

Research Article

Globalisation and Social Exclusion: A Perspective from Below

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to focus on globalisation and social exclusion from a perspective from below. In this paper, an attempt has been made to enquire into the impact of globalisation on the marginalised groups, especially Dalits. On the other hand, social exclusion has been discussed as the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from their full participation in the society within which they live. In this context, we may broadly focus on two factors of interpretation: First, whether globalisation is accelerating opportunities or creating breach among people. Second, how the concept of social exclusion excludes individuals, groups or communities due to their social background. Being accepted as global and multi-dimensional concepts in social sciences; both globalisation and social exclusion have originated in the West, talks about social disparity among people.

Keywords: Globalisation, Social exclusion, Dalits, Caste, Disparity, Hindu social order, Varna

INTRODUCTION

Indian society is changing so fast in terms of social, economic, political, education and cultural domains, is one of the slogans among people. On the other hand, one looks at the rise of unjust, unfair, discrimination, exploitation atrocities, inequality/ disparity and exclusion among the weak in both urban and rural India, in the

present time. Both above arguments in Indian society are highly contradictory to each other. One may view that either society is changing rapidly due to globalisation through social disparity among people is positively coming down or it is failed to bring respective fairness for deprived sections of the society because of discriminatory practices of traditional social structure. In this context, we may broadly focus on two factors of interpretation: First, whether globalisation is accelerating opportunities or creating breach among people. Second, how the concept of social exclusion as a process excludes individuals, groups or communities due to their social background. As we know that both concepts, that is globalisation and social exclusion have originated in the West. Besides it, social exclusion basically explains the institutionalised attempt to keep a few segments of population away from their participation in the various aspects of life in a given society. It is about the denial of equal opportunities imposed by certain groups of society upon others, which leads to inability of individuals to participate in the basic social, civil, political, economic and cultural functioning of society in which they live (De Haan, 1997). In this regard, globalisation, Dalits, social exclusion and caste have been touched upon from a 'perspective from below'.

UNDERSTANDING GLOBALISATION

In the general parlance, the term 'globalisation' can be defined as a process of integrating world economies in the conditions of free markets, free flow of trade and capital and movement of persons across national borders. Further, it copes with the new world trade order and opening up of commercial market is one of the distinctive features of the contemporary world (Abercrombie *et al.*, 2006). In this sense, such an explanation over globalisation is a purely economic interpretation of the process that has originated in the West or developed society and spread up all over the world after 1990. More specifically, globalisation refers to overcome all borders and boundaries and brings the world closer economically and culturally where social relations are constructed across infinite spans of time-space (Giddens, 1990: 21, Pathak, 2006). Further, globalisation by Robertson, known as its father, defines it by mentioning, 'Globalisation as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole' (Robertson, 1992: 8). In other words, globalisation is a complex multidimensional phenomenon by which the world is becoming highly interconnected and interrelated through economic, social, political, cultural, technological and environmental levels by suggesting a world full of movement of persons and mixture, contact, linkage, persistence cultural interaction and exchange. Thus, the world is shrinking in terms of time and space making the world feel closer, smaller and distances shorter (Jogdand and Michael, 2003: 1). Therefore, the above explanation of globalisation is a broader and sociological in nature that largely explains the interrelationship between economic, political, educational and cultural dimensions of social life.

Here, we shall focus on two major aspects of globalisation by conceptualising and integrating it in terms of 'economic perspective' and 'non-economic perspective' (Sengupta, 2001) as mentioned above. Economic perspective of globalisation means open, liberal, free market and trade and flow of capital with fewer barriers. On the other hand, non-economic perspective includes socio-cultural, historical, political, educational and so on. Now, the latter is much debating discourse in academic circles than the former. In this way, globalisation comprises many dimensions such as its social, structural, economic, cultural and political correlates and consequences, ideology and epistemology or conceptual status in terms of integrated social and economic development of the contemporary societies (Singh, 2012: 206). According to Singh, globalisation is a composite process that results from the convergence of a series of developments in society. Thus, Singh explains that globalisation is a segmental rather than holistic approach in the context of its attributes by viewing 'financial or capital globalisation', 'telecommunication or media globalisation' and 'cultural globalisation' as separate developments referring to financial or capital globalisation on the one hand. Contrary to this, there are other segments of globalisation such as the 'media', 'communication' or 'culture', on the other hand. In this regards, this approach, according to him, has two weaknesses: First, it fails to help us in comprehending the role of the residual social structural realities and their emergent properties in terms of capital, communication or culture where it has got rejection from some societies, communities or groups whereas others accept it. Secondly, the segmental approach does not give enough weight to a holistic treatment of the process of globalisation (Singh, 2012: 206–7). On the other side, Oommen (2004) emphasises the process of globalisation and its impact on communication system that has converted the universe into a 'world society'. This means that the things which happen in one part of the world can be communicated to the rest. Further, Oommen argues that one world culture is different from one world society because of its four interrelated processes involved in the creation of the global culture including homogenisation, pluralisation, traditionalisation and hybridisation. In this situation, it may be said that the vast network of communication system, which produces a world society resulting in the process of homogenisation.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

More specifically, the term 'social exclusion' is relatively of recent origin in the mid-1970s in Western Europe mainly through the work of the International Institute of Labour Studies at the International Labour Organization (ILO), and it implies to the deprivation of the poor and the marginalised section of people in the world. Rene Lenoir (1974/1989) is the first initiator of the concept of social exclusion in the study of excluded people such as mentally and physically handicapped, suicidal people or people with the suicidal tendency, aged people who remain invalid with

regard to performing actively the productive role, abused children and the abusers, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginals, asocial persons and other socially 'misfits' in France before the 1970s (Sen, 2004). Social exclusion by De Haan (1997) is a denial of equal opportunities imposed by certain groups of people upon others in a society. This leads to their inability to participate in the basic social, civil, political, economic and cultural functioning of a society in which they live. On the other hand, Silver (1995) illustrates social exclusion by analysing that people may be excluded from earning their livelihood, at the prevailing consumption levels, through securing permanent employment, acquiring property like land, housing and so on and getting credits, achieving education, skills and cultural capital and so on. However, social exclusion, for Sen (2004), is a relational root of deprivation. Sen explains by distinguishing the constitutive relevance of exclusion (exclusion or deprivation is of intrinsic importance in its own rights) from its instrumental importance (exclusion itself is not impoverishing, but it can lead to the impoverishment of human life). He also differentiates between unfavourable exclusion and unfavourable inclusion and active and passive exclusion.

After the brief exposition of the concept of social exclusion when we look at a few writings about an excluded community like Dalits in India, we find that they have been perennially excluded and deprived from almost every aspects of life. In Indian context, for instance, Prakash Louis reveals that social exclusion of Dalits is entirely embedded in the various institutions of the Indian social system, particularly the Hindu social system. He further points out that the Dalits get excluded from the social, political, economic and cultural domains of their life. According to him, social exclusion or segregation is an institutionalised form of social distancing which keeps out a particular section of population from the usual functioning of a social order (Louis, 2003: 163). Further, he views that there are two types of excluded persons in Indian society. First, social groups concerning Dalits/untouchables/lower castes, tribal/adivasis/indigenous peoples, religious and linguistic minorities, the most backward castes, and especially women and children within these social groups. Second, sectoral groups consisting agricultural labourers, marginalised farmers, child labourers, domestic workers, informal workers/unorganised sectors workers, contract workers, plantation workers, fishing communities, manual scavengers, rural and forest-based communities, vernaculars speaking social groups and people with disability (Louis, 2007). Similarly, Thorat (2008) examines the nature of social exclusion in the Hindu social system by analysing that exclusion of an individual takes place from access to economic and social opportunities due to his or her individual attributes. On the other hand, in the case of group exclusion, all individuals belonging to a particular social or cultural group are excluded due to their group identity. This simply means that the individuals or persons belonging to certain groups are excluded, irrespective of their individual positive attributes, simply because of

their groups are excluded. Taking the argument further, we may clarify that since exclusion of Dalits happens due to their collective identity, that is caste which is mainly stigmatised and remains excluded (before) and after independence India, still how Dalits get excluded in the context of 'book view' and 'field view' based on the Hindu social order (Kumar, 2014: 117).

SITUATING DALITS

The term 'Dalit' is derived from the root 'Dal' which means to crack, open, split and so on. When it is used as noun or adjective, it means burst, split, broken or torn, downtrodden, scattered and so on. (Massey, 1995: 15). Dalits have been called by various names such as untouchables, 'Harijan' (a glorified term coined by Narasimha Mehta and adopted by Mahatma Gandhi), 'exterior caste' (used by J.H. Hutton), 'depressed classes' (by British Officials), 'out caste', 'Pariah' – undoubtedly derived from the Tamil generic word 'Para' or 'Parai' the 'drum' (Deliege, 1997). In ancient times, different nomenclatures or terminologies were used for them like 'Mlechha', 'Chandal' (used by Manu), 'Avarna', that is outside the four varnas, 'Nishada', 'Danlaku', 'Antyaja', 'Atishudra', (Michael, 1999: 12). On the other hand, the term 'scheduled caste', known as constitutional term, appeared for the first time in the Government of India Act, 1935. After then, the British Government issued the Government of India (scheduled castes) Order, 1936 identifying certain castes, races and tribes as scheduled castes. The term 'Dalit' which is known as a social category, originated from Panther movement in Maharashtra during the early 1970s and then became popularised in the rest parts of the country. Historically, Dalits have been the most excluded castes or communities of the society in India. They have been the most discriminated, exploited, subordinated and physically segregated communities in Indian society. They have also been the stigmatised people and suffering from numerous disabilities due to their low ascribed status, that is caste status which has remained regulated through the religious beliefs and practises. Such a caste status in Hindu social system is still immobile or stagnant despite having all unique talents or qualification. By and large, the majority of them also have low socio-economic status (class status), lack of political power, low literacy and educational level and social mobility including both untouchables and ex-untouchables in India. In other words, 'definition of the term Dalit' discussed by Kumar in the context of sociological, economic, cultural and their exclusion in the given Hindu social order is based on *dharma* and *karma* doctrines (Kumar, 2005).

GLOBALISATION AND DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES

In this segment, we may look into the impact of globalisation in India in general and deprived or marginalised section of society such as Dalits in particular and how it has been failed to fulfil the basic necessities for individuals in Indian society.

But in doing so, it is necessary to look into how the concept of globalisation has been used in the positive way for creating opportunities and healthy life for people. There is no doubt that globalisation has brought lots of change in terms of science, knowledge, technology, innovative production, agriculture, communication, education, economy, health and so on. But there is no acute evidence by which it can be said that globalisation has accelerated social change among deprived sections of society in India qualitatively and quantitatively.

It has been seen that during the last decade of globalisation, according to Teltumbde, saffronisation or communalisation of education has taken place in the academic institutions. It has variously sought to poison education with obscurantist, fundamentalist and fascist values of Hindutva to create the compliant mass of people that would not raise any question against the imperialist onslaught. As he views that Hindutva may be understood in terms of local manifestation of the globalisation. In this context, at the basic ideological level, they are same such as extreme individualist, anti-community, elitist, fascist, anti-democracy, anti-liberty, equality and fraternity (Teltumbde, 2003: 176–7) and the kind of spiritual education envisaged in the new curriculum framework of NCERT is quite contrary to the spirit of the Indian Constitution. In a similar way, for example, we have recently seen (in the year of 2016) the present Government were BJP and the RSS are trying to saffronise universities such as University of Hyderabad, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jadavpur University and others through ABVP or in the name of anti-national activities. Not only has that but even the government started oath ceremony in schools and colleges/universities that shows the agenda of Hindu Nationalism rather than creating a nation where people live together despite having different social, cultural, religious backgrounds. Moreover, it may be analysed that the current policy of the government is to commence teaching Upanishads, Veda and the appropriate traditional/classical texts emphasising the Hindu philosophy in the universities under the traditional paradigm. At the same time, there has been a fee hike in education in the name of modernisation through globalisation everywhere and, thus, privatisation and commercialisation of education has started in India after 1990. Hence, it is the biggest threat to the majority of Dalits belonging to both rural and urban societies. In a similar way, Teltumbde envisages that the following factors such as (i) general pauperisation of rural masses, (ii) unemployment and casualisation in the urban centres, (iii) elimination of motivation for investments in education on account of lack of jobs, (iv) rising price barrier around education, (v) marketisation of education and (vi) creation of neo-varna system are going to be affected because of globalisation. Therefore, he views that globalisation is a new elitist paradigm in which there is no space for Dalits by analysing Manu's code which had badly affected them for getting access to education for centuries and now globalisation with new-liberal code (Gohain, 2003: 177).

On the other hand, Nagla points out that some groups or sections are highly affected or marginalised due to globalisation in the name of development in Indian society by explaining that 'more than one-fifth of India's population does not have access to safe drinking water, nearly half of our population is illiterate, nearly two-thirds of our population lacks basic sanitation, nearly 40 per cent of our population lives in poverty' (Nagla, 2014: 48). In this context, we may focus on how population of India are largely affected and even their indigenous sources of livelihood in terms of fisheries, daily sectors, handloom or agriculture sectors, the small industries or even petty businesses (such as Kirana Shop, Bilal shop, Bidiwala, Tea stall, Weavers etc.), landless labourers, marginal farmers, slum-dwellers, backward classes (including upper, middle and lower), Dalits, tribal, women, linguistic minorities, ethnic groups and so on have been marginalised and excluded in one and other ways in the globalised world. This process of globalisation has also created (still creating) huge disparity between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in a Marxian sense where the poor are getting poorer and the rich are richer. There are countless studies that reveal that deprived sections in Indian society such as Dalits and Tribes are being displaced from their native place because of Multi National Corporation, Big Projects or Mega Projects, Big Bazaars, Reliance Fresh, Walmart, Adani and so on and even smart cities or projects coming up. Here, one may express this kind of anxiety about who will start their business in these areas and who will get benefit by selling projects if people are financially handicapped. Will local people or petty business men or women allow opening up their market and sale their product? In this case, the majority of them cannot access to market and can easily be affected by the process of globalisation in the name of modernisation or job opportunities. In other words, it may be mentioned that globalisation is also creating threats to the poor and the marginalised by widening the gap between a small group, on the one hand, which controls the world's knowledge, power and benefit the majority, on the other hand, who are being pushed to the margin (Kananaikil, 2003: 83). It is in the sense that marginalisation as a process that denies opportunities and outcomes to those persons who are on the margins and benefits those who are at the mainstream. It even leads to discrimination and social exclusion that rejects human rights, especially the right to live. In the context of Dalits, Guru (2000) focuses on different shades of marginalisation in India society such as, economic, social, cultural, political, intellectual and so on. But the most significant form among them is political marginalisation. By explaining that, he views that Dalits issues make only a token appearance in the election manifestos of leading political parties and when a Dalit gets included into the political hierarchy he is given an unimportant portfolio like Ministry of Social Welfare. It not only happens in the central cabinet but also in the state cabinet. For example, Ambedkar who was competent enough to handle the finance ministry but was given law. There are many evidences that reveal that marginalisation against Dalits in Indian political system are still visible. As far as

decision-making/policy-making process is concerned, it is only concentrated in the hand of upper caste representatives. They do not take the views of elected Dalit representative while formulating policies. Even a handful people from the Dalit communities at least show their courage to express their views but either they are not allowed to speak or are under pressure due to traditional caste hierarchy. Therefore, the bulk of them are still deprived of their access to such power and authority in Indian political systems because of political hegemony of the upper and middle level castes. In Indian society, Dalits or scheduled castes have remained the excluded or deprived (marginalised) groups or communities from their socio-cultural, economic, educational and political rights for centuries. They have been subjected to various kinds of social deprivation or discrimination and exploitation in the local systematic arrangement in the country. In fact, the origin of their exclusion from other groups or communities in the Hindu society or social system can very well be traced from the structural-functional organisation of the caste system itself. This can also be understood from the Hindu mythological narratives of the origin of all the four varnas or classes or social categories of the people—the Aryans and the types of specific roles or functions assigned to each of them (Ram, 2016: 386).

SOCIAL EXCLUSION: LOCATING ITS ROOT

Here, we shall reveal briefly the main domains of Indian social system in which the root of social exclusion are located. In this context, it is relevant to think over what Indology means in sociology. Indology, known as a branch of sociology, deals with Indian society based on such as ancient texts, ancient history, epic, religious manuscripts and sacred texts of Hindu. More interestingly, these texts include the classical ancient literatures of Indian society like *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Manusmriti*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharatha* and others. Moreover, it may be said that the sources of exclusion of Dalits are particularly the Hindu scriptures, sacred books or texts where we find insulting words like Achhut, Avarna, Chandal, Mlechha, Neech, Chhota for Dalits, segregation, restriction, hierarchy, derogatory, discriminatory, lopsided, purity and impurity against Dalits discussed by Ghurye 1979, Dumont 1966 and Srinivas 1992) in their works. In this regard, it may be viewed that they all have studied Indian society by referring Hindu texts. On the other hand, if we focus on the theory of *Chaturvarnya* (Hindu Social Order) or division of Hindu society into four orders (Srinivas, 1992: 28) it reveals that how three *varna* or castes (brahmin traditionally priest or scholar, Kshatriya, i.e. ruler or soldier, Vaishya, i.e. merchant known as 'twice-born') included in the society and forth one (Shudra, i.e. peasant, labourer and servant) is excluded from society where fifth one (untouchables or ex-untouchables) are completely outside the *varna* scheme. This *varna* or caste also refers to how one *varna* or caste is

originated from the creator such as *Brahmanas* from the mouth, *Kashtriyas* from arms and *Vaishya* from thighs and *Shudras* from feet (Srinivas, 1992: 29). Further, Ram (2009: 54) expresses his own point of view on Hindu Social Order or the caste system by focusing on that Hindu social order is unified from outside but highly fragmented from within in the context of numerous castes and sub-castes, numbering into thousands. As a result, we may state that such a theory of Chaturvarnya has not only divided society into many layers but at the same time also excluded them from the society in which they live. Taking the view further, we may also clarify that according to Hindu Philosophy, right hand and upper part of the human body are considered to be pure whereas left one and lower part are impure. Not only that but it also envisages that males are pure whereas females are impure. Therefore, females are prohibited to perform some rituals during specific periods of time in Indian society. In this regard, we may view that root of social exclusion of Dalits are largely rooted in traditional or classical texts of Hindu in particular. Therefore, in the context of India, it is significant to take the cognizance of Oommen (2014), who discusses about three specific sources of social exclusion are cultural heterogeneity, spatial externality and social hierarchy. Further, he focuses on secular and ritual dimensions in terms of exclusion by explaining that all Dalits, irrespective of their secular status, are excluded by higher castes vis-à-vis ritual dimension, but the poor Dalits are excluded both from the ritual and secular contexts by the higher castes. In this situation, it may be said that Dalits are most excluded social category in Indian society.

CASTE AS AN EXCLUDED SOCIAL CATEGORY

In the context of exclusion, the notion of caste/caste system plays a vital role in excluding rather than including Dalits from the social system. Due to such a social institution, Dalits have remained the excluded or deprived groups or communities from their socio-cultural, economic, educational and political rights for centuries. They have been subjected to various kinds of social deprivation or discrimination and exploitation in the local systematic arrangement in the country. In fact, the origin of their exclusion from other groups or communities in the Hindu society or social system can very well be traced from the structural-functional organisation of the caste system itself. This can also be understood from the Hindu mythological narratives of the origin of all the four varnas or classes or social categories of the people – the Aryans and the types of specific roles or functions assigned to each of them. As Ram (2008) argues by mentioning that all the four varnas had to perform four distinct functions and were assigned specific ranks or statuses higher and lower or superior and inferior, and any violation of these was subjected to punishment specifically in the form of ex-communication. According to Ambedkar (1979), caste means an artificial chopping off of the

population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy. He further illustrates about the genesis of caste as an outcome of the super-imposition of endogamy over exogamy (as a form of marriage) which he considered as one of the mechanisms for the genesis as well as growth of caste. Again, commensality or commensal relations taking food together cooked in the same kitchen, drinking water from the same pot and smoking from the same smoking stem which has remained confined to the members of a caste. Over and above, the national ritual or religious purity of mind and body of members of a caste, especially higher in the caste-hierarchy, has made it separate from members of another caste (See in details, Dumont, 1966). Thus, exclusion means throwing away or boycotting, either permanently or temporarily member(s) of a caste. Such strategy has remained in operation since the early period, and operates even today, especially among the lower castes in rural society, though it is applied generally on temporary and not on permanent basis (Dumont, 2008: 7–8). The denial of opportunity resulting into deprivation, discriminatory behaviour, exploitation and so on may be same of the manifestations of exclusion or social exclusion of a person or group in the contemporary Indian society. It is true that such a strategy or mechanism of the exclusion of the Dalits or scheduled castes is deeply rooted in the Hindu social structure as well as its social system where caste as an institution plays a crucial role.

There are many forms of social exclusion of Dalits in India such as discrimination, deprivation, exploitation, untouchability and so on, but among them the notion of untouchability has been discussed here. The root cause of untouchability is embedded in the *Varnashram Dharma* which is based on the superior and inferior gradation or ranking of one varna over the other in descending order (performing religiously the duty of one's varna, out of four of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudravarnas). According to the general understanding, the institution of caste is supposedly derived from the varna, which is relied on the fact that the hierarchy of caste system is analogous to that of the varna system and so also is the gradation or rank of each caste in the system. In addition, the caste system is based on observance of purity and pollution (Dumont, 1966). Such notions exclude the Dalits on the basis of their caste identity rather than including them in the social system. As we know, the contact of any kind through touching, dining, drinking and fetching water from the common well and so on between the institutionally distanced castes, that is Dalit and non-Dalit castes, along with the former's spatial segregation supposedly confirm the notion of untouchability. It is a fact that the people belonging to twice-born castes do not accept cooked food or water from the Dalits. They also do not have commensal or inter-dining relationship with them. Although people of the higher castes invite Dalits for ceremonial dinners,

the latter are served meals separately and that too in the end in rural areas. This shows that the exclusion of Dalits is on the basis of their group attributes and not on their individual attributes. Today as we see the caste in the relation of others in India is highly Indian society where 'castes of mind' by Dirks (2004: 5) refers to the modern phenomenon that is a product of historical encounter between India and Western colonial rule. In the contemporary context, it has been noticed that Dalits are remained discriminated via excluded from the Hindu social system on the basis of their primordial attribute, especially caste that is deeply embedded in the belief system of Hindu doctrines. Caste as a social identification of a person in India does not only exclude Dalits, but also place them in the lowest position of social system. In consequence of that, the social inconsistency appears among them.

CONCLUSION

In concluding remarks, briefly we have to focus on globalisation and social exclusion from a perspective from below in the context of deprived section of Indian society, especially Dalits in particular. By discussing about the process of globalisation at both conceptual and theoretical points of view in the contemporary scenario, we have mentioned that how globalisation is creating a gulf or cleavage among the rich and the poor, 'haves' and 'have-nots', educated and uneducated, weak and the strong and rural and urban in almost every sphere of societal life in India. By and large, such a perspective is deeply embedded in social, economic, educational, political and cultural aspects of Indian society by which exclusion of people takes place. As result, globalisation may be said as a dividing paradigm rather than an integrating one. On the other hand, social exclusion as a process copes with exclusion of Dalits from all spheres of life such as social, cultural, economic, political, educational and so on. Further, we have explained that how the notion of exclusion is deeply rooted in Indology which includes *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Manusmriti*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharatha* and others. In these sources, we find insulting words like Mlechha, 'Chandal', restriction, hierarchy, unfair, pure and impure, and *Neech* against Dalits. In this regard, caste plays a vital part in excluding Dalits from their social rights based on their ascribed status permanently or temporary in Indian society.

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