



The Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies towards Dalits: A Historical Perspective

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Twentieth century has witnessed a wide change in international world such as the World Wars, emergence of third world nations, economic and structural changes in policies. The developing nations have faced struggle for political stability and economic development. The developed nations of the world have also faced so many challenges due to neo-liberal policies. Every nation has some domestic or regional issues of social justice with unique specifications. The United Nations has tried to address all inequalities and injustice in its Charter with a belief on equality and peace in the world. The emerging concept of globalization in last two-three decades of 20th century has given a global context to every issue and phenomenon. The regional issues got new global perspectives and generalization with the existence of similar issues in other countries at different space and time.

Social exclusion in 21st century is a popular phenomenon in policy discourse to explain a variety of deprivations, lack of access, poverty, social injustice or denials to participation in one or more spheres of public life all over the world. The nations got a commonly acceptable term 'social exclusion' for policy failures or flaws in implementation mechanism. It explains that why some individual groups have not benefitted from a social policy? The concept of social exclusion is accepted with a variety of native contexts that emerged originally in a particular nation as a result of its own economic and political structure, historical factors, social stratification or social net. This paper offers a historical perspective for social exclusion with special reference to Dalits (Scheduled Castes) and exclusive challenges for their inclusion.

The Concept of Social Exclusion and Strategies for Social Inclusion

The emergence of new nations after World War II and the economic structure of world have categorized the nations in developed and developing (undeveloped and underdeveloped) nations. The developed nations have already entered into economic liberalization and neo liberalism. The results of this economic restructuring and transformation were clearly shown in the last three decades of 20th century. The term Social exclusion finds its origin in French social policy discourse. The term was coined during social insurance policy implementation in 1974 when some groups were recognized unprotected in the social insurance policy. This analytical criticism over the policy discourse has given birth the term *Exclusion Sociale* in France by Rene Lenior.¹ According to Silver (1995) *Rene' Lenoir*, a French social policy analyst, in 1974, identified ten categories or groups, who came under the 'uninsured' umbrella i.e. suicidal, aged invalids, prisoners, abused children, substance abusers, delinquents, single parents, multi problem households, physically and mentally handicapped.² The ten categories were

identified as excluded that time. In France exclusion got debatable and used to explain the neo liberal policies generated neo- poverty, technological changes and economic restructuring.³ Within two decades the term became center to the policy discourse of developed nations and social exclusion emerged as a most fit term to explain number of subsequent results of economic transformation. In Latin America and Caribbean, it was used during the period of macroeconomic transformation.⁴ The European Union, France, Britain, Caribbean, the World Bank, the United Nations and many other institutions, nations and organizations has given place to social exclusion in their social development policies. Popay and others define “exclusion consists of dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four main dimensions—economic, political, social and cultural and at different levels including individual, household, group, community, country and global levels. It results in a continuum of inclusion/exclusion characterized by unequal access to resources, capabilities and rights which leads to health inequalities.”⁵

In the developed nations the concept of social exclusion is used more as economic exclusion which impacts further on other aspects of life. According to Katherine Duffy, ‘Social exclusion is surrounded not only low material means and the inability to participate effectively in economics, social, political and cultural life and in some extent alienation and distance from mainstream society.’⁶ The European Union defines social exclusion as a process through which individuals and or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live.⁷ Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in Britain defines social exclusion as ‘a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, poor housing, high crime environment, bad health and family breakdown.’⁸ Gordon et al in a report defines “social exclusion is a lack or a denial of access to the kinds of social relation, social custom and activities in which the great majority of people in British society engage”.⁹ The World Bank defines “social exclusion is the process of improving the terms, ability, opportunity and dignity for those individuals and disadvantaged groups on the basis of their identity to take part in society”.¹⁰ Poverty is defined generally in fiscal terms and appears as a result of unequal economic development whereas social exclusion is broader and both process as well as an outcome.¹¹ Amartya Sen disagrees with the traditional income/consumption approach which defined poverty in fiscal terms and gives a new approach of viewing poverty as a deprivation/the absence of some basic capability. This capability approach has given a conceptual framework to the United Nations to develop the concept of ‘human poverty’.¹² Andre Beteille discussed how poverty in USA is linked to the problem of racial minorities specifically with blacks in urban America.¹³ Same wise it is related to some specific excluded groups or disadvantage groups in some other nations. The social exclusion theory also accepts relative deprivation concept of poverty which is based on lack of resources or unavailability of environment to participate and enjoy the widely accepted activities of society.¹⁴

Awareness and understanding of social exclusion as a global problem, has given birth to the term ‘Social Inclusion’. Exclusion and inclusion both are twins and have ‘cause and effect’ relationship. If former exists in any form in one society, the latter necessarily arises. Whereas exclusion sounds negative in terms of denial or prevention, Inclusion is a positive reactionary process or a set of efforts against exclusion. Social inclusion is all about participation in all spheres of social life, a revolutionary positive minded reaction and a set of efforts against age old majority sanctioned exclusions. The World Bank in 2007 suggests the ‘2-pillar strategy’ in the Bank’s formulation for financial inclusion, in which the first pillar is building a strong environment for investment, create more jobs, and sustainable growth, and the second pillar of strategy is investing in the empowerment of poor people to make sure their participation in development.¹⁵ As an alternative perspective, social inclusion is understood as the process by which societies combat poverty and social exclusion.¹⁶ Gore (1995) defines an

inclusive society is a society for all in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play.¹⁷ United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1995 defined Inclusive society- as a society for all, in which every individual has an active role to play. Such a society is based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, human rights and freedom, as well as based on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity.¹⁸

Social Exclusion in Indian context

In developing nations social exclusion came from developed nations where it is conceptualized as a contemporary phenomenon to express deprivations and denials. The social exclusion is comprehensive in nature and present everywhere since times immemorial with different names in different places. The multi-dimensional and overlapping character of social exclusion has taken many problems under a single buzz. Social exclusion affirms the relational aspects of many different concepts including poverty, social inequality, discrimination, segregation, denials to access, alienations, exploitations and deprivations which used as single indicators to express the levels of exclusion among groups and individuals.¹⁹ Edmos Mtetwa called social exclusion as the most fashionable term to describe social division.²⁰ In Europe social division is a consequence of class division based on economic conditions of a person and that person can shift any time to another class due to increase or decrease of income. In India there are three basic traditional social exclusive groups are centuries old, i.e. Caste, Gender and Religion. The caste is the essential feature to define the Indian society. The all three groups have a hierarchical status in which the caste hierarchy puts the Brahmin on the top most and dalit on the bottom. The situation of woman is always socially inferior to man in patriarchal society. The Brahmin male is on the top most and dalit woman is on the lowest pedestal. The Hinduism is the dominating majority religion and all others are minority religions. This paper focuses on the social exclusion of dalits earlier known as untouchables and their inclusion. There are two major milestones to understand the social exclusion and inclusion of Dalits in India, i.e. 1) Untouchables and social exclusion 2) Social inclusion of dalits: modern to globalized India.

Untouchables and Social Exclusion

The phenomenon of social exclusion of Untouchables in India is different from the popular phenomenon of social exclusion worldwide as it was not decided by economic conditions. The humane society's represent some kind of vertical divisions.²¹ In India the traditional society is divided in a vertical social stratification known as caste hierarchy. The Marxian perspective of class struggle is accepted by Marxists in India. D. D. Kosambi argued that in Indian society "the caste plays the class role."²² But Ambedkar argues that vertical division of castes is not the division of labour rather it is division of labourers and based on social or more over religious segregation. The position in a caste is decided by birth which further determines the economic conditions. The traditional social system in India was organized around caste structure and caste identities.²³ Thorat²⁴ observes that in India, caste is the primary unit of Indian society. The exclusion of an individual or a group, become more problematic and critical when it is due to birth, which indicates the individual, belongs to a particular caste. Srinivas observes that caste in Indian society recognized as a pattern of religious and ritual performance under a ranking which has its religious roots.²⁵ The caste is a unique, original and complex character of Indian society. Caste system has its roots in Hindu Dharmashastra and Manu Code Bill. The Varna system was created by 'Savarna Hindus' and these Varnas are stratified as Brahmin, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas also consider as 'the dvijati' or twice born and Shudras as 'the ekjati'²⁶ the lower most who live in village called but not allowed to perform 'Upanayana Sanskara'.²⁷ There was a provision of 'Chatur varna' (four varna) in Hindu social order which was theoretically designed as

based on occupations and with the change of occupation one could shift to another varna but in practice the occupations became hereditary and the castes was a deciding factor linked with birth. But there was a silence on untouchables who forced to live in segregation outside the villages. In ancient India literatures Rigveda, Dharmashastra, Buddhist scripture Jataka tales and Arthashastra of Kautilya are some sources which describe the Indian society and mentioned the Chandala as inferior class which live in segregation outside.²⁸ Two essential elements were emphasized for the existence of State in ancient times, i.e. Danda (coercion) and Varna Ashrama Dharma. To organize all the subjects in state varna system was established as Dharma and the king was guardian. The danda was used on who try to cross the jati dharma. Jawahar Lal Nehru explains in *Discovery of India* that the killing of Samvuka and demand for right thumb of Eklavya's hand were justified as danda for the sake of Dharmapalan. There was an increase in untouchables as Al-Biruni in twelfth century describes eight inferior castes from Sudras called Antyaja.²⁹ The Muslim rulers adopted the political approach of non-interference and never pursue forced conversion to anyone.³⁰ The untouchables were there in army of Muslim rulers, Shivaji and also in Khalsa Fauj of Guru Gobind Singh. Sufi and Bhakti period Saints tried to break the rigidity against untouchability. New market and occupations has given continuous increase in untouchable castes in medieval to modern India on the purity-pollution basis. The untouchables were of dark skin and were generally engaged in unclean occupations.³¹ The bulk increase in untouchable population has changed the social setup in modern India. Many castes of untouchables also work as agricultural labourers with their traditional occupations³² but segregation was still there. Brahmins are on the top and the untouchables³³ are on bottom also known as Antya, Antyvasin, Pariahs, Panchama, Bahya, Antyaja, and Adi-dravidas or outcastes.³⁴

Social Inclusion of Dalits: Modern to Globalized India.

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule used word 'dalit' first time for untouchables in his writing in 19th century.³⁵ Jyotiba Phule has used name 'Dalit' individually for 'broken men' and as a group for depressed classes in 19th century and presented first 'internal criticism' within the Chaturvarna to protect dalits. Jyotiba Phule along with his wife Savitri bai started first school for girls in 1848 in Maharashtra. Dalit girl's education was the priority for both. Walangakar has given petition in 1890 to resume the recruitment of Mahars and other untouchables in British Army. Ayyankali from Kerala started schools for dalits and mobilized the Pulayyas in 1907 for their dalit women rights to cover breast with cloth.³⁶ Ambedkar called dalits (Non-caste Hindus) 'Avarna Hindus' in which Primitive Tribes, Criminal Tribes and Untouchables were include.³⁷ Ambedkar tries to explain the root cause of untouchability. "The root of untouchability is the caste system, the root of caste system is religion attached to varna and the root of varnashrama is Brahmanical religion and the roots of Brahmanical religion is authoritarianism and political power."³⁸ Ambedkar has given the slogan- 'Educate, Agitate and Organise' to dalits. A new educated section of dalits was emerged and which was more interested to fight against the dominating caste and supporters of Brahminism than the British rulers.³⁹ Dalit' is a contested concept: it is interpreted to be inclusive of all the exploited, suppressed, oppressed and violated; and it is also interpreted as referring to the Scheduled Castes per se.⁴⁰ In Mahad, a conference was convened in which Ambedkar took water from Chowdar Tank and drank it to agitate against untouchability along with a temple entry in 1927.⁴¹ Ambedkar was successful in getting separate electorates for untouchables in his representation at Round Table Conference (1930-1932). But he was forced to sign Poona Pact (the joint electorate with reservation) to save Gandhi's life.⁴² In 1932, Gandhi has promoted the term 'Harijan' for untouchables which means 'children of God'. Gandhi used this term to 'bring home' to the socially excluded people from earlier injustice of the custom of 'looking down' upon them.⁴³ Gandhi himself faced the discriminations in South Africa where the Europeans treated all Indians (Hindus and Muslims) as untouchables. Indians were not allowed to enjoy equal rights there in South Africa.⁴⁴

The traditional status urge or to shift in another caste by purification of caste is described as 'sanskritisaion' by M.N Srinivas. Rajni Khothari argued that in the process of sanskritisation the status of a caste becomes subjectively ambivalent and insecure. Kothari described it as 'negative assertion' means 'submitting yet opposing'⁴⁵the rival group. This is a halfheartedly acceptance under some pressure. We can see this in Gandhian philosophy also where Gandhi's thrust was to change the mind set of uppercaste so they would really admitted the wrongs and took responsibility of all wrongs against untouchables to wipe out the roots of discriminations against untouchables.⁴⁶Gandhiji called it 'a change in outlook'.⁴⁷But it was a time taken long process. As on the one hand where Ambedkar attacked very strongly on religious sanctions of 'Untouchability' Gandhi used very passive approach towards injustice against 'Harijans'. Ambedkar choose a legal battle but Gandhi adopted social inclusion with 'bring home' method. All the efforts pave a way to recognize the issue of centuries old discriminations against untouchables. Ambedkar was the pioneer who historically analyzed the situation of untouchables in his writings and devoted his full life for the legal rights, justice and representation of Scheduled Castes in political and social life.

Constitutional Provisions:-

The term Scheduled Castes came into use first time in Government of India Act 1935.⁴⁸After independence, the Constitution of India abolished Untouchability to give social justice to the earlier depressed classes. The term 'Dalit' is an identity marker of ex-untouchable communities, which are known as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the Governmental parlance through Constitutional Order (1950).⁴⁹ The provision of positive discrimination and reservation for the Scheduled Castes are the main features of the Constitution. Social positive discrimination under Article 14, 15(1), 15(2), 17, 23 and 25 has provided in Chapter III. Educational and Economic Reservation under has provided Article 15(4), 16(1), 16(4), 16(4A), 29, 46 and 335. The provision of political reservation is under Article 164(1), 330, 332 and 334 of Indian Constitution.

The Government of India made the laws to reduce the discriminations and atrocities in 1955 as the Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955.

The Scheduled Castes Special Component Plan was introduced in sixth Five Year Plan to facilitate and channelize the development programs for Scheduled Castes in proportion to their population.

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 also amended in 1995.

The first National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) was constituted on February 24, 2004. The Commission performed duties as laid down in clauses 4,5,8,9 and 10 of Article 338 of the Constitution. The commission interacts with Niti Ayog, the Central ministries and State Governments and consults the policy matters affecting the community. Clause 8 confers the power of a civil court to the Commission while investigation.

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013.

The constitution of India has given all rights equally to all without any discrimination and with positive discriminations in case of weaker sections and religious minorities. Here the journey starts from the legal and political rights to social equality and acceptance in mainstream. It was the turn of the Government of India to execute the Constitutional Provisions through laws to develop an environment for social justice for earlier untouchables or Dalits.

Policies and Programs for Scheduled Castes after Economic Reforms (Globalized India):-

With the evolution of the concept 'Welfare State' Governments have made themselves accountable to complex problems of societies. Thus policy-making has become an important function of state. The Beveridge Report 1942⁵⁰ (Social Insurance and Allied Services) recommendations was the first milestone policy for peace and welfare state after World War II. The Government institutions legitimate their policies with the claim that the policies which they have made are general in nature or public policies and not designed to favor any specific individual, group or section in that particular state. ⁵¹The Government of India has also made policies for all in general as for poor, rural or urban. The situation was unchanged for Scheduled Castes. The Sixth Five Year Plan for the first time understood the need for special attention to Scheduled Castes development and introduced the Special Component Plan for Scheduled Castes. But due to economic crisis in 1991, India shifted from socialist approach to Neo-liberal approach and adopted the New Economic Policy (NEP). The pursuit of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization led to the Government's withdrawal itself from its welfare programs and socio-economic development policies. No doubt, more than one decade of privatization and liberalization has adversely impacted the weaker sections of society as they were unable to understand the benefits of new economic policies. Who remained in rural areas felt excluded in the era of privatization with hire and fire approach and still rampant caste discriminations. Through the Millennium Development Goals of United Nations the notion of poverty, health and basic education has taken up in the development agenda. The Government of India shifted the need based approach with the right based approach to cope with the international scenario. The Sustainable Development Goals emphasized let no one behind and inclusion of all excluded. The Right to work has taken the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act for all rural poor with special mention and inclusion of Scheduled Castes in guaranteed 100 days employment. The Right to Education provides a way to Free and Compulsory Education to all Children (6 to 14 years) and Mid Day Meal for children in School to maintain their health. The National Food Security Act 2013 gives right to all rural poor for free Atta and Dal. The ICDS scheme for infants and children under the age of 3 years to maintain their food needs and nourishment.

Concluding Remarks

The right based approach accepts that poverty is not just deprivation but being poor is a state of exclusion, helplessness, lack of self confidence and self respect and the rights are the vehicles for their participation and empowerment.⁵² The governmental efforts are not satisfactory till the socially excluded groups not recognize and enhance their capabilities and functioning. Inclusion will be sustained only with the realization of skill and human capabilities. Social Inclusion is not merely the accessibility but empowerment which requires an environment free with caste discriminations for all. The rights generate a compulsive environment in which they can adjust.

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