose from the French political concerns of the 1960s relating to the emergence of groups who were excluded from the labour market and in danger of permanent detachment from the wider society. Since the seminal work of Rene Lenoir (1974) of France on social exclusion, it became the central theme of social policy in many European countries. However, it came to prominence on the wider European stage in the 1980s, when high unemployment returned and threatened national modes of social integration.

Some characteristics of social exclusion:

1) A distinctive feature of the concept is the attempt to move beyond a narrow or one-dimensional view of the human experience towards a multifaceted and more encompassing view (Room, 1995, Atkinson, 1998 and Sen, 2000).
2) It gives more emphasis on dynamics (Paugam1995, 96). Paugam talks of 'spirals of precariousness'- that is, a progressive rupturing of social relations through exposure to cumulative disadvantage. It requires viewing social exclusion as a process rather than state and necessities.
3) The concept has concern with relative position in society, rather than absolute deprivation.
4) The concept also focuses upon the idea of 'agency'. Understanding social exclusion involves the attribution of responsibility –whether individual or institutional –for exclusionary processes that go beyond the individual.
5) Social exclusion also focuses attention on relational issues, which show rupturing of social relationships as reflected in inadequate social participation.

Situation at International Level:

Social exclusion is of increasing interest because it has gained a primary role in official documents and in political debate in Europe and, more recently, in Australia, Canada and the United States. In the Treaty of Amsterdam, signed in 1997, the European Union included the reduction of social exclusion among its objectives. The design of policies aimed at the combating social exclusion is at heart of the 'Lisbon strategy' agreed upon during the European Council of March (European Council 2000).

Most recently, the second European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), conducted by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) in 2007, offers a wide –ranging view of the diverse social realities in the 27 EU Member states. It has incorporated both objective and subjective components. It also includes measures of living conditions, social participation and support, as well as perceived social exclusion. The analysis begin from the position that three key processes promote social integration at the individual level; First, attachment or access to the labour market; second, the provision of basic essentials in terms of income and ability to lead a lifestyle acceptable to the majority of people within a country; and third, social support and membership of a family unit or small group of some form.

UNDP's 2011 Regional Human Development Report gives Multidimensional Social Exclusion Index which captures the complex nature of social exclusion. It is based on the multidimensional poverty of Alkire and Foster (2007) which has been employed in UNDP's 2010 Global Human Development Report. They actually estimated a social exclusion headcount and MEI data from detailed ("social exclusion") household surveys from

6 transition countries, namely Macedonia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Tajikistan and Ukraine with particular focus on the "rural-urban divide". The MEI measures exclusions from economic life; social services and civic life and social networks. This complex multidimensional index of social exclusion gives equal weight to these dimensions and is based on 8 sub- indicators in each dimension- that reflect the ways in which people are denied access to labour markets, education and health systems, as well as to civic and social networks. An individual is defined excluded if he or she is deprived at least in nine indicators. Since a dimension contains only eight indicators, to be considered socially excluded a person must be deprived in at least two dimensions. The index reflects both the share of people that experience at least nine out of 24 deprivations and the depth (how many deprivations socially excluded people experience on average).

SITUATION IN INDIA:

Exclusion as a social phenomenon is expressed in different forms all over the world. In India, unique forms of exclusion are observed, where certain groups like the Dalits, backward classes, women and religious minorities experience systematic exclusion in regard to accruing the advantages of development. Institutional inequality and discrimination have been pervasive features of the Indian society. Narayan (1999) calls it a norm and process that prevents certain groups from equal and effective participation in the social, economic, cultural and political lives of the societies. It is both a process and a product which involves four factors: the excluded, the institutions from which they are excluded, the agents whose actions result in the exclusions and process through which exclusion occurs. Discrimination, inequality and isolation are the main features of social exclusion which negatively affect the quality of life.

In the Indian context, exclusion revolves around institutions that discriminate, isolate and deprive the subordinate groups on the basis of identities such as caste, religion and gender. It is mainly based on caste and patriarchy. The salient features of social exclusion on the basis of caste are social stratification, social inequality, hierarchy and hegemony. Patriarchy breeds gender inequality and social exclusion of weaker sections is closely associated with the discriminatory practices and inequality embedded in the institution by caste. According to Bradley (1994), there are five main mechanisms of exclusion in order of increasing severity: geography, entry barriers, corruption, intimidation and physical violence.

Geography: Social exclusion can be a function of geography and direct correlations between rural isolation and poverty are often found (Ravallion, 1995). In general, the poor live in the most marginal areas, which compound the cycles of poverty and exclusion. In India, most of the tribes inhabit in hills and forests and are thus excluded from mainstream population.

Barriers to Entry: Transaction costs and documentation requirements are the two most common barriers to entry (Ravallion, 1995). Transaction costs are those costs that are involved in acquiring a good or service above and beyond its actual price. Barriers to entry involving the state bureaucracy are mostly related to documentation requirements. The state, which is often inflexible in helping the excluded, denies them access to resources. Documentation is also held responsible to for the inability of the poor to gain access to resources. Documentation allows the state to humiliate and deny services to the excluded. Other barriers to entry include hostility and unfairness confronted by excluded people while dealing with bureaucracy.

Corruption: Corruption as a social evil is a common problem in all parts of the world. Corruption not only makes access harder for the poor in financial terms, but also destroys the trust that a society needs to function effectively. It makes equal access and fair treatment from the state impossible for the poor & excluded and accelerates their disengagement from a wider society.

Intimidation: As a mechanism of social exclusion, it is often used to reinforce social stereotypes and power relations. In general, those with power use the threat of harm to maintain their dominance over those without power. In India there is deeply entrenched caste exclusion. The threat of violence is reported to be the major form of control of general castes over backward castes and men over women.

Physical Violence: Social exclusion can result in physical violence. Fear of repercussion imposes a pall of silence around the subject of violence and the violence perpetuated by the state, community, group and individuals. Violence against women in the household is the direct consequence of patriarchy. Violence against Dalits and service castes is a common feature in many rural areas of India. Domestic violence is rooted in the norms of the gender inequality and identity and is often linked to alcohol and drug abuse.

Excluded Sections of Indian Society

In almost all human societies, certain groups are excluded and deprived of some opportunities. While the way in which each of these groups is excluded is context-specific, certain social differences continue to serve as

grounds for exclusion. These differences include belonging to a particular ethnic, gender, caste, religion or age-group, living in a particular area or having certain disabilities. Various forms of social differences overlap and intersect in complex ways over time. Some of the common categories of excluded groups are described below:

Ethnic Groups: Social exclusion due to ethnic differences is a common feature across the globe. In India the exclusion on the grounds of ethnicity is seen in the form of caste system. The practice of untouchability can be seen in most villages of India. The best example is the tribal population. They are settled in the degraded forests, eroded hill slopes, scrub lands etc. They were forced to become the labourers for the non-tribal population. Today they have started protesting for their rights.

Women: In most of the societies women are considered subordinates to men. They are just considered important to look after their family but in the globalisation world the increasing role of women in low –paid formal and informal job markets has brought new opportunities as well as burden. Now they have dual responsibilities, increasing violence at home and exploitation at work place clearly indicate the transformation of society and new emerging threats to women.

Children: Children are among the most disempowered groups in the society and they are more susceptible to abuse. Customary law considers children as property of their respective families and gives them no individual rights. Exclusion from schools and prevalence of bonded child labour are problems related to children. The widespread acceptance of highly exploitative labour practices and the practice of genital mutilation of girls, child prostitution are among the most extreme examples of vulnerability of children.

The poor: social exclusion and poverty are different but still they are connected. Poor people live in the vicious cycle of exclusion of everything and it is difficult for them to break the shackles of poverty. In India around 30% of population is below poverty line and most extreme thing about poverty is that it translates itself into intergenerational poverty.

People with HIV/AIDS: In India HIV/AIDS infected people face social exclusion. Our society is not very progressive and it is considered as if the infected person has committed a sin. The major fear associated with HIV/AIDS is the fear of social isolation that would befall on the household or individual if the infection is disclosed. This causes many to hide the fact, thereby hampering further awareness.

The Elderly: In India the elderly are treated with deference and respect. Their vulnerability is compounded by the rapid collapse of support systems that provided them security in their retired lives. With increasing economic stress and breakdown of family solidarity, the elderly are emerging as a new category of excluded poor in many countries across the globe.

Widows: In many parts of India, widows are considered as an excluded group. The widows are excluded from attending certain social ceremonies and rituals at both family and community levels. The combination of social prejudices, kinship, customs and lack of accountability on the part of state explains why widows face great risk of poverty and exclusion. Socially they are often neglected and considered a burden to the family. The widow beggars in Vrandavan are examples.

The Disabled: Disability is frequently reported as one of the important reasons cited for exclusion. The disabled are excluded at work place as well as home.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND INDIAN CONSTITUTION

India has adopted a clear policy on human rights set forth in different groups viz. (1) right to equality, (2) right to freedom, (3) right against exploitation, (4) right to freedom of religion, (5) cultural and educational rights and (6) right to constitutional remedies. Article 14, 15, 16 have been provided with equality provisions. Article 14 of the Indian Constitution ensures equality before law to all persons within the territory of India. The strict compliance with rule is obligatory on the part of state and a citizen cannot waive this right. Article 15(1) and (2) prohibits discrimination between citizens on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. The constitution has abolished untouchability under Article 17 and forbids its practice in any form. Right to shelter has been held to be necessary for the enjoyment of 'right to life' guaranteed under Article 21 of the constitution. Freedom of movement is guaranteed by the Articles 19(1)(d) and 21.

Different laws have been enacted to protect the right of citizens like for women Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Hindu Succession Act 1956, Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, Dowry Prohibition Act 2005, Sati Act 1961, Widow Remarriage Act 1856, Immoral Traffic Act 1956 and Equal Remuneration Act which have been enacted from time to time to remove gender discrimination and protect women's rights. For caste discrimination the protections of Civil Rights Act 1955 have been enacted. It defines civil rights as the rights accruing to a person

by reason of abolition of untouchability. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocity) Act give more teeth to the law –enforcing agencies to bring to book those who humiliate and dishonour Dalit women. There is visible gap between as it stands and the law as it operates. Yet we come across rampant casteism and witness to its practice in various forms in our day to day lives. This is the reason why the plethora of laws that were passed to combat dowry deaths, cruelty, rape, eve-teasing, female foeticide, sexual harassment, etc. proved ineffective.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND INCLUSIVE POLICY

In the Indian context, where structural and systematic exclusion based on caste, gender and ethnicity and in some cases religious minorities combine with the class inequality, it results in social exclusion of both types; the constitutive and the instrumental. Overcoming 'exclusion' constitutes the most elementary pre-requisite for building of a democratic society and can be done through the 'policy of social inclusion', particularly by the state by taking affirmative action to change the circumstances that lead to social exclusion. Indian Constitution provides equality to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed, religious and gender. It also directs the State to take various measures to remove the different forms of discrimination and inequality and thereby help to eradicate social exclusion. Social inclusion is a coordinated response to the very complex system of problems that arise because of social exclusion. It operates both at the public and private levels; it becomes the responsibility of the civil society as well as the state to ensure social inclusion is a reality and inclusion as desirable.

CONCLUSION

It can be said mere enacting laws against social exclusion will not help. It is the implementation part that is more important. The gaps in the laws should be rectified and implemented in a better way. Secondly it is the cooperation of the society and state which is very much essential for social inclusion. In India focus is upon the Human Development Index and not on any measurement of deprivation and exclusion, which is the need of hour. Focus upon exclusion will help to understand the dimensions of exclusion, the true needy people will be identified and policies will be directed in order to empower these people/sections.

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