

SOCIAL EXCLUSION INCLUSION CONTINUUM

— A PARADIGM SHIFT —



Editors

V. Rama Krishna

R. Shashidhar

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Social Exclusion Inclusion Continuum: *A Paradigm Shift*

By: V. Rama Krishna, R. Shashidhar, M. Muniraju

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Dedicated to
Grand Parents
Lt. Smt. Laxmamma
Lt. Sri. Dharmayya

Contents

Preface	i x
About The Book	xi
Contributors Details	xiii
About The Editors	xvii
1. What Does it Mean to be an Untouchable? A Study of the Many Contours of Subjugation and “Independence” In Mulk Raj Anand’s Untouchable <i>Amarjeet Nayak</i>	1
2. Sustainable Development of Businesses Key to Social Inclusion <i>Kimi Thareja & Rashi Thareja</i>	14
3. Inclusive Growth and Socio-Economic Political linkage of Inclusive Policies for Exclusive Sections <i>V. Rama Krishna</i>	25
4. General Health and Alienation Status of Divorced Women in Bangladesh <i>Neaz Ahmed^{PhD} & Abul Hossen^{PhD}</i>	44
4. A Review of Higher Education and ICT Analysis in India: An Inclusive Approach for Social Change <i>R. Shashidhar & Muniraju M</i>	61
5. Dalit Education and the ideology of Ambedkar: A case study in Odisha <i>Madhusmita Sahoo & Swagatika Biswal</i>	76
6. Improving Child immunization in EAGA states: Learning from Kerala experience <i>Rajesh J Nair</i>	91

7. Campaigning for Inclusion: Muslims and Social Exclusion in Contemporary West Bengal
Kenneth Bo Nielsen 117
8. Social Capital and Financial Inclusion through Banking Technology Education as A Silver Lining to Quell Social Exclusion
Krishna Kishore & Dr. Aloysius Sequeira 133
9. Social exclusion of Criminal Tribe: A Case Study on Lodhas of West Bengal
Progya Ghatak 148
10. Philosophy of Social Inclusion in Indian Tradition
Professor Raghunath Ghosh 159
11. Rammanohar Lohia and Vivekananda's Idea of Social Exclusion: A Comparative Analogy
Pratyay Dutta 172
12. Safe Motherhood Practices: A study among the Indian Tribal Mothers
Dr. A. K. Ravishankar 190
13. Awareness of Pubertal Changes of Schedule Tribe Adolescents: A Comprehensive Programme in Rajasthan
Parul Tripathi 209
14. Studying socio-economic factors affecting Female Foeticide in Himachal Pradesh
Shashi Punam & Piar Chand Ryhal 223
15. Gender Mainstreaming: A Concrete Way for Social Inclusion
Rangaswamy D 249

16. Changing Faces of Rural Livelihoods in India
Dr. Ramesh B 268
17. Potential of MGNREGS to Address the Agrarian Crisis: A
Case for Repositioning the Scheme
Dr Ashok Antony D'Souza 284

Preface

This is a rich and intellectual collection of sixteen papers internationally framed. The idea for this book was generated by the editors who are working in academic field and felt that to choose the rich body of papers received through wide advertisement for call for papers based upon our vast and varied experience and wide reading, and that it was time each of us thought of putting together this book in a edited volume and impetus was also provided by the editors of this volume.

Exclusion and Inclusion revolves around the twin objectives of social justice and good governance and alleviation of poverty and amelioration of the living conditions of weaker sections, minorities, women, children and rural masses. The agenda of UNO's Millennium Development Goals and India's Five Year Plans towards good governance and inclusive development strives to achieve the objectives of social justice.

People's movement and people's participation in governance affairs of developmental activities is the talk of the day in India. With participation of pressure groups in a democratic set up on par with grass root movements and decentralization are the major developments for inclusive policies and exclusion concept.

Despite all efforts made by the government of India, many of the goals enshrined in the constitution still remain distant dreams. These in turn undermine rule of law in a myriad ways. All the developments in a society are aimed at improvement in the quality of human beings lives. Education is the foundation of human capital formation and it is the most critical variable in economic development of the society.

Since every aspect of governance is now being viewed from narrow, regional, race, caste and communal angles, the role of All India Services is getting diluted. Inordinate delays and cumbersome proceedings characterize our legal system. The prime duty of the state is to protect its citizens and promote growth, sustain development and social justice. We extend our warm greetings to the authors of this edited book for their efforts and their research experience to bring their ideas and concept of development continuum.

The subsequent papers included in this volume represent the research on various fields of inclusion and exclusion towards the path of the development continuum and millennium development goals. Democracy and good governance have to go in hand in hand to achieve universal brotherhood and development of human being with peace as the soul concern of the rulers.

About The Book

Social exclusion not only generates tension, violence and disruption but also perpetuates inequality and deprivation in Society. In India, certain communities such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and religious minorities experience systemic exclusion in the matter of taking advantages of development. Social exclusion is a complex and multidimensional concept having social, cultural, political and economic ramifications. The consequences of macroeconomic policies such as poverty, unemployment and involuntary migration exclude the victims from economic, cultural, and political activities.

Only participatory democracy would provide the foundation for development with dignity. The reciprocity of duty and the right for every citizen to participate and derive benefit from the process of development will alone contribute to Dalits and STs Empowerment.

There is an obvious inequality across regions in terms of socio-economic and political development of SCs, STs, Minorities and Gender. This book is an eye opener and attracts those interested in exclusion and inclusion development in wake of development process and good governance in their various facets and for further research and development.

About The Editors

Rama Krishna. V has completed his M.A. in Political Science, presently working as an *Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, Tumkur University, Tumkur*. He has one edited book to his credit and he is serving as a member in BOS, Journal Editorial Board of international repute as well as a Copy write Editor for Essex Human Rights Journal. His research priority is social exclusion and inclusion; dalits & women empowerment, Human Rights etc. His contribution is worthily considered and contributed extensively in social service work as a member in ‘Special Component Plan’ & ‘Tribal Sub Plan’ Projects in Tumkur University, Sponsored by Government of Karnataka. Delivered Special Lectures on Various Topics; as a Member of Board of Studies in Department of Political Science contributed to revise and to bring the quality of education at Post Graduate and Under Graduate level.

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**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN UNTOUCHABLE?
A STUDY OF THE MANY CONTOURS OF
SUBJUGATION AND “INDEPENDENCE”
IN MULK RAJ ANAND’S UNTOUCHABLE**

Amarjeet Nayak

Abstract

Mulk Raj Anand’s Untouchable can be seen as an honest examination of caste-based hierarchical Hindu society. Through a close analysis of Anand’s text, it will be my endeavour to see how during the British rule in India, caste-based discrimination had doubly colonized and enslaved a community that was treated with complete apathy by its own people, while also highlighting the note of optimism that Anand envisages for them, coinciding with India’s imminent political freedom. While not trying to undermine or overlook the author’s sense of optimism, my paper will attempt to look at the various forms of subjugation and ways of possible redemption for these oppressed people who continued to be discriminated against.

Keywords: *Untouchable, Subjugation, Independence*

At the outset, it is pertinent to come up with some working definition of the word ‘untouchable’ and its various contemporary and historical connotations in the specific context of the hierarchical Indian society. Sociologist S. C. Dube, in his book *Indian Society* defines and categorizes the various forms of untouchabil-

ity practiced in India thus:

“Physical contact between clean and several categories of inferior *jatis* are to be avoided...The very sight of some of the lowest *jatis* was believed to be polluting. Then there were *jatis* with whose shadow contact was polluting. The most common – and the least severe – form of untouchability only ruled out their physical contact with the *clean jatis* and barred entry into the latter’s homes. The untouchable *jatis* were denied entry into temples and access to common village wells. Their living quarters had to be built outside the village, often at some distance. They had to sit separately in schools; even tea-shops earmarked separate cups for them which they had to wash themselves and keep aside.” (45 – 46)

Even though Dube specifically talks about the practice of untouchability in the past, he also points out that in spite of untouchability having been officially abolished by law, “invidious distinctions, however, are still made and subtle forms of discrimination prevail.” (46)

The issue of caste-based discriminations has been a major concern in Indian literature. Since it is one of the many evils that continue to afflict Indian society which the main stream media has largely tried to sweep under the carpet, authors have taken it unto themselves to speak the unspeakable truth. The mental agony of an untouchable continues to simmer among all the brouhaha of everybody being equal in the eyes of the law in an independent India. In such a scenario, it is through literature that such ‘inconvenient truths’, to quote a phrase from Al Gore’s documentary on global warming *An Inconvenient Truth*, come into light and show a mirror to a hypocritical society. However it would be incorrect to generalize all literatures produced in various languages in India as making an honest attempt to show reality. For instance, some Indian English writers, especially the ones writing post-*Midnight’s Children* such as Aravinda Adiga write about the plight of the common man keeping in mind a predominantly Western reader as the target readership. On the other hand, authors in re-

gional languages in India, such as Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai in Malayalam, write about the common man and his various problems. While talking about the issues that he deals with, Pillai says that he deals with "...human problems of the poor common man. One man beats another, they quarrel with each other and immediately go to police, and they have to be defended. You can find real human problems in each and every one of such cases." (300, *Authors Speak*)

This is not just a view of some regional language writers, but many critics also hold a similar view when it comes to portraying reality in literature. Gaurav Jain, in an article in *Tehelka* says:

But reading contemporary Indian writers in English leaves you with a feeling that there remain stubborn layers of butter paper between their prose and the actual life they're trying to describe. It is really a problem of foggy realism... For all the brouhaha about Indian writing in English in the last decade, our writers are still better in their native tongues when it comes to stretching the dough of language to local shapes. (from the web version of *Tehelka Magazine*, Vol 7, Issue 04)

An overview of the Indian literary scenario will suffice to bring forth innumerable literary texts trying to grapple with the various socio-psychological problems arising out of caste-based hierarchical society, both in Indian Writing in English as well as regional literatures – Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Ruskin Bond's short story "Untouchable", U. R. Ananthamurthy's Kannada novel *Samskara* being some of the prime examples, of which Anand's *Untouchable* is one of the earliest texts dealing almost exclusively with the issue of untouchability in the hegemonic Hindu society. Through a close analysis of Anand's text, it will be my endeavour to see how caste-based discrimination had doubly colonized and enslaved a community that was treated with complete apathy by its own people, while also highlighting the note of optimism that Anand envisages for them, coinciding with India's imminent political freedom.

Anand's *Untouchable* is the story of one day in the life of Bakha, a sweeper boy in the British-colonized India. Even though it is the story of one individual and his struggles in a society that judges a person's value on the basis of the caste into which he is born, the author at various stages in his novel makes it abundantly clear that it is more than a character study. Bakha, for the author, represents generations of outcastes and untouchables, and his predicament is also the plight of every other unfortunate human being born into a caste considered lowly by the orthodox and hegemonic Hindu society. The following two examples from the text bring the point home very clearly that he does not intend his novel to be read as the story of just an individual facing some unique experiences, but of any individual facing a similar predicament because of his / her caste.

Both these instances are taken from Bakha's interaction with Havildar Charat Singh who is from the upper caste of Hindu society. When Charat Singh is satisfied with Bakha for cleaning the latrine for him, he promises to give Bakha a hockey stick. Anand describes the grin on Charat Singh's face thus: "Charat Singh was feeling kind, though he did not relax the grin which symbolized three thousand years of racial and caste superiority." (8) It shows the awareness of the higher caste person's superiority over the outcastes. At the other end of the spectrum we have the outcastes who have internalized a sense of inferiority. And this comes across very clearly in the way Bakha reacts on being promised a hockey stick by Charat Singh. "Charat Singh's generous promise had called forth that trait of servility in Bakha which he had inherited from his forefathers, the weakness of the downtrodden, the helplessness of the poor and the indigent, suddenly receiving help, the passive contentment of the bottom dog suddenly illuminated by the prospect of fulfillment, a secret and long-cherished desire." (8) Thus at the very outset, the reader is told in no uncertain terms that it is going to be a grim battle for survival for the protagonist

for being born in a family of outcastes. This aspect of the text is crucial to my study as my reading of the text will be based on the premise that *Untouchable* is a text that touches upon the issue of caste-based discrimination in its myriad forms, while trying to provide the ostensible reasons and seek some ways to emancipation from the imprisonment that exists not just at a societal level, but also at a deep-rooted psychological level.

Having established that the text is a study in the unfortunately hierarchical caste-dynamics, this study will now look into the dynamics of caste-based discriminations at three levels. The first part of my paper shall attempt at an understanding of the problem of untouchability from the perspective of an ‘untouchable’ and his predicament in a society that considers him evil and outcaste. After looking into the problems of untouchability, the second part will try to look at the various factors that sustain and encourage this evil to stay and flourish. The final part of my paper will look at some of the solutions provided by the text to come out of this vicious circle. While discussing these issues at hand, I shall draw insights from other texts dealing with similar issues, wherever applicable.

What does it mean to be an Untouchable in India?

In the Preface to the text, E. M. Forster puts it very succinctly as to what he considers the fate of an untouchable in the hegemonic Indian society. He writes about the sweeper community in India, one of the many ‘untouchable’ castes: “The sweeper is worse off than a slave, ...the sweeper is bound forever, born into a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse, and the consolations of his religion.” (vi) This pretty much sums up the fate that Bakha, the protagonist of the novel, is subjected to. The comparison of Bakha’s predicament to that of a slave is something that the author also takes pain to explain through the various tribulations, both physical and psychological,

that his protagonist is forced to face. The introductory paragraph of the novel is enough to draw attention to the extremely unhygienic and inhuman physical state of the sweeper household and their community. It is replete with vivid and extremely sensory, but repulsive images of ‘dead carcasses’, ‘the dung of donkeys, sheep, horses, cows and buffaloes heaped up’, etc. and how ‘the ramparts of human and animal refuse that lay on the outskirts of this little colony, and the ugliness, the squalor and the misery which lay within it, made it an ‘uncongenial’ place to live in.’ (1)

When it comes to the basic amenities such as drinking water, they have to depend upon the mercy of the upper caste people. In this novel, we find the outcaste community making beelines at the well, begging the upper caste people to have mercy on them and provide them with some drinking water.

The physical tribulations of an untouchable are matched by his inner state of mind that has been conditioned by thousands of years of servility, and slavery. Hence, the author describes Bakha’s gaze at the temple as that of “the slave stealing an enquiry into the affairs of his master” (43) and that “the serfdom of thousands of years had humbled him” (50).

Thus, the analogy of the untouchable to a slave runs through the entire novel. The inhuman plight of the untouchable is also highlighted through the careful use of animal imagery. It is interesting to note the variegated ways in which animal imagery have been used to describe the untouchables, especially Bakha, by upper caste people. Juxtaposing those unflattering animal imagery with the kind of positive animal imagery that the narrator uses to describe Bakha provides one with an interesting framework to judge the way different people tend to look at the same people. For instance, on various occasions, the people from the upper caste abuse Bakha using negative animal imagery such as ‘swine’, ‘dirty dog’, ‘son of a bitch’, ‘cockeyed son of a bow-

legged scorpion'. It is interesting to note that whenever he is subjected to such abuses, Bakha does not retaliate, and instead suffers the humiliation in silence. While bestiality is thrust upon the outcastes, they too see the upper castes in the same hue. However, when Bakha and his fellow untouchables try to use the same sort of negative imagery for the upper castes, they either do it in private, or mentally. There is only one clear instance when Bakha retorts out in the open using similar abusive animal imagery, when he comes to know that the temple priest had tried to molest his sister. This shows that barring extreme humiliation, the untouchable is forced to keep silent by the dominant castes. This recurring use of negative animal imagery to describe Bakha and his fellow outcastes also draws attention to the inhuman and almost animal-like existence of these people. It shows that the upper caste people do not even consider the outcastes as human beings. This analogy of the untouchable to that of negative animal traits becomes more poignant when one contrasts these with the beautiful and positive animal imagery used by the author, employing the narratorial voice, to describe Bakha. For instance, the author describes Bakha's gait as "a bit like an elephant's on account of his heavy, swaying buttocks, and a bit like tiger's, lithe and supple" (23), and on another occasion compares him with an "Arab horse" (40).

The untouchable, apart from being shown to be looked down upon by the main stream society as a 'slave' and as inhuman as an animal, is even loathed by society for his presence. He is considered unholy whose presence can pollute others. As Bakha says, "They think we are dirt, because we clean their dirt." (63) This is an extremely powerful sentence that encapsulates the extreme paradox and irrationality of why the untouchables are considered so. Furthermore, it serves two important purposes. Firstly, it lays bare the hypocrisy of Hindu society that apparently congratulates itself for its "instinct for immaculate cleanliness" (7). The author

does not let this hypocrisy go unnoticed by sarcastically putting forth the self-congratulatory views of the upper caste Hindu society about the nobility of Indian culture. “India has been the privileged home of the world’s eternal religion, that teaches how every man and woman, according to their birth and environment, must practice *swadharma*...” (117) Secondly, a clear battle line between the upper castes and the outcastes is drawn through the use of “they” and “we”, and one can see it in postcolonial terms where the colonization happens within a community itself where in one suppresses the other and inflicts physical and psychological damage, much like what the colonizers do to the colonized.

Since the untouchable’s presence is loathed, he also internalizes the notion that he should not be seen in public, especially in the gathering of upper-caste people. He tries to remain invisible as much as possible. On one occasion, when Bakha manages to buy a cigarette packet, but forgets to buy a match-box, “he was too modest to go back, as though some deep instinct told him that as a sweeper-lad he should show himself in people’s presence as little as possible.” (30) One can draw a parallel of the untouchable being invisible for the upper castes with the natives being almost invisible for the British colonizers, as is exemplified by Adela Quested’s attitude towards Dr. Aziz in Forster’s *A Passage to India*. The major difference in the two events is that in *A Passage to India*, the colonized is ignored by the colonizer, where as in *Untouchable*, the outcaste’s presence is loathed by his own countrymen. This makes the untouchables doubly colonized who suffer colonization at two levels.

Forces that Sustain and Encourage Untouchability

The internalization of the notion that he is inferior makes the untouchable a fatalist. He considers all the humiliation and tribulations as his fate and tries to reconcile with this. This can be exemplified in the way Bakha considers himself powerless to re-

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GENERAL HEALTH AND ALIENATION STATUS OF DIVORCED WOMEN IN BANGLADESH

Neaz Ahmed ^{PhD} & Abul Hossen ^{PhD}

Abstract

This paper is part of a broader research study on “Psycho-social and Economic Conditions of Divorced Women in Bangladesh” conducted by the author. The study tries to explore the general health and alienation status of divorced women of Bangladesh using two scales namely General Health Questionnaire and Alienation developed by Goldberg and Hiller, 1979, and Kureshi and Dutt, 1979 in order to assess the health and alienation status. These scales measured on somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction, severe depression, despair, disillusionment, psychological vacuum, unstructured universe and narcissism. The findings of the study revealed that only 5.5 per cent divorced women are normal. Among the 200 divorced women 31.0 per cent had all kinds of psychiatric problems. All most all (94.5 per cent) divorced women had alienation problem. The researcher drawn two hypotheses firstly, divorced women who are working are psychologically depressed than that the women who are not. Secondly, women who are divorced by their spouses have experienced greater sense of alienation implying that self divorcees are not greater alienated. Chi-square and t test has been used to prove the hypotheses. Results indicate in first hypothesis is that there is no significant difference at the level of psychological depression. The second hypothesis was statistically significant indicating that self-divorcees are less alienated than the divorced were initiated by their spouses (the women who were divorced by their spouse).

Key Words: Marriage, Divorce, Women, Alienation

Introduction

Marriage is a legal relationship between a man and a woman. Though it is a legal contract in almost all societies, it is also a social relationship. Indeed, in all societies, marriage is generally social. It is relatively a stable relationship between man and woman including social norms evolved for having children. It is an old institution, common throughout most of the civilized world. Traditionally, marriage was more than a linkage of two individuals, and even now. In our culture, girls actually marry the whole family. The psychological framework views marriage as an occurrence that makes it possible to have a close intimate relationship with a number of the opposite sex. In addition, the case for early marriage lies in the fact that the nature of each spouse is such that it gives rise to a congenial relationship between husband and wife unlike in the case of late marriages when the man and woman will have developed set attitudes. But from the physiological point of view Velde (1976) maintains that marriage is the permanent form of monogamous erotic relationship. Sexual urges can't be ignored from marriage. It is one of the marital and duties.

Like marriage, divorce is a universal phenomenon. It is a socially sanctioned arrangement whereby marriage is formally terminated and the family group dissolved (Bertrand, 1967). It is practiced in most societies but varies in the conditions that must be met, the sanctions it if's, the frequency with which it is used. The disposition of and responsibility for the care of children, the disposition if family property and effects, the status assigned to divorced persons, and the rituals, procedure and ceremonies that legalize it. The magnitude and trends of divorce may also differ from one society to another and from one religion to another religion. And also, the perceptions of divorce are not similar in many Countries. For example, in countries like United States, Australia and some European countries, the rates of divorce are high as compared with other countries. The problem of divorce

is much more so in those countries. In fact, marital bonds in those countries are not generally strong. Moreover, the sacramental aspects of marriage are not found in those western countries. In fact, marriage is absolutely a civil contract. So dissolution of marriage like divorce can take place on certain grounds.

In Asia, the rates of divorce have not been increasing rapidly in many countries due to several reasons. In a country like India, among Hindus, marriage is a sacrament. Though, divorce is permitted according to the Hindu Marriage Act 1955, the rate of divorce is increasing only slowly. Some cases, divorce are prohibited according to their internal customs and values. But in the Muslim community in all over the world, divorce is permitted according to their respective personal and state laws. However, it varies from country to country. The conditions under which divorce is granted vary from painless procedure to long drawn out, traumatic experiences etc. In extended family structures, where the individual is surrounded by a large group of kin and his Status is well defined and protected, divorce involves little change in regular behavior and hardly any emotional upset. In a society where there is a strong emphasis on attachments within the conjugal family unit, divorce is likely to mean emotional shock, social stigma, and economic problems for at least one if not both spouses, as well as for children (Bertrand, 1967). Marriage is not only an erotic harmony. But a union of many sided ever-developing non-erotic functions of affection, a community of traits, and feelings of interests, alienating companion, a probability of shared parenthood and often an economic union.

It is a fact that in most cases, divorce precipitates problems to both the partners though the degree and nature of problems differ. But the problems are more severe for women than men because of the social cultural circumstances. Society is generally male-dominated. The male counterparts irrespective of religion,

castes, and creeds, dominate women in the society. Women are vulnerable in general, and divorced women in particular in our society. Problems of divorced women start during the process of divorce and continue till their death if the remarriages do not take place. There are several issues, which are associated with divorce. Issues like maintenance, custody of minor children, future life, sexual and social needs etc. As a human being, she has the right for economic social, emotional help from the family and the society. In our general social customs, husband is the breadwinner of the family. Wife's responsibilities are towards rearing the children and maintaining household activities.

According to every religion, it is the duty of the wife to please her husband properly. Otherwise, the purpose of marriage will not be fulfilled. In Muslim Religion too males dominate the females and the religion upholds the husbands. Moreover, the personal laws regulate personal matters like, marriage, divorce etc. Some laws are against the women and in favor of men. Men are taking advantages by depriving women of their rights. Indeed, it is invariably the law that deprives women. Women's identity after divorce in our society usually changes. They are considered as divorced women. Immediately after divorce, she needs support primarily for sustenance. Who will give this support, if nothing had been provided by the husband? If parents are not in a position to look after them, where will these women go for the fulfillment of basic needs? Apart from physical needs, these women have sexual, social and emotional needs. If the family and society do not look after these women, their problems will remain unabated till their death.

In Bangladesh, women are mostly dependent on their male counterparts for the fulfillment of basic needs. But the situation of urban women is somewhat different. Due to urban socio-economic conditions, women are working outside their home as paid

workers. They interact with other people outside, of the family. Women are acquiring new knowledge, technology and skills. They can determine what is good or bad and have their own likes and dislikes. Traditional norms and customs have been changing substantially. Sometimes urban women do not bother the domination by their husbands. Women have a lot of limitation in the process of divorce among Muslims in Bangladesh. A husband can divorce his wife at his own will without the intervention of court through the Arbitration Council but women cannot. Though it has been said that marriage is a civil contract, there is no strict provision for marriage registration. There is also no provision for the maintenance of divorced women. The provision of maintenance is only for minor children of the divorced women. However, in few a cases,' divorced women are getting proper maintenance from their spouses. The structure of Bangladeshi family is mostly a joint one. But, urban family is mostly a single one; usually women can take shelter in their parent's houses. But for these women, shelter is not sufficient when social, psychological and emotional needs are grossly denied.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective is to know the health conditions of divorced women. In this line, the following objectives are framed;

1. To understand the psychiatric problems of divorced women and
2. To examine the alienation status of divorced women.,

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses have been formulated with the help of a review of literature and consultations with different experts on the field of the study.

1. Divorced women who are not working are psychologically depression the divorced women who are working.

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CAMPAIGNING FOR INCLUSION: MUSLIMS AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN CONTEMPORARY WEST BENGAL

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Abstract

Debates on social exclusion in India have for historical and political reasons focussed predominantly on caste. In contrast, the social exclusion of religious minorities has figured less prominently in the academic and political discourse. In this article I focus on the conditions of India's largest religious minority, the Muslims, in the state of West Bengal. Here Muslims comprise approximately one fourth of the population; but in spite of their numerical strength they have so far generally been excluded from the developmental and political processes of the state. The article outlines the social and political marginalisation of Muslims in the state in terms of development indicators. It then proceeds to examine how Muslim groups and organisations have over the past few years increasingly mobilised as a community around demands for inclusion, more specifically in terms of inclusion into the policy of reservations. The paper analyses the particular political context that facilitated the emergence of a distinct 'Muslim demand' for inclusion, and examines the impact this mobilisation has so far had on state policy and interventions. It is argued that highly competitive electoral contexts in combination with politicised and mobilised constituencies can be an effective combination in the pursuit of social inclusion by minority groups.

Key words: *Development; Social Exclusion; West Bengal; Elections*

Introduction

Debates on social exclusion in India have for historical and political reasons focussed predominantly on the institution of caste. In contrast, the social conditions of religious minorities have, at least until recently, figured less prominently in the academic and political discourse on social exclusion (Hasan, 2009: 3). To address this imbalance I focus in this article on the condition of India's largest religious minority, the Muslims, in the state of West Bengal. Here Muslims comprise approximately one fourth of the population; but in spite of their numerical strength they have so far generally been excluded from the developmental and political processes of the state. However, rather than limiting the analysis to identifying the social, economic and political practices that produce Muslim exclusion, I focus predominantly on how Muslim groups and organisation have increasingly and vocally campaigned for inclusion over the past five years. This focus on how excluded communities navigate their own exclusion, for example through political campaigns, constitutes an important corrective to the large body of scholarship on social exclusion which often lacks an inherent focus on agency and which portrays the excluded as helpless victims (Hickey and du Toit, 2007: 3). Since my aim is to apply the notion of social exclusion to a particular empirical case (and not to contribute to an ongoing conceptual critique), I follow Sukhdeo Thorat (2011: 5) in conceptualising social exclusion as involving the denial of opportunities to certain social groups in multiple spheres. This results in the inability of these groups to participate in the basic political, economic and social functioning of society.

The article consists of two main sections. The first briefly maps out the social and political exclusion of Muslims in India, and in West Bengal in particular, in terms of select development indicators. The second section examines how Muslim groups and organisations in West Bengal have over the past few years mo-

bilised as a community around demands for inclusion, and more specifically for inclusion into the policy of reservations. I analyse the demands raised by Muslim organisations and the responses to them – in terms of both policy and rhetoric – by the leading political parties in the state. I argue that the highly competitive political context such as it existed in West Bengal during the years immediately preceding the 2011 state elections proved remarkably conducive to the aggregation and articulation of demands for inclusion among minority communities.

Muslims, Social Exclusion and Reservations

Debates on the political and developmental position of India's Muslim minority are not new. As far back as 1871 W. W. Hunter (2002: 138–206) wrote of how colonial rule had adversely affected the Muslim community. In addition, a large proportion of India's Muslim population are descendants of converts from various 'low' castes, whose social and economic conditions remained largely unchanged after conversion (Hasan, 2009: 166).

India has a tradition of addressing questions of social and political exclusion through the policy of reservations. The constitution grants reservations to SCs and STs, and since the implementation of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission the OBCs have been included in this policy as well, albeit in a more limited manner. The question of whether special reservations should be extended to certain sections of India's Muslims has similarly been raised from time to time, from colonial rule and onwards (Dasgupta, 2009: 92). The Gopal Singh Committee's report from 1983 declared Muslims a socially and educationally backward group that required special measures to alleviate their backwardness, but it had little if any concrete effect on state policy and practice (Hasan, 2009: 8-9). In the wake of the Mandal Commission (which declared over 80 Muslim groups to be backward and hence eligible for reservations) some Muslim

organisations renewed their demand for official backward status for the entire community (Jenkins, 2001: 36), but again with little effect.

Over the past few years, however, the debate on the exclusion of India's Muslims has resurfaced with particular force. Two important reports have contributed to this: that of the Sachar Committee, published in 2006; and of the Ranganath Mishra Commission, submitted to the Lok Sabha in 2007 and tabled in 2009. The Sachar Committee's report documented how at the all-India level Muslims scored significantly lower than their Hindu counterparts on most indicators.¹ In particular, Muslims scored very low on key development indicators such as literacy, education, employment and consumption (Alam, 2010: 47). While these findings did not point out something hitherto completely unknown, what surprised some observers was that many of these findings also applied to West Bengal. The report presented evidence that a large number of Muslim concentration villages lacked postal and telegraph services, and it identified an inverse association (in small villages) between the proportion of Muslims and the availability of educational infrastructure. It thus documented a clear bias in public service provisioning in Muslim concentration areas in the fields of education, physical infrastructure and health facilities. In addition West Bengal presented a glaring instance of Muslim exclusion from government employment: only 4.2 percent of government staff were Muslims as against their population share of 25 percent.

Was also made the report significant was that prior to its publication there was no community-disaggregated data generated by government agencies for policy purposes, and hence no official information about the socio-economic conditions of minorities

1. For an overview of the findings of the Sachar Committee's report, see Basant (2007).

and the disadvantages and deprivation suffered by them (Hasan, 2009: 9). The report of the Ranganath Mishra Commission went on to provide concrete suggestions to how these deprivations could be addressed through policy. The report argued that since minorities, and Muslims especially, were very under-represented in government employment, they should be regarded as backward in this respect. Accordingly, the commission recommended a 15 percent reservation in jobs and employment for minorities, with 10 percent earmarked for Muslims. This suggestion led to some controversy as it appeared to run counter to the letter and spirit of the Indian Constitution, several articles in which enunciate the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of religion. Yet in West Bengal the findings of both reports, and the recommendation for a 10 percent Muslim quota in particular, were quickly appropriated by Muslim groups and organisations as part of their campaign for inclusion. The next section introduces the political context in which this campaign played itself out, and proceeds to analyse how the campaign unfolded.

Campaigning for Inclusion: The 2011 State Elections²

The demand for Muslim inclusion through reservations in West Bengal emerged in a political context characterised by fierce competition between the then incumbent CPI(M)-led Left Front (LF) and the opposition combine led by the Trinamul Congress (TMC). The 2011 state elections were approaching when the question of reservations for Muslims arose, and after having suffered consecutive and significant electoral setbacks at the 2008 *panchayat* elections, the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, and the 2010 municipal elections, there was a very real chance that the LF could be ousted from power in the state they had governed since 1977. Voters in West Bengal had generally started drifting from the LF towards the TMC, and the movement of Muslim voters in that direction

2. This and the following section draw on Nielsen (2011).

appeared particularly pronounced. Several political commentators speculated that the core reason for TMC leader Mamata Banerjee's sudden political success could be found in the shift of the Muslim vote from the LF towards her party (Nielsen 2011, 354).

In January 2010 the Jamiat Ulama-e Hind (JUH), one of the leading Islamic organisations in India, hosted a large conference in Kolkata, where they demanded reservations for Muslims to solve their educational and social backwardness. Importantly, they demanded more than what the Mishra Commission had suggested. JUH's General Secretary Siddiquallah Chowdhury said that:

10 % reservation will not be enough to solve the West Bengal Muslim problems. Therefore, we demand 20 % reservation because currently only 2.5 % Muslims are in government job while they comprise 30 % of the total population of the state. We gave ultimatum to the government to take the decision on the matter on earliest because we can not wait any more. We have fed up of promises since last 30 years now government has to step in practically (in Bilal, 2010).³

Siddiquallah Chowdhury added that the JUH was not alone in raising this demand: all leading Muslim organisations and groups, including Jam'at Islami Hind, the Indian Muslim League, the All India Milli Council (AIMC) and the Republican Party of India were united in this struggle. On its part the JUH would hold vehicle rallies to visit all Muslim dominated areas in the state to 'create awareness among the community'. Such efforts would continue until the demand for reservations was fulfilled, Siddiquallah Chowdhury threatened.

The JUH would continuously raise the issue of reservations throughout the election campaign. Occasionally they would also

3. Syntax in the original.

threaten with dire consequences if their demand was not met. For instance Siddiqullah Chowdhury warned – at a conference on the need for reservations for Muslims in West Bengal held in April – that the trouble the LF were facing with insurgent Maoist groups would pale in comparison with what was in store if the LF failed to extend reservations to Muslims. If Muslims adopted the strategy of the Maoists, he warned, nobody could stop them. Accordingly:

In the eve of Assembly election 2011 of West Bengal, the ruling Left Front government should declare reservations for Muslims in West Bengal, otherwise Muslims will throw them out of power (in Haque, 2010).

The JUH was not the only Muslim organisation organising public events where the demand for reservations was raised. Less than two weeks after the JUH conference, the Popular Front of India (PFI) started its National Campaign for Muslim Reservation from Kolkata, demanding at least 20 percent reservation for Muslims in West Bengal. The main event of the PFI rally was to send on its way a caravan, which would move through Muslim dominated districts (Popular Front India, 2010). Months later the West Bengal chapter of the Students Islamic Organisation of India (SIO) launched its state-wide 10-day campaign on the issue.

Other, religious leaders also came out in support of the demand for 20 percent reservations. This included the *imam* of Kolkata's Nakhoda Mosque, Maulana Md. Shafique, who also demanded that LF ensure quality education for backward Muslims: 'If Muslims are deprived of quality education, how can they apply for government jobs?' he asked (in Bhabani, 2010). *Imam* Maulana Noor-ur-Rehman Barkati of Kolkata's Tipu Sultan mosque said that the time had come for Muslims to abandon the LF, who had 'destroyed Bengal'; and Toha Siddiqui, the director of the Furfura Sharif – one of the most important Muslim pilgrimage sites in the

state – echoed this sentiment, adding that the community had had enough of the LF's empty promises.

The LF responded immediately and favourably to these demands and threats. At a rally held in Kolkata in May the Chief Minister confirmed his government's commitment to implementing reservations in government jobs for Muslims. He also promised that ten million Muslims in the state would be made eligible for reservations in government jobs within a month.⁴ Months later, the LF expanded the scope of reservations by reserving 17 percent of all seats in government and government-aided colleges for OBC students, and it introduced a similar 17 percent reservation for OBC candidates in the three tier *panchayat* system. Muslims stood to benefit greatly from this (Nielsen, 2011: 357). In addition the LF introduced a range of other policy measures aimed at the Muslim electorate. It ordered that job oriented development projects in a number of Muslim-dominated blocks be expedited, and it more than doubled the plan outlay for minorities and *madrassa* education. The number and amount of government scholarships given out to Muslim students similarly doubled, and the LF increased the total allocation for the West Bengal Minorities Development and Financial Corporation (WBMDFC) dramatically. In 1998 the WBMDFC had been allocated Rs. 7 *crore*; in 2010 it received Rs. 425 *crore*.

Why did the LF respond so favourably to the demands emanat-

4. Rather than introducing a potentially unconstitutional 10 percent 'Muslim quota' the LF, in September 2010, included an additional 41 Muslim communities in the OBC category, bringing the total number of Muslim communities in the OBC list to 53. It then sub-divided the OBC category into a 'backward' and a 'more backward' section, and placed 49 Muslim communities in the 'more backward' section, thus making it predominantly Muslim. Lastly, they declared 'backward' communities would henceforth be entitled to 7 percent reservation, while the 'more backward' communities would be entitled to 10 percent. The 53 Muslim communities in the OBC list ostensibly covered more than 86 percent of the entire Muslim population.

ing from Muslim voters? The answer, I believe, can be found in the highly competitive political context in which the campaign took place. This significantly increased the *relative* electoral strength of Muslim voters, who potentially decided the outcome in as many as 80 of the state's 294 constituencies. No party, in other words, could afford to turn a deaf ear to the desires of Muslim voters. This is also brought out by the fact that the opposition TMC similarly went to great lengths to address issues of concern to Muslims.

TMC's Campaign

The TMC officially supported reservations for Muslims. It also demanded that this principle be extended to include the Women's Bill, that is, it insisted that a separate quota within the quota be carved out for Muslim women. But more generally, Mamata Banerjee used her status as an MP to signal her concern for West Bengal's Muslim voters. In August 2010 she demanded that the government provide more advertisement to Urdu newspapers, and open an Urdu university and Urdu academies across the country. While doing so she quoted several lines of Urdu poetry. Some of her fellow TMC MPs followed up by demanding that *imams* across India be provided with salaries at government scales. TMC's Minority Cell Chairman added that the party would launch a campaign on the issue of higher salaries for both *imams* and *muezzins* (Indiareport, 2011).

In addition Mamata Banerjee used her spell as Railway Minister from 2009 to 2011 to cater to the West Bengal electorate in general and to Muslim aspirations in particular. Within a seven month period in the latter part of 2010 she inaugurated or laid foundation stones for 120 railway projects in her home state. She ensured that notices were posted in Urdu (alongside English and Hindi) on the notice boards in the Railway Ministry; allowed candidates to take rail recruitment tests in Urdu; waived the Rail-

way Recruitment Board examination fee for applicants with a minority background; extended students' travel concessions to *madrasas*, higher *madrasas* and senior *madrasas*; and increased the frequency of trains to areas in West Bengal with high Muslim concentration. Her ministry also produced two railway advertisements, carried on the eve of Eid, with pictures of Mamata wearing a *hijab* and offering *namaz*. The background contained Islamic motifs like the crescent moon, a star, and the outlines of a mosque. The advertisements promoted railway projects inaugurated in West Bengal as Mamata Banerjee's more or less personal Eid-gift to West Bengal's Muslims (Nielsen, 2011: 361). And when the TMC-led alliance released its list of candidates for the 2011 elections it contained 63 Muslim candidates, 6 more than the LF.

There were early indications that the TMC's campaign appealed to Muslim voters. When the TMC won a clear victory at the 2010 Kolkata Municipal Elections, many Urdu newspapers had celebrated TMC's win and published Urdu couplets hailing the victory. The state elections too resulted in a comfortable win for the TMC and its allies. It won in 227 constituencies against the LF's 62, including in 90 of the state's 125 constituencies with a sizeable Muslim population. The new state assembly had 59 Muslim MLAs (up from 46), corresponding to about 20 percent of the assembly. In terms of the formal political inclusion of Muslims the result of the 2011 election represented a clear improvement.

Beyond Elections

The account of the campaign for the 2011 elections brings out how the issue of Muslim exclusion was propelled to the top of the political agenda of the major political parties in the state. But the litmus test is of course the degree to which inclusive campaign rhetoric has been transformed into inclusive policy, since many

electoral promises tend to fade away when elections are over (Banik, 2010: 112). How, then, has the new government fared in promoting Muslim inclusion?

Early on there were signs that Mamata Banerjee remained committed to delivering on her electoral promises. She kept the portfolio of Minority Affairs and Madrasa Education with herself, leading to widespread speculations that she had ‘something special in her mind regarding the Muslim community in the state’ (TwoCircles.net, 2011). And she moved swiftly to give Urdu second language status in districts with a 10 percent or more Urdu speaking population. For this she won praise: language activist Shamim Ahmed said that: ‘what the CPI(M) government could not do in three decades, Mamata has done in a week’ (Hafeez, 2011).

Yet there were equally early signs that Muslim organisations had no intention of offering the new government a honeymoon. At an All Bengal Minority Council convention held only a month after the election, Toha Siddiqui of the Furfura Sharif said bluntly that the Muslims of the state were monitoring the activities of the new government, and that Muslim voters would throw the government out of power after five years if they were not satisfied with the performance (Haque, 2011a). Later, in August during the Eid prayers at Kolkata’s Red Road⁵ in front of a congregation of 400,000 devotees, the criticism of the new government continued. *Imam* Qari Fazalur Rahman warned the government against complacency and inaction in addressing the concerns of Muslim voters:

They must learn a lesson from what happened to the previous government. The former government promised a lot of things but

5. The congregation on Red Road is the most significant in the state, and religious heads have a history of using the platform to set the agenda for the community for the coming year.

delivered very little. As a result, they were wiped out. If these people take us for granted, it won't take us much time to show them the door (Jawed, 2011).

The *imam* added that his community expected more than just lip service. Referring to the various promises made by the Chief Minister, Rahman said that they were mere newspaper announcements, and insisted that the government 'show us some work'. He stressed that a lot remained to be done in the fields of education, jobs and housing, and that the new government's response had not been encouraging so far: 'Not a single promise that the government has made has been fulfilled', the *imam* claimed, adding that the Chief Minister should 'learn from the mistakes of the previous government'. The Chief Minister was present and addressed the congregation and asked for patience. She explained that just as the celebration of Eid followed a month of fasting, so too there would be reason for Muslims to celebrate when concrete results of her government's pro-Muslim policy eventually began to materialise.

Two weeks later an AIMC delegation that included *imam* Qari Fazalur Rahman met with the Chief Minister. They brought with them the demand for reservations along with improved conditions in housing, health and education. At the meeting Rahman ostensibly told Banerjee that slackness in work for the Muslims would not do (*The Saisat Daily*, 2011). The Chief Minister ostensibly promised the delegation that all Muslim matters would be considered on a priority basis: work on the OBC list for Muslims was already going on; the state would work towards sanctioning 10,000 *madrasas*; and 5,000 apartments would be distributed among minorities through the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (*The Times of India*, 2011). Some ten days after the meet the government released its minority budget and a minority plan. The plan, the Chief Minister claimed, had been discussed with Rajendra Sachar

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GENDER MAINSTREAMING: A CONCRETE WAY FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

Rangaswamy D

Abstract

The issues of social inclusion and poverty reduction are a mandatory component of global integrations policy in the period to come. The world faces a significant population who are pushed to the margins of society and prevented from participating in social relations and mainstream with their full capacity. This is due to the reasons of their poverty or lack of basic knowledge and opportunities for lifelong learning, or as a result of discrimination. They have insufficient and inadequate access to institutions, authorities and decision-making processes, thus inadequate or no access to rights.

The international community has adopted numerous policy documents, strategies and legislation and established bodies to tackle poverty, social exclusion, improvement of the position of socially excluded. These create basis for identifying and implementing measures for affirmative action in different fields, including: civil registration, personal documents, registration of residence, education, health care, social welfare, employment, gender equality and prohibition of discrimination. However, the relevant legislation and policy documents will be effective only if the implementation mechanisms are also effective and institutional practice equal and consistent. Some laws and regulations still need to be adopted.

Key Words: Gender, Mainstreaming, Social Exclusion, International policies

Introduction

The concept of social exclusion emanated from European dissatisfaction with perceived failures of the welfare system in the face of persistent poverty and slow economic growth in the early 1990s. Although the concept was initially developed in Europe, it has increasingly been applied to developing countries. Social exclusion remains a serious development issue in the developing world and in South Asia in particular, hindering the life chances of millions of people.

The concept of social exclusion is used to describe a group, or groups, of people who are excluded from the normal activities of their society, in multiple ways. The excluded are often deprived of the chance to legally redress violations of their rights and denial of opportunities to them because they cannot afford the costs or they are prevented from doing so by the more powerful perpetrators of these injustices, who can often bend the rules and laws in their own favour.

Social exclusion may be deliberately imposed by a government or by a powerful social group on other communities or groups. Social exclusion also occurs through ongoing social processes in the absence of any deliberate attempt on the part of the government or any group of powerful people to exclude people, partially because there may not be any deliberate public or private interventions to reverse social exclusion of this nature.

Social exclusion of women is a powerful form of discriminatory practice in the contemporary world. Large numbers of women in developing countries are socially excluded – excluded by mainstream society from participating fully in the economic, social and political life of the society where they live – often because of their cultural, religious or racial characteristics. Although efforts have been taken to improve the status of women, the international as well as national dream of gender equality is miles away from

becoming a reality. Even today, ‘the mainstream remains very much a male stream’. The dominant tendency has always been to confine women and women’s issues in the private domain. The traditional systems of control with its notion of ‘what is right and proper for women’ still reigns supreme and reinforces the use of violence as a means to punish its defiant female ‘offenders’ and their supporters.

There are strong reasons for devising policies to reduce social exclusion of women not only as part of a poverty reduction agenda, but also from the perspective of the well-being of those who are excluded. In recent years it has become generally accepted that gender mainstreaming is such an innovative policy and a prerequisite for social inclusion of women. It is an essential strategy not only for attaining gender equality, but also for the sustainable development of societies as a whole. It aims to look more comprehensively at the relationships between men and women in their access to and control over resources, decision making, and benefits and rewards within a particular system.

Objectives of the Paper

The present paper has the following objectives:

- to advance women’s equal participation with men as decision-makers in shaping the sustainable development of their societies;
- to support women and girls in the realization of their full human rights;
- to reduce gender inequalities in access to and control over the resources and benefits of development.
- To integrate in national plans the specific concerns of women and their roles as active agents in and beneficiaries of development, specifically considering their role as a productive force

to attain the full development of the human personality;

- To design and promote programmes involving the participation of the community and non-governmental women organizations towards strengthening the national and regional resilience;

Conceptualisation

The key concept in feminist thought is gender. It is a complex concept often with definitions as variable as the diversity of cultures, geographical location and state of advancement of a society. It is therefore appropriate to first interrogate this concept. As elucidated by de Beauvoir's ever popular statement, feminist theorists understand the term gender not simply as physical, biological differences between males and females, but as "a set of culturally shaped and defined characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity" (Simone de Beauvoir: 1997). As the International Committee of the Red Cross writes in 'Addressing the Needs of Women Affected by Armed Conflict' (2004): "The term 'gender' refers to the culturally expected behaviour of men and women based on roles, attitudes and values ascribed to them on the basis of their sex."

A more universal definition however depicts gender as a relational development concept that describes men and women's (boys' and girls') social and economic relations in society. Gender is socially and culturally determined and has nothing to do with capabilities and very little with the sex of a person.

The mainstream refers to an inter-related set of dominant ideas, values, practices, institutions and organizations that determine "who gets what" within a society. The ideas and practices within the mainstream tend to reflect and reinforce each other and thus provide a rationale for any given allocation of societal resources and opportunities (Schalkwyk, et al,: 1996).

The commonly accepted and most widely used definition of gender mainstreaming is the one adopted by the United Nations' Economic and Social Council: "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality." (UN ECOSOC: 1997)

Being part of the mainstream means that women and men have *equitable access* to resources, including opportunities and rewards. It implies *equal participation* in influencing what is valued in shaping options within society. Becoming part of the mainstream means sharing equitably in the benefits of development. Becoming part of the mainstream offers the opportunity to influence who does what in a society, who owns (and can own) what, who has access to jobs and income, who controls the society's resources and institutions, who makes decisions, who sets priorities (GMDP: 1999).

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to assess the implications for both men and women, of any planned actions, policies or programmes in all areas and at all levels. This approach recognizes the need to take social and economic differences between men and women into account to ensure that proposed policies and programmes have intended and fair results for women and men, boys and girls.

Gender mainstreaming is the incorporation of gender issues in development programs so that at all levels gender is automatically addressed. Consequently gender mainstreaming demands a

deep analysis of the policies, objectives, strategies and activities of a society to identify stakeholders at each stage, their roles and responsibilities and the dynamism created as a result of these people working together to meet the set objectives for development

Gender mainstreaming here refers to “the process of assessing the implication of women and men of any planned action, including legislation, making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences integral dimensions in the design, implementation monitoring evaluation of all agricultural policies and programmes so that women and men benefit equally”. This should be done according to their local traditions, socio-economic conditions and expressed needs.

Need of Gender Mainstreaming Social Inclusion

Mainstreaming equality issues may contribute to underlining the need to base and to evaluate any single policy according to its impact on the concrete situation of individuals and social groups, be they women or men, with their particular endowments and needs. Such an approach will improve the practice of basing and evaluating general policies (global and sectoral, national, regional or local) according to their results on the wellbeing of the people and will open avenues to replace the “traditional” practice of employing abstract economic and ideological indicators (such as GDP and similar data considered neutral and expressed in average values) by more relevant and valuable indicators regarding the concrete well-being of people (DGHR: 2004).

Decisions about allocations of development resources and opportunities are made by an interrelated set of dominant ideas, development directions and organizations: collectively referred to as the Mainstream (ideological component and institutional component both reinforcing each other) which decides who gets what and also provides a rationale for the allocation of societal resources and opportunities. Therefore, if gender equality has to

be achieved, it is essential to address those larger processes, paradigms, and institutional structures that constitute the mainstream (United Nations: 2003).

Gender mainstreaming is the systematic inclusion of both women's and men's concerns, experiences and needs throughout the lifespan of any initiative, including projects, policies or programs. This means that decision-making on policies and priorities must take account of the differences between men and women, boys and girls. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy towards the end goal of gender equality. It is therefore a long-term and transformative process, and not an end in itself.

Women as Socially Excluded- Evidences

Gender issues have made their appearance from as early as the seventh century when women sought to reinterpret the scriptures which deemed women intellectually inferior by nature and given to sin (Gerda Lerner: 1993). Women and men experience and cope with risk, insecurity and crisis differently. As a result of unequal property rights, interruptions to their working lives posed by childbearing, unequal sharing of unpaid care responsibilities, location in less well-regulated forms of work and lower levels of remuneration, many women are unable to insure themselves against contingencies arising from old age, ill-health, disability, unemployment and other life crises.

Women in many parts of the world continue to face discrimination in access to land, housing, property and other productive resources and have limited access to technologies and services that could alleviate their work burdens. Unequal access to resources limits women's capacity to ensure agricultural productivity, security of livelihoods and food security and is increasingly linked to poverty, migration, urbanization and increased risk of violence. Attention to the resource challenges women face in agriculture is essential for addressing the food and energy crises and climate

change in both the short and long term.

Labour is the most widely available factor of production at the disposal of poor people around the world and the primary means through which they earn a living. Although women's share of employment has increased, a gender division of labour persists. The contraction of formal employment and decent work and proliferation of "atypical" or non-standard work, which is generally precarious, poorly paid and uncovered by labour legislation or social protection, has particularly affected women. Lack of access to decent work is a major cause of poverty among women.

Despite the improvements in literacy, there continues to be a large gap between the literacy levels of men and of women. Significant progress has been made in achieving gender parity in basic education all over the world; in spite of this progress UNICEF projection for 2005 continue to indicate a global gender parity index (GPI) of 0.96, meaning that there are still only 96 girls for every 100 boys in primary school, with significant variations between and within regions and countries. Gender inequalities in primary school are greatest in Western and Central Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

In addition, at secondary level, of 75 countries surveyed, only 22 are considered on course to meet the 2005 gender parity goal, while 21 will need to make additional efforts and 25 are far from the goal. At secondary level, the gender gap is most pronounced in South Asia (44% of boys of secondary school age in secondary school compared with only 36% of girls) and in the Middle East and North Africa (54% of boys compared with 43% of girls) (UNICEF:2005).

The availability of antenatal care for pregnant women was low in South Asia, with Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan among the countries with less than 80% women accessing antenatal care at least once. Afghanistan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and

Nepal had less than 50% coverage ratios. Disparities exist in antenatal care coverage between rural and urban areas, and between the poorest and richest 20% of households in countries with low access rates—with those in the rural areas and those in the poorest 20% of households receiving less antenatal care coverage. In almost all countries, clear disparities in participation of females in the labour force exist, with the lowest participation rates for females in Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (ADB: 2011)

For last several years the performance of Indian economic growth is remarkable (praiseworthy). But when it comes to social indicators such as health and education performance of India is limited.

Over the last decade, we have seen improvement in various health outcome indicators. Death rate, infant and under five mortality rates and fertility rate, have all declined. From 80 per thousand infant mortality rate (IMR) in 1990, IMR has come down to 50 in 2009. However, we are far behind in reaching the MDG target of reducing IMR to 26.7 by 2015. There has been a rise in institutional delivery from 39 per cent institutional deliveries in 2005-6 as reported by NFHS 3 to around 78 per cent institutional deliveries as a proportion of total reported deliveries as of March, 2009 (Pg. 158 of the Report), implying better healthcare for mothers. Delivery at home is the prime reason for maternal mortality. A rise in institutional deliveries has resulted in a decline of MMR from 301 per 100,000 live births in 2001-3 to 212 in 2007-9 – fall of 89 points in six years.

Despite NRHM, India faces a dismal position in terms of health infrastructure – both physical and manpower. Compared to 30 hospital beds per 10,000 populations in China, India has nine. India has six physicians per 10,000 population compared to 14 in China. The nurse population ratio in India is 1:1205 as against 1:100-150 in Europe. Open defecation is a serious threat

to health and nutritional status, in addition to the safety of women and girls. About half of Indian households lacked access to sanitation facilities in 2008-9 (HRD: 2011).

Despite considerable improvement in literacy rates (from 67 per cent in 2001 to 74 per cent in 2011), India is home to the largest chunk of illiterate people in the world. The gender parity index (GPI) at the primary level improved from 0.91 in 2004-5 to 0.93 in 2007-8 (DISE 2010). When subject to international comparison, the GPI for India fares relatively well with most of the regions of the world at the primary level (world average was 0.96 in 2007), mainly because girls' enrolment at the primary level has improved significantly over the last two decades. More than half of the females belonging to the SCs and STs in rural India were illiterate (NSSO survey on Education in India, 2007-8). Further, the male-female literacy gap in rural India persisted and the 20 percentage point gap that existed in 2001 continued in 2007-8. So, despite the improvement in literacy rate, a considerable proportion of females remained illiterate (HRD: 2011).

Challenges in Gender Mainstreaming

One of the major limitations in translating stated rights for women into greater exercise of agency resides in women's lack of access to mainstream of the society. Many challenges may limit this access. The principle object of Gender mainstreaming is to empower women by overcoming these challenges that have been constructed by either societies or existing situations that operate to the disadvantage of women.

Social Stigma: Social norms and stigma plays vital role in gender mainstreaming by influencing expectations, values, and behaviours. Social stigma is a serious barrier for women who try to resist or flee from gender discrimination or gender inequality. This is severe disapproval of society and psychological trauma often involved in bringing claims. There are situations where

women are often reluctant to pursue justice where outcomes are not predictable, where legal institutions are gender biased, and where legal actors themselves victimize complainants, resulting in a double victimization. The consequences of a strong son preference could extend to the denial of girls' right to life or their vulnerability to discriminatory practices in the environment in which they live. Experiences suggest that majority women in the developing countries are lack mobility and the time to engage with the reformative process. Societal attitude often make women responsible for care and housework do not allow them the time to participate in the positive transformative process.

Lack of Education: Any analysis of the determination of social inclusion or mainstreaming has some connection with the education of that particular country. Education is important for everyone, in that too for girls and women. The link between female literacy rates and development is obvious and has received much attention in the development literature in recent days. Education has never been viewed as a tool to develop the overall personality and capabilities of women. The economic problems are the main hindrance deterring women from getting an education, coupled with early marriage and parental negligence playing an important part in the ultimately deteriorating status of women.

For example World Bank Development Report reveals that for households, higher incomes relax the need to choose between sons and daughters when spending on basic education, health, and nutrition. For countries, higher incomes permit the supply of services in these areas to expand— increasing not only the number of schools and health clinics but also their accessibility. And the market signals that typically accompany growth and encourage the greater participation of women in the wage labour market also work to reduce gender gaps by raising the value of girls' education (World Bank:2012).

Transparency and Accountability of the Governance: The consequences of good governance on development of girls and women have been widely discussed. Enforcing gender policy change is shaped by the capacity of the state machinery to follow through and by the extent to which the wider community accepts reforms. New laws may reflect developmental destiny or reformative road. But if the executing authorities fail to implement those laws, they may be simply ignored or not widely disseminated. Corrupt or no accountable system is considered a harmful practice as it tends to be polluted developmental activities. There is clear evidence that a lack of accountability and oversight often hinders enforcement of women rights. The preferential treatment or attitudes of the enforcing authorities such police, prosecution or judges all too often mirror the social norms prevailing in the society, thus limiting the ability of the system to enforce some laws with the direction of gender mainstreaming.

Political Participation: Women representation in political arena was one of the many topics that the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly touched upon. Under the title, “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century”, the five-day meeting reviewed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

The survey thus reveals that parliaments and parties have become more aware of the issues involved and the need for women to participate more fully in the decision-making process. However, difficulties in changing electoral customs and legislation and in establishing new practices contribute to the persistence of strong opposition in society and among women themselves (IUP, 1999).

Gener Mainstreaming- International Law Perspective

Early major advances in the protection of the human rights are to be found in the mandates and minorities protection treaties of the

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Social exclusion not only generates tension, violence and disruption but also perpetuates inequality and deprivation in Society. In India, certain communities such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and religious minorities experience systemic exclusion in the matter of taking advantages of development. Social exclusion is a complex and multidimensional concept having social, cultural, political and economic ramifications. The consequences of macroeconomic policies such as poverty, unemployment and involuntary migration exclude the victims from economic, cultural, and political activities.

Only participatory democracy would provide the foundation for development with dignity. The reciprocity of duty and the right for every citizen to participate and derive benefit from the process of development will alone contribute to Dalits and STs Empowerment.

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