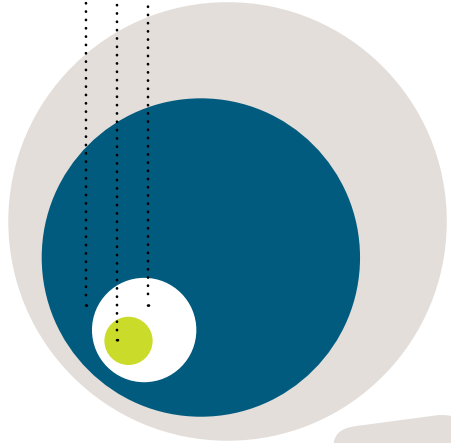


Globalization

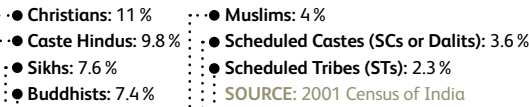
TERTIARY ENROLMENTS (TOTAL)

- US: 72.6 %
 - India: 10.5 %
 - Weighted World Average: 23.8 %
- SOURCE: UNESCO



and Exclusion: The Indian Context By P. Radhakrishnan

DEGREE HOLDERS (20–24 AGE COHORT, BY SOCIAL CATEGORY)



SOURCE: 2001 Census of India

WHILE GLOBALIZATION is a recent phenomenon, social exclusion is both historical and contemporary. Therefore, in order to place globalization in perspective and understand its impact on persistent social exclusions and how it also results in new forms of exclusion, it is important to understand the so-called exclusion debate both in general and in the Indian context.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Social exclusion is used here to mean the systematic exclusion of individuals and groups from one or more dimensions of society, such as structures of power and privilege, opportunities and resources.

Exclusion discourse in Europe has generally been concerned with social problems in the labor market thrown up by economic restructuring. It is this economic restructuring, and the resultant social transformation, that dismantled social bonds and support systems, undermined democracy and condemned large numbers of people to life in urban slums and collapsing rural communities, according to Noam Chomsky.

Social exclusion in India cannot be captured by the Euro-centric approach and its labor market framework. The exclusion discourse in Indian society has to be understood against the backdrop of the caste system.

Caste, traditional India's system of social ordering and control, is the most elaborate form of social stratification ever known. It has dominated the Indian sub-continent for about three millennia, and is also the most exhaustive and obnoxious of all exclusionary systems.

Caste-exclusions are explicit in traditional society. Membership and status are determined by birth; there is a hierarchy of social precedence among the castes; there are restrictions on social and cultural intercourse between castes; castes

The concept of social exclusion in India dates back more than three millennia, enforced by the Hindu caste system. Modern India, though, now faces a fresh challenge to its efforts to stamp out institutionalized social exclusion.

India sociologist P. Radhakrishnan explains how globalization is reinforcing some of the worst of India's social problems.

Protest Movements Against the Caste System Throughout History



6BC

Buddhism and Jainism arise in opposition to Brahmanism, and the supremacy and socio-cultural hegemony of the Brahmins and related caste prejudices.

are segregated and stratified with regard to civil and religious privileges; occupations are caste determined with relatively little choice allowed; restrictions on marriage outside one's sub-caste help maintain the system. (Ghurye, 1979: Chapter 1).

Caste exclusions are writ large in the *Manusmriti*, or Laws of Manu, the fundamental work of Hindu law. It defines the duties and occupations ordained for the four chief castes, or *Varnas*. In its "dos" and "don'ts" it describes the treatment of women, mixed-castes and castes of "low origin," of which the most despised are Chandalas, the lowest untouchables. The rules are most glaring in the practice of untouchability, and the treatment of certain castes as "unapproachable" and "unseeable."

As the structure of exclusion in India is very old, and still persists in different forms, at least three strands of exclusion discourse can be discerned, all directed against the discriminatory, oppressive, exploitative and exclusionary practices of the caste system (For an overview of this discourse, see Milton Singer and Bernard Cohn, 1968).

The first are the protest movements that have been a feature of caste society since the sixth century B.C., when Buddhism and Jainism arose in opposition to Brahminism and the supremacy and socio-cultural hegemony of the Brahmins and related caste prejudices.

The Bhakti movements in different parts of the country throughout the Middle Ages, and Veerasaivism in twelfth century Karnataka challenged the established hierarchy of caste in the name of social equality. The Brahmo Samaj founded by Rammohun Roy in Calcutta in 1828 repudiated caste, and established a brotherhood of men irrespective of caste or creed. The Satya Shodak Samaj, or society of truth-seekers, was founded by Jotiba Phule in Poona in 1873 and blamed the Hindu religion for social inequality, and the Brahmins for fabricating "sacred scriptures" to maintain their social dominance; the

movement, which is still alive, asserted the worth of man irrespective of caste.

The Hindu reform movement Arya Samaj was founded by Dayananda Saraswati in Bombay in 1875 and seeks to remove birth as the basis of hierarchy. It promoted inter-caste marriages, and encouraged admitting untouchables into mainstream society. Sri Narayana Guru, who was active in Kerala as a socio-religious reformer for four decades beginning in the 1890s, attacked the caste system, especially the supremacy of Brahmins, who had denied low caste Hindus the right to participate in Brahminic Hinduism. He exhorted his followers to reject differences based on caste and to work for the abolition of the caste system.

B.R. Ambedkar, who described the caste system as a gradation of castes forming an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt, advocated its outright annihilation. The political culture built by Ambedkar in articulating the socio-political rights of the untouchables culminated in the Constitutional provisions for formal equality to all and special dispensation (affirmative action) to the historically disadvantaged, in particular the Constitutionally recognized Scheduled Castes (SC), otherwise known as Dalits, and Scheduled Tribes (ST).

Second, beginning in the early 19th century, caste came under severe attack by Christian missionaries like William Ward and Abbe Dubois, especially in the context of discrimination against lower castes and women. Ward (1822, Vol.1: 143-44) criticized the caste institution as one of the greatest scourges of Indian society, dooming 90 percent of the people even before birth to a state of mental and physical degradation. Both Ward and Dubois deplored the servitude of women, and their exclusion from learning. In one context Ward observed: "Like all other attempts to cramp the human intellect, and forcibly to restrain men within bounds which nature scorns to keep, this

SOCIAL CASTES BASED ON THE VARNAS



system, however specious in theory, has operated like the Chinese national shoe; it has rendered the whole nation cripples.” (*Op. Cit.* 64)

Third, from the second half of the 19th century the British administration also showed concern about various forms of exclusion in Indian society. This was mainly in the context of Brahmin dominance, Muslim alienation and the social isolation and backwardness of the lower castes and tribes. As a result, British educational and employment policies came to be characterized by concessions, communal representation and patronage politics.

Since the 1950s, social exclusion in India has assumed a wider connotation, and discourse on it has had greater significance in political rhetoric, and among academics, more recently in writings on women, Dalits and other deprived groups.

Exclusion discourse also gained new meaning in the 1990s with Prime Minister V. P. Singh’s decision to implement the Mandal Commission report, which sought to increase affirmative action programs for the disadvantaged. The discourse now covers a wide range including emancipation politics, national justice and the empowerment of women and backward classes.

THE EXCLUDED SOCIAL GROUPS

Those historically excluded in Indian society are broadly several social groups subsumed under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories, the lower strata of caste-Hindus, women, Muslims and some Christians. Until the Constitution came into force in 1950, exclusion was enforced primarily by the traditional caste-based social order. This practice was legally abolished in the 1950s, though it still persists socially.

The Constitution is, prima facie, anti-discriminatory, anti-exclusionary, anti-exploitative and anti-oppressive. It strikes at the roots of traditional caste and community-based prejudices, hierarchies and inequalities, and provides for legal remedies to reshape social patterns. Effective implementation of its provisions over the last six decades should have ushered in an inclusive, egalitarian society devoid of privileged high castes, despised low castes, entrenched backwardness and exclusionary practices. This has not happened.

EXCLUSION AND GLOBALIZATION

While social exclusion is an extreme form of vulnerability, it is also both a cause and consequence

of it. Even as India struggles to grapple with this problem, the impact of globalization has made it worse. The globalization behemoth has added new dimensions to the vulnerability of India's downtrodden by exacerbating their social exclusion, and making large segments of other social groups also vulnerable and excluded.

But before turning to these issues, it is necessary to place globalization in perspective.

One way of understanding globalization is from its etymology. As globalization is "going global" and many things over the centuries have "gone global," it is pertinent to ask in the context of the ongoing globalization discourse, (a) *what has gone global*, (b) *how it has gone global*, (c) *why it has gone global*, and (d) *why it has been causing so much commotion, concern and consternation*.

The answer to *what has gone global* is, as political scientist James Kurth (1999) would have it, that the United States — the sole superpower, "high-technology economy" and "universal nation" — has been leading the drive for globalization.

On *how it has gone global*, more from Kurth:

"It [the US] has done so by systematically pressing to remove any national barriers to the free movement of capital, goods and services. It has done so through the great international, now global, financial institutions, especially the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. And it has done so because it has the political, economic and military power to get its way. The triumphalist United States, which has reached the heights of being the sole superpower at the culmination of the "American Century" and at the end of the modern era, now seeks to lead the world into the globalized economy and the post-modern era."

The answer to *why it has gone global* is partly evident from the above passage, but, as will be shown later, it is not the economy alone that is globalizing.

As for *why it has been causing so much commotion, concern and consternation* — it is because unlike the earlier processes, the present one is a gargantuan juggernaut. On this, more from Kurth:

"Globalization is often described as a process: steadily progressing over time, pervasively

Caste, India's traditional system of social ordering and control, is the most elaborate form of social stratification ever known.

spreading over space and clearly inevitable in its development. But globalization is also a revolution, one of the most profound revolutions the world has ever known. Indeed, globalization is the first truly world revolution.

All revolutions disrupt the traditions and customs of a people. Indeed, they threaten a people's very security, safety and even identity. The world revolution that is globalization in some measure threatens the security of every people on the globe." (Emphasis added.)

It is only to be expected that the impact of such disruption and threat exacerbates the conditions of groups that are already excluded, vulnerable and are at the margins of society. This observation is particularly valid in the Indian context.

FEATURES OF GLOBALIZATION

Despite the accelerated pace of knowledge production under globalization, the nature of these changes and the nature of the related transformations in social and economic relations have not been understood adequately in their complexity and diversity, since many facets of globalization have only begun to unfold. However, it is possible to discern some of its features. These include: increasing economic and market capitalism and economic and market integration at a global level; increasing free global movement of capital, goods and services by removing national barriers, with the IMF, World Bank and WTO as its key



1200AD

Veerasaivism in Karnataka challenges the established hierarchy of caste in the name of social equality.

instruments; the rise of the knowledge-technology revolution; and the need for countries to be knowledge-driven and market-driven to compete and survive in the new global scenario.

MARKET DISCIPLINE VS. NANNY STATE

All said, globalization is not global integration that breaks barriers among nations by turning the world into a “global village.” On the contrary, it is an insidious agenda for perpetrating the hegemony of one country over the whole world, by force and fraud.

In an interview with the Indian weekly, *Outlook* (January 3, 2000), Noam Chomsky observed:

“The consensus of the rich and powerful is that the weak and defenseless should be subjected to market discipline, while the rich and powerful should continue to shelter under the wings of the nanny state ... The global consensus is achieving its aims of enriching small sectors, dismantling social bonds and social support systems, and undermining democracy — one of the chief goals and consequences, of liberalizing capital flow... disposable people are being removed from society, either left in deteriorating urban slums and collapsing rural communities or sent to prison. Though crime rates have been declining, incarceration has sharply increased, targeting the poor and minorities by various devices, primarily, a ‘drug war’ that’s recognized to be utterly fraudulent by serious criminologists, a consequence of a deliberate social policy designed to remove the superfluous population. Other industrial societies are proceeding along similar paths, though in different ways.”

MARKET CAPITALISM

No matter how one perceives globalization, it is pervasive and brings under its sweep everything indispensable to individuals and societies. It covers culture, consumerism, economy, education, entertainment, media, natural resources, politics, productive forces, religion, society, state and what have you, with the market, knowledge and technology as driving forces.

As globalization necessarily entails the fast-paced development of material and human re-

sources, those developing countries that do not chant the globalization mantra are bound to be left behind by the developed countries. India is one such country.

THE INDIAN CONTEXT

Only a liberalized state can shape and sustain a liberalized economy in keeping with the needs of a growing democracy. The state, by creating and sustaining institutions that strive for equality, social justice and fairness, can cushion the shocks of social dislocation arising from a liberalized economy. But the Indian state has not brought about the required liberalization nor the needed structural transformation.

In the absence of the state liberalizing its activities in vital social areas, economic liberalization has wrought havoc on India’s economy and society. Having now been overrun by the newfangled capitalism of the liberalized economy, practically every state sector is devastated.

If technology, the market and knowledge are seen as the drivers of globalization, India lacks all of them. Indian technology is way behind that of developed countries, and its development is confined to certain regions. The Indian market, whether for labor or commodities, is neither free, fair, nor participatory, as most traditionally excluded groups and many others are not equipped to participate. The state of India’s knowledge industry is not any better.

EXCLUSION IN GLOBALIZING INDIA

Exclusion in the Indian context is complex, widespread and multi-layered. It may be the result of a lack of social and economic opportunity, as in the case of the urban poor, denial of legitimate social space thus causing social segregation and ghettoization, as in the case of the lower castes, or social insecurity, as in the case of Muslims. Of these, the plight of the urban poor and the lower


 1828

The Brahma Samaj is founded by Rammohun Roy in Calcutta, and repudiates caste, and establishes a brotherhood of men irrespective of caste or creed.

castes is well known. The plight of Muslims was elaborated in the 2008 Sachar Committee report. (Government of India, 2006: 14-15).

There are a great many manifestations of these new types of exclusion:

Displacement: Exclusion may be the result of social uprooting by the state, as has been happening to tribal peoples due to development projects, special economic zones and displacement from traditional occupations caused by economic liberalization (read globalization). While such exclusion is not new, the “development project” as part of the globalization mission has accelerated the processes involved. The Sachar Committee dwelt at length on this in the context of economic liberalization and livelihoods (see Government of India, 2006: 21; also Radhakrishnan 2008).

Fragmented labor: Exclusion may also be the result of the disappearance of well-organized industrial structures. Multinational corporations and their compradors in globalization have dismantled and replaced much local industry with business process outsourcing. In the process they have fragmented industrial labor and weakened the organizational ability and bargaining power of the working class.

Educational deprivation: Exclusion also results from denial of access to education and employment, as in traditional Indian society, or lack of access to the education system and occupational structures for various reasons, especially the state’s failure to provide free or affordable education and generate adequate employment opportunities in contemporary India. Whether in the traditional sense, in the context of globalization, or both, the need for universal higher education is a social imperative.

In its *Overview*, the report of the 1997-99 Task Force on Higher Education in Developing Countries concluded that without more and better higher education, developing countries will

As globalization necessarily entails the fast-paced development of material and human resources, those developing countries that do not chant the globalization mantra are bound to be left behind by the developed countries. India is one such country.

find it increasingly difficult to benefit from the global knowledge-based economy. This report, *Perils and Promise: Higher Education in Developing Countries*, published in 2000, was prepared by the Task Force on Higher Education in Developing Countries, convened by the World Bank and UNESCO. The Task Force brought together experts from 13 countries to explore the future of higher education in the developing world.

India’s gross enrollment for tertiary education is only 9 percent to 11 percent, which is way be-

1873

The Satya Shodak Samaj, or society of truth-seekers, is founded by Jotiba Phule in Poona. It blames Hindu religion for social inequality, and Brahmins for fabricating "sacred scriptures" to maintain social dominance.

1875

The Hindu reform movement Arya Samaj is founded by Dayananda Saraswati in Bombay and seeks to remove birth as the basis of hierarchy.

Early 1900s

Caste comes under severe attack by Christian missionaries such as William Ward and Abbe Dubois, especially in the context of discrimination against lower castes and women.

hind the 54 percent to 85 percent in developed countries. Going by India's Census 2001, the overall share of graduates in the 20-24 age group is only about 8 percent. Of the six categories into which the Census 2001 classified the Indian population, degree holders in the 20-24 age group account for only 2.3 percent of the total population in this age group among the STs, 3.6 percent among the SCs, 4 percent among the Muslims, 7.4 percent among the Buddhists, 7.6 percent among the Sikhs, 9.8 percent among the caste-Hindus (Hindus excluding SCs and STs), and 11 percent among the Christians.

Given this dismal scenario, and the fact that 54 percent of India's population is below age 25, it is only too obvious that the state has failed to grapple with the enormous task of educating India's rising generation in socially equitable and globally competitive ways.

The problems of Indian education center on financing, equity and excellence. As these problems have been confounded by rapid globalization that requires only educated manpower, the traditionally excluded social groups, which are way behind the advanced groups in their access to education, are now victims of a double whammy. Their traditional deprivation keeps them away from education, and the demands of a knowledge-driven society under globalization leave them out of the mainstream because of their lack of education.

Virtual communities: While lack of access to education in itself is a major exclusion of Indian youth from participating in and benefiting from opportunity structures, there are other forms of exclusion that neither the youth nor the elders seem to be aware of. Such exclusions include the educated as well. This refers to increasing participation in web-based virtual communities such as Facebook, Myspace, Orkut and Geni (for family networking) and the subsequent withdrawal from direct, per-

sonal interaction with real society. The result is a remaking and redefining of the social landscape. While this may give participants some immediate satisfaction, its effect is surreal, which, if it becomes widespread and an addiction, may gradually make society both morbid and moribund.

CASTE-CLASS OVERLAP

Though exclusion and related vulnerabilities in the traditional Indian context are seen in terms of groups, in the case of globalization it is necessary to go beyond groups and look at vulnerable populations as a broad class or category. A case in point is the devastation of India's agrarian sector by global companies with the resulting rural impoverishment, indebtedness and rise in farmers' suicides in a number of regions (see Radhakrishnan, 2006). This impact is not only on traditionally excluded social groups but also on many others, as caste and class overlap to a large extent. For instance, while the majority of the scheduled castes are agricultural laborers, the majority of agricultural laborers are not SCs. Here it is necessary to keep in mind the impact of globalization on rural and urban areas alike, with those in rural areas migrating to urban areas and ending up as insecure street vendors, daily wage workers or vagabonds.

MIGRATION AND MISERY

A case in point here are street vendors. In the absence of reliable data it may be difficult to treat them as part of any one traditionally excluded social group, though studies may reveal that they belong to more than one group.

Going by one account, the total number of street vendors in India is about 10 million, accounting for 2 percent of the total urban population, with Mumbai and New Delhi having around 250,000 street vendors each, Kolkata around 150,000, Ahmedabad and Patna 80,000 each and the rest spread across the country. Though

1950s

Constitution comes into force. Social exclusion in India assumes a wider connotation.

1990s

Prime Minister V. P. Singh implements the Mandal Commission report, which seeks to increase affirmative action programs for the disadvantaged.

street vendors form a very important component of the urban informal sector in India, and the street-vendor economy absorbs millions in the job market, sustains industries and delivers basic necessities to the poor (Sharit Bhowmick, 2008), by the very nature of their work they are vulnerable and the wretched of the earth:

“Despite their growing number and positive contributions to the urban economy, street vendors are regarded as illegal traders and encroachers. Their illegal status makes them vulnerable to rent seeking by the authorities (police and municipality) and extortion by local mafias. It’s estimated that in Mumbai, around Rs 400 crore is collected as bribes annually from street vendors. In Delhi, a study by Manushi showed that the police and municipality collect Rs 50 crore every month from street vendors and cycle rickshaw pullers.” (*Ibid.*)

Far from improving their lot, globalization has only added to their misery:

“The opposition to legalizing street vendors comes from several quarters. There are the so-called citizens groups and residents welfare organizations who view them as encroachers on public space; department stores and shopping malls that regard them as competition; and, finally, municipal and police officials who find it profitable to keep them as illegal entities. Despite such opposition, street vendors exist, eking out a precarious living on the margins of the economy.” (*Ibid.*)

LIVING BEHIND WALLS

The negative impact of fast emerging “gated communities” for the wealthy in urban areas is obvious. Such communities shrink the traditionally available social space to people in general and the excluded in particular. Traditionally, human habitation has been horizontal — at ground level — though social relations involved hierarchies reflected in the geography of spatial habitations.

These horizontal habitations created adequate avenues for social interaction, and, when necessary, social mobilization. Those who were not part of such habitations at least had access to the public space. “Gated communities” exclude by definition those outside the gate but also exclude the denizens inside from the dynamics of society and the social interaction such communities cannot provide. This is in some sense a symptom of a dying society.

CONCLUSION

While the foregoing sections have dealt with some aspects of exclusion and vulnerability in the context of globalization, the discussion is far from complete or comprehensive. There are different ways of doing this. One is by revisiting the exclusion discourse in the Indian context that was mentioned briefly at the beginning of this essay.

Keeping that discourse in mind, it is important to point out that in India’s development efforts there has been no coherent appreciation of social exclusion, and no integrated approach to combat exclusion, despite the fact that political rhetoric and policy documents take into account women, ethnic groups, backward classes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Issues such as civil rights, poverty, untouchability, inequality and basic needs are all related to exclusion in some way but this fact is not well appreciated.

Because exclusion is embedded in the way society functions, any approach to overcome it calls for understanding the role of societal processes and institutional structures in creating deprivation and exclusion. This assumes greater significance with the arrival of globalization.

Since the notions of citizenship, and social, civil, and political rights are new to India, markets (whether labor or commodities) are not well developed, and India has hardly anything in the nature of a welfare system or safety net, the ex-

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clusion discourse and inclusion approach in India ought to focus on these issues.

Exclusion operates at the level of individual, group, institution, locality, region and so on. It is both cultural and material, and is hierarchical in terms of needs and intensity. Therefore, there is a need for a disaggregated approach in understanding the patterns and processes of exclusion and the nature of the excluded, taking into account historical and contemporary disabilities, and problems of lack of integration of particular groups. Inadequate social and economic infrastructure in areas that have insufficient resources for participation in mainstream development also has been at the root of various "sub-national movements" such as the Jharkhand, Uttarkhand and Bodo-land.

People respond to social exclusion in various ways, ranging from passivity to group action. Because of a long history of fatalism, which is embedded in the caste system, it is more often than not the case that the excluded themselves are not aware of their exclusion, and even if they are aware, they do not act. There is a need to raise awareness of exclusion, leading to mobilization and group action. Disadvantages arising out of exclusion in India take multiple forms — economic, educational, social, political and cultural — and are all deeply rooted in traditional society.

Because combating social exclusion is meant to bring about social integration — a value-loaded term in the context of continuing caste, communal, ideological and political conflicts — one might ask: integration of whom, with whom, how and why? Because the mandate of the Indian Constitution is to usher in a secular, democratic, pluralist and egalitarian society, even though the caste-based social hierarchy still stifles this mandate, the answers to these questions would entail engagement with many related social problems. Central to such engagement is the need to enrich India's legislative and parliamentary practices,

It is only too obvious that the state has failed to grapple with the enormous task of educating India's rising generation in socially equitable and globally competitive ways.

processes and discourses, thus separating religion from politics and governance, expanding the space for effective participation by those at the margins of society and strengthening "social justice" in order to enable the full and healthy growth of democracy.

Because globalization, per se, is not development and has many socially harmful elements, globalization itself needs to be brought within the ambit of development; in which case the emphasis should be on development discourse, treating development as freedom — as Amartya Sen has done. Such a debate has not yet taken place. With globalization only part of a larger development project, its success or failure depends on how different nations draw up globalization road maps in the context of the larger development process. India's record on this so far has been dismal and disastrous.

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