From Exclusion to Cohesion - Critical Reviews on Fundamental Social Issues

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Abstract:

It is a proven fact that public accountability holds secrets of progress and it is a proven fact that public accountability holds secrets of progress and harmony that are fundamental to national development. If segregated or de-linked mass is brought back to mainstream then it will accelerate development process further. Therefore, concept of social exclusion is prioritized across nation to identify factors that are primary for social cohesion and holistic development of society. With the passage of time, social exclusion has demanded scientific and trans-disciplinary approaches to generate understanding that makes the social development complete. Insights of academia, policy planners and government have been noticed in the forms of varied initiatives. Conferences, seminars, dialogues, debates and discussions supported with the research insights on social exclusion in the different period of time have brought many schemes and welfare programmes for the development of the marginalized and oppressed sections. Since deliberations and discourses pertaining to social exclusion are multidimensional in their approaches and nature, cursory glance on scientific conclusions relating to such efforts will enhance comprehensibility and draw a road map towards the social cohesion. Social cohesion brings participatory and duty (responsibility) based approach at individual level within social groups living in a nation. The present paper articulates perceptions of academia relating to the conceptual and theoretical framework of social exclusion. The author has tried to justify the need for more deliberations on the issue

of social exclusion. Attempt has been made to discuss various categories of excluded population in Indian context.

Key words: Exclusion**,** Social Discrimination, Marginalisation, Alienation Oppression, Domination, Cohesion, Social integration.

Why Addressing Exclusion is Imperative?

There is no single reason for which addressing social exclusion has become imperative. Social exclusion is to be examined in a concerted manner, because the two-third populations of our country are unable to comprehend equity and equality, democracy, secularism and above all sovereign and republic. Not only they are huge in number, they are equally potential and productive for India. The success to stabilized and improved GDPs (Gross Domestic Products) is in the hands of those who are marginalized economically, underprivileged and socially weaker sections. Poverty, on one hand, casteism, socio-economic and gender inequalities on the other have drawn attention of planners, policy makers and academia. All such groups are of national and international priorities and titled as socially excluded. Towards the end of last century, discussions and deliberations have multiplied their frequencies on the issue of "social exclusion in the era of knowledge economy." Globally, the concept of social exclusion characterizes contemporary forms of social disadvantages. In many parts of the world the concept of "social exclusion refers to the illegitimate and non-democratic social processes in which certain groups are denied access to fundamental rights, primary opportunities, and key resources and have been away from the mainstream of social development and social integration" (Mohanty 2012). Historically originated from marginalization and disadvantages, the concept reflects significant kinship with poverty and alienation. Social exclusion refers to the ill social processes and practices that have laid down the foundation of a

barrier between the excluded mass and the national development. It involves the systematic denial of entitlements to resources and services, and the denial of the rights to participate on equal terms in social relationships in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. Exclusionary processes can occur at various levels – within and between households, villages, cities, states, and globally. This is an actor-oriented approach which is useful because it points to who is doing what and in relationship with whom.

There is a disparity in social power relationships, and therefore the question of who has the prerogative to define, who the definer is and who is the defined, becomes a crucial issue. Social exclusion relates to the alienation or segregation of certain people within a society. It is connected to the social class of people, educational status, and relationships in childhood and living standards. It also applies to to people with varied degrees of disability, to minority men and women of all races, to the elderly, and to unemployed youth. Anyone who deviates in any perceived way from the norm of a population may become the victim of social exclusion. According to Sociologists, there is a strong links between crime and social exclusion in industrialized/modernized societies. Growing crime and social atrocities rates may reflect the fact that a growing number of people do not feel valued in the societies in which they live. The excluded population fails to meet economic and consumption standards status that are promoted within society. Therefore, legitimate means are bypassed in favor of illegal ones. Crime is favored over the political system or community organization. Young people increasingly grow up without guidance and support from the adult population. Young people also face diminishing job opportunities to sustain a livelihood. This can cause a sense of willingness to turn to illegitimate means of sustaining a desired lifestyle. Social exclusion is a concept used in many parts of the world outside of the United States to characterize contemporary forms of social

disadvantage. Dr. Lynn Todman, Director of the Institute on Social Exclusion at the Adler School of Professional Psychology, suggests that social exclusion refers "to processes in which individuals and entire communities of people are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources (e.g. shelter / housing, job / employment, healthcare, civic engagement/community participation , democratic participation and due process) that are normally available to members of American society and which are key to social integration." The ideological basis of social exclusion is mostly found in major social values. Social exclusion in principles defines boundaries between groups, locates the different groups in a hierarchy and regulates and guides their interaction. The attitude of discrimination is passed from society to individual and in due course the individual passes it back to the society. Thus both individual and society reinforce discrimination. Since social exclusion is intimately related to systems of domination and oppression, it is often highly resistant to change and transformation. It is not only those who discriminate against those who are inferior, incapable and lower who do not want this form of social relationship to be changed. But those who are discriminated against also do not want to alter the situation since they fear greater discrimination and assault. And thus, discrimination becomes a focal point for social conflict that disintegrate societies.

With the passage of time, social exclusion demanded scientific and trans-disciplinary approaches to generate understanding that makes the social development complete. Insights of academia, policy planners and government, (both at local and regional level) have been noticed in India in the forms of varied initiatives. Conferences, seminars, dialogues, debates and discussions supported with the research insights on social exclusion in the pre-independence period in India have brought many schemes and welfare programmes for the development of the marginalized sections. Since deliberations and discourses

pertaining to social exclusion are multidimensional in their approaches and nature, cursory glance on scientific conclusions relating to such efforts will enhance comprehensibility and draw a road map towards its future. "Though substantial improvements are noticed in all dimensions of national development, Indian villages have been at the core of discourses on meeting the Minimum Levels of Living(MLL) that are as follows-safe drinking water at the door steps of each house in villages; adequate food with minimum nutritional values; shelter that should have minimum standards to protect from natural calamities; adequate fundamental health care support; reading, writing and computational (functional mathematics) abilities; locale specific vocational training and economic empowerment; culture and locale specific ICT induction" (Das 2012).

Who are categorized as Excluded?

It is surprising that social exclusion is a global issue and has been prevailing in varied forms of suppression, marginalization that are to a noticeable extent. Social exclusion describes how more than a half of Indian populations are not protected through the Constitution. Duties and rights are equally important to achieve the targets set by the Constitution. Who are excluded? Girls and women are found to be marginally excluded at all stages and levels.

Nearly half of population either at local or global level are women and girls whose role has not been accorded due importance till current times. Scheduled Castes and Tribes, other backward classes constitute the two-third of the total population in India whose needs have not been addressed so far. Such classes are economically weaker, socially alienated, educationally delinked. Poverty continues to be the main reason for which a majority of population thus becoming the stumbling blocks for social progress. Migrants are found to be excluded

regionally and since they belong to minority they suffer the most. Religious minorities, such as, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, and Jains etc. are the victims of exclusion. Certain vocations are equally responsible for fuelling exclusion among certain strata of population in India. In the recent days, old age people seek utmost attention because their alienation from the mainstream of development.

Disadvantaged/ Socially excluded sections as considered by the committee constituted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India in the year 2000 are as follow:

Social Groups: Dalits/untouchables/lower castes, Tribals /Adivasis/Indigenous Peoples, religious and linguistic minorities, physically challenged and the most backward castes, especially women and children among these social groups.

Sectoral Groups: Agricultural labourers, marginalised farmers, child labourers, domestic workers, informal workers/unorganized sector workers, contract workers, plantation workers, fisher communities, manual scavengers, rural and forest based communities, vernacular speaking social groups, people with disability etc.

The Poorest Areas Civil Society in India categorises followings as socially excluded groups-- Scheduled Caste (SC) groups, Scheduled Tribe (ST) groups, Muslims, Women, and People with disabilities.

How exclusion is perceived conceptually and theoretically?

Discourses based on empirical evidences relating to social exclusion highlight that four major issues—the current interpretations/understanding on social exclusion, types of social exclusion, inclusive education, moving towards absolute inclusiveness of education. Inclusion in education or inclusive

education and inclusiveness of education is the synonymously used terminologies focussing on the concept originated from the multi-dimensional and trans-disciplinary insights relating to social exclusion by all countries across the globe. Though, exclusion is related to social domain, its kinship with social issues and problems make it difficult to comprehend because its ill effects on psychological, mental, emotional and physical health. Kirsten Weir (2012) viewed in "The pain of social rejection" that "the brain that is concerned a broken heart may not be so different from a broken arm. Rejection also has serious implications for an individual's psychological state and for society in general. Social rejection can influence emotion, cognition and even physical health."

In terms of material resources, a set of thinkers posit social excluded are those who don't possess fundamental or primary level resources, because of which their sustainability and livelihood is restricted and so as their social and political participation. Social exclusion connotes limited access to resources that facilitate inclusion in a given society, such as transport, social networks and adequate housing (Roosa, Deng, Nair & Burrell 2005) as well as civic and political voice and participation (Aber, Gershoff and Brooks-Gunn 2002). The notion of social exclusion moves beyond a focus on income poverty, providing a 'conceptual net' to capture processes of marginalisation and exclusion on the basis of (including but not limited to) race/ethnicity, gender and ability status (Diemer and Ortega 2010). Ruth et al. (2007) generated a working definition of social exclusion that is stated as "social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole." Severe or deep exclusion was defined as

"deep exclusion refers to exclusion across more than one domain or dimension of disadvantage, resulting in severe negative consequences for quality of life, well-being and future life chances" (ibid). Byrne (1999) sees social exclusion as a departure from the depiction of the poor as the 'underclass' in a post-industrial society –the 'underclass' depiction of the poor portrays their condition as self-induced.

The term 'social exclusion' refers to changes in society that affect only some of the people in that society through an ongoing process rather than a timeless state. Some of the symptoms of social exclusion could include unemployment, loss of income and bargaining power and the inability to participate in a wide range of social services (Mawson 2001). Foley and Alfonso (2005) define 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 incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown". Selwyn (2002) developed a framework on what constitutes social inclusion. The elements of Selwyn's social inclusion model include production activity (engaging in an economically and socially valued activity), political activity (involvement in a collective effort to improve and safeguard one's social environment), social activity (significant social engagement with friends and family), savings activity – the ability to accumulate monetary savings), and consumption activity – the ability to consume some of the services deemed to be normal in society. European Union (2005) defines "Social inclusion is a process whereby individuals gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision-making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights." Das (2012) viewed that "while inclusion in education or inclusive education is an approach or strategy or

method employed in education for enabling children to cope up with a specific or multiple disabilities, inclusiveness of education is a theoretical framework in education and humanities designed to ensure integrated human and societal development." Inclusive education is the approach through which scientific, innovative and productive interventions are employed to make education system more effective, student friendly and participatory. This approach has been in practice in various forms of activities ranging from educating children with special needs to education of special focussed groups. Thus, it is synonymously used with inclusive education. But, Inclusiveness of Education is a theoretical construct based upon integrated form of education focussing on holistic human development— ensuring all children mainstream of education and integrated social development—ensuring sustainable development on all aspects and across all strata of society. Therefore, epistemology of (Inclusiveness of) education rely more on democratized—socialistic philosophical goals enshrined in the Statutes or the Constitution of a nation."

By and large, thoughts of academia, prima facie, reflect that disabilities (deformities) are physical in nature and visible for which inclusive education initially was adopted to educate children with special needs, but with the passage of time, inclusive education is interpreted to bring solutions to concurrent form of social exclusion. What about the handicapness attributed to social conditions because of which certain groups or strata of population are socially alienated? Gustafson, Kaaryn (2010) stated that "over the last several decades, criminal law enforcement goals, strategies, and perspectives have grown entangled with the welfare system, a putatively benevolent arm of the state. Government welfare policies increasingly treat the poor as a criminal class, and the treatment of low-income women as criminals has occurred at all levels of government--federal, state, and local. The 1996 federal welfare reform legislation required states to implement

measures to control welfare fraud. While states have approached the policing of welfare fraud with varying levels of zeal, there is a clear trend toward toughness on welfare recipients who run afoul of regulations or who fail to comply with welfare rules. Jackson (1999) reported that "gender mediates particular forms of exclusion". Long-term unemployment among young adults or adults is viewed as a potential factor for their social exclusion. "Long-term unemployment turns into psychological and behavioural deformations that lead unemployed youths further toward a passive social position. Mass unemployment among young people breaks the continuity in developing labour skills (Iskra Beleva 1997). Wilson's (1987), Durlauf (2001), Vartanian and Buck (2005), Gregory and Hunter (1996), Gregory and Hunter (2001) Hunter (1995) Hunter (2003), Lawson and Dwyer (2002), Garnett & Lewis (2007), Kelly & Lewis (2002), Buck (2001) have proven the kinship of social exclusion and regional or territorial effects, and residential effects. In certain contexts, reviewed evidences represent that the institutional set up (especially schools) and classrooms are fuelling social exclusion on the basis of casteism. "Religious schools are more likely to uphold gender differences than eradicate them, and schools are often places of intolerance, discrimination and violence. Girls are disproportionately the victims" (UNESCO, EFA: 2003-2004). Women have been oppressed in many parts of the world, though they equally contribute towards national development. Professions or types of vocations or jobs are also responsible for alienations— adolescent girls in slums of Delhi (2005), scavangers in Lucknow (Mohanty 2011), SC girls at primary level in Haryana (Mohanty 2000). Participants of each of the above-cited empirical studies revealed that professions such as barber, sweeper, scavenger, butcher etc. are deemed as the low level of vocations having low or no social recognition and acceptance in rural places. They are denied access across all fundamental human rights in rural parts of India. But their

social recognition and acceptance is reversed in the urban places attributing to the universally acknowledged fact of educated society. It is assumed that urban community is more educated and thus they realise the need of out-sourced human support in the form of servants (both male and female), drivers, gardeners, barbers etc. It is noteworthy to reveal that concept of alienation is related to the level of knowledge and understanding in rural places while in urban it is prevalent in less significant form. A number of experiences, each one of us, might be having —that a servant is not allowed to sit in sofa or chair, children of servants are not allowed to play with the children of masters, children of a cobbler or any disadvantaged group or even scheduled caste are not allowed to share seating chairs either in classrooms or laboratories. SCs (Scheduled Cates) and STs (Scheduled Tribes) and other disadvantaged groups are not allowed to enter temple premises for worshiping the god or goddess in certain parts of India. All such instances are primarily reflecting some form of social exclusion. Though its magnitude varies significantly from one context to another, the concept of social exclusion is universal.

The term "social exclusion" denotes new forms of social inequality that cannot be adequately described in traditional terms of poverty. The American debates on the emergence of an urban "underclass" (Wilson, 1987) and the French discussion on "exclusion social" (Dubet and Lapeyronnie 1994) represent two strands of a debate, which was soon followed up by empirical research in different European countries under this perspective (Mignione 1996; Haeussermann et al. 2004). Exclusion as a concept is not as straightforward as is appears, and it has different meanings in different contexts (Haeussermann et al. 2004; Room 2004). Firstly, it is relational--exclusion is measured by the predominant standards of the respective society. Secondly, it is multidimensional--exclusion may take place in different dimensions (e.g. labour, health, social networks, education etc.). The desire for social

relationships is one of the most fundamental and universal of all human needs (Baumeister and Leary 1995). Social exclusion, a painful yet common part of life, thwarts this ingrained motivation and has striking consequences for people's psychological and physiological functioning (Buckley, Winkel, and Leary 2004; DeWall and Baumeister 2006; Maner et al. 2007; Twenge et al. 2001; Williams 2001). In support of the assertion that social connections are a need, not just a desire, Baumeister and Leary (1995) reviewed decades of research and concluded that people suffer psychologically and physically when they lack sufficient social ties. Given the negative side effects associated with belongingness deficits, it is perhaps not surprising that people have psychological mechanisms in place that help ensure their need to belong is being met. For example, people continually monitor their level of inclusion (Leary et al., 1995) and automatically allocate attention to social opportunities in the environment when inclusion drops below a desirable level (DeWall, Maner, and Rouby 2009; Gardner, Pickett, and Brewer 2000). Migration is a key dynamic in understanding change in rural Scotland and it has implications for policy development and delivery (HARC Network 2011).

Critical Reviews

The concept of social exclusion was first used in France, where it has been a focus of political debate since the 1960s (Silver 1994). It has come to exercise a growing influence on social and economic policy within the European Union (e.g., European Commission 1994). Within the United Kingdom, one of the first acts of the 'New Labour' government when it came to power in 1997 was to establish a Social Exclusion Unit within the Cabinet Office, to develop and promote a range of cross-departmental initiatives designed to tackle the issue. Levitas (1998) has argued that the concept is subject to a number of different interpretations, embedded in three different

discourses— redistributionist discourse (primarily focused on poverty), moral underclass discourse (centring on the moral and behavioural delinquency of the 'excluded' themselves), and social integrationist discourse, (participation in paid work as the key to social inclusion).

Laura Kiepal, Peter J. Carrington, and Myrna Dawson (2012) coined the concept of social exclusion with the relationship between people and groups who may be socially and economically disadvantaged and the phenomenon of going missing. The CSSEIP of Andhra University (2011) categorized "the individuals who are most susceptible and are in a marginalized state are the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Women, Religious and linguistic minorities, Elderly, Poor, differently-abled, and Persons living with HIV/AIDS." Abhijit Guha (2011) cited that "social and cultural ecologists have demonstrated that when a group of people are excluded from using a certain portion of natural resources (a patch of forest for grazing or from killing particular species of plant and animal) it helps in the conservation of nature. Even the continuation of occupational specialization of the Indian caste system (which excluded a particular caste from pursuing the occupation of others) was explained by Nirmal Kumar Bose a mechanism for minimizing competition (Bose 1963). Madhav Gadgil and Kailash Malhotra at a much later period extended Bose's ideas within an ecological framework in explaining the existence of various caste groups in the rural areas of Maharashtra (Gadgil and Malhotra 1983). In a study conducted by Haripada Pradhan, Abhijit Guha and Falguni Chakraborty of the Department of Anthropology, Vidyasagar University, the authors have shown how under the leadership of local communist party some unwritten rules of exclusion and inclusion in the reclamation of unrecorded char land in Nayagram block of the Paschim Medinipur district minimized conflict as well as inequality among the rural cultivators

(Pradhan et al. 1992).

For the purpose of conceptualizing social exclusion, Diemer and Liyana (2010) cited a couple of researchers in North America those who defined social exclusion as the degree to which children or families do not participate fully in society or [the] process by which individuals and groups are wholly or partly closed out from participation in their societies because of low income as well as constricted access to employment, social benefits and services, and other aspects of cultural and community life. (Kahn and Kamerman 2002). Social exclusion connotes limited access to resources that facilitate inclusion in a given society, such as transport, social networks and adequate housing (Roosa, Deng, Nair and Burrell 2005) as well as civic and political voice and participation (Aber, Gershoff and Brooks-Gunn 2002). The notion of social exclusion moves beyond a focus on income poverty, providing a 'conceptual net' to capture processes of marginalisation and exclusion on the basis of (including but not limited to) race/ethnicity, gender and ability status.

UNESCO (2009) attempted to understand marginalization through four broad thematic clusters-- Group-based: ethnicity; language; race; caste, Poverty-related: extreme and persistent poverty and vulnerability; child labour, Location: urban slums; rural (drought-prone, pastoralist etc); conflict zones (including refugees and internally-displaced persons), and Individual: disability and special needs; HIV/orphans; other health-related.

Rawal (2008) reiterated that "the concept of social exclusion/inclusion figured prominently in the policy discourse in France in the mid-1970s. The concept was later adopted by the European Union in the late 1980s as a key concept in social policy and in many instances replaced the concept of poverty. This concept which had first appeared in Europe as a response to the crisis of the welfare State has now gained considerable currency over the last five years in both official and

development discourses in Nepal. The debates surrounding inclusion/exclusion have ascended to conspicuous importance in the present political transition in Nepal with several groups such as Dalit, women, ethnic communities, donor communities, Madhesi communities and region voicing their demands for an inclusive state by virtue of which, the issue has now come to be a part of the popular public discourse. Ayaz and Ahmed (2007) coined that "exclusion is a cumulative and multi-dimensional process which, through successive ruptures, distances individuals, groups, communities and territories from the centres of power and prevailing resources and values, gradually placing them in an inferior position. In a socially inclusive state therefore, the individual's identity as a citizen trumps all other identities (e.g. gender, ethnicity, caste or religion) as a basis for claims for state services and commitments (e.g. justice, social service provision, investment in public infrastructure, police protection) through the constitution and legal system. A sense of belonging comes through civic, economic, social and interpersonal integration into a society, which is promoted by (i) democratic and legal system (ii) the labour market (iii) the welfare-state system (iv) the family and community system consecutively. Hence, social exclusion can be defined in terms of the failure of one or more of the four systems."

In the Indian context, caste may be considered broadly as a proxy for socio-economic status and poverty. In the identification of the poor, scheduled caste and scheduled tribes and in some cases the other backward castes are considered as socially disadvantaged groups and such groups have a higher probability of living under adverse conditions and poverty. The health status and utilization patterns of such groups give an indication of their social exclusion as well as an idea of the linkages between poverty and health. In this review, broad linkages between caste and some select health/health utilization indicators were examined. Data on prevalence of anaemia, treatment of diarrhoea, infant mortality rate,

utilization of maternal health care and childhood vaccinations among different caste groups in India were taken into consideration. The data based on the National Family Health Survey II (NFHS II) highlight the caste differentials in health (as cited by Nayar 2007). Dragana Avramov (2006) viewed that social exclusion is a notion that encapsulates deprivations experienced by the poor and those people who are at risk of poverty. Alexandra Dobrowolsky and Ruth Lister (2005) included women, Racial and Ethnic Minorities, Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers as most disadvantaged and marginalized. Dobrowolsky and Ruth (2005) further explored that social exclusion as a concept originated in France.

Kinship of exclusion with potent social problems and issues figured out above provides the theoretical foundations—inter-disciplinary to trans-disciplinary. Lynn Todman (2007) while focussing the on goals of a discourse on social exclusion organised by Adler Institute on Social Exclusion reiterated that "Our goal with this conference series is to show the similarities between disciplines and to encourage a trans-disciplinary conversation on the topic." Therefore, social exclusion seeks an integrated approach towards formulating inclusive policies. The inter-relationship of social factors viewed at macro level reflects the inter-relationship of various independent branches of human knowledge —sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, governance and polity, social history, demography and geography, economics, law and human rights. Exclusion can be viewed macro-sociologically or micro-sociologically (Silver 1994). Achille Weinberg and Jean-Claude Ruano-Borbalan (1993) distinguish between macro and micro causes in contrasting exclusion from "above" and "below." "Top-down" perspectives may view exclusion as an employment crisis or as a crisis in the integrative social institutions of the nation generally.

Harald Stoeger (2011) discussed theoretical approaches to social exclusion and stated that "During the last two decades

the number of approaches attempting to explain social exclusion has increased. This can be viewed as problematic or as a welcome contribution to diversity. With respect to the "macro-level" researchers grapple with the ways in which types of clusters of welfare regimes shape the risk of homelessness and deprivation in the realm of housing. Scholars have seized upon the three-fold typology of Esping-Andersen (1990) and have added the rudimentary (or Latin-rim) welfare type (for Southern Europe) and the "post socialist welfare disarray" for Eastern Europe (Leibfried 1992; Abrahamson 1999).

Exclusion is a complex concept and its major roots are spread across disciplines. Poverty being measured in terms of economic criterion, but its relationship with social status and culture cannot be ignored. Unemployment is caused by locality and further attributed to the availabilities of avenues or resources, educational background and willingness of individual. The sets or groups or the clusters that are emerging among the social factors are to be viewed in terms of the extent to which each of these groups are fuelling to the process of social exclusion and thus becoming stumbling blocks to social cohesion. The significance of all such group wise or cluster wise may be understood from the empirical evidences available for the present discourse on social exclusion by taking into account the evidences reported by Jespersen (1995), Iskra Beleva(1997), Mohanty(2000, 2005, 2011), Katharine Giffard-Lindsay (2005), Lockheed (2010), Tomasevski (2003), Lewin (2000) , Raja, Boyce & Boyce (2003), Singal (2005) and many others. Advent of ICT is also emerging as a potential factor responsible for social cohesion. David (2002) reported that the excluded invariably fall on the wrong side of the digital divide, and are thus unable to take advantage of recent developments in ICTs. This digital divide, which clearly marginalises many of the socially excluded, shows how problematic are assumptions about the future role of e-commerce within wider society (ibid).Peter Saunders (2003) argued that researchers need to think more

strategically about how research on exclusion and poverty can exert influence on those setting the policy agenda.

Social exclusion in Indian context in relation to religious minorities, especially Muslim minorities are treated equally with lower caste communities of other religions including Hindu. Muslim minorities are in double binds—being alienated socially and religion wise. In the Indian context, interpretations on social exclusion are ironical in nature. During the pre-British era, many of the Hindu kings had kept Muslims as Chief Chef (cook) in their kingdoms, because of the meticulous skills of Muslims in cooking. Being the Chief Chefs they were honoured by the public but alienation in certain form was found to be prevailing. As per Hindu mythology, people belonging to lower castes (irrespective of their socio-economic-political status), such as, SCs, STs, shudras, chamars, chandals etc. are not allowed to enter temples. But at the same point of time, history had witnessed that it is the butcher   (belonging to chamar or chandal group) can only slain throats of buffaloes or goats (balipratha—sacrifice rituals) in the front of the idol of god or goddess in the presence of the public and within the temple premises. An empirical study (Mohanty 2000) focusing on in-depth understanding of the socio-psychological factors (among high and low achieving SC girls at primary stage in Haryana) revealed that socio-economic status of children belonging to SC communities is playing a significant role in learning attainment—SC girls of high socio-economic status are achieving better than low socio-economic status SC girls of the same school and at the same grade/class. Such finding leads low achieving SC girls to become more educationally excluded and thus found to be socially excluded—being born as girl, in SC community, and low level of learning achievement. A study conducted on scavengers in Lucknow (Mohanty 2011) explored that migration among scavengers from their natives to urban places are mainly due to scarcity of resources for managing livelihood, lack of traditional jobs in rural places, and

enhancing quality of life of their children. These factors reflect the social exclusion of scavengers both in rural and urban. Such instances are primarily reflecting some form of social exclusion. Though its magnitude varies significantly from one context to another, the concept of social exclusion is universal. "Cursory reviews of the concept of social exclusion clearly indicate different conceptions of what constitutes social inclusion and exclusion. The concepts and definitions vary both in the academia and in development policies. For instance, some analysts report that social exclusion as a cause of poverty, others suggest that it is both an expression and a determinant, of poverty and most would probably agree that poverty is a form of social exclusion (de Haan 1998, cited in Jackson 1999). Disadvantaged is to be understood as those who are denied fundamental rights and thus becoming more excluded socially and having low level of participation in mainstream of societal development which includes health, locality, religion, education, economic condition, social status and acceptance.

Tomasevski (2003) points out that lack of education is often attributed to poverty rather than policy, because exposing poor policy choices puts a spotlight on abuses of power. Indeed, power hierarchies are a key determinant of social exclusion, although poverty, policy, quality and relevance of education available, and stakeholder attitudes all have essential roles to play too in a family's decision, or ability, to send a child to school. Lewin (2000) highlights the potential for education to reverse the negative effects of social exclusion. There are an estimated 25 million children out of school in India (MHRD 2003 statistics, cited in World Bank, 2004), many of whom are marginalised by dimensions such as poverty, gender, disability, and caste. While many educational programmes have attempted to reach out to these previously excluded children, those with disabilities are often forgotten, emphasising their invisible status in a rigidly categorised society.

In Germany, social exclusion is interpreted in terms of

disadvantaged on housing market—female single parents, families with children, and elderly people.   The Brazilian experience on social exclusion include unwed mothers, divorced or widows, illiterate or semi-illiterate, without professional training and having no access to social rights they fight to bring up their children (as mentioned in the project report titled Team work to Mothers Head of Families). Finland's "City for All—Barrier-free Environment" known as Marlala's homes— connections between the homes and all streets, access routes, parks etc. are planned and built so that they meet the needs of even the weakest link, i.e. the wheelchair-bound inhabitants. Social exclusion is interpreted in terms of inequalities that are attributed to the legacy of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Community Information Resource Centre in South Africa is a timely intervention towards community building.

Belgium, through the European Charter, has attempted to make women free from constructive stereotypes hindering all women-oriented development in town planning and services, housing, safety and mobility. "The European Charter for Women in the City" urged that "cities must be rethought and remodelled through a woman's perception, which will be instrumental in giving them a new equilibrium and another dimension. Homeless Families Program in USA is an example to move homeless families and adults directly into permanent rental housing in residential neighbourhoods. Such effort reflects the social integration of certain excluded group by providing residential settlements. McAuleyVillage (1989) is another example of inclusion or integration among growing number of single parents who could neither house nor support themselves and their young children. The Orange Grove Recycling Center (OGRC 1988) is a successful experiment in social inclusion of mentally-disabled citizens.

Social inclusion is a process whereby individuals gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of

living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision-making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights (European Union 2005). "The term "social" means that something is of or relating to society or its organization. If society is understood as the more or less ordered life of a community, then we have enough to hazard an initial definition of social exclusion: social exclusion is the process or state of being excluded from the ordered life of a community. The ordered life of a community includes employment; education; market institutions; public services, benefits, and institutions; political and civic participation; and informal social associations (friendships and related social associations). Thus, social exclusion refers to the process or state of being excluded from one or more of these or other elements of community life. More generally, social exclusion could take the form of what Adam Smith described as a key component of social life—not being able to appear in public " without shame" (Social Exclusion Unit of Government of U.K 1997).

In India, caste and tribal ethnicity remain strong markers of disadvantage, strongly correlated with particular occupational/livelihood strategies. Among different economic groups, the most vulnerable groups are the agricultural labour households (rural) and the casual labour households (urban). Membership of these groups strongly overlaps with Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. The dual phenomenon of being an asset less casual wage labour household, in either rural or urban areas, from either an SC or ST group has accentuated the 'prevalence, depth and severity' of poverty. In Nepal, there is a significant rural-urban divide and remoteness, causing increasing poverty in Mid-Western and Far-Western regions and in remote mountain districts; secondly, there is deep-rooted discrimination based on social differences of gender, caste and ethnicity. In Bangladesh, by

contrast, linguistic and religious homogeneity is the norm, though there are small pockets of ethnic minorities. Here, the dominant axes of inequality are those of gender and ultra-poverty.

Conclusion

One of such potential areas of human endeavour that witnessed its commencement towards the end of last century is relating to the concept of social exclusion. Historically originated from marginalization and disadvantages, the concept reflects significant kinship with poverty and alienation. Insights of academia, policy planners and government, (both at local and regional level) have been noticed in India in the forms of varied documents. Such documents vary from articles to scholarly research work, excerpts, abstracts, text books and reference books. Since deliberations and discourses pertaining to social exclusion are multidimensional in their approaches and nature, scientific conclusions on such efforts will enhance comprehensibility and draw a road map towards the future in terms of research, policy formulation and practice.

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