



## Social Exclusion: Issues and Concerns

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**Abstract:** Social exclusion is a menace of democracies the world over. Social exclusion denotes that denials of rights, opportunities in the social relations, social customs etc. in which a great majority of people in society engage. There is no agreed definition regarding social exclusion. Scholars of social exclusion believe that social exclusion varies in different national contexts and also from the sociological paradigm. In reality, we have seen that social exclusion subverts the collectiveness and integration. In other words, it encourages social distance, marginalization and inadequate integration. At the same time social exclusion hampers democracy and development. It is noteworthy that social exclusion negates inclusive arrangements of democracy as well as reflects inadequate social cohesion or integration. Though, the term 'social exclusion' emerged in West in 1960s, identified 'poor' as excluded segments of society. Later on, social exclusion describes a new social problems arising after post economic growth. Generally, social exclusion denotes poverty and unemployment in Europe. Social exclusion is a multidimensional concept: encompassing social, economic, political and cultural dimensions and acts at different social levels. Social exclusion can be reflected in various aspects of democracies like citizenship, rights, representation etc. Social exclusion has been receiving increasing attention by policy makers and social scientists from the 1990s. The major reason is that social exclusion is perceived in all democratic societies at different levels.

At this outset, this paper tries to explore various emerging roots of social exclusion and how it strategically operates in the inclusive realm of democracies world over.

**Key words: democracy; social exclusion; rights, representation; inclusive.**

Social exclusion is considered a malaise of democracies the world over. Simply, social exclusion is the denial of access to the kinds of social relations, social customs and activities in which a great majority of people in society engage. Social exclusion occurs in terms of class, caste, ethnicity, gender and so on. Social exclusion does not seem to land itself a particular definition. Some approaches emphasize exclusion from opportunities while others conceive of exclusion as social distance, marginalization and inadequate integration [www.philia.Ca/files/pdf/SocialInclusion.pdf](http://www.philia.Ca/files/pdf/SocialInclusion.pdf) (accessed on 4th August, 2011). At the same time social exclusion hampers democracy and development. It is argued that democracy poses inclusionary arrangements of socio-political order. Thus, at the societal level, this reflects inadequate social cohesion or integration. At individual level, exclusion refers to the denial to participate normatively in expected social activities.

Though the term social exclusion has French origin and academics started to make vague reference to the poor as 'les exclus' (the excluded) in the 1960s later on, the term was used in Europe to describe new social problems arising after post economic growth(Hilary1994)in[www.socialinclusion.org.np/.../Social\\_Exclusion\\_and\\_Solidarity\\_by\\_Hillary\\_SILVER\\_1336541445c29W.pdf](http://www.socialinclusion.org.np/.../Social_Exclusion_and_Solidarity_by_Hillary_SILVER_1336541445c29W.pdf) (accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2013).

Generally, social exclusion identifies poverty and unemployment in Europe. But social exclusion is multidimensional; encompassing social, economic, political, cultural dimensions and operations at different social levels. Citizenship is a democratic concept. But the socially excluded has increasingly been identified with those whom citizenship have either not been actualized or denied. Viewing to citizenship T. H. Marshal(1992) concedes that citizenship is "a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community". However, in a democracy, people expect that it brings collective decision making bodies that govern them. But in reality, democracy sustains only procedural democracy rather than substantive forms. Thus, representation has faced a major challenge from democracy. The privileged class wields the real power while the marginalized sections remain far behind the decision making process. "Although political elites must in some minimal sense be responsive to voters on this view, democracy is not fundamentally about representation, it is about selling a product - governmental output - in exchange for votes (Shapiro and Hacker 1999).

In reality, democracy often opposed its principles. Equality is the one of the cardinal principle of democracy which has been subverted by the privileged class. Multiculturalism is often used as a management tool to combat the exclusion or deprivation. But Gurpreet Mahajan (2002) has been of the view that multiculturalism is not just an assertion of tolerance, nor is it, for that matter, a celebration of eclecticism of tastes. Multiculturalism speaks of equality of cultures and argues that in a democracy, all cultural communities must be entitled to equal status in the public domain. That is, fair treatment as a citizen must have equal right; it is not and must not be dependent upon the largesse or benevolence of the majority community (Mahajan 2002: 3). She further is of the view that multiculturalism reflects upon the status of different cultural communities within a policy. Multiculturalism responds to the issue of cultural discrimination by privileging the goal of protecting minority cultures. Based on the understanding that policies of cultural assimilation and homogenization render minority cultures unviable it aims to make these marginalized communities and cultures seek ways of how they can flourish within the nation state(Mahajan 2002: 53)

Multiculturalism upholds empowering democracy that is what is deepening democracy. To John Gaventa, deepening is a process through which citizen's exercise ever- deepening control over decisions which affect their lives and as such it is also constantly under construction. ([www.justassociates.org/.../Gaventa\\_Deepening\\_theDeepening\\_Democracy\\_debate.pdf](http://www.justassociates.org/.../Gaventa_Deepening_theDeepening_Democracy_debate.pdf) (accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2011).

However in reality, women have been under-represented in democratic decision making bodies. 'Reservation' or 'quota' is just treated as women's presence by default in political

In this backdrop, this paper explores to the issues relating to democracy and exclusion in the light of institutional canvass.

### **Social Exclusion and Democracy**

Social exclusion remains a vital issue of importance to democracy. Social exclusion is still a menace of all societies. Social exclusion is multidimensional in nature, social exclusion often manifests itself in several violent forms such as communalism and communal riots, class wars, ethnic conflicts, secessionist violence and so on. Globalization also adds to the problem of social exclusion by creating new forms of deprivation and discrimination among impoverished sections.

Social exclusion has been receiving increasing attention by social scientist and policy makers from the 1990s. The major reason is that social exclusion is perceived in all democratic societies at different levels. But the pertinent question is why does democracy exclude? Historically speaking, the citizens of certain Greek city states enjoyed rights while the rest of them were excluded from the mainstream of society. It is stated that citizenship is a democratic concept. Earlier, citizenship involved a set of duties rather than rights. As Simon Hornblower (1992) observes:

“severe rules governed the definition of the citizen elite itself. The Athenian democracy was one of the most participatory of all time—if one focuses on the powers and privileges of those were included in its operations. But the total of those excluded was large. We have met most of them already; slaves, women, subject-allies in the two periods of naval hegemony, metics. There are degrees of exclusion, and exceptions were made for occasional privileged groups.”

By comparison, Aristotelian concept of citizenship is a status which enjoyed by a privileged few. He excluded women and old as citizens since they were lacked the deliberative faculty and the leisure to understand the working of politics.

As Cynthia Farar (1992) articulated, “Aristotle's exclusion of the 'necessary and the useful' from the life of the best polis or the best man is both a reflection of fourth century developments in the condition of the city state and a rejection of the implications of those developments”.

It is noteworthy that the Aristotelian concept of citizenship exhibited that not only slaves were excluded but also wealthy aliens such as merchants, bankers and mercenaries were not part of the city state. Thus, the Aristotelian has been that citizenship was a privileged status to be inherited. Aristotelian notion on democracy is the least democratic in nature which provides unequal treatment to the poor. Even the poor people were far away from govern. He ranks democracies in terms of the 'natural classification of their inhabitants' (Rackham 1977). Thus, social exclusion and democracy go hand to hand. In other words, instead of inclusionary strategy, exclusion became a strong rationale of democracy at the very earlier stage. In the much acclaimed direct democracy, in ancient Greek city states the slaves were completely excluded, the plebeians were grudgingly included and only the patricians were fully included in the decision making process(Oommen 2010).

By contrast, Rome developed a pragmatic, flexible and legalistic notion of citizenship. Roman citizenship explores virtue - the willingness to serve one's state. Service to state meant military rather than judicial and political service. Social exclusion reflects in terms of class, caste, and ethnicity and so on. Paradoxically, democracy has institutionalized exclusion through these various means instead of inclusion. Existing exclusionary practices have given instability which hampers integration and development in democracy.

However, Alex de Tocqueville, the exponent of democracy, considered political equality in democracy may bring about social transformation in a society bound by cultural norms, inequalities and hierarchies (Bradley 1963).

Tom Bottomore opined that the pursuit of social equality, 'an insatiable passion' in democratic communities according to Tocqueville, may come into conflict with the liberty of individuals'' (Bhattacharyya et. al 2010). He further criticized Marx and argued that democracy is dominated by bourgeoisie while full participation of all members of society is limited (Bottomore 1994). So, it can be said that democracy breeds class society.

Social exclusion due to ethnic differences is a common practice across the globe. The main cause lies in that democracy fails to accommodate the ethnic groups in the socio-political process. Existing exclusionary practices, ethnic groups often raised their voice for rights. In this context, Danielle Benrick has been of the view that democracy has institutionalized exclusion arguing the case of the Batwas- the ethnic minority in post genocide Rwanda in ([http://www.democracy\\_identity\\_and\\_the\\_genocide\\_rwanda\\_thecase\\_of\\_batwa\\_3.pdf](http://www.democracy_identity_and_the_genocide_rwanda_thecase_of_batwa_3.pdf)(accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2011). He further pointed out that their relative lack of representation in decision making bodies and increased impoverishment through dispossession, the Batwa have attempted to organize themselves into groups to attract funding and lobby the government for recognition of their status as indigenous peoples. ([http://www.democracy\\_identity\\_and\\_the\\_genocide\\_rwanda\\_thecase\\_of\\_batwa\\_3.pdf](http://www.democracy_identity_and_the_genocide_rwanda_thecase_of_batwa_3.pdf)(accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2011).

Apart from that gender exclusion has predominated in democracies the world over. Generally, women have been less represented in major decision making process of democracy. Robert Dahl

emphasizes that since the 1980s, there has been a large number of countries that have adopted democracy on the basis of either male or universal suffrage (Bhattacharyya et.al 2010).

However, since the inception of democracy, it has coexisted with varied forms of exclusions within it. Democracy must be sustained with more and more inclusion. Robert Dahl has identified 'inclusion' as the fifth democratic standard, yet the dilemma between exclusion and inclusion persist in every corner of democracy (Dahl 2001).

Hannah Pitkin introduces her concept 'standing for' or descriptive representation which is nothing but physical presence of representatives in the process of decision making. Women could not express their view in democratic decision making

institutions. It is either formal inclusion or informal exclusion. Hannah Pitkin lamented that “thus representation is one thing, and governing another” (Pitkin 1967). However, the existing writings of feminist scholars have made the importance on women’s under-representation in democracy. Democracy does not include women in real sense. As Susan Mandus observes, “for feminists, democracy is not something which, as a matter unfortunate fact, has failed to deliver on its promise to women”. Thus, democracy does not protect the rights towards women. In other words, three hundred years of democratization have failed to sustain women’s equality in society. The governing principle of ‘inclusion’ in democracy is not always opposite to exclusion. Sometimes inclusion is considered as coercive assimilation or subordination. In reality, social categories are systematically excluded from democracy. Social exclusion thus has been institutionalized.

### **Social Exclusion: Definition in various contexts**

A proper understanding of social exclusion entails the necessity of tracing the roots of social exclusion and in this regard scholars are not unanimous regarding the notions of social exclusion.

However, there are two types of notions one enunciated by the French policy milieu and the other by the European Union.

**The French policy milieu:** In the French policy milieu, for at least a decade prior to the European Union Poverty programmes, ‘exclusion social’ had been a term used to refer to a very select set of categories of people who were excluded from the provision of social insurance in France According to Hilary Silver, in 1974 Rene Lenoir , identified ten categories or groups who came under the ‘uninsured’ umbrella. These were the physically and mentally handicapped, those who were ‘suicidal’, aged invalids, abused children, substance abusers, delinquents single parents, multi-problem households, ‘marginals’, asocials, and ‘social misfits’ (Silver 1995).

### **The European Union Context**

The European Union stressed the importance of ‘poverty’, and ‘unemployment’. The shift in European Union social policy entailed a shift from a focus on ‘poverty’ to focus on ‘social exclusion’ and has attracted a great deal of commentary, especially since the mid 1990s.

However, the concept of social exclusion has been defined by scholars, both Western and Indian. As G. Room (1992) articulates a new dimension to the discussion by couching the issues of social exclusion “in a right-based language, which defined social exclusion in relation to the social rights of citizens, to a basic standard of living and to participation in the major social and occupational opportunities of the society”.

It can thus be seen that it has great affinity with the capability approaches developed by Amartya Sen which calls for greater effort to ensure that people have equal access to basic capabilities such as the ability to be healthy, well-fed, honored, integrated into community, participate in community and public life and enjoy social bases of self respect.

Hilary Silver observes social exclusion through various lenses. She opined that the concept is often conflated with new poverty and inequality, discrimination and the underclass and it is associated with a variety of terms like superfluity, irrelevance, marginality, foreignness, alterity, closure, disaffiliation, dispossession, deprivation and destitution.

Thus, Hilary Silver's interpretations of the concept of social exclusion have differed greatly and there may have been more conceptual critique than empirical applications of the concept. Silver elaborates three paradigms of social exclusion and calls these the solidarity, specialization and monopoly paradigms (Silver 1995). In the 'solidarity paradigm', dominant in France, exclusion is the rupture of a social bond between the individual and society that is cultural and moral. A 'specialization paradigm', dominant in the US, is determined by individual liberalism. According to liberal-individualistic theories, individuals are able to move across boundaries of social differentiation and economic division of labour and emphasize the contractual exchange of rights and obligations. A 'monopoly paradigm' is influential in Britain and many Northern European countries and views the social order as coercive, imposed through hierarchical power relations.

In contrast, Ruth Levitas (2005) is primarily concerned to illuminate how ideological underpinnings for concepts of social exclusion change over time and how these are translated into different policies or action. R. Levitas identifies three different social exclusion discourses in the UK such as RED, MUD, SID. The redistributionist discourse (RED), emphasizes poverty as a prime cause of social exclusion. The moral underclass discourse (MUD) emphasizes cultural rather than material explanations of poverty. The social integration discourse (SID) sees social inclusion and exclusion primarily in terms of labour market attachment.

It is noteworthy that exclusion varies from one society to another. But gender, ethnicity, poverty, unemployment are some of the common issues relating to social deprivation in recent years. Globalization poses some challenges of exclusion. In this context, Marshall Wolfe,(1995) in his article, 'Globalization and Social Exclusion: Some Paradoxes,' identified the following issues of social exclusion:

1. Exclusion from livelihood: It is to some extent different between peasant societies and corporate industrial societies.
2. Exclusion from social services, welfare and security networks which have been monitored by governments earlier. But later, the minimal role of state subverts all kinds welfare activities for citizen, affecting the marginalized sections.
3. Exclusion from political choice is practiced in democracy where people are guided by dominant groups, ideologies, culture and norms.
4. Exclusion from understanding what is happening which means no one can express anything due to lack of information regarding scientific technological, economic, political, cultural, demographic, environmental and other transformations of the world today.

Social exclusion still a problem in all societies in the era of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Social exclusion has been broadly defined as the process through which individuals and groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in society within which they live. Social exclusion hampers social cohesive development and integrity. As Bhattacharyya et al (2010) observe that democracy is not successful if it is not inclusionary. By contrast, social inclusion is empowering and participatory, incorporating various kinds of affirmative measures designed to remove deprivations and discrimination.

It is noteworthy that problem is acute in post colonial countries through deep - rooted social and cultural processes which serve to act differently to exclusion most importantly in the economic and political spheres.

But the difficulty of defining exclusion arises from the fact that it is interpreted by different authors from different viewpoints. Thus the term 'social exclusion' is expansive and multidimensional that it can be defined in many different ways. So for a boarder understanding of the concept of exclusion, the insight into the societal process and institutions of exclusion are as important as the outcome in terms of deprivation of certain groups. Amartya Sen therefore refers to various meanings and manifestations of social exclusion, particularly with respect to the causes or the processes of discrimination and deprivation in a given society. Distinction is drawn between the situation where some people are being out (or at least left out), and where some people are being included (may even be forcibly included) at greatly unfavourable terms, and described these two situations as "unfavourable exclusion" and "unfavorable inclusion". Unfavorable inclusion, with unequal treatment may carry the same adverse effects as "unfavourable exclusion". Sen also differentiated between "active exclusion and passive exclusion". He defined "active exclusion" as the deliberate exclusion of people from opportunity through government policy or other means."Passive exclusion", as defined by Sen, works through the social process in nevertheless, may result in exclusion from a set of circumstances. He further elaborated that poverty is the main cause of capability deprivation. (: [www.abd.org/Documents/Books/Social\\_Exclusion/Social\\_exclusion.pdf](http://www.abd.org/Documents/Books/Social_Exclusion/Social_exclusion.pdf)),(accessed on 25 th August, 2011).

V.Subramanyam and K Sekhar (2010) argue that social exclusion is a process by which individuals or households experience deprivation either of resources or of social links to the wider community or society.

On the contrary, Deepa Narayan(1999) is of the view that exclusion is a norm and process that prevent certain groups from equal and effective participation in the social, economic, cultural and political lives of societies . On the whole asymmetries of power are observed resulting to the exclusion of certain groups and individuals. Thus, social exclusion creates disintegration in society. Hilary listed various reasons of social exclusion in her article of edited books of Rodger,G. Gore,C. and Figueiredo,J.B.(eds ), *Social Exclusion : Rhetoric, Reality, Responses* (1995) as follows:

“If rather referred to a process of social disintegration in the sense of a progressive rupture of the relationship between the individual and society, which was occurring due to increasing long term unemployment, particularly focused on unskilled, the inability of young people to enter the labor market, greater to enter the labor market ,greater family instability and isolated single member households, increasing members of homeless people, and rising tensions and low periodic violence in the low cost housing entitlements on the periphery of cities (banlieues )”.

The term social exclusion is ambiguous and multidimensional in many different ways. Rajesh Patanaik (2010) held that view that social exclusion as of now is, at least at the definition level being advocated as a multidimensional concept that attempts to highlight the process of exclusion of an individual, ethnic group, community or any other identifiable entity of the larger society.

However, P. D. Satya Pal (2010) found two important factors involved in this process or social exclusion which are: i) a institutions governing social relations that cause exclusion and ii) denial of equal rights in several spheres of life.

Thus, the multiple disadvantages affecting excluded groups of people could be discrimination, internalization of inferiority, cultural devaluation and so on. Exclusion process can have profound effects on the sense of self worth of the members of these groups. However, Bradley (1994) identifies five mechanisms in order of increasing severity: geography, entry barriers, corruption, intimidation and physical violence. Naila Kabeer (2000) adheres to the belief that “social exclusion is more than economic phenomenon”.

### **Social Exclusion: As a State Strategy**

The previous discussion directs us to the question of state strategy for combating social exclusion. Social exclusion relates to the alienation of certain people within a society. It is also connected to a person’s social class, educational status, religions, gender, and living standards etc and how these might affect access to various opportunities. These opportunities are often determined by the state machinery itself by creating discriminatory situation of society.

By contrast, democracies have introduced different affirmative discrimination measures for inclusion of hitherto excluded sectors such as women and other minorities. But the strategies have not been always able to preserve the rights of the marginalized section in democracy.

Social exclusion is often practiced by minority when majority is marginalized. As Bhattacharyya et.al (2010) cited Hutus by the Tutsi in Burundi in Africa, where Hutus, the minority, dominates over the Tutsi Burundi in Africa.

Garry Rodgers (1995) argue that an individual may be excluded from the labor market, or indeed from a country club but this is not the point, it is rather that societies and economies systematically marginalize some and integrate others, and distribute rewards in ways which both include and exclude.

It is to noted that in reality, the state may play the role of an umpire, controlling the exclusion of one group by another, on the one hand, and adjusting different groups stay in their place and work together on the other.

However, social exclusion is highly compelling because it speaks the language of the victimized to give voice and expression to the way in which they experience globalization, the way in which they gone through market forces as well as under the purview of liberal democracies.

### Conclusion

Social exclusion is the denial of opportunities to some groups in a society because it excluded some people from others in the democracy. Social exclusion has denied equality before law, equal opportunities and equal protection of the law. Thus, social exclusion is a source of violence and violation of human rights. It leads to riots, protests movements etc which dismantle socio-political cohesion of democracy in society. It is to be noted that existing writings of social exclusion may disturb the feeling of national solidarity and achieve the goal of common good or welfare. In the Indian context, SC, ST, Women are worst victims of social exclusion. Various inclusive policies have not been able to protect their interests in various aspects of lives. Moreover, social exclusion has also opened up avenues for movements for self-determination which led to identity formation and assertion among them.

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