

# Divided Spaces

Discourse on  
Social Exclusion  
and Women in India



Durga P. Chhetri

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# DIVIDED SPACES

## Discourse on Social Exclusion and Women in India

*Editor*

**Durga P. Chhetri**



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## Preface

The concept of social exclusion became popular during the 1970s and 1980s and since then it has become central to policy and academic discourse in both western and eastern parts of the globe. With the spread of concept beyond France, where it was first developed, the meanings attached to the concept adapted to reflect prevailing political and cultural contexts. In other words, the understanding of social exclusion and its manifestations varied according to the socio-economic environment and value system. Ruth Levitas has rightly observed that 'The language of social exclusion is no longer the preserve of a temporary specialist unit. It has become commonplace in public discourse, and pervades government policy'. The spread of concept from North to South or from developed to developing nations has been linked to the rise of neo-liberal ideology and individualism from the 1970s. This apart, the concept of exclusion is perceived as less threatening than the concept of poverty and hence is readily acceptable to a range of political positions across the globe. Some scholars are also of the view that the growing popularity of the concept of social exclusion is mainly due to the fact that it has the potential to provide novel insights into the nature, causes and consequences of poverty, deprivation and discrimination and give new direction to remedial policies.

The exclusion discourse in India is closely linked with a wide range of socio-economic inequality. The existence of social pattern based on caste hierarchy systematically excluded the large groups and kept them outside the gamut of social life.



Caste is the most elaborate form of social stratification in Indian society and is also the most exhaustive and obnoxious of all exclusionary systems. Hence, in India, the most rigorous form of exclusion is practiced by the institution of caste, followed by religion, ethnicity and gender. Social exclusion also operate by means of cultural norms that are transmitted through social interactions at the community level and allow the exclusion of those who do not speak, dress or behave in certain ways. Alternatively, exclusion may operate through informal networks that provide or deny access to job and educational opportunities. The contours of the exclusion perpetuated by these variables constantly change with the context, time and space according to a given society's social and cultural norms, customs and rules.

Many social groups in India have been experiencing some form of inequality or social exclusion. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, who together make up about a quarter of the population of India are perhaps the most excluded social groups. Their exclusion is reflected in a lack of access to political institutions, to public services, to public places and to income-earning assets, among many others. Across social groups, women face exclusion and discrimination in many areas of life, though their status varies significantly according to their social and ethnic backgrounds. The history of civilisation shows that women were excluded from the public sphere. There are separate spaces for women and men. By tradition also, the public sphere is male domain and women have been confined to their homes (private sphere) and relegated to the background. The persistence and reproduction of women's exclusion is also supported by social norms and religious values. In many communities, traditional barriers still prevent women from going out of their homes to work. Their primary or sole responsibility is confined to household duties, including childcare, cooking food, fetching water, etc. and they have generally been restricted to the roles inside the house, those of wife and mother. This divided spaces based on traditional gender roles led to the further exclusion of women. Hence, the society based on social constructs of proper gender roles and separate spheres marginalised women from participating in activities within the public sector. Though reforms in governance have generated a profusion of new spaces



for citizen engagement but men continue to dominate that sphere especially at the top levels of government, business, social institutions and religion.

*Divided Spaces: Discourse on Social Exclusion and Women in India* makes a unique contribution to the literature on social exclusion and inclusion. Based on the results of UGC-sponsored National Seminar held at Southfield College, Darjeeling, West Bengal, the book explores several forms of social exclusion in the context of India. The book brings together leading scholars from several of the disciplines that have developed concepts of exclusion and various dimensions of exclusion/inclusion. The contributions by different authors show that the social exclusion of any form affects the overall well-being of both individual and the society as a whole. The book will be useful for students and scholars of political science, sociology, geography, anthropology, social psychology and the history. Further, it is hoped that this volume contributes to our understanding of the complexities of social exclusion and provide policymakers with guidance for corrective policies and social inclusion to combat the different forms of social exclusion.

**Durga P. Chhetri**

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In the process of editing and in translating from a collection of papers to a book, we have been forced to leave out some of the papers presented in the Seminar and hence this volume includes only the twelve selected papers. The editor would like to take the opportunity to thank all the contributors for their diligent efforts to respond to our suggestions for revision, submission of their papers on time and most importantly for providing chapters which truly cast new light on issues of social exclusion/inclusion in varied contexts and with new perspectives.

We also wish to acknowledge with much appreciation the many friends and colleagues for their support and encouragement. Last but not the least our special thanks are due to Gyan Publishing House for bringing out the book in its present form.



# Abbreviations

BJP	:	Bharatiya Janta Party
BPL	:	Below Poverty Line
CEO	:	Chief Executive Officer
CII	:	Confederation of Indian Industries
DRC	:	Democratic Republic of Congo
DFID	:	Department for International Development
EEVFAM	:	Extrajudicial Execution Victims Family Association Manipur
EC	:	European Commission
EU	:	European Union
GAD	:	Gender and Development
GEM	:	Gender Empowerment Measure
GDI	:	Gender Development Index
GII	:	Gender Inequality Index
GoI	:	Government of India
GP	:	Gram Panchayat
GVSA	:	Gun Victims' Survivors Association
HDI	:	Human Development Index
HIV	:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRLN	:	Human Rights Law Network
HSRB	:	High Risk Sexual Behavior
ICDS	:	Integrated Child Development Service
IDS	:	Institute of Development Studies
IILS	:	International Institute for Labour Studies
ILO	:	International Labour Organisation
IP	:	Intermediate Panchayat
IRDSO	:	Integrated Rural Development Social Organisation

KDF	: Kerala Dalit Federation
KDMF	: Kerala Dalit Mahila Federation
MGNREGS	: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
MGSN	: Manipur Gun Survivors Network
MHA	: Ministry of Home Affairs
NCEUS	: National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organisation
NRHM	: National Rural Health Mission
NRI	: Non Resident Indian
NSS	: National Sample Survey
NSSO	: National Sample Survey Organisation
ODPM	: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OECD	: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRI	: Panchayati Raj Institution
PSU	: Public Sector Unit
RIMS	: Regional Institute of Medical Sciences
RMK	: Rashtriya Mahila Kosh
RSS	: Rashtriya Sewyamsevak Sangh
SATP	: South Asia Terrorism Portal
SC	: Scheduled Caste
SEP	: Socio-Economic Programme
SGSY	: Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
SHG	: Self-Help Group
ST	: Scheduled Tribes
STEP	: Supporting to Training and Employment for Women
UGC	: University Grants Commission
UK	: United Kingdom
UN	: United Nations
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
US	: United States
VHP	: Vishwa Hindu Parishad
WEP	: Women's Economic Programme
WHO	: World Health Organisation
WID	: Women in Development
ZP	: Zilla Panchayat



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# Introduction

*Durga P. Chhetri*

Social exclusion has become one of the important themes in contemporary social policy debates in both the developed and developing countries. It has become central to policy and academic discourse in Western Europe and increasingly in other parts of the globe. As far as the use of the term social exclusion is concerned, it arose in Europe and more particularly in France, in the wake of prolonged and large-scale unemployment and the failure of the welfare state. Silver (1994) is of the opinion that economic restructuring in North American and European countries since the mid-1970s has given rise to such terms as 'social exclusion', 'new poverty' and the 'underclass' to describe the consequent negative effects on the more vulnerable populations in these countries. The coining of the term 'social exclusion' is however attributed to Rene Lenoir who was then Secretary of State for Social Action in the Chirac Government in France. Lenoir in his 1974 publication titled *Les Exclus, un Francais sur Dix* (The excluded, one Frenchman in ten) estimated that 'the excluded' made up one-tenth of the French population; the mentally and the physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged invalids, abused children, drug addicts, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal, asocial persons, and other 'social misfits'. When Lenoir spoke of "*Les Exclus*", he was referring to population groups that were unable



to find a place in the salary nexus and whose rights to social citizenship were thus limited or, at least, not recognised. As increasing numbers of people were unemployed and hence excluded from the salary relationship, the search for ways of compensating individuals and groups in precarious labour market conditions began. Over time this has involved the individualisation of social protection in the context of globalisation and increasing labour flexibility.

The concept of social exclusion is not a new one. The historical roots of the concept of social exclusion go back as far as Plato. Plato in his work ranks people of city-state in three specialised classes, the ruler (perfect guardians), the soldiers (auxiliaries) and the producing class (which Plato calls farmers). He insisted on a strict and exclusive division of functions – as guardian must dedicate themselves to ruling and the producers should be excluded from any role in the political life of the state – which means that most of the population are excluded from the political order. The slaves, resident aliens and women were completely excluded as they did not possess political rights nor any social rights.

The process of exclusion continued in the middle ages and between twelfth and nineteenth centuries. During this period, the socially excluded were those people considered unacceptable by the church (Allard, 1973). This group included killers, thieves, the poverty-stricken (known as paupers), certain occupations such as butchers, decorators, mercenaries, etc., women, the physically and mentally handicapped, the elderly, the prostitutes, the beggars, etc.

While the concept's historical roots can be traced back to Plato, the theoretical roots of social exclusion however lie in classical sociology. In the work of Max Weber, the idea referred to the ways in which groups can, through a process of 'social closure', secure and maintain privilege at the expense of those different from their own members (Berting and Villain-Gandossi, 2001). The underlying concern with social integration and cohesion has been identified with the theoretical stance of Emile Durkheim and Robert Merton (Levitas, 1998; Born and Jensen, 2002). Daly and Saraceno (2002) are of the view that modern usage of term social exclusion is however more political than



sociological in origin. It is usually traced to France, where it was deployed in the 1970s and 1980s to refer to a range of marginalised groups who had fallen through the net of the French social insurance system (Evans, 1998).

The 'social exclusion' now became the fashionable terminology. Ruth Levitas (2005) observed 'The language of social exclusion is no longer the preserve of a temporary specialist unit. It has become commonplace in public discourse, and pervades government policy'. The idea of social exclusion has been rapidly and enthusiastically adopted across the European Union (EU), decentring discourses around poverty. European interest in social exclusion grew in large part from debates surrounding the EU's antipoverty programmes. In 1989, the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs of the then European Community passed a resolution to fight 'social exclusion' and to foster integration and a 'Europe of Solidarity'. Similarly, the European Commission's 1994 White Paper, 'Growth, Competitiveness, Employment' called for fighting exclusion and 'the poverty which so degrades men and women and splits society in two'. The British government also created the cross-ministerial Social Exclusion Unit in 1998. Today, most of the European countries like France, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Belgium have introduced new institution to take action on social exclusion (Kronaeur, 1993; EC Commission 1994, 1992, 1991; Room *et al*, 1992; Yopez del Castillo, 1993). There is also interest in the concept of social exclusion in the international arena, the documents that emerged from both the World Summit on Social Development (1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (1996) talk of 'inclusive' societies and the need for social 'inclusion', as distinct from the eradication of poverty. In fact, since the Social Summit in 1994, there has been increasing attention paid to the usefulness of the concept to concerns with poverty, inequality and social justice in the developing country context by, among others, the Institute of International Labour Studies, the Asian Development Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 1997) and the World Bank have also embraced social exclusion/inclusion.

This gradual rise in popularity of the social exclusion concept has been attributed mainly to two important reasons:



firstly its political appeal and secondly of neo-liberal ideology. It has been argued that social exclusion is perceived as less threatening than poverty and its semantic flexibility allows it to be acceptable to a range of political leaderships. Furthermore, social exclusion is perceived, potentially, as a political concept of great strength and appeal, enabling 'a better understanding of the politics of growth and the fact that the politicians were using it reflected their greater sensitivity to the great changes occurring in the world' (Gore and Figueiredo, 1997).

Secondly, its emergence has also been linked to the rise of neo-liberal ideology and individualism from the 1970s. More generally, the shift from a poverty discourse to the discourse of social exclusion in the EU has been linked to the rise of neo-liberal ideology and the culture of the individual from the 1970s onwards (Veit-Wilson, 1998; Byrne, 1999; Levitas, 2005; Gough and Eisenschitz, 2006). Gough and Eisenschitz (2006) argue that within neo-liberal political economies, the notion of poverty as 'a misfortune occasioned by the vagaries of the market' has been superseded by the concept of social exclusion understood as detachment from social life in general and the labour market in particular. For these writers, this shift is linked in turn to a critique of universalist welfare state policies portrayed within neo-liberalism as: 'expensive and wasteful, as a disincentive to provide for one's self, as nationally-centrist and dictatorial and as sapping individuals' enterprise and independence and limiting their choice'.

In addition, its popularity may in part be attributable to a belief that the concept of social exclusion offers an original perspective on the social world. Understood as multi-dimensional, it has the potential to provide new insights into the nature, causes and consequences of poverty, deprivation, inequalities and discrimination and give new direction to remedial policies.

As a result of its popularity, the theory and concept of social exclusion though originated in developed countries, have been applied extensively to developing countries. The International Institute for Labour Studies has played a key role in introducing the idea of social exclusion into the developing country debate. The understandings of social exclusion and its



manifestations however, varied according to the socio-economic environment, region and value system. In higher-income countries, "social exclusion" tends to be associated with processes of social disqualification and from economical and social problems that affect urban areas, many of whom have had previously better living conditions. In the definition of UK's Social Exclusion Unit, "*Social exclusion is 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*" (Blair, 1998). By contrast, social exclusion south of the Equator has a significantly different setting. In most areas suffering from social exclusion, its population has never had acceptable living conditions. Therefore, in developing nations, social exclusion has to be measured from the viewpoint of considering what would be a basic standard of living (Sposati, 2000). Establishing the basic standard of life implies defining what needs are considered basic and universal according to a collective ethic of life.

Furthermore, social exclusion in developed countries is mostly directed towards minorities (the poor, immigrants) (Byrne, 2005) while in developing countries it occurs to the majority at the bottom of the social pyramid (see also Sen, 2000; Saith, 2001). Gore and Figueiredo (1997) also observe that the 'exclusion' is very much associated with long-term unemployment, the loss of rights associated with work and the welfare state in industrialised states, whereas 'social exclusion' is very much related to the process of labour market formation in developing states. He further notes that in such "fragile" societies, it is not only closely associated to social rights, but also to the enforcement of civil and political rights.

Notwithstanding its variation in understanding in the context of socio-economics and regions, the concept of social exclusion was judged in the main by the ILLS to be relevant both in developed and developing nations. The analytical potential of the concept was recognised, perhaps most significantly, in a note prepared by the ILLS for the ILO's 1997 Conference on overcoming social exclusion:



*'Social exclusion complements traditional poverty analyses by illuminating the multi-dimensional aspects of deprivation and their interrelationships; the dynamics of social disadvantage; the processes of impoverishment; the role of institutions and rights in generating - or alleviating - deprivation in the process of economic growth' (IILS, 1998).*

There are also major questions of relevance in country contexts and regions where the great majority of a population are living in severe poverty or where there is formalised and deeply entrenched exclusion through apartheid and caste systems for instance. Moreover, at a "Policy Forum on Social Exclusion" organised by the IILS in 1996, and bringing together academics and representatives from governments and international agencies, concerns were raised about the political and ideological implications of the increasing prominence of the concept of social exclusion in development policies:

*'The great danger of the deployment of the notion of social exclusion was that it was being politically used to make "real, nasty, genuine, poverty" invisible as it became hidden under the umbrella of social exclusion... in the immediate post-colonial situations exclusion had been a broad screen, a curtain, which hid problems of desperate destitution... it was important that social exclusion did not become a "blaming label", which was used to make the poor responsible for their predicament, as had happened with the term "underclass" in the USA' (Gore and Figueiredo, 1997).*

However, the limitations of applying a concept developed in the industrialised nations of the northern hemisphere with well developed welfare systems, to nation states with weak governance, minimal welfare provision, largely informal economies and a majority of the population living in extreme poverty, have been pointed out. More generally, the danger that 'exclusion' may be used as a screen to hide extreme poverty and as a blaming label to make the poor responsible for their condition has also been recognised.

### **What is Social Exclusion?**

Despite the increasing use of the term, there is no single universally acceptable definition of social exclusion and the term



is used with a variety of definitions in mind. For some, social exclusion is merely a new way to refer to existing concepts such as poverty or unemployment (Levitas, 1997; Paugam, 1993). On the other hand, a number of commentators have adopted a broader definition centred on a notion of 'integration', rather than a sole concern with the distribution of resources. Hence, there is a considerable debate about the precise meaning of the term social exclusion (Evans, Paugam and Prellis, 1995; Atkinson, 1998; Klasen, 1998). The multiple, often contradictory, connotation and synonyms of exclusion transform it into an "essentially contested concept" in that the proper use of it 'inevitably involves endless disputes (Gallie, 1956). Social exclusion is a "contested idea" (Hills, 2002) and is polysemic (Silver, 1994-6; De Haan, 1997; Sen, 2000; Kabeer, 2000; Peace, 2001; Jackson, 1999; Room, 1999) in that it has many meanings. One European Union document conceded that "it is difficult to come up with a simple definition" (EU Commission, 1992). Similar conclusion has been arrived at the recent review of sociological theories of exclusion where the observers agree on only one point i.e. the impossibility of having a single, simple criterion with which to define exclusion. The numerous surveys and reports on exclusion all reveal the profound helplessness of the expert and responsible officials.

There are, therefore, many definitions of social exclusion by many social scientists. Social scientist Ruth Levitas describes the process of developing an agreed measure of social exclusion as 'an ongoing struggle'. According to Duffy (1995), social exclusion is concerned with the 'inability to participate effectively in economic, social, and cultural life and, in some characteristics, alienation and distance from mainstream society'. Room (1995) has added a new dimension to the discussion by couching the issue of social exclusion in a rights-based language when he defines social exclusion as the 'denial or non-realisation of civil, political, and social rights of citizenship'. The approach of exclusion developed by Room has great affinity with the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen which calls for efforts to ensure that people have equal access to basic capabilities such as the ability to be healthy, well-fed, housed, integrated into the community, participate in



community and public life, and enjoy social bases of self-respect (Sen, 1992; 1999).

A definition of the United Nations Development Programme attempts to include social exclusion in both developed and developing countries. Social exclusion is defined as lack of recognition of basic rights, or where there is recognition, lack of access to political and legal systems necessary to realise the rights (Burchardt, *et al.*, 2002). An European Commission document, 'Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion, Report of 1992' defined social exclusion "in relation to social rights of citizens - to a certain basic standard of living and to participation in the major social and occupational opportunities of the society" (Gore, *et al.*, 1995).

Beall and Piron (2005) offer an abbreviated working definition of social exclusion as 'a process and a state (deriving from exclusionary relationships based on power) that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic and political life and from asserting their rights'. Stewart *et al.* (2006) defines it as a concept 'used to describe a group, or groups, of people who are excluded from the normal activities of their society, in multiple ways'. Both these definitions probably derive from the EU definition of social exclusion in the mid-1990s as a 'process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live' (Laderchi *et al.*, 2003). Beall and Clert (2000) point out that the reason for this wide and less than rigorous application is that "in its colloquial and political usage, the concept of social exclusion has tremendous resonance and is very compelling".

### **Dimensions of Exclusion**

Social exclusion is a multifaceted phenomenon and is considered by many to be both an outcome and a process. It is driven by a complex interplay of demographic, economic, social and behavioural factors, which means that people from certain backgrounds and experiences are disproportionately likely to be socially excluded: "The risks of social exclusion are not evenly shared but concentrated in the poorest individuals and



communities' (ODPM, 2004). Social exclusion processes occur through the interaction of many dimensions which involve social, economic, political, cultural and spatial exclusion as well as lack of access to specific areas such as information, medical provision, housing, policing, security, etc. These dimensions are seen to interrelate and reinforce each other: overall they involve exclusion in what are seen as the 'normal' areas of participation of full citizenship (Percy-Smith, 2000). Burchardt *et al.* (1999) have identified five dimensions of social exclusion in terms of the 'normal activities' in which it is important that citizens participate. These dimensions are as follows:

1. Consumption activity: relates to traditional measures of poverty.
2. Savings activity: includes pensions, savings, home ownership.
3. Production activity: defined in terms of 'engaging in an economically or socially valued activity, such as paid work, education or training, retirement . . . or looking after a family'.
4. Political activity: defined as 'engaging in some collective effort to improve or protect the immediate or wider social or physical environment'.
5. Social activity: defined as 'engaging in significant social interaction with family, or friends, and identifying with a cultural group or community'.

Sen (2000) presents two types of exclusion that are distinguishable depending upon the nature and the context of exclusion. They are active and passive exclusion. Active exclusion, according to Sen, is the fostering of exclusion on some groups from equal opportunity through deliberate means. When, for example, immigrants or refugees are not given a usable political status, it is an active exclusion. Passive exclusion, on the other hand, is explained as the exclusion which results from a set of circumstances. When the deprivation comes about through social processes in which there is no deliberate attempt to exclude, the exclusion can be seen as a passive kind.

Percy-Smith (2000), on the other hand, identifies seven dimensions of social exclusion. These include, economic, social, political, neighbourhood, individual, spatial and group (Table 1.1).



**Table 1.1: Dimensions of Social Exclusion**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Economic	Long-term unemployment Casualisation and job insecurity Workless households
Social	Income poverty Breakdown of traditional households Unwanted teenage pregnancies Homelessness Crime
Political	Disaffected youth Disempowerment Lack of political rights Low registration of voters Low voter turnout Low levels of community activity Alienation/lack of confidence in political processes
Neighbourhood	Social disturbance/disorder Environmental degradation Decaying housing stock Withdrawal of local services Collapse of support networks
Individual	Mental and physical ill health Educational underachievement/low skills Loss of self-esteem/confidence
Spatial	Concentration/marginalization of vulnerable groups
Group	Concentration of above characteristics in particular groups: elderly, disabled, ethnic minorities

Source: Janie Percy-Smith, 2000.

In an economic sense, exclusion refers to the inability to be engaged in gainful employment which yields enough income to satisfy basic requirements. Hence, the economic approach to exclusion is concerned with questions of income and production and access to goods and services (or commodity bundles) from which some people are excluded and others are not. They may be excluded from income and livelihood, from employment and the labour market and from the satisfaction of such basic needs as housing/shelter, health and education (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997).



Among the many indicators, employment is very important in distinguishing economic exclusion from others. Sen (1975) defined the employment concept in terms of three aspects: income, production, and recognition. It was implicitly assumed that employment is a means of alleviating poverty. The economic approach to exclusion seems to cover mainly the first two aspects. The third refers to the idea that 'employment gives a person the recognition of being engaged in something worth his while' (Sen, 1975). The economic dimension of exclusion has a number of different aspects to it that go beyond unemployment. It certainly includes length of unemployment and households in which no working-age adults are in employment, but it also includes other changes affecting the labour market such as casualisation, decreasing job security and fragile attachment to the labour market.

In a social term, exclusion is equal to denigration, the loss of respectability and dignity in one's own eyes, as well as those of others. The social dimension of social exclusion includes the breakdown of traditional households, the rise in the numbers of unwanted teenage pregnancies, homelessness, crime and disaffected youth. Other social dimensions to be considered include participation in decision-making of certain social groups as well as marginalisation of such disadvantaged categories as women and ethnic groups. Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997) outlines three main categories of the social aspects of exclusion: (i) access to social services (such as health and education); (ii) access to the labour market (precariousness of employment as distinct from low pay); and (iii) the opportunity for social participation and its effects on the social fabric (greater crime, juvenile delinquency, homelessness, and so on).

In political sense, exclusion implies a lack of access to sources of power and the inability to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes. This form of exclusion concerns more on the denial of particular human and political rights to certain groups of the population. The UNDP (1992) notes these rights as: personal security, rule of law, freedom of expression, political participation and equality of opportunity. Marshall (1964) has classified these rights into three main categories: civil (freedom of expression, rule of law, or right to justice); political



(right to participate in the exercise of political power); and socio-economic (personal security and equality of opportunity, right to minimum health care and to unemployment benefits, and so on). Hence, an individual may be excluded from having either of these rights because of their immigration status or by not registering to vote or due to inertia, apathy, transience or the wish to evade officialdom. This becomes obvious that the political dimension of exclusion involves the notion that the State, which grants basic rights and civil liberties, is not a neutral agency but a vehicle of the dominant classes in a society. It may, therefore, discriminate between insiders and outsiders and may exclude some social groups and include others (see Rodgers, 1994).

Other forms of political activity include participation in community fora of various kinds such as tenants' organisations, school governing bodies, pressure groups, service user groups, and so on. All of these bodies will have some impact on decision-making and the quality of local life.

The neighbourhood dimension of social exclusion includes the indicators of environmental degradation, a decaying housing stock, the withdrawal of local services (e.g. shops, public transport), increasingly overstretched public services and the collapse of local support networks (related to the political aspects of social exclusion, namely low levels of participation in community and voluntary activities). All these indicators show that neighbourhood dimension of social exclusion is clearly related to both the social and spatial aspects.

Individual dimension of social exclusion includes the different types of problems an individual faces in a day-to-day life. For instance, the increasing levels of physical and mental ill health, educational underachievement and failure to acquire or update skills, and low self-esteem are all indicators of individual dimension of exclusion. Walton's (2000) studies on educational underachievement and low levels of skills, Moran and Simpkins' (2000) on the relationship between health status and social exclusion and Jane Mathieson' *et al.* (2008) on health inequalities are all based on the individual dimension of social exclusion.



Under the spatial dimension of exclusion, the area itself is defined as disadvantaged, irrespective of the characteristics of the individuals who live there, and becomes subject to further exclusionary process (e.g. withdrawal of local services). In this type of dimension, the large numbers of socially excluded individuals scattered throughout the rest of the population become largely invisible. However, social exclusion might also affect localities not because of the concentration of socially excluded individuals and households within the population but because of the nature of the area itself (Percy-Smith, 2000).

According to Percy-Smith (2000), certain groups are at greater risk of social exclusion either because they differ in some way from the dominant population or because of their position within society. The individuals or groups who, to some degree, do not accept the values, norms or lifestyle of mainstream society are more vulnerable if they are also affected by one or more of the other dimensions of social exclusion. Nationality, ethnicity, language and religion are obvious aspects of group difference. Secondly, due to their circumstances, some groups that are discriminated and denied the equal opportunities, are particularly vulnerable. Examples of such groups include elderly people dependent on state benefits, lone parents and young people not in education or training and without a job.

Cultural exclusion is another dimension of social exclusion. For Will Kymlicka, cultural exclusion occurs when the culture of a group, including its language, religion or traditional customs, are denigrated or suppressed by the State. Conversely, cultural inclusion refers to the public recognition, accommodation and support to the culture, language, religion, customs and life styles of a group. According to Rajeev Bhargava (2004), cultural exclusion occurs either when one group in society persistently misrecognises, denigrates, humiliates or suppresses another cultural group or when some members of a cultural group suppress, denigrate or misrecognise members of a sub-culture of their own group. Within cultural aspect of exclusion, comes the religious exclusion. By religion-related exclusion Bhargava mean to broadly cover two forms of exclusions. Firstly, the exclusion of people from the domain of religious liberty and equality which he describes as the exclusion from religion, or more simply, religious exclusion. Secondly, the exclusion of



people from the wider, non-religious domain of liberty and equality (citizenship rights) which he called religion-based exclusion and it occurs when a person's religion or religious identity is seen to be sufficient ground for excluding him/her from the legal, economic and political benefits/rights available more generally.

### **Social Exclusion and Poverty**

The term 'social exclusion' originated in the social policy of the French socialist governments of the 1980s and was used to refer to a disparate group of people living on the margins of society and, in particular, without access to the system of social insurance (Room, 1995; Jordan, 1997; Burchardt *et al.*, 1999). In social sciences literature, there is general agreement on the core features of social exclusion, its principles indicators, and the way it relates to poverty and inequality (Buvinic, 2005). Some writers have commented that the term social exclusion was preferred to the term poverty in European circles because of the difficulties on the part of some member states at that time to apply the term poverty to their own countries (see Lee and Murie, 1999). Indeed the EU poverty programmes which had been in existence since 1974 were brought to an abrupt halt in 1994 when the Council of Europe rejected a new poverty programme. Since then, social exclusion, rather than poverty, has been the main focus of EU's social policy and, furthermore, the approach to social exclusion has, in practice, reflected a more limited concern with labour market exclusion (Geyer, 1999). The concept of social exclusion is collapsed into a concept of poverty, either as social deprivations or else as social processes leading to poverty. Gore and Figueiredo (1997), for instance, in their efforts to resolve how social exclusion should be differentiated from poverty, argue that the former refers to processes of impoverishment, versus categorisations of "the poor". Similarly, Laderchi *et al.* (2003) explicitly treats social exclusion as one of four poverty approaches. Gore (1995) on the other hand clarifies that the early French debates of the 1970s and 1980s did not necessarily equate social exclusion with poverty as such, but with processes of social disintegration. The concept only became more closely equated with poverty in the early



1990s after the European Commission defined social exclusion in relation to a certain basic standard of living, among other factors. Room (1999) also notes that the multi-dimensional, dynamic and community aspects often promoted as the novelties of the social exclusion approach all existed in the “classic” studies on poverty. According to him, the more original element of social exclusion is found in its emphasis on relational issues (inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power), versus the primary emphasis of poverty on distributional issues.

Many authors however are of the view that one can conceive of social exclusion outside poverty. This was mentioned on many occasions in the summary of the ILS debate in Gore and Figueiredo (1997) and in the IDS workshop summarised in O’Brien *et al.* (1997). In both cases, it was recognised that it is possible to be poor and not socially excluded, but also to be socially excluded and not poor, with examples taken from the Indian caste system, or from classic cases of discriminated minority groups specialising in trade and commerce, such as the Chinese in South-east Asia or the Jews in Europe for many centuries. In OECD countries, Atkinson (1998) notes that poverty does not necessarily always go together with social exclusion. Levitas (2006) points out that, even in the UK, paid work may in some cases limit social “inclusion” or that “economic inactivity” does not, in itself, necessarily lead to exclusion from social relations.

Matt Barnes (2005) has attempted to draw distinctions between poverty, deprivation and social exclusion. In his schema (see Table 1.2), and in contrast to poverty and deprivation, the concept of social exclusion ‘evokes a multi-dimensional notion of participation in society, involving a combination of physical, material, relational and societal needs, over a period of time’ (Barnes, 2005). This approach echoes Estivill’s (2003) suggestion that: ‘if poverty is a photograph, exclusion is a film’.

This sharp juxtaposition of poverty and social exclusion is however criticized by many scholars. First of all, the distinction between static poverty and dynamic exclusion may be questioned. Silver (1994) argues that exclusion is not only a dynamic process, but it also points to the outcomes of historical developments. It may, therefore, very well be regarded as a



**Table 1.2: Comparison of Poverty, Deprivation and Social Exclusion**

<i>Poverty</i>	<i>Deprivation</i>	<i>Social Exclusion</i>
One-dimensional	Multi-dimensional	Multi-dimensional
Physical needs	Physical needs Material needs	Physical needs Material needs Societal participation
Distributional	Distributional	Distributional Relational
Static	Static	Dynamic
Individual Household	Individual Household	Individual Household Community

*Source:* Barnes (2005).

static condition, or a state, sometimes referred to as 'being socially excluded' or 'excludedness'. Poverty, on the other hand, can be regarded in a dynamic fashion, as happens in empirical research on the process of becoming poor and terminating periods of poverty (see e.g., Goodin *et al.*, 1999; Jäntti and Danziger, 2000).

Alcock (1991) also uses a wider approach of the poverty concept and tends to regard poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon. At first sight, poverty, thus conceived, may even seem to be synonymous with social exclusion. However, some authors note an essential difference: although deficiencies other than financial shortages are included in the broad definition of poverty, the reason for those deficiencies is mainly financial (see Nolan and Whelan, 1996). In the case of social exclusion, by contrast, there may be other causes than lack of financial means, such as illness, old age, neighbourhood factors, and discrimination. Thus, one might be socially excluded without being financially poor (Burchardt *et al.*, 2002; Uunk and Vrooman, 2001; Saraceno, 2001; see also Abrahamson, 1997; Room, 1997; De Koning and Mosley, 2001).



One can conclude from the above discussion that the concepts of poverty and social exclusion are not synonymous. Social exclusion encompasses more than just poverty, although poverty is frequently an inevitable characteristic of most of the socially excluded. The concept of social exclusion contributes to an understanding of the nature of poverty and helps identify the causes of poverty that may have been otherwise neglected. It also encourages deeper thinking on the subject of social policies for reducing poverty. In contrast to poverty which focuses on individuals or households, social exclusion is primarily concerned with the relationship between the individual and society, and the dynamics of that relationship. Hence, poverty is not necessarily identical to exclusion. People may suffer from deprivation, but if they are not in a position to relate their own circumstances to conditions in which other people live, there is no reason for them to feel excluded.

Referring to this more recent heritage, Levitas (2006) mentions the difficulty in distinguishing social exclusion from poverty in the UK context, which is “sometimes masked by references to ‘poverty and social exclusion’ as an inseparable dyad”. Pantazis *et al.* (2006) also points out that the 1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey for the UK proposed impoverishment as one of four dimensions for measuring social exclusion, alongside labour market exclusion, service exclusion and exclusion from social relations. Levitas (2006) adds that most of the indicators proposed by the EU Social Protection Committee in 2001 relate either to income or to labour-market position, while those that were eventually adopted widen the scope to include deprivations in education, housing and health. Notably, all these attempts at quantification include notions of poverty (income and multidimensional) in their operational definitions. In a workshop convened by the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex in 1997, de Haan thought that, despite its overlap with the concept of poverty, the concept of social exclusion could be useful because it focused on processes and because it was multidimensional in nature. However, he was doubtful whether these aspects made it different from poverty, particularly in light of recent debates on poverty that were concerned with similar types of issues. The distinction is



only clear if one adopts a narrow view of poverty (cited in O'Brien *et al.*, 1997). Saith (2001) makes a similar point and, in order to avoid a relabeling of poverty studies, she emphasises the processual theme of social exclusion. Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997) argue that "social exclusion overlaps with poverty broadly defined, but goes beyond it by explicitly embracing the relational as well as distributional aspects of poverty".

Some attempts have been made to avoid explicitly associating social exclusion with poverty, although these nonetheless tend to use an idea of norms to situate exclusion within a social context. For instance, Beall and Piron (2005) offer a working definition of social exclusion as "a process and a state (deriving from exclusionary relationships based on power) that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic and political life and from asserting their rights". Stewart *et al.* (2006) define it as a concept "used to describe a group, or groups, of people who are excluded from the normal activities of their society, in multiple ways". Both these definitions are probably influenced by the EU definition of social exclusion in the mid-1990s as a "process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live" (cited in Laderchi *et al.*, 2003).

### **Contextualising Social Exclusion in India**

In India, the process of social exclusion is not a new phenomenon and is particularly visible given that the country has traditionally been characterised as a heterogeneous society with diverse culture, religion, caste and unequal distribution of income. There are many small ethnic groups quite heterogeneous, with households of different income levels living side by side and sharing the same public space. This heterogeneity provided a social difference between individuals of different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The presence of various ethnic groups without stable employment or educational attainment and better opportunities for social mobility are in most disadvantageous and vulnerable position. Further, compounding the country's inequality, some social groups and individuals are more likely to remain stuck in poverty. A significant number of



extremely poor people with low education levels remain at the bottom of the income distribution, largely untouched by economic development. Poverty has become increasingly concentrated among populations with specific characteristics: indigenous people; children and youth and the unemployed; people employed in agriculture or rural areas; and people employed in the informal sector. Hence, in the Indian context, exclusion revolves around institutions that discriminate, isolate, shame and deprive subordinate groups on the basis of identities like caste, religion and gender (Thorat and Newman, 2007). Unlike in West, in contemporary Indian society, four different bases of social exclusion can be identified. The first is the caste-based social exclusion under which groups, identified as 'low' caste in the hierarchy of Hindu society have been placed at disadvantaged social, economic and political position through ages. Second is the cultural and spatial isolation under which certain ethnic groups (tribes) kept away from the mainstream and thus got socially excluded from many important spheres of the modern Indian economy. Thirdly, the religious exclusion of certain groups including women who have been excluded from the domain of religious liberty and freedom. Finally, the universally observed case of gender-based discrimination and exclusion.

### **Caste-based Exclusion**

Caste-based exclusion is a ubiquitous feature of the Indian society. The Hindu caste system in India and Nepal, as well as caste-like identities in Pakistan, "exclude lowest caste groups from ownership of land and key productive assets and assign them to various forms of labour and services which are considered to be menial, degrading and dirty" (Kabeer, 2006). Historically, the caste system has regulated the social and economic life of the people in India. A caste system is a type of social condition that divides people on the basis of inherited social status and occupation. Shah *et al.* (2006) argue that each caste had a specific place in the hierarchy of social status. The caste system, also known as the Brahmanical system, has regulated the life of the people of India over centuries, in which the organisational scheme is based on the division of people



into endogamous caste groups and the civil, economic, political and religious rights of each individual caste are ascribed inequality by birth and made hereditary. This system has resulted to the forced exclusion of one caste from the rights of other castes in all sphere of life (Thorat, 2008). Furthermore, 'The caste system prevents common activity and by preventing common activity it has prevented the Hindu from becoming a society with a unified life..... The caste system is infested with the spirit of isolation, and in fact, it makes isolation of one caste from another a matter of virtue' (Ambedkar, 1936). Caste system, according to Ambedkar, denies not only the right to existential dignity to the Bahujans and relegates them a subhuman existence but also denies their right to identity. Both B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Jotirao Phule who launched the movement of social revolution called it the Brahmanical ideology which conceived the caste system a 'ideology of exclusion' that moulds a social order based on inequality where no two castes are equal and the divided castes are made to oppose each other.

The rigid caste system in India, therefore, is the root cause and very source of social exclusion. Social hierarchy based on caste system exhibits social discrimination and inequality. As a result, the dalits, untouchables and downtrodden communities were considered to be at the bottom of the Hindu social hierarchy and were not a part of the four-fold 'varna system' comprising Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. They were denied equality before law, equal protection of law and equal opportunities. This apart, the practice of untouchability denied vast multitude of the population access to the very basic human life and also denied the civil and political rights and opportunities for economic mobility.

### **Ethnicity and Social Exclusion**

Ethnicity is another form of group identity which has served as a basis of social exclusion across the world. Race and ethnicity have been identified as 'an important dimension of social cleavage along which processes of social exclusion run throughout Europe' (Cars *et al.*, 1998). In the Indian context also, social exclusion follows largely ethnic lines in the region. The indigenous ethnic group that comes closer to the dalits in



terms of exclusion and deprivation are by no means homogenous. Furthermore, the basis of tribal isolation and exclusion is not caste or religion but ethnicity. They suffer from isolation, neglect and exclusion, which cause considerable deprivation and poverty among them (Thorat, 2006a). Unlike caste, the tribes are identified on the basis of certain criteria such as primitive traits, distinct culture, geographical isolation and general backwardness. However, the terms 'scheduled caste' and 'scheduled tribe' are nowhere defined in the Constitution of India. They comprise within them more than four hundred castes and tribes respectively, with large cultural heterogeneity (Singh, 1993; Singh, 1994). This group can make up significant proportions of the population in the country. As per the 2011 Census, the tribal population in India is estimated to be 104.3 million, i.e., 8.6 per cent of the total population of India, classified under 461 different communities. 'Indigenous' ethnic minorities are mostly located in hilly and forest, and difficult geographical areas. They are largely concentrated in the remote, usually upland and mountainous areas of the central and north-eastern parts of the country with poor access to services and with little infrastructure. Many of them are still nomadic or semi-nomadic in their way of life and practised jhum cultivation at high altitudes. For this reason, and also due to years of neglect and exploitation at the hands of the government and other citizens, the Human Development Indicators (HDI) of India's *Adivasi* population are much lower than the HDI of the rest of the population in terms of all parameters (literacy, infant mortality, etc). Poverty is also very high among tribal populations. Studies by Thorat (2006b) show that poverty is highest among the tribals in rural areas despite better access to agricultural land. According to Sen (2000), it is 'active and passive exclusion' affected by development policies of the states and other agents causing land alienation and displacement.

### **Religion and Social Exclusion**

Religion is an integral part of culture. Walter Burkert (1996) opined that there has never been a society without religion. The religion has codified customs into binding source books that predate the whole concept of gender equality and have both legal and the institutional structures to enforce their



principles. The different monotheistic religious (Judaism, Christianity, Islam or Hinduism) norms impose patriarchal regimes that disadvantage women. The story of gender in traditionalist cultures and religions is that of the domination of women by men, of women's exclusion from public power and of their subjection to patriarchal power within family (Raday, 2003). Women have been excluded from the hierarchies of canonical power and subjected to male domination within the family. Hence, under most of the monotheistic religious norms, women are not entitled to equality in inheritance, guardianship, custody of children, or division of matrimonial property. Further, in most of the branches of the monotheistic religions, women are not eligible for religious office, and in some, they are limited in their freedom to participate in public life, whether political and economic (Raday, 2003). Today, the use of culture and religion to deny women rights is a global phenomenon rather than specific to one religion. Women are generally excluded from several practices of their own religion. For example, Islam does not permit women to offer prayers in mosques. There are no known women archbishops, Imams or pujaris. Islam, in its most widely practiced forms, has maintained and asserted the validity of all its patriarchal religious norms, including polygamy, the recognition of the husband as the head of the family, unequal inheritance, denial of eligibility for religious office, and in many cases, restrictions of participation in public life. Muslim contexts provide a highly significant example of the power dynamics that actively disempower women because of the growing influence of political Islamists claiming that religion itself legitimizes - even demands - the disempowerment of women.

In Hinduism, there are restrictions on women participation in religious rituals at the time of menstruation. Entry to temples is similarly restricted because their very capacity to menstruate makes their bodies impure for this entire period. In medieval Christendom, ordinary, lay persons had access to God only via the Clergy. Even potentially, salvation was not, therefore, available to everyone (Bhargava, 2004). Further, some segments of Christianity have retained rules that disadvantage women, mandating obedience of a wife to her



husband, denying eligibility for religious office, and prohibiting contraception and abortion. This is evident from above-mentioned facts that women's rights have been denied by using culture and religion and women find themselves disadvantaged and marginalised.

### **Gender based Exclusion**

Gender-based exclusion and discrimination is found to be a common phenomenon across the globe. Gender is a widespread basis of social discrimination, the intersection of gender inequality and economic deprivation means that women from poor household represent a particular category of the multiple-disadvantaged. Women and girls face gender discrimination at every stage of their life, starting even before they are born. Women belonging to socially excluded groups face greater challenges. In Indian society, women experience structural exclusion in societies that perceive them as inferior and subordinate to men. Majority of women and girls are at a disadvantage to men and boys in relation to literacy, education, earnings and employment. The imposition of inhuman practices and restrictions like widow burning, enforced widowhood, child marriage has been the means by which social exclusion of women has been maintained. Social exclusion and inequalities are embedded in and structured by Brahmanism in India. Some argued that Brahmanical world view is grounded on the understanding that inequalities are a natural phenomenon. The woman who is considered naturally inferior is bound to suffer exclusion from social, political, economic and religious realms. This totalitarian exclusion relegated women to a subhuman existence (Pradgna, 2010). The brahmanical ideology imposes stringent restrictions on women because purity of women is central to Indian patriarchy, as purity of caste is contingent upon it (Nanda, 2006).

The tribal and *dalit* women suffer from endemic gender and caste discrimination, violence and exploitation and their situation constitutes an extreme case of active exclusion. Pervasive violence against tribal and *dalit* women in India is the core result of gender-based inequalities. They suffered from various forms of violence which include physical assault, verbal



abuse, sexual harassment and assault, rape, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, kidnapping and abduction, forced incarceration and medical negligence regarding female foeticide and infanticide, child sexual abuse and domestic violence from family members. This apart, a disproportionate number of women experience relative poverty in India. The unequal possession of power and ownership of resources result in a greater risk of poverty among women. Women are also more likely to have experienced poverty at some time in their lives (Payne and Pantaziz, 1997), and to suffer recurrent and longer poverty spells (Ruspini, 1998; 2001; DWP, 2003). The UNDP in its reports revealed that in both North and South, poverty all too often wears a female face (UNDP, 1995; 1997). The evidence from the EU and the US also shows that, to varying degrees and with the clearest exception of Sweden, women face a greater risk of poverty than men (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2003; Daly and Rake, 2003). Hence, the majority of women experience poverty in both developing and developed countries alike. Women are overrepresented among people living in poverty and suffer from exclusion from basic education, landownership and employment.

The incidence of poverty among women is further aggravated by the unfriendliness of Indian labour market. Women constitute almost one half of the population, but less than one-third of the workforce. Three-fourths of the women workers are in agriculture which is generally low-productivity and low income sector. Only a small percentage of women

**Table 1.3: Work Participation Rates by Sex: 1991 and 2001 (in per cent)**

<i>Census Year</i>	<i>T/R/U</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Persons</i>
1991	Total	22.27	51.61	37.50
	Rural	26.79	52.58	40.09
	Urban	9.19	48.92	30.16
2001	Total	25.63	51.68	39.10
	Rural	30.79	52.11	41.75
	Urban	11.88	50.60	32.25

*Source:* Modified from the Report of the Working Group on Empowerment of Women, Planning Commission, Government of India, 2007-2012.



workers are in better paying modern sectors of the Indian economy. In public sector, which provides secure and better paid jobs with social security benefits, only 16 per cent of its employees are women. In the organised sector as a whole - both public and private together - only 20 per cent of workers are women. Only 11 per cent of women workers as against 19 per cent of men have regular jobs (Papola and Sahu, 2012). This gender discrimination present in the labour market contributed to low economic participation of women. According to the

**Table 1.4: Gender and Social Exclusion Indicators**

<i>Gender Related Indicators</i>		<i>2011</i>
1.	Gender Inequality Index (GII)	0.617
2.	GII Rank out of 146	129
		1996 2006
3.	Gender Related Development Index (GDI)	0.514 0.590
4.	Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)	0.416 0.497
		2000 2010
5.	Rate of Cognizable crimes against women (per cent)	14.1 18
		2004-06 2007-09
6.	Maternal Mortality Ratio (Per 1,00,000 live births)	254 212
		2011
7.	Male Literacy rate	82.14
8.	Female Literacy rate	65.46
9.	Gender Gap in Literacy	16.68
10.	Proportion of seats held by women in Parliament (per cent)	10.7

*Sources:* Human Development Report 2011, UNDP (No. 1-2);

Gendering Human Development Indices: Recasting GDI and GEM for India 2009, Ministry of Women and Child Development, GoI and UNDP (No. 3-4);

Crime in India 2000 and 2010, Ministry of Home Affairs, GoI (No. 5); Special Bulletin on Maternal Mortality in India 2007-09, SRS, June 2011 (No. 6);

Census 2001 and Census 2011, Provisional Population Totals Paper 1 of 2011 India series1, Registrar General of India (No. 7-9);

Human Development Report 2011 and Human Development Report 2000, UNDP (No. 10)



estimates of Censuses and NSSO, the women's workforce participation in India is very low as compared to men.

An estimate of the 2001 Census shows that the work participation rate for women was 25.63 per cent in 2001, which is an improvement from 22.27 per cent in 1991. In 2001, work participation rate for women in rural areas was 30.79 per cent as compared to 11.88 per cent in the urban areas (see Table 1.3). In the rural areas, women are mainly involved as cultivators and agricultural labourers while in the urban areas, almost 80 per cent of women workers are working in the unorganised sectors like household industries, petty trades and services, buildings and construction. The NSSO figures, unlike the Census figures provide a more complex picture. It indicates a decline in work participation rates for women between 1993-94 and 1999-2000 from 28.6 per cent to 25.9 per cent. There was an increase again in 2004-05 to 28.7 per cent, and in recent years, there has been a marginal but steady increase in work participation (Sunny, 2007; NCEUS, 2009).

Despite the fact that women face discrimination in many areas of life, improvements is seen in gender-based human development indices, with GDI and GEM showing little improvement from 0.514 to 0.590 and 0.416 to 0.497 respectively. However, crimes committed against women have increased over time. Maternal mortality in India is reported to be 212 per 100,000 live births. This can partly be explained by the widespread poverty and limited health services available for much of the population. In addition to this, educational exclusion is most pronounced among the poorest children, and especially girls. There are large gaps in literacy rate and level of education between male and female. High drop out in school, poor quality of education, discrimination in education, are some of the educational problems faced by girl child. In 2011 (latest census year for which data are available), literacy rate of females was 65.46 per cent compared to 82.14 per cent of males. There was thus a gender gap of 16.68 per cent in literacy. Women have also been excluded from political power and participation in democracies. There are at present only 10.7 per cent of seats in Parliament that are held by women.



**Overview of Chapters**

This book is intended to provide a broad understanding of social exclusion/inclusion and women in India through a multidisciplinary approach. The opening chapter by Raghunath Ghosh has dealt at length the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion with special reference to women. The author provides a historical understanding of exclusion and inclusion of women in Indian society by citing the example from Manusmriti and other scriptures. Ghosh suggests that the problems of the women can be realised and solved by the women themselves if they are given an opportunity. In order to prevent the women-related evils including their exclusion from the society, women alone should come forward, initiate a leading part and restore their glorious cultural identity. It is possible if they are given constitutional powers.

In her contribution, Gangotri Chakraborty introduces jurisprudential discussion on social exclusion. The concept of social exclusion has the advantage of situating individuals in a social and relational context and the experience of exclusion due to the reasons of poverty, caste, race, gender, etc., is almost universal. According to her, the rapid social and economic changes associated with information age and globalisation have exacerbated and fostered new forms of social exclusion. That, in the society, individuals are continuously in motion either solitary or in community, is evident from the various form of unsettlement, such as geographic mobility, social mobility, economic mobility, political mobility and marital mobility. She concludes that remedies to social exclusion is to provide sufficient levels of capabilities, which in turn, is justice in transition.

Shelly Parul Bhadwal in her essay claims that patriarchal ideology always keeps the women under subjugation and domination. According to her, patriarchy has ever since used it as a tool to hegemonize women in all walks of life. Even in the instances of praise for women, it is the patriarchal order that remains the covert beneficiary. Women, though are professed to be considered as 'Devi', 'Durga', and 'Lakshmi', but their exploitation and exclusion in the name of tradition and culture continue to persist rampantly. Hence, women on the one hand



are given a high pedestal within the social framework by associating them with divinity, while on the other hand, it is this very divinity through which women are exiled indoors. They are turned into objects of worship, and at the same time, the household is demarcated as their field of action. In this way, the social exclusion and inclusion of women takes place as a simultaneous event.

Upasana Mahanta and Samrat Sinha in their paper highlighted the problem of conflict induced widowhood in India with reference to the state of Manipur. Women and girls are affected by armed violence in different ways, including direct and indirect conflict violence, and lethal and non-lethal conflict violence. However, like most conflict situations, gendered violence is systematic but typically overshadowed by attention to 'harder' security matters. One of the serious fallouts of the proliferation of armed conflicts, and the high levels of military and civilian casualties, is a large increase in the number of widows in many countries. Widowhood can affect the physical safety, identity and mobility of women and children. It can also affect their access to basic goods and services necessary for survival, and their rights to inheritance, land and property, in addition to the wider impact it has on the community. The problem of conflict induced widowhood in the case of Manipur is an extremely serious one. This is primarily because of an absence of precise or reliable estimates as to the number of persons who have been widowed as a consequence of the long standing armed conflict in the state.

Sandip Ghatak in his essay portrays the situation of tribal community and their exclusion in the Bankura district of West Bengal. The tribal population in our country is excluded from the developmental process which is reflected in respect to a number of development related indicators. The incidence of poverty is very high among the tribes, majority of whom are landless, unemployed and illiterate. As a whole, ST community is excluded from the enjoyment of some of their basic human rights as a human being.

Priyanka Nandi in her paper explores the theories of social exclusion and ideas about development/social progress briefly, in the contexts of political history, variables and hierarchies of power and modernity. She also examines the attempted



translation of these ideas into action in India, paying special attention to the confrontations between theory and stereotypical constructs about the developing world, and the diversity of indigenous ideologies on the ground.

Deepika Rose Alex discusses the lives and struggles of Dalit Women as the members of Dalit communities, the most excluded groups in Indian society, as per the caste hierarchy. Her paper explores the experiences of oppression a group of Dalit women activists faces in their relationship with Dalit men, in families and Dalit organisations. The paper asserts that oppressions and negotiation that happens in relationships between Dalit men and women need to be understood in the light of dominant gender ideology, and as an inevitable outcome of intersectional oppression of caste, gender and class. The paper discusses the dominant gender ideology of Kerala, division of spaces as private and public, confining women to the private sphere, which has permeated the Dalit culture gradually.

Kaustav Chakraborty in his paper tries to depict the marginalised reality along with the attempt of historicizing their exclusion in India. Taking the help of Indian Classical Literature, the author also tries to investigate the authenticity of the tag of 'western vice' that is often attached with these women of alternative orientations. The narration has also documented the Indian Queer Movement aiming at the inclusion of these subjugated women. Finally, the paper is an endeavor to retell the academic world, these lesbian tales; and listening to this voice with a difference, as Carol Gilligan believes, will transform the patriarchal world: "To have a voice is to be human".

Mainstream Hindi films cannot present women revolting against patriarchal society because of what Noam Chomsky describes as the function of media in manufacturing consent. Popular films are a consensus between the filmmaker and audience expectation, it is an agreement between people who finance a film and their expectation of recovering that money by entertaining an audience without offending their 'sensibilities'. This includes their individual understanding of the position held by women in families and extended social groupings. It is in this backdrop, Pallav Mukhopadhyay in his chapter tried to investigate the portrayal of women in recent



Bollywood Hindi films and also tries to enquire the status of women in recent mainstream Hindi films in the first decade of the 21st century.

Women, though constitute half of the population, are politically marginalised world over. They are although increasingly active in community support systems, yet gender disparities persist in public positions at all levels: global, national, regional and local. Women are, therefore, continued to be under-represented in formal decision-making structures. As the full participation of women is a prerequisite for governance that is truly democratic, hence there is a need to make special provisions to include women in the democratic governance at different levels. Decentralisation and local governance are frequently presented as good and beneficial for women. It includes women in the democratic governance at different levels. Drawing on the experience of decentralisation reforms in India, which is invariably considered as an example of good practice in advancing gender equity in governance, Durga P Chhetri in his essay explores the hitherto under-researched relationship between decentralisation and social inclusion. More specifically, the author examines the impact of decentralisation reforms on, and how this relationship in turn promotes social inclusion of, women at the grass roots politics.

The chapter written by Pawan Gurung highlights some of the problems faced by the religious minorities in India. This also deals on the role of police in communal violence in the context of minority community in India. The genesis of this problem and the contemporary issues are also discussed which will help the reader to understand the problem of communalism critically in India.

The book ends with an essay by Anil Rajak on the Empowerment of Women through Inclusive Governance.

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## **Social Ex(in)clusion and Women: An Indian Perspective**

*Raghunath Ghosh*

The present essay has dealt at length the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion with special reference to women. In our tradition, and also in modern times, there are many evidences which show due respect and honour to the women, the sign of their social inclusion. In present times, we are well-acquainted with the concept of eco-feminism which is deserved to be mentioned here. Eco-feminism is the social movement that regards the oppression of women and nature as interconnected. It is one of the few movements and analyses that actually connect two movements. More recently, eco-feminist theorists have extended their analyses to consider the interconnections between sexism, the domination of nature (including animals), and also racism and social inequalities. Consequently, it is now better understood as a movement working against the interconnected oppressions of gender, race, class and nature. Nature and women are taken as equally honourable, adorable and inevitable for survival, which proves the social inclusion of women as well as nature. The following reference from the Atharvaveda may be taken as an example of eco-feminism in our tradition as the Earth has been considered as our Mother.



The status of Mother, among the women relations, is so near and dear to us that we do not think her as excluded from the family.

Ms. Marina L, while doing the readings on the land, said that she was struck by imagery that could have just as easily been used to describe woman. For example, when Thoreau spoke of "cutting down the forest and all large trees, simply deform the landscape, and make it tamer and cheap" (qtd. Nash 37), images of woman reconfiguring her body to conform to a "Madison Avenue" ideal through regiments of diet and exercise were called to mind. When George Perkins Marsh disparagingly used the metaphor "womb" (Nash 41) to say that "(man) is not born of her (land) (qtd. Nash), but lower forms of life are," the ideas of misogynist Greek philosophers were recalled. Then, when Swain (Nash 120) talked about *grazers still abusing and exploiting the unregulated public domain*, the connection between woman and the land was again felt, from the perspective of a female raised within the framework of Western culture. Repeatedly, I kept feeling that these authors and still others could have been describing woman just as easily as the land. That mental connection caused me to wonder whether the relationship between woman and the land went deeper. Hence society's treatment of the land is necessarily indicative of how it treats woman, which ultimately proves her value in a society.<sup>1</sup>

The Prthivi Sukta of the Atharaveda echoed the same theory of inclusion among men where it is prayed to Mother Earth to strengthen all in the earth to have a secular outlook. It is said: Oh, Mother Earth, give us as your children the ability to mix harmoniously without any discrimination, may we speak sweetly with one another'. The original *mantra* runs as follows: "*Ta nah prajah buhatam samagra vaco madhu Prthivi dehi mahyam*".<sup>2</sup>

This sense of alienation makes a man 'self-centred' or 'narrow' which closes the door of inclusive idea. If a man thinks that he is not isolated or alienated, he starts looking 'others' as his 'own'. This sense of 'owning' generates the feeling of patriotism, nationalism, fellow-feeling, sacrifice, etc. If these feelings are developed, he will not see 'others' as excluded from



'himself' leading to the cessation of desire of exploitation, desire of usurping other people's properties, sexual exploitation, hatred etc. ('*Yadaitamanupaśyatyātmanam devamañjasā/ Īśānam bhūtabhav-yasya na tato vijugupsate*')<sup>3</sup> It is deeply felt by Swami Vivekananda while concentrating on the initial *mantra* of *Īsopaniṣad*- '*Īśāvāsyamidam sarvam yat kiñca jagatyām jagat / Tena tyaktena bhunjithah mā grdha kasya-sviddhanam*'.<sup>4</sup> That is, whatever remains in this world is covered by the Self. Hence, one should enjoy through renunciation without being greedy towards others properties. The first line of the *mantra* is the premise and hence the second line follows from the realisation of the first one. If a man does not have the sense of 'owning', he cannot grasp the sense of inherent significance of inherent inclusion in tradition leading him to the path of exclusion resulting in human being's exploitation as well as environment's exploitation. Vivekananda, being inspired by the above-mentioned *mantra*, realized such inclusion among human beings and hence he could declare it with courage : "Forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayantī; forget not that the God thou worshpest is the great Ascetic of ascetics, the all-renouncing Sankara, the Lord of Uma, forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's alter; ...forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers." (IV.479-80)<sup>5</sup>

Kazi Nazrul Islam, a famous poet in Bengal had realised such inclusion among all human beings and hence he has been able to raise his voice against the man-made bad practices in the name of caste and creed ('*Jater name bajjati*').

The sense of inclusion is also found in another poem – '*Kandari Hunsiyar*' where he has drawn our attention to consider humanity alone, not caste or creed, as the need of hour. When a man is in danger one should not consider his caste, creed, etc., but humanity alone (*Hindu na muslim oi jijnāse kon jan / Kāndāri balo dubiche mānuṣ santān mor mār*). Candidasa, a Vaisnava poet, is also of the opinion that humanity is over and above everything (*Śunoha mānuṣ bhāi, sabār upare mānuṣ satya tār*



*upare nāi*). If someone neglects the touch of human being, he indirectly hates and lies his own personal God (*'Mānuṣer paraśera thekāyia dūre ghrṇā kariyācho tumi prāṇer thākure'*)

Rabindranath has shown social exclusion in various manners in his dance drama Candalika and ultimately he has concluded that such exclusion is man-made and socio-logically imposed. The curd-seller refuses to sell his curd to Candalika, a girl belonging to an untouchable class. The same thing happens with other vendors like bangle-seller, etc. It has pained Candalika due to her alienation from main current of the society, which makes her feel that she belongs to downtrodden and untouchable class. She always feels pain to remember the words of her friends addressed to the curd-seller who is completely unaware of the fact of her belonging to an untouchable class. The words go like this – *'Chunyo na chunyo nā chih, se ye Candālinīr jhi, naṣṭa habe je doi se kathā jāno na ki ?* That is, don't touch her, because she is a daughter of Candāla. Are you unaware of the fact that your whole amount of curd would be spoiled if you are come in contact with this lady?

This discrimination has made her isolated, depressed and socially outcast or alienated called *bratya*. This sense of depression has been expressed by her dissociation with household work and non-cooperation with her mother as expressed in – *'kāj nei kāj nei mā kāj nei mor ghar kannāi.'* (That is, O Mother, there is no point in performing house-hold works).

At the end of the dance-drama, Rabindranath has brought the sense of inclusion among all men without having any man-made exclusive principles like caste, untouchability, etc., bringing an episode of Ānanda, a Buddhist monk, whose thirst was quenched with the water provided by the same untouchable girl, Candalika, who was initially reluctant in offering water to a Buddhist monk (*tomare debo jal hena punyera nahi adhikarini ami je candalakanya*). At last, the monk has substantiated the fact that she belongs to human class, not to any particular caste and creed. The monk has brought her in main current of the society after conferring her honour of humanity (*manaver samman*). It is rightly pointed out by Ānanda that she is after all a human being and the blood of a human being is flowing through her veins. Hence, she should not blame herself as



belonging to the race of Candāla (*Tini bale gelen amai nijere ninda koro na, manaver vamsa tomar manaver rakta tomar nadite*). The property of being Candāla is a socially imposed phenomenon having no actual reality in it and hence there is reason for her exclusion.

Ultimately, Ānanda has brought out the bond of thread of all human beings which may otherwise be called a thread of inclusion. Ānanda has told the girl that he himself belongs to the human race which she herself belongs to. (*ye manava ami sei manava tumi kanya*). The Buddhists in general believes that an object is stated to be real, if it is momentary and has got causal efficacy which are followed from two premises : *'yat sat tat kṣaṇikam'* and *'arthakriyākāritvalakṣaṇam sat'* (i.e. 'whatever is real is momentary' and 'an entity is taken to be existent, if it can fulfill some purpose-oriented action'). Ānanda has brought these theories and told Candālikā that the causal efficacy of water lies on the fact of quenching thirst of a thirsty person. If it can perform this job, it can be taken as sacred as water belonging to auspicious places (*sei bāri tīrthabāri yā tṛpta kare tṛṣitere*). The first point of inclusion is that Ānanda and Candālikā belong to the same human race. The second point is that any object capable fulfilling the need of a needy person is to be taken as a glorified sacred auspicious object without considering the source or owner of the object. If 'candalatva' ('the property of being a *Candāla*') is imposed on the dense cloud spread over the sky in the month of *Śrāvaṇa*, would it be treated as *Candāla* and its water as impure? (*Srāvaner kālo ye megh tāre yadi nām dāo candāla, ta bole ki jāt ghucive tār, asuci habe ki tār jal*). This honour of humanity conferred to Candālikā is a transformation from exclusion to inclusion, which is considered as a 'new birth' (*'natun janma'*). It is achieved by virtue of being included in the main stream of human race through the instrumentality of quenching thirst of the monk. (*'E natun janma natun janma natun janma amār, amāke dilen sahasā mānuser tṛṣṇā meṭāno sammān'*). Through proper inclusion Candālikā starts thinking herself as fortunate as a flower. Just as a flower is intrinsically auspicious as it is used in the service of God, Candālikā also thinks herself pious as she has been utilised in the service of quenching thirst of a monk. So far she was



excluded from the society and not allowed to serve others, which she considers as a social isolation or exclusion (*phul bale dhanya ami dhanya ami matir pare, devata, ogo tomar seva ammre tare ... nai dhuli mor antare*).<sup>6</sup> Rabindranath has highlighted, strengthened and developed the ethics of secularism with the spread of Buddhism that denounced social distinction between man and man, man and woman, etc. The key features of Buddhism were equality of all men irrespective of sex, language or religion, compassion (karuna) for all beings, liberation and humanity which may be taken as seeds of social inclusion.

We come across certain advertisements in the electronic and print media to highlight that all are equal – no one is superior or inferior, in so far as his/her work is concerned. When a near or dear one is in need of blood, he is given the same after collecting from other persons whose identity is not known to us. Do we really consider which class or caste the donor of blood belongs to? If not, why should we consider caste, creed, etc., in other spheres of life? Some of our modern thinkers like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath, and others have duly recognised and highlighted the equal status of men and philosophical justifications behind it. Now time has come to make others convinced regarding the views of modern thinkers about the status of men and their social position so that not a single man feels socially excluded or alienated from the main current of the society. For having a broader social inclusion, we need the change of our mindset regarding the status of women, labours and the so called down-trodden people. It has been stated by Manu that a society cannot prosper if women are not given due honour. To him gods rejoice in that society where women are worshipped (*yatra nāryastu pūjyante ramante tatra devatāh*)<sup>7</sup>.

Now such women are looked upon as commodities and treated as instruments of a man's enjoyment. We neglect the women-labours by describing them as '*kajer lok*' ('a woman assisting in domestic work'), 'prostitutes', etc. These derogatory ascriptions to women make them socially excluded, which is undesirable. The idol of '*Ardhanarīśvara*' ('half-woman and half-man') which is a part of Hindue religious beliefs signifies the highest form of inclusion – it states that a man is basically a



combination of 'man and woman'. The image suggests that a man is not complete, but half, and hence his second better is filled up by 'female'. In other traditions and also in West, the 'second-half' or 'female-half' is metaphorically described as 'better' in comparison to the first as evidenced by the word '*ardhangini*'. The term 'better' is used only to show the inevitability of this half for being a 'complete man'. So, a man's body comprises of a woman at least by half which is the paradigm case of inclusion. If this idea is nourished, the exclusion of women from men, the evil practices of witch-killing, abductions, trafficking, and the like can easily be removed. Lastly, it may be concluded that the phenomenon of social exclusion is the result of our non-education (*asikṣā*) or mal-education (*kuṣikṣā*). Our education system should have such openings where there may be a scope for teaching basic principles of moral education like, equality among men from economic, racial and social standpoints, the glorification of the deeds alone, but not of the doers. Normally, those who perform duties of sweeping, cultivating, labours, etc. are neglected in the society and thereby they are excluded. If the deeds are alone glorified in our society, there will exist no room for undermining the persons performing these jobs. In our tradition, the performance of action is called 'worshipping to God' (*karmai pūja*) and the persons performing actions are called worshippers of God giving no scope for underestimating them, which may be taken as a seed of social inclusion.

It is believed in Indian culture that the Divine Energy (*Sakti*) is manifested as the Ultimate female power in Hindu cosmology. She creates, destroys and exhibits a fierce power over all the creation. In no way the position of women was inferior in our tradition which is evidenced from the episodes of the learned women like Gargi and Maitreyi, great mathematicians like, Leelavati, and the experts of comprehensive system of medicine and surgery like Dhanvantari, etc. Considering all these, the general and most honourable term to address a lady is Devi, i.e., goddess.

It is a pity that in modern times, women have lost their glorious cultural identity and has to suffer for various reasons



such as due to the over-dominance of the males or their ego-problem and many other such traits. Still, women continue to be tortured as evidenced from the reports of bride-burning, witch-killing, among many others. Many woman-related cases like rape, sexual harassment, trafficking, etc., are reported often in the newspapers. It is pathetic and disheartening indeed that a woman is burnt alive considering her as a witch. I do not know how utopian ideas like, witch, etc., have occupied the rational faculty of a modern human being. No sensible man, I think, can commit such a heinous act towards another human being in this age of science and technology. It is also very interesting that we do not get the masculine form of the word 'witch'. From this, it is presumed that if any evil spirit at all exists, it is found among the women alone. This is an invention of the superstitious male leaders alone of our society.

Today, women have been considered as commodities or the objects of enjoyment, which is evidenced from the fact of their trafficking to other places. In many instances if one comes to know that the foetus in the womb is a girl child, one does not hesitate to kill it, being unaware of the darker side of such incidents. If these things are allowed to happen or encouraged, it will surely lead to the depletion of female population. It is a matter of great concern that, in Rajasthan and Punjab, still the sex ratio is much less than other parts of the country. If this practice is allowed to continue, it will be pernicious for the mankind as it will considerably reduce the population of females due to their skewed numbers.

Now the time has come to appreciate the problems of the women which, I believe, can be realized and solved by the women themselves if they are given an opportunity. In order to prevent the women-related evils, including their exclusion from the society, women should boldly come forward, initiate a leading part and restore their glorious cultural identity. It is possible if they are given constitutional power, much of the ills plaguing them can be solved. Our country has already started reservation of women representatives in the public policy-making bodies like Panchayats, Assemblies, etc., after considering the question of their empowerment. Fortunately, now we find a considerable number of ladies as administrators, police officers, judges, pilots



and soldiers. If they are encouraged with endowment of legitimate power, they can perform in a better way being free from male-chauvinism. Before considering their security in other domains, they should be provided psychological security so that they are boosted up with their full potential.

Can all-round development of our society be possible without the empowerment of women? Women have got their own ability and power, which needs an outlet of exposure. A nation should look into the matter seriously and create a situation so that they can exert their power administratively and constitutionally. Hence, they should be included in the main stream of the society.

It has already been said that through counselling and sensitization programmes, common people are made aware of certain facts like sanitation issues, ill effects of superstitions, bride-burning, dowry-system, witch-killing, etc. All the social evils including women-related ones can easily be removed through these.

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