POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

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INTRODUCTION

In this Paper the Social Exclusion of the Marginal communities, keeping in view the Inequality they are subject to, is demonstrated by examination of data from a No. of surveys. More than 60 years after the idea of Equality translated into India's Constitution, Social Exclusion remains a central Dimension of Poverty in our country. Social Exclusion(Marginalization) has been by and large , described as the Blatant Action or tendency of Human societies whereby certain sections in our community are Removed or Excluded from the prevalent systems of protection and integration, thus limiting their opportunities and means of survival. Marginalization lies at the core of all social, political and Economic conflict wherein Vulnerable Groups undergo Victimization. This concept which has entered Recently in our Vocabulary covers a wide Variety of Discriminations, Deprivations and Denials of Equal social opportunities to different groups or sections of the society. It covers far more than exclusion rooted in India's Historical Division on the lines of caste, religion and gender; it includes discrimination against minorities , dalits , Tribals , widows, sex-workers , migrants, nomadic tribes , etc.

Marginalisation and social Exclusion of groups are reality in virtually every society and in every period of Human history. In the area marginalisation and social exclusion, many different issues have to be addressed, such as discrimination, inequality, racism, poverty, globalisation, immigration, Social welfare, health and Human rights. Also this list of potentially, or actually marginalised and excluded individuals, groups and populations is extensive: ethnic minorities, immigrants, disabled persons, isolated older persons, economically weaker sections, etc. More than 60 years after the idea of equality has been incorporated in Indian constitution in the form of various Fundamental Rights granted to our citizens, social exclusion still remains as a central dimension of poverty in our country. Rising inequalities in India has been a subject of concern in our country. The term 'SOCIAL EXCLUSION' was first used in France in the 1970s to distinguish the excluded, who then comprised of a wide variety of people: the disabled, suicidal and elderly persons, and abused children among others (Silver 1994). The concept of social Exclusion which entered only recently, covers a wide variety of social discriminations, deprivations and denials of equal social opportunities to different groups or sections of the society. Broadly speaking, it refers to the exclusion of the groups of people from access to such things as are considered normal or taken for granted for other sections of the society. It covers far more than the exclusion rooted in India's historical divisions on lines of caste, religion and gender; it includes discrimination against Minorities, Dalits, Tribals , widows, migrants, nomadic tribes , poor etc. Much of the responsibility for not only persistence but also extension of such social Inequalities and deprivations in our society may be traced largely to the inability or failure of the state in meeting its constitutional obligations. Poor people and marginalised communities suffer a remarkably wide range of social and economic problems much graver than just

living in poverty. So, Social exclusion is basically a social disadvantage and relegation to the fringe of society a social phenomenon by which minority or subgroup is socially excluded.

It is evident that the processes of Marginalization either give birth to their socio-economic inequalities or overlap in various domains of development. History is itself a mirror-process which puts narratives in the world picture of Marginalization, Exclusion, Poverty and inequality. Marginalization deprives the marginalised communities which include poor, under-privileged, etc from many opportunities in life. They face unfair treatment in terms of Employment opportunities, business opportunities, housing among various others. Such process further moulds into Inequality that creates distinct feelings of being left out or being exploited. Vulnerable, poor and Marginal communities often live without the fundamental freedom of action and choice that many other take for granted. They lack adequate food shelter, education, Health care access and other social and political opportunities that keep them from leading a fulfilling life of their choices. Due to Marginalisation these communities face extreme vulnerability to ill health, economic dislocation, and natural disasters. Discrimination and Inequality affects them in their communities and they are often exposed to poor treatment by institutions of the state rendering them powerless to influence key decisions affecting their lives. Alienation or disenfranchisement resulting from Social Exclusion can be connected to a person's social class, race, skin colour, religious affiliation, ethnic origin, educational status, childhood relationships living standards, or

appearances. Such exclusionary forms of discrimination may also apply to people with disability, minorities, LGBTQ people, drug users, institutional care leavers, elderly and the young. Anyone who appears to deviate in any way from perceived norms of a population may thereby become subject to coarse or subtle forms of social exclusion.

Marginalisation affects millions of people throughout the world. People who are marginalized have relatively little control over their lives and the resources available to them. This results in making them handicapped in delving contributions to the society. Marginalization deprives a large majority of people across globe from participating in development. It is a complex problem and there are many factors that cause marginalization. This complex and serious problem need to be addressed at the policy level.

HIGHLIGHTING INEQUALITIES: DALITS, MUSLIMS, TRIBALS, WOMEN AND THE POOR

While India has attained primary school enrolment according to official data, the percentage of girls who never attended school was just above 25% among Muslim, Dalits, and Tribals and between 13 and 16 percent for boys. In fact numerous studies show the discrimination these marginal communities are subject to. Poverty trends exemplify these inequalities. With an estimated 22 percent population below the official poverty line, India is nearly on track to having poverty over the last two decades. Repeated revisions of the poverty line over the recent years amidst heated political debates have raised scepticism about this figure. The marginalised groups suffer from

discrimination and subordination, they have physical or cultural traits that set them apart and which are disapproved of by a dominant group, they share a sense of collective identity and burdens, they have shared social rules about who belongs and who does not. Thus marginalization is a complex as well as shifting phenomenon linked to social status. Marginalisation of these communities has resulted in poverty among them, low levels of education, poor health and reduced access to health services when required. They are practically deprived from many civic facilities and isolated from modernized way of living from so many centuries. As it is rightly defined by The Encyclopedia of Public health , Marginalised groups as, "to be marginalised is to be placed in margins and thus excluded from the privilege and power found at the centre'' Marginalised groups comprises of the people who are marginalise, from a group or community for their protection and integration.

DRIVING   INEQUALITIES: FOUR DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION:

These social outcomes point out at different but overlapping dynamics of social exclusion. India's tribes have lived historically in a multiplicity of relatively small and cohesive groups at the geographical and cultural margin of the major society. In contrast dynamics of social exclusion against Dalits, play out with Hindu majority. The historic discrimination based on occupation, continues to be starkly felt. Cases of direct discrimination remain frequent despite the introduction of series of law aimed at preventing them. Violence against dalits has not disappeared; caste identities continue to determine prospects in

the employment market; and the discrimination in the provision of essential services remains widespread. Despite this enduring, the group's social mobilisation and the policies introduced as a response to it are showing results: legal safeguards are providing leverage to the organisation working on Dalits rights; reservation policies have supported the development of an educated and empowered middle class. Yet indirect discrimination continues to deepen the gap between a majority of dalits and Better off sections of society. The absence of land and other assets tremendously limit their opportunities. Muslims of India cumulate vulnerabilities. Yet because of sensitivities linked to the country's emergence as a Nation, the effects of the faith based discrimination have played out far from political will and public Interest historically deprived of Assets, many of them share the vulnerability of Dalits.

Gender discrimination cuts across lines and becomes acute when accumulated with group wise dimensions of social Exclusion mentioned above. Women constitute more than one third of the working place, but the overwhelming majority of them do not have a say in decisions within the household: without assets they are unable to convert this financial resource into empowerment. Outside their homes, their exposure to violence also contributes to limiting their access to employment and government schemes.

The group wise lens should not divert attention from the commonalities between them. Muslims, Dalits and Tribals constitute 38% of the Indian population, and a major share of country's poorest. As such they share a core set of interests and challenges : they are for example excessively impacted by

the pitiful state of India's essential public services ; furthermore, while they play out differently across groups , land rights or crude physical insecurity , historic lack of assets, poor access to government schemes and quality employment, as well as lack of economic opportunities affect all of them , similarly the group wise focus should not divert attention from deep inequalities that run through each of them . The four dimensions therefore acts as axes of vulnerability that interact among themselves and with other factors that not highlighted in this paper. Gender in particular acts as a cumulated factor of vulnerability across Muslims, Dalits, and Tribals. The forms of Marginalization vary from country to country. Being excluded from economic, social and political means of promoting one's self determination can have adverse effects on Individual and community. Poverty, dependency and feeling of shame are everyday aspects of Economic dislocation and social marginalization

COLONIAL EXPERIENCE: ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS

The major strategy that has been popularly used by imperial rulers to maintain the power was 'divide and rule' strategy upon the colonial people. 'Divide and Rule' is defined as the " conscious effort of an imperialist power to create and /or turn to its own advantage the ethic, linguistic , cultural , tribal or religious differences within the population of a subjugated colony'' . The basic tactics adopted by these colonial rulers were to create differences between the conquered population; to exploit these differences for the benefit of colonial power

and to politicize those differences so that they are carried over into post-colonial period .the creation of differences can come about in several ways; first by playing one ethnic group against another ; secondly throwing hostile ethnic groups together ; thirdly by magnifying linguistic or cultural differences ; and fourthly by religious conversions . Thus the main driving forces lies in the roots of the colonial era that led to the isolation of these marginalised communities in India.

EXPLAINATION OF THE WORD MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES AND MARGINALIZATION

In general, the term Marginalization describes the overt actions or tendencies of human societies, where people who they perceive to be undesirable or without useful function are excluded i.e., marginalized. All this limits their opportunities and means of survival. Peter Leonard defines marginality as "being outside the mainstream of productive activity and social reproductive activity''. Latin observes that, Marginality, is thoroughly demeaning, for economic well being, for human dignity, as well as for physical security. Marginal groups can always be identified by members of dominant society and will always face irrevocable discrimination. These definitions are mentioned in different contexts and show that marginalization is a slippery and multi layered concept. Marginalization has aspects in sociological, economic and political debates. Marginalization may manifest itself in forms varying from genocide /ethnic cleansing and other xenophobic acts at the end of the spectrum, to more basic economic and social hardships at the unitary

(Individual/ Family) level. Marginalization has been by and large defined as blatant action or tendency of human societies whereby certain sections in our community are removed or excluded from the prevalent systems of protection and integration, thus limiting their opportunities and means of survival. Marginalization lies at the core of all social, political and economic conflicts wherein vulnerable groups undergo victimization. The historical discrimination and exclusion countered by various communities have been sought to be ameliorated by the Indian constitutional provisions of exclusion and positive discrimination. Steps of great magnitude, for the empowerment of these excluded and marginalized groups have been institutionalized under the Indian Constitution leading to the social restructuring of the entire socio-political-economic system. In spite of the express rights that have been embodied in the Indian Constitution, question still loom about the sidelined fate of unorganized sector. The condition of the unorganised sector bring forth the, important question as to whether there is inadequacy in the giving of rights , or inadequacy in terms of protection of already existing rights . A matter of serious consequence is the empowerment and integration of the disabled persons. The issues faced by these groups also question the veracity of the rights guaranteed to them.

Marginalization is a complex as well as shifting phenomenon linked to social status. It is also called as Social Exclusion. It is the process by which a person or group of persons are made marginal or become relegated to the edge of society. There are different social structures that impact Exclusion i.e. Race, Geographic location, class structure, Globalization, social issues, education, Religion, politics, economic status etc. Marginalized group is viewed with Hostility and fear

Social exclusion is a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the societies in which they live. In an alternative conceptualization, social exclusion or marginalization theoretically emerges at the individual level or group level on four correlated dimensions: insufficient access to social rights, material deprivation, limited social participation and lack of normative integration. The issues faced by these groups often questions the veracity of the rights guaranteed to them. Another pertinent questions relates to that are given to, what would become the backbone of our country i.e. children. The questions related to legal safeguards guaranteed to women and the achievement of gender justice in Indian climate is one that has not been fully settled till this date. The constitutional provisions, legislative actions and the issues faced by the migrants, displaced persons and refugees are an area of utmost importance especially considering the diverse populous of our country.

MARGINALIZATION AND INEQUALITY:

The Fundamental Human Rights guarantees and non- discrimination are legally binding obligations and do not need instrumental justifications. That said there is a growing body of evidence the Human-rights based approaches and these key guarantees, in particular can lead to more sustainable and inclusive development results. This is to

show that all the indigenous people have been living in what may be termed as frontier region right from the pre-historic period. What have actually emerged today are the two unequal societies or two different worlds.

PROBLEMS OF MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

Most vulnerable marginalized communities in almost every society can be summarized as below: Women: under different economic conditions, and under the influence of specific historical, cultural, legal and religious factors, marginalization is one of the manifestations of gender Inequalities. In other words, women may be excluded from certain jobs and occupations, incorporated into certain others, marginalized in others. In general, they are always marginalized about men, in every country and culture. Women don't represent a homogenous category where members have common interests, abilities, or practices. Women belonging to lower classes, illiterate, and the poorest region have different level of marginalization than their better-off counterparts.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

Women, People with disabilities, Dalits, Aged people, children, Minorities, poor, sexual minorities etc are the most vulnerable marginalized groups in almost every society. In every Nation there are some sections of the people deprived of socio-economic opportunities for their development and they are victims of social, cultural and political exclusion. They are the marginalized , and

the marginalized communities are Women, people with Disabilities , Dalits, Aged people with disabilities , Dalits, Aged people, poor, the Downtrodden, etc.

In India, the caste system is a strictly hierarchical social system based on underlying notions of purity and pollution. The Indian society is broadly classified into upper cast and lower cast. Brahmins are on the Top of the Hierarchy and Dalits or the depressed class constitutes the bottom of the hierarchy. Among them, there are also some sub-caste , caste based discrimination entails social and economic exclusion , segregation in housing , denials and restrictions of access to public and private services and employment and enforcement of certain types of jobs on Dalits. Dalits in India have existence as if they have their Island in the same society. The Geographical, cultural, social, educational, existence of Dalits is different from the upper caste Indians.

They include:

1. Women: under different economic conditions and under the influence of specific historical , cultural , legal and religious factors , marginalisation is one of the manifestations of gender inequality, in other words women may be excluded from certain jobs and occupations , incorporated into certain others , and marginalised in others. In general they are always marginalised relative to men, in every country and culture. Women belonging to lower classes, lower castes, illiterate and the poorest region have different level of marginalization than their counterparts.

2. People with Disabilities: people with disabilities have had to battle against centuries of biased assumptions, harmful stereotypes, and irrational fears. The

Stigmatization of disability resulted in social and economic marginalization of generations with Disabilities and thus has left people with disabilities in a severe state of impoverishment for centuries.

3. Elderly or aged people: Being passed middle age and approaching old age; rather old age; rather old. Ageing is an inevitable and inexorable process in life. For most nations, regardless of their geographical location or development stage, the 80- years old, or over- age group is growing faster than any younger segment of the older population. Elderly women form a majority of marginalised group among them.

4. Ethnic minority: A group that has different national or cultural traditions from the majority of the population the term Ethnic Minority refers to Marginalized people of the same race or nationality who share a distinctive culture. A minority is a sociological group that does not constitute a politically dominant voting majority of the total population of a given society. Every large society contains ethnic minorities. They may be migrant, indigenous or landless nomadic communities, or religious minorities that have a different faith from the majority.

4. Caste groups: The caste system is a strictly hierarchical social system based on underlying notions of purity and pollution. Brahmins are on the top of the hierarchy, and the Shudras or Dalits, or the Scheduled caste constitutes the bottom of the hierarchy. The Marginalization of Dalits influences all spheres of their life, violating basic human rights such as social, civil, political, economic and cultural Rights. Literacy rates,

purchasing power and poor housing conditions among dalits are very low. Dalits do not refer to a caste but suggests a group who are in a state of oppression, social disability and who are helpless and poor. Structural discrimination against these groups takes place in the form of physical, psychological, emotional and cultural abuse which receives legitimacy from the social structure and the social system. However, in the recent years due to affirmative action and legal protection, the intensity of caste based marginalization is reducing.

5. Tribes: In India, the Population of Scheduled Tribes is around 84.3 million and is continued to be socially and economically disadvantage group. They are mainly landless with the little control over resources such as land, forest and water. They constitute agricultural, casual, plantation and industrial labourers. This has resulted in poverty, low levels of education and poor access to health care services. In the Indian context the marginalized are categorized as the Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes, denoted tribes, and other backward classes.

7. Sexual Minorities: Another group that faces stigma and discrimination are the sexual minorities. Those indentify as gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, kothi and hijra; experience various forms of discrimination within the society and health system. Due to the dominance of heteronomous sexual relations as the only from of acceptable relations within the society , individuals who are identified as having the same sex sexual preferences are ridiculed and ostracized by their own family and are left with very limited support

structures and networks of community that provide them conditions of care and work.

EFFECTS OF MARGINALIZATION

The effects of Marginalization are extremely large. Those who are marginalized suffer from a crisis of identity, and this perhaps leads to rising in Social Inequality. Deprivation in various aspects of life is the common result of Marginalization. Material resources such as food, shelter, etc are unfairly dispersed in society, and the Marginalised individuals or minority groups are excluded from employment. It is true that marginalization is the unfair or unjust treatment of individual or minority groups by the majority or stronger group. Making marginalization refers to making separated from the mainstream society and being marginalized refers to being separated from the rest of the society or forced to remain on the Fringes or outskirts and not to be at the centre of social or National life. Sometimes marginalized people are not considered as an ingredient or part of the society rather they are thought to be unwanted or negligible in the building of society or nation.

UNTOUCHABILITY AND DISCRIMINATION:

The practice of untouchability and a large no. of Atrocities inflicted on Dalits continue even today mainly because of hidden prejudices and neglect on the part of officials responsible for the implementation of special legislations; i.e. Protection of Civil Rights Act (PCRA) and The Prevention of Atrocities act (POA). The government should take meaningful intervention in this regard so as to mitigate the sufferings of Dalits due to the practice of Untouchability and atrocities

inflicted upon them and should also treat this matter on priority basis to ensure that the official and the civil society at large are sensitized on these issues.

Thus the need of the day is to , well equip these marginal communities in terms of basic education i.e., awareness + knowledge = better utilization which is a pre-requisite for building up a self secure individual who not only being active, participate in community development but also in the development of whole globe as a village.

Though there has been some improvement in certain spheres and despite some positive changes, the standard of living for the marginalised communities has not improved. Thus there is a great need of the hour to take these following steps:

1. ACTIVE ROLE OF STATE IN PLANNING

It is necessary to recognise that for the vast majority of the discriminated groups, state intervention is crucial and necessary. Similarly, the use of economic and social planning as an instrument of planned development is equally necessary. Thus planned state intervention to ensure fair access and participation in social and economic development in the country is necessary.

2. IMPROVED ACCESS TO CAPITAL

The poverty level among SC and ST cultivators is 30% and 40% respectively, which is much higher compared with non-scheduled businesses. The viability and productivity of self employed households

need to be improved by providing adequate capital, information, technology and access to markets. It is a pity that though the STs do own some land, they lack the relevant technological inputs to improve the productivity of their agriculture.

3. IMPROVED EMPLOYMENT IN PUBLIC ANG PRIVATE SECTORS:

There is a need to review and strengthen employment guarantee schemes both in rural and urban areas, particularly in drought prone and poverty- ridden areas. Rural infrastructure and other productive capital assets can be generated through large-scale employment programmes. This will serve the dual purpose of reducing poverty and ensuring economic growth through improvement in the stock of capital assets and infrastructure.

4. EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCE EMPLOYMENT

Firstly lower literacy rates and level of education and the continual discrimination of SC/STs in educational institutions pose a major problem. The government should take a second look at the education policy and develop major programmes for strengthening the public education system in villages and cities on a much larger scale than today. There is necessity to relocate government resources for education and vocal training. For millions of poor students located in rural areas, the loan schemes do not work. We should develop affordable, uniform and better quality public education system is our strength and needs to be further strengthened. Promotion of such private education systems

that creates inequality and hierarchy should be discouraged.

5. EDUCATION LEVEL AMONG SOCIAL GROUPS:

The differences in the level of education among the different social groups are examined on the basis of the data shown. It presents the area wise and sex-wise educational levels among the social groups in India during 2009-10. It is observed that among the rural Males, the rate of illiteracy ranges from 35.8% among the ST, 25.3% among the other backward classes (OBC) and 17.4% in case of others. This indicates that the portion of an illiterate population is considerably higher among the ST and SC communities than among the OBC and others. Among the literates, the proportion of those with primary level of education is higher among the ST (26.4%) and SC (27.6%) than among the marginalised section (ST and SC); educational level is mostly centred at the primary level. This is underscored more so by the fact that at higher levels of education, the rate is less among the marginalised section than among the OBC and others. Among the literates, the proportion of those with primary level of education is higher among the ST (26.4%) and SC (27.6%) than among the OBC (25.2%) and others (23.1%), which underlines the fact that among the marginalised section (ST and SC); education level is mostly centred at the primary level. This is underscored more so by the fact that at higher levels of education, the rate is less among the marginalised section than among the OBC and others.

6. FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMS:

The public distribution system should also be revived and strengthened. In distributing Fair price shops in villages, priority should be given to the SC\ST female and male groups, as some studies have pointed out that they are discriminated upon in the public distribution system and mid-day Meal schemes.

7. PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM:

The public health system in rural areas has been by and large neglected. Therefore, the primary health system in rural areas and public health system in urban areas must be revived and more funds should be allocated for the same.

CONCLUSION:

To sum up making sure that everyone has a chance to develop their potential through education is an important challenge for all countries. Equal opportunity in education is a basic Human right. Moreover, Fair and inclusive education is one of the most powerful levers available for making societies more equitable, innovative, and democratic. Overcoming the extreme and persistent disadvantages that Marginalized Groups experience is the vital element in the wider agenda for inclusive education. Extending opportunity to these groups requires more than the general expansion of education and the improvement of average learning achievement levels. It requires the policies that target the underlying causes of disadvantage in education and beyond.

The pertinent question, therefore, is where do the marginalized groups stand today? Though there has been some improvement in certain spheres and despite some positive changes, the standard of living for the marginalized communities has not been improved. Therefore, what minimum needs to be done? The reason of high incidences of poverty and deprivation among the marginalized social groups are to be found in their continuing lack of access to income earning capital assets, heavy dependence on wage employment, high unemployment, low education and other factors. Therefore there is a need to focus on policies to improve the ownership of income earning capital assets ,employment , human resource and health situation and prevention of discrimination to ensure fair participation of the marginalized community in the public and private sectors.
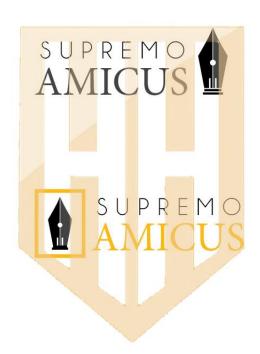
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