



PROMOTION OF SOCIAL INCLUSION OF RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES FROM THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Protection of religious and linguistic minorities in a pluralistic society like India is imperative for Social harmony. Novel paradigms to promote inclusiveness have to be explored. An inclusive Society regarding religions and languages is imperative for a concordant social fabric. The paradigms and needs to foster. Inclusiveness has to be well understood and appreciated by the educator as a primary necessity.

Keywords: *Religious Inclusiveness, Linguistic minorities, Social harmony Novel Paradigms.*



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Introduction -

Social inclusion is the acceptance of a society to the equality of values of all its citizens. In such a society, the different ways leading life are respected and the basic needs of all in the society are met with, without any discrimination all among caste, creed, religion, gender or class. All people in a society that have equal and easy access to good food, proper shelter and basic healthcare, irrespective of their religion or linguistic group is a socially inclusive society. Misogyny whether open or disguised for a specific religion on any pretext or prejudice sows the seeds of an exclusive society.

Social inclusion is a matter not only of an adequate share of resources but also participation in the determination of both individual and collective life chances.

(Stewart 2000), It overlaps with the concept of socioeconomic equality but is not equivalent to it. There are many ways that the poor can have fuller participation and inclusion even if they lack an equal share of resources. At the same time even the well-to-do may face problems of social exclusion because of political persecution or discrimination based on age, gender, sexual preference, or disability. The concept of social inclusion does not ignore the role of class but recognizes that a broad array of other variables help shape how class forces interact. Social exclusion and inclusion are context-specific concepts in at least three senses. First, the

dominant image, framework, ideal or paradigm of an inclusive society varies. Second, different geographical regions have different histories, cultures, institutions and social structures. These make some dimensions of social exclusion – economic, social, or political- more salient and important than others. Third, context-where one lives – makes a material contribution to social inclusion, shaping access to resources and social proximity.

A Socially inclusive society is thus one that develops the talents and capacities of all members, promotes inclusive participation in all walks of life, actively combats individual and systemic discrimination, and provides valued recognition to groups such as ethno-racial communities.

Social inclusion meant nothing or provoked anger and suspicion. This accurately reflects the understandable pessimism associated with many people's current status and lived experiences. For others, inclusion was a multi-dimensional process involving the self and opportunity or a goal, to reach somewhere better. Social inclusion means to facilitate the involvement of people like us who are usually left out of the community because we belong to a minority. It means giving a chance to those who are usually deprived of opportunities that others take for granted. Social inclusion is particularly important with regard to employment and vocational opportunities because it can significantly increase people's independence and autonomy.

In a country like India which was ruled for several hundred years by the Moghuls whose faith was Islam, by British whose faith was Christianity and by others & like the Portuguese and French, the religious minorities came to stay as a part of the complex texture of this ancient country. Attempts to exclude people of these faiths from the mainstream of Indian life and culture have not yielded fruit though need to curb religious, fanaticism and excessive pride for one's religion, language and hatred for another always needs to be redressed in a pluralistic society like ours.

The 'Madarasas' and 'Gurkuls' were started to protect the ethnic identity and impart knowledge of religious rituals and customs to children of the Islamic and Hindu faiths respectively in India. But these have gradually become centers of fostering exclusiveness among the innocent young minds. A taste of a variety of cultures and the pride in tolerance and respecting the noble ideals in different religions can be nurtured only through inclusive education. The more conservative a religious tradition is the more is the likelihood of it proclaiming that it alone holds the truth.

Exclusivism gives uncensored liberty to a specific group to preach its traditions and supposed superiority beliefs in an aggressive manner. Exclusivism has an atmosphere of

pluralism in an educational group wherein the educator is manifesting his ideas on religion, language, caste and creed. There is an inbuilt imposition of self censorship that promotes harmonious ways of teaching and learning. An educator becomes cautious and alert in the inclusive model of educating a diverse group of learners.

Branding of a particular faith often sows seeds of distrust for all the rest and ushers the beginning of the end of tolerance, for this reason, religious beliefs often generate tensions over social inclusion. Presuppositions must be held out in a polite manner. Militant religious fundamentalism is exclusiveness at best and more than not menaces harmony and catalyses eruption of sectarian violence. Inclusiveness has to be not only inter-religion but even intra-religion. Roman Catholicism, Shia Islam and Mahayana Buddhism, needless and the pyramidal caste based structure of the Hindus are all examples emphasizing the need of social inclusion of all religious and linguistic minorities to maintain social harmony. Tolerance may be seen as the other face of inclusiveness. Exclusiveness results in a cult that tends to foster fanaticism among religions and sects of religions. Religion then becomes an excuse for violence and a grab for socio-economic alienation and fanatic extreme nationalism. Without social illusion of different religions, religious sects and linguistic minorities a society cannot exist, a nation cannot last and a community cannot live in harmony.

If exclusivism was controversial, Pluralism-was for many Christians mind-blowing. Coming from liberal Protestants on one side (notably John Hick and his colleagues) and from a group of (mainly Indian) Asian Catholic theologians (notably Raimundo Panikkar) on the other, it seemed to many Christians to be a capitulation to Hindu and Buddhist ideas: the acceptance that Christianity was not the only way to God, the view that all great faiths are like rivers flowing into a great common ocean. Though different in outward form they share the same source. The pluralist theology of religions does not enjoy much traction with leadership in the Christian churches. Yet in secular society it has become the norm. One might even say that most Christians are exclusivists on Sundays and pluralists in the workplace.

A social inclusion lens enables the portrayal of people's access in a community to the assets of the society. These include nutritious food, convenient shelter, good medical care, employment, education and equal opportunities in arts and cultural activities. Teachers' beliefs and values bolster or mar the paradigms of inclusive education and affect their sustenance depending upon the ideals and depth of knowledge of teachers. Thus educators who are positive about the needs of the paradigms to foster inclusive education are essential for the successful impact of inclusive education.

India is primarily an agro based nation, and majority of the people dwell in villages. The structure of the social fabric is based on the agro based cottage industries in villages. This pattern is changing but the type of employment of a villager determines his position in the social strata and hence his status.

Two great philanthropists advocating humanism and tolerance all their lives – Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi had different views on migrations to cities from villages. Dr. Ambedkar had realized that the rural set up of India nurtured an inbuilt exclusion in the social strata and appealed to his followers to flock to cities for employment to break the shackles of casteism. This was in favour of an inclusive society. Mahatma Gandhi on the contrary adhered to the idea of self sufficient villages based on cottage industries and was anti to urbanization. Today we realize how Dr. Ambedkar's ideas were more pragmatic and culminated in a more inclusive society. The situation in towns and cities is far different where a person can perform any job or trade irrespective of his or her ancestral or ethnic roots. Thus villages are primarily exclusive and towns and cities are inclusive in nature regarding the religious and social fabric of the Indian Society.

Paradigms of social inclusion vary with political philosophy. Confucian thought prefers social harmony over individual freedom. Conservative thought views social order as a result of hierarchy of authority engulfing individual, family, community and nation.

Inclusion of linguistic minority -

Inclusion of linguistic minority in a country like India assumes importance since it is a nation having people speaking 22 languages, 720 dialects written in 13 scripts. Although Hindi language is spoken by a vast number of people in India residing in the Gangetic basin encompassing seven Northern states, it is not the National language since the script, dialect and verbal style of the languages spoken in Southern India – Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada and Tamil are far different from Hindi which has its roots in Sanskrit. Exclusiveness regarding languages snowballs into the feeling of disparity among linguistic minority groups. This causes discord in the various social strata. Hence linguistic inclusiveness is of great importance in a multilingual country like India. Even after sixty-six years after the formation of the Marathi-speaking state – Maharashtra in India, the region of Belgaum which was inadvertently included in the neighboring Kannada speaking Karnataka State is a socially simmering pot even today for want of linguistic inclusion of that area by the rules of that state. Belgaum has predominantly Marathi population. Thus the need for inclusiveness of linguistic minorities is glaring.

In India's minority rights discourse the issue of linguistic rights has not been of much concern. This is unjust, as the denial of linguistic rights not only hampers the cultural development of a community, but is also detrimental for the social and economic development of a minority and for the society as such. While the culture industry and the big media privilege a few dominant languages, minority languages and tribal cultures alike are dying a silent and slow death. In India many such languages have definitely disappeared and several more are on the edge of extinction. This fact is not unknown to politicians; rather it is taken as the inevitable price to be paid for economic modernization and cultural homogenization.

The case of the Urdu language is an interesting one. It has no signature on it of any specific religion or cultural but has derived its beauty from the pretty blend of its root in Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit to varying extents. This is inclusiveness at its best. Urdu origin words have pervaded into many Indian languages like Hindi, Marathi and Gujarathi to enrich their flavor.

Conclusion :

With time the contextual effects contributing to social inclusion regarding identity and access keep changing. They vary with resources, facilities and social composition. Places are stratified. Manifestations of lack of inclusiveness develop cracks in the harmony of a society especially exclusiveness regarding religion. While social exclusion is condemned as unjust, inclusiveness has its downsides too. Identity values may be jeopardized, languages and scripts may become extinct and tribes cannot maintain their identity.

However these drawbacks of inclusiveness are minor when compared with its advantages of fostering social harmony. Certainly the balance is heavily tilted in favor of inclusiveness in any progressive society having religious and linguistic minorities.

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