



SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF EXCLUDED GROUPS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India is one of the fastest growing economy but the fruits of development is not trickling down to all sections of society equally, especially socially excluded sections viz. Tribals, Dalits and Muslims minority. India's fast growth rate of over 7 per cent since 2003-4 has been globally acknowledged but its HDI ranks 130th indicating a less than commensurate performance on human development. Ironically, public spending on social sector is gradually decreasing and subsidies to rich corporate entities have become an increasing trend in present day government. The HDI is not something that makes headlines in the country, nor does the low social spending.

Introduction:

It is truism that pro-poor growth and exclusion is provided by the fact that those socially excluded are often amongst the poorest sections of the population. So, focusing on the poor would lead to inclusive growth. For achieving inclusive growth UNDP identified three mutually reinforcing elements, viz., pro-poor growth, equity in resources, access to basic social services and income distribution and productive employment. In case of India, inclusive growth should result in lower incidence of poverty, broadbased and significant improvement in health outcomes, universal access for children to school, increased access to higher education and improved standards of education, including skill development.

As per UNDP approach inclusive growth is a concept that encompasses pro-poor growth but goes beyond it in terms of both participation and the distribution of benefits from it. Hence, pro-poor growth is a *necessary* condition for inclusive growth, but not a *sufficient* condition. It includes excluded groups such as ethnic minorities, physically challenged and those affected by HIV/AIDS along with poor.

There is a great divide between India and Bharat. Fluctuations of the stock market are considered bigger news events than farmers' suicide. Nobel laureate Professor Amartya Sen has criticized caste system in India and asserted it anti-national and suggested all such

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divisions need to be eliminated if a nation wants to progress. He once said, ‘there can’t be famine in a democracy.’ If caste and gender continue to be factors that pre-determine children’s futures in the largest democracy, we cannot claim for real democracy

Objective of the Study:

This is a humble attempt to highlight the failure of Indian state at front of inclusive growth. Though, 12th Five Year Plan document has declared inclusive growth as main objective yet a large section of population viz. Tribals, Dalits and Muslims remained excluded. Goals of sustainable development or ‘Agenda 2030’ are also discussed in this regard. Finally, some feasible suggestions are given to formulate policies and programs for sustained inclusive growth.

Methodology:

This paper is based on analysis of secondary literature such as relevant policy documents, census reports, data compiled by the National Sample Survey Organization, Reports of government, research institutes, NGOs and other competent bodies. The study intends to cover various manifestations of social exclusion faced by the Tribals, Dalits and Muslims. Sustainable Development goals in this regard are an opportunity to fight exclusion for the groups in discussion.

Concept of Social Exclusion:

Social exclusion is concerned remarkably wide range of social and economic problems. It covers not only poverty but all social disadvantages and relegation to the fringe of society, a social phenomenon by which the minority or sub-group is excluded. Kabeer (2000, p. 84) conceptualizes that social exclusion captures “an important dimension of the experience of *certain groups* of being somehow ‘set apart’ or ‘locked out’ of participation in social life”. Social exclusion helps us to understand “the various institutional mechanisms through which resources are allocated ...operate in such a way as to systematically deny particular groups of people the resources and recognition which would allow them to participate fully in the life of that society” (Kabeer, 2000, p.86). Seen this way, a thorough examination of social exclusion must necessarily make reference not only to material deprivation, but also to institutions and processes which reproduce that disadvantage or deprivation. Social exclusion is a multi-dimensional concept and varied dimensions in which people are excluded can be – livelihood, security, employment, income, property, housing, health, education, skills, and cultural capital, citizenship and legal equality, democratic participation, public goods, family and sociability, humanity, respect, fulfillment and understanding (see: Silver, 1995).

Hence, problems of social exclusion is tried to be addressed by the world community by adopting 'Agenda 2030' i.e. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are 17 Goals and if they are fulfilled will surely create a just and egalitarian society.

The SDGs may be enlisted as:

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

Goal 3: Ensure Healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation.

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, sustainable, reliable and modern energy for all.

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

The above mentioned objectives can only be realized if policies and programs are formulated to target excluded groups. It is pertinent here to look into the nature, extent and implications of social exclusion among the most identified marginalized groups –

(a) Indigenous people / Tribals

(b) Dalits

(c) Muslims

Indigenous People/Adivasis:

Indigenous people/ Adivasis are the earliest inhabitants of India. They are often residing in the interior forests, hills and remote areas away from the urban influences. Most of them have their own distinguished dialect and cultural affairs. As per the Census of India-2011 there are 10.4 crores indigenous people, making up 8.6 per cent of the total Indian population.

They are the most socially excluded section in Indian society. They are deprived of fruits of success in terms of growth and poverty reduction has not been able to reach to them. According to NSSO -2006, at all India level 27.5 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line (BPL) but this figure was 43.8 per cent for Adivasis in the year 2004-05.

On the education parameter, the NSSO (2009-10) data bring out that literacy rate among ST (Scheduled Tribes of the Indigenous People) is 63.1 per cent, almost 10 per cent lower than the national average (72.8%). Statistics of School Education 2010-2011 reports that the dropout rate of the ST students in class I-X is 70.6 per cent which is much higher than the average of all the categories that stands at 50.4 per cent.

The Dalits:



Caste in India is an indigenous concept which has religious sanction and based on the *Verna* system. *Shudras*, today's Dalits are at the bottom of *Verna* system. It is estimated that 170-200 million Dalits (which literally meaning *broken people*, previously this group was known as the *untouchables*), constituting 17 per cent of the India's population at the bottom of the caste system.

The worst manifestation of this caste system is 'untouchability'. Though, untouchability in any form is outlawed and a crime by the Constitution of India, yet practicing untouchability is still a stark reality in many parts of the country. Findings of a study conducted in 565 villages of 11 states in India (Shah, Mander, Thorat, Deshpande and Baviskar, 2006), demonstrate that in 38 per cent of government schools Dalit children are forced to sit separately during lunch means. In 20 per cent of government schools they are not even permitted to drink from same water source. About one-third of public health workers refused to visit Dalit homes and nearly half were denied access to common water sources. In 14.4 per cent of villages, Dalits were not permitted even to enter the panchayat building (cast council) and in 12 per cent of villages surveyed, they were denied voting rights. The study (Shah, et al. 2006) further revealed that 35.8 per cent Dalits were denied entry into village shops.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) report (2012) shows that a crime is committed against a Dalit in every 18 minutes in India; every day three Dalit women are raped; two Dalits are murdered and two Dalits' houses are burnt; and every week: 13 Dalits are murdered; and six Dalits are kidnapped or abducted.

On Health parameter, NHRC (2012) revealed that more than half (54%) of the Dalit children were undernourished, 21 per cent were severely underweight and 12 percent die before their fifth birthday. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) among Dalits was 83 per 1000 live births. Only 27 per cent Dalit women avail institutional deliveries. In 33 per cent of villages, public health workers refused to visit Dalit homes.

The NHRC (2010) brings out that 45 per cent of Dalits in India are illiterate. Dalit women, in rural areas, have an appalling rate of illiteracy 62.2 per cent. According to the Gandhi Peace Foundation and the National Labour Institute survey, it is estimated that between 90-94 per cent of bonded labourers were illiterate.

Muslims:

India is a plural society and here inhabits innumerable ethnic, cultural and religious groups. Muslims form the largest religious minority group, and their proportion to the total population rose from 13.4 per cent in 2001 to 14.2 per cent in 2011 (Census 2011).



Justice Sachar has reported that almost one-third (31%) of the Indian Muslims are living below poverty line. Supporting this fact, the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) notes that three out of every ten urban Muslims are poor. And, one in five rural Muslims are below poverty line with an average monthly income of Rs.338 per year.

On the expenditure criteria, National Sample Survey Organization examines that in 2009-10, at all-India level, the average monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) of a Muslim household was Rs. 980 while that of a Sikh household was Rs. 1,659. This figure for Hindus and Christians were 1,125 Rupees and 1,543 Rupees, respectively. Pew Research (2014) finds that Muslims' average per capita spending a day is Rs. 32.7 (\$0.52), while it is Rs. 37.5 for Hindus, Rs. 51.4 for Christians and Rs. 55.3 for Sikhs. The problem is going to be more severe because impact of poverty alleviation programmes is minimal on Muslims. Human Development Report (2011) of India presented a comparative picture and come to this conclusion that compared to SC/STs and other social and religious groups, poverty levels are highest amongst Muslims, in both rural and urban areas. Similar situation is also articulated by the Sachar Committee report. Hence, it can be safely inferred on the basis of above studies that India's Muslims have the lowest living standard in the country.

Looking at employment in formal sectors, Muslims, in general, trail behind the national average by 60 per cent and OBC Muslims by 80 per cent. Even in landholdings, Muslims are far below the national average: general Muslims 40 per cent and Muslim OBCs 60 per cent, whereas Hindu OBCs are approximately 20per cent below the national average (Sachar Committee Report).

Data on educational status among Muslims are very appalling. The Sachar Committee come to this finding that 25 per cent of Muslim children in the 6-14 years' age-group either never went to school or else dropped out at some stage. The report also finds that up to the matriculation level, Hindu OBCs trail behind the national average by 5 per cent, while the figures for Muslims in general and OBC Muslims is 20 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. And up to graduation level, general and OBC Muslims lag behind the national average by 40 per cent and 60 per cent respectively. Marginalization of Muslims is also reflected in health indicators.

Many studies (Khanam, 2009; Singh, 2013; Hasan, 1996, Mander, 2007) have, beyond doubt, proved that majority of poor Muslims are the prime victims of custodial torture and deaths. Similarly, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (2012) observes that 36 per cent of the Jail inmates are Muslims while the population of Muslims in the state is close to 10.6 per cent. The findings of the report are in conformity with the Sachar Committee report and general observation of Human Rights activists.

Centre for Equity Studies (2011), during evaluation of flagship programmes for minority development, documents ample evidences to show government's biases and apathy against Muslims in planning, selection of beneficiaries and implementation of schemes and programmes. Consequently, the Muslim community remains in deplorable conditions of poverty and victimization. Likewise, Sachar Committee report (2006) and Ranganath Mishra Commission Report (2007) affirm that the nodal institutions and systems such as National Commission for Minorities and Ministry of Minority Affairs have not effectively taken up 'hardcore' issues of undue violence, discrimination of Muslims and thereby failed to ensure justice and equality.

(Ranjan K Panda, 2016)

Suggestions:

'God helps those who help themselves'. These three groups (Dalits-17% + Muslims-14.2% + Tribals-8.6%) constitute 40 percent of Indian population which is more than sufficient to form their own government in various states and at centre. They have to come together and make a strong unbroken political, social and cultural bond. This is the need of the hour to lead the nation on right track.

These three groups together are 50 crores people. No goal can be achieved by neglecting them. India cannot be a true democracy without addressing their issues.

Muslims along with others need to get modern English education to be able to get good jobs. For this these communities have to establish and administer modern educational institutions of their own choice which is guaranteed by Indian Constitution. But English educated and modernized Muslims control the minority educational institutions only to make money by selling the education to rich and upper castes of India.

No doubt there are many notable personalities in Muslim community who have emerged as global players but they do not have any sense of community. Individuals like MF Hussain, Sania Mirza, many Khans in film industry have emerged out of English education. The Muslim intelligentsia must take initiative to develop modernist communitarian cultural institutions getting built outside the realm of State. They should also involve the U.N. in case of their persecution and human rights violation instead of retaliatory politics.

Prof. Kancha Ilaiah is of view, "the time has come, based on the very same reservation principle of Ambedkar that Muslims have to ask for proportional representation to them both in the parliament and State Legislatures. It is a known fact that the Muslims community is very under-represented in the Parliament." Out of 545 MPs in the present Lok Sabha there are just 23 Muslim members. Based on their population (according 2011 census 14.2 per cent) there should be 73 members. The saddest part is that there is no all India Muslim party or



organization that can put forth such a demand. On the other hand SCs and STs are benefiting from reservation system.

Emphasizing the role of Masjid, a worship place of equality and fraternity, Deccan Herald suggested that the Masjid needs to take up a massive community modernization drive. We all must know for certain that the State can do only certain things. But religious and cultural institutions play their own autonomous role in developing communities. The Muslim community needs to address this question quite seriously (Deccan Herald, February 16, 2007).

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