



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2017; 3(8): 905-907
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 05-06-2017
Accepted: 08-07-2017

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Modernization and globalization, and parallel workings of institutional mechanisms of social exclusion

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Abstract

Globalization and modernization are two very vast and contested phenomena. It has brought multifaceted impacts. Present study aims to highlight the paradox of modernization and globalization as it contributes in reproducing new forms of social exclusion and discrimination of old institutions such as caste. The study is based upon the secondary data to understand that how Dalits still face caste discrimination despite government policy like caste reservation.

Key words: social exclusion, modernization, globalization.

Introduction

The states of south Asia have been caught between contradictory pulls of tradition and modernity. In most of the states in south Asia, though the minorities have been given constitutional status and they do have protection to varying degrees, but still the process of exclusion in its widest possible expanse i.e., economic, social, political, as large sections of people are still excluded in a very subtle manner. In case of India if we see, India which has remained one of the most stratified societies, which has also excluded large sections of the population out of the mainstream society. Economic deprivation and political powerlessness has kept certain groups on the margins of the society. As the process of modernization and Globalization paved way for many to take advantage of the many opportunities available, a large chunk of the population was still struggling to find a place of dignity for themselves not only in social life but also in terms of employment opportunities. Socially disadvantaged groups have been lacking basic opportunities to lead a life with full dignity, they were not only excluded from the mainstream developmental process but very conscious exclusion was practiced against them. Though affirmative programmes have been in place but in practical practice, it has not been successful in eliminating age old biasness, that people have towards certain sections of the society and such biasness gets reflected in educational institutions, political spheres, in public life, even the social media which seems to be representing the interests and view point of a particular section of the society.

In social science literature there is general agreement on the core features of social exclusion - its principal indicators and the way it relates to poverty and inequality. Social exclusion is the denial of equal opportunities imposed by certain groups on others resulting in the inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic and social functioning of the society. (Sukhdeo Thorat) Two defining characteristics of social exclusion are particularly relevant. First, deprivation is multidimensional, that is, there is denial of equal opportunity in multiple spheres. Second, it is embedded in the societal relations and societal institutions - the processes through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live.

Social exclusion takes different forms. Social exclusion results in the economic deprivation and poverty. In India, exclusion revolves around the societal interrelations and institutions that exclude, discriminate, isolate and deprive some groups on the basis of their identity like caste and ethnicity. Historically, the caste system has regulated the social and economic life of the people in India. The nature of exclusion revolving around the caste system particularly needs to be understood and conceptualised. It is this caste based exclusion which has formed the basis for various anti-discriminatory policies in India. The kind of the exclusion which is practiced against a group has a lot to do with the group identity; a person's identity is

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incomplete without identifying the caste name to which they belong. Even in the urban neighbourhood if one sees people are curious to know people from what caste is living in their neighbourhood. Even if the person's educational status is high and the economic condition is well off, but still the social stigma remains attached to him. As is argued by Vivek Kumar the social stigma of degraded caste status on ex-untouchable is so strong that it remains attached to them even though they occupy highest office of the land and have transcended national boundaries and gain economic and political empowerment. The practice of caste-based exclusion and discrimination thus necessarily involves failure of access and entitlements, not only to economic rights, but also to civil, cultural and political rights. It involves what has been described as "living mode exclusion" (Minorities at Risk, UNDP HDR 2004).

Vivek Kumar in his paper Globalization and empowerment' talks about the ideological hegemony in Indian society which results in the deprivations, inhuman conditions of material existence, powerlessness of Dalits. He goes on to argue how cumulative deprivation of the ex-untouchable is based on the ideological hegemony of the upper castes, which also plays important role in construction of world view of others about Dalits.

Globalization as a process is often associated with the integration of the world, with the market breaking open the barriers across nation states in terms of flows of trade, finance, technology, knowledge, culture and even movements of people. It is supposed to be a leveller with universal benefits, reaching out to all. But if one tries to see the repercussions of this process in the Indian context, one has to first find who are benefiting from it, it is only the big industrialist who have made more money, their social and cultural capital have helped them to reach that position and retain it, but other section of the society who had no cultural capital with them and had relied on the affirmative policies of the government for their upliftment. Vivek Kumar in his work talks about the impact that Globalization has on the Dalits.

To begin with there will be substantial reduction in government jobs. The state has already opened up 10 out of 18 core public sectors for private bidders and by 2003 the rest of the eight will also be thrown open. Furthermore, many nationalized banks are being merged to compensate for their losses and private banks are coming up. Even the insurance sector has been opened for the private sector. The net result of the aforesaid process will be shrinking job opportunities, not only for the general masses but also for Dalits well. For Dalits it is detrimental because reservation was envisaged to play an important in their empowerment and the integration into the society. (Vivek Kumar, Dec 2001 ^[1] Indian Anthropologist. Globalization and Empowerment of Dalits in India).

The constitutional safeguard which were provided to Dalits have not been fully achieved and with the process of Globalization that is also being challenged, as more private sectors are coming, and private sector does not encourage Dalits nor Tribal's the job opportunities, as it is more dominated by the so called upper caste people.

For political reservation under Article 330 and 332 the Central and state government have not filled the allotted quotas of jobs for the Dalits under article 335 of the Constitution. For instance with respect to the provision of 15 per cent reservation in Central services their representation

was 8.23, 10.47, 14.76, per cent in class I, II, and III respectively. In the banking sector it was only 7.29 per cent in class I and 13.7 per cent at the clerical level. Similarly in public enterprises their representation was 4.86 in class I and 6.17 in two other levels. Hence it is evident that for 50 years Indian state has not been able to fill the allotted quotas and now the government is even snatching away whatever little avenue of mobility and empowerment Dalits had thought the process of privatisation which is an integral part of globalisation. (Vivek Kumar, Dec 2001 ^[1] Indian Anthropologist. Globalization and Empowerment of Dalits in India).

Globalization has affected Dalits in terms of the job opportunities available to them. As with Globalization many private sectors have come, but there is no place for Dalits. Media sector is almost dominated by the members from the upper castes. Dalits youths hardly think of joining Media. Dalits still have no representation in Media. B.N. Uniyal undertook a comprehensive survey of national newspapers and found that among 686 journalists accredited to government, 454 were upper caste; the remaining 232 did not carry their caste names. However, in a random sample of 47, not a single was Dalit." Recently, another comprehensive survey sample revealed that out of 315 senior journalists in 37 Hindi and English newspapers and T.V channels upper caste Male Hindus hold 71% of the top jobs. Though they account just 8% of the National population. The survey further reveals that Brahmins alone hold 49% of the top jobs in TV channels. There have always been the Institutional mechanisms working which ensured that those sections of the society who had no access to education, political opportunities always remain at the margins. Even the affirmative policies were very much there but it did not ensure that no exclusion will be practiced. Indian Media has class as well as caste character.

Dalits has no representation in Media. Even the media seems to have a conscious policy of exclusion when it comes to reporting of sexual violence against Dalit women precisely for the reason that Dalits are untouchable to media. The whole issue of non-reporting of Dalit concerns by the media must be seen in the larger context of social exclusion and the age old system of untouchability and caste disability.

Even the educational Institutions which claim that they have overcome such biasness towards caste, but when one goes to find the true picture one can see reality. Even the seats which are reserved for the marginalized sections are not properly filled by the students coming from the marginalized groups, sometimes the reserved seats are converted for the general students. The Dalits and the Tribal students who get admission on the quota seats are always compelled to prove their merit, in fact their merit is always put to question. They are frequently asked about their academic background, their percentage to check their meritocracy, and are also a means to humiliate them. Especially before the entrances exams of any kind they are commented that they will clear the exam as they have reserved seats for them. The merit of such students are never acknowledged, but put to question. Even the Doctors in medical Institutions are not spared from such humiliation, as they are referred as the quota wala Doctors, and their merit is also challenged. As the news about them is spread that quota wala Doctors, what will they know. And even the fellow Doctors in the Government hospitals keep advising

Dalit Doctors what medicines to prescribe, even in terms of the basic medicines, as the so called upper caste people in the hospital do not see them as equal to the upper caste doctors.

Sukhadeo Thorat argues that given the iniquitous and hierarchal character of Indian society, and exclusion linked deprivation of a large section of excluded groups and groups which are discriminated against, *viz.* the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and the Other Backward Castes (OBCs), which constitute almost half of India's population.

With modernization and Globalization did not improve tribal's condition much. As is argued by Vivek Kumar also that despite the processes of Modernization and Industrialization in the Indian society the caste Hindus are still interacting with the Dalits on the same primordial identities as is evident from the number of cases of exclusion and atrocities on Dalits.

Such exclusion has persisted over time, as they are not very much evident but practiced with very careful strategies. Social exclusion has not disappeared from Indian society as there is failure to address the persisting forms of exclusion. As T.K Oommen has argued Dalits and OBC's are excluded but the intensity varies, as Dalits are subjected to the cumulative exclusion. T.K Oommen in his book *Social Inclusion in Independent India: Dimensions and approaches* talks about the nine excluded social categories—Dalits, Adivasis, Subalterns, religious and linguistic minorities, women, migrants, the poor and the disabled. Oommen argues that inclusive growth and human development can be achieved only by ensuring equality of status and opportunity for the vulnerable sections of the society. The various forms of marginalization and discrimination that exist in contemporary India needs to be addressed and the exclusion that is practiced at every stage against marginalized section need not only to be recognized but also addressed in order to create a society for them, where they also can also be placed on equal terms with everyone in the society.

In 2002, India had the low rank of 127 among 175 countries on the Human Development Index of the United Nations. Two out of every five adults remained illiterate in India 2002, and the health of the individuals tells an equally dismal story. What is more distressing, these figures are considerably more dismal for women, and for the Dalits. They show economic inequality is reinforced in our society from acute gender and caste, compounded at times resulting by religious discriminations. The unforgettable facts remains that the democratic polity of India has been incapable of correcting these group inequalities despite six decades of independence. (Amit Bhaduri, 2005) ^[5].

The various developmental processes should not just focus on a higher growth rate nor should it mean simply an elaborate bureaucratic mechanism for income transfer to improve the distribution of income in favour of the poor. It has to be viewed from a different perspective altogether in which the growth and distribution are integrated into the very same process, while breaking systematically the social barriers of discrimination and prejudices based on gender, caste, language, religion or ethnicity. This is what 'Development with Dignity' must mean for us in India. (Amit Bhaduri, 2005) ^[5].

Amartya Sen. (2000) draws attention to the various meanings and dimensions of the concept of social exclusion. He draws a distinction between the situation in which

people are being kept out and in which people are being included in seriously unfavourable terms, and both the situation are described as "unfavourable exclusion" or "unfavourable inclusion". The unfavourable inclusion, with unequal treatment may carry the same adverse effects as "unfavourable exclusion".

Thorat Argues, exclusion in India revolves largely around the social relations and institutions that exclude, discriminate, isolate, and deprive some groups on the basis of identities like caste and ethnicity.

So as is claimed that with modernization and Globalization many forms of discriminatory practices have disappeared does not hold true, as is reflected in the works of many scholars who have showed, how social exclusion and discrimination is practiced in contemporary society. But with all this there is a need to see other side of this developmental and economic growth what lies behind it. Though affirmative action's/positive discrimination has been in place but the discriminative practices have not completely disappeared with it and such exclusionary practices at every stage is felt by the members of the marginalized groups.

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