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11.1 INTRODUCTION

Development and democracy are the two key concepts that have captured the human imagination during the last two centuries. While developmental processes have tried and brought prosperity and economic well being to people, democracy has been instrumental in assuring that the result of development is widely distributed among diverse groups. In recent years, large number of people, communities and families across societies has been facing the threat of dislocation from their habitat, economy and even families due to the skewed manner in which either development is taking place or its results are being distributed. Anger against such exclusion and dislocation have found articulation in wide spread protests against economic policies and political oppression which backed such policies from across the world in recent years. One of the ways in which the effects of this large-scale economic dislocation is sought to be mitigated is through what is termed as policy of Social Inclusion.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The meaning of social inclusion and its different kinds
- Social inclusion in historical and contemporary context
- Gandhi's efforts towards evolving social inclusion.

11.2 THE CONTEMPORARY POLICY OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

Increasing reach of larger economic interest to even smaller economies have led to breaking down of local economies, patterns of consumption, societal mores and values and large-scale use of natural resources. Consequently, there has been increasing homogenisation of the economies and societies at the cost of the richness of life in the hitherto non-integrated societies. There is an obvious sense of loss of diversity and autonomy. In the current phase of development there has been the loss of social place or habitat by large multitude, through large-scale extraction and use of natural resources. The dams, the mines, plantations or cash crops cultivation have also been the economic activities which also led to quite skewed social and cultural impact leading to the marginalisation and exclusion of hundreds of communities whether they are the forest dwelling tribes in Amazon or Congo, or the tribal population in Orissa or Southern Africa, or the plantation economies in western Africa or in northern and southern India. Precisely, it has led to a kind of homogenous development at the cost of human and biological diversities. There have been political and social movements protesting against marginalisation and exclusion, demanding a more inclusive society. Multilateral institutions like World Bank, and a large number of non-Governmental organisations have come up with packages of projects collectively referred as Social Inclusion policy. The rationale for advocating such is to thwart the criticism of the developmental paradigm within capitalism that apparently pushed a large number of people and groups to the margins of economy and society.

11.3 SOCIAL INCLUSION AS A HISTORICAL PROCESS

Socially a more inclusive society cannot be created merely through policy packages. In fact in human history, social inclusion as a policy instrument comes up only in recent times with the advancement of democracy and new phase of capitalism. It has otherwise been rare that the political ruling groups would adopt a policy of social inclusion. It would sound strange as most political system were based on social division and the ruling groups thrived on divided social fabric. On the other hand, however, there have been attempts from within the societies to usher new ways and principles of accommodating individuals, communities and groups. This accommodation proceeded both horizontally as well as vertically. New groups, or foreign elements either migrating from other locale required horizontal inclusion into societies. Indian society has been a very good example where principles and processes to assimilate, or include and accommodate groups or people have been in operation for centuries. Many tribal groups, for example, Sakas and Hunas, from central and west Asia and beyond came and settled in different parts of India. Society, over the time, absorbed them through different mechanisms. There were new terms coined to regulate the social interaction with these new groups. Mlecchas was not only the term for the foreign elements but also signified the code of relationship that was designed between the native and the foreign elements. In the course of time, the foreign elements lose their traces and become part of the local community. The medieval history too witnessed such incorporations by different groups.

In the nineteenth century the British writers and administrators thought that the Indian society was immobile and non-change was its defining characteristic. The 'unchanging village community' with its 'self-sufficient economy' was thought to be the example par excellent of this. Theories about caste, religion, etc., by many foreign scholars were based on these assumptions. In reality, however, there were very dynamic interactions between institutions and human groups and this relationship transcended villages, regions and quite often had continental dimensions. Pilgrimage sites were of such interesting networks. Many groups and ideas and values had their entry into the societies in this horizontal interaction.

What, however, is more intricate is the basis and processes of inclusion vertically. Historians, for example, pointed out that in modern times colonialism produced the most intense unequal relationship between societies, between the one which was colonial and exploited the resources of the colonised societies through various instruments. The colonial system, in its turn, legitimised this unequal relationship on the basis of race, technology or civilising mission. Delving deeper into the working of both the colonial and colonised societies, one soon discovers that the unequal relationship was based on the unequal ownership of the factors of production which historian Bipan Chandra had first pointed out as 'colonial mode of production'. It was further argued that this inequality characterised even the pre-colonial social order in the colonised societies. Historian Irfan Habib, for example, showed how the Mughal Empire and economy was an exploitative economy so far as the poor were concerned. Later day historians showed how the contemporary society remained anchored on unequal relationship and perpetuated this unequal economic order, locally, regionally, nationally and globally. It is generally argued that it was very significant that bases of this unequal order be understood properly so that appropriate response can be created.

11.4 EXCLUSION AND KINDS OF EXCLUSION

Economic and political exclusions are very significant as they not only are the grounds on which social and cultural exclusion are legitimised but they also prevent efforts to create inclusive society. For example, mining and other industries located in the province of Jharkhand and Orissa in India is monopolised by big business groups from outside the province. People whose habitat is used for mining neither have economic nor political clout to impose better economic terms for the land that have being taken away from them quite often with the connivance with the officials siding with the rich and powerful. One can see globally how the multinational companies and the countries backing them, fight to retain their hold over the mining areas in Africa, South America and Asia, and have inflicted some of the worst violence in the region. The decade long agitation to save Narmada River in India has shown how the economic planning quite often ignores the lives and arguments of the economically and politically marginal people and destroys their lives, economies and culture. Thus, location in the economic hierarchy leads to marginalisation. It is this trend which one sees is getting exacerbated in the recent times.

Bases of Exclusion

We saw that economic inequality quite often creates the basis of unequal society. But the basis on which exclusion from economy and polity is legitimised historically and in contemporary times have been ideas like that of colour, gender, language, religion and ethnicity and caste.

(A) *Race*: Race or in some sense colour, has been a significant marker of difference and has been the basis for excluding people from economic, political and cultural power. One of the most intense examples in the modern times has been the way the black population in many parts of North and Southern America has been denied some of the basic civic rights. Not long ago the anti-Semitic feelings were mobilised in a systematic way by the Nationalist socialist party in Germany and excluded the Jews from all affairs. It finally led to the six million Jews being killed. Roma (Gypsies) people in the central and Eastern Europe live an abysmal life of exclusion, political, social, cultural and economic, and discriminated precisely on the basis of race. There is an unsaid division in the world between the white races and the non-white so far as the control of resources is concerned. Thus, rich versus poor division also quite often reflects racial division. There are insidious ways that it works. Within the nations which has multicoloured population the racial division and discrimination is widespread. Quite often the racial division reflecting as it does, the economic division, requires an attack on the economic basis of the exclusion. In Latin America, for example, the whole of mining and plantation economy has been the monopoly of the erstwhile white colonialist and their creole descendants while millions of indigenous as well as the black population and the erstwhile indentured labourers from India, China and other places lived a life of subsistence. The global financial/ governance institutions too are controlled by more or less by developed countries and an element of racial division is quite often obvious.

(B) *Gender*: Gender, the division of the people and social exclusion on the basis of sex has been there for centuries and it is the most obvious discrimination principle which creates an ideology of patriarchy to legitimise and support it. It is one of the oppressive ideologies and needs careful and intense critique. The Feminists movement that emerged in the west attacked this exclusionary principle by arguing for equality of men and women. Later in the 1970s and 1980s, one also found that the stronger opposition to the gender discrimination began adopting a position that men and women are biologically different and the fight for equality should not undermine this difference. Simultaneously, the protest movements across the world reflected the adverse impact of the developmental processes on women. Scholars like Arturo Escobar emphasised argued that an inclusive development should be a gender sensitive development.

(C) *Class*: A careful perusal of human history also indicates that societies have been divided in relation to the ownership of factors of production. The surplus that one section extracts on the strength of its location in the production process determines its location in the society. Therefore classes which are extracting surplus also determine the way the society organises its value, ideological and political organisation. The capitalist society today has, for example, the capitalist class which also is the ruling class. Arguably, any inclusive society means that there should be change in the way productive relation and productive system is organised and

surplus is extracted. This is a tall order and thinkers have called for revolution to bring such a change.

(D) *Aboriginals* in many societies, particularly in the settler societies, are excluded from political, economic and social order. For example, the way the aboriginals from the Northern America and South America survived the onslaught and still live an excluded life demonstrates this. In other older societies too aboriginals are pushed out of the mainstream of existing social-political-economic order. The Veddas in Sri Lanka, Ainus in Japan are some examples. In India too, a large number of tribal population has been living the existence of seclusion and their seclusion often makes them an excluded part of population.

(E) *Religion* has also been quite a powerful tool of exclusion in the human societies. Even today in most part of nationally organised communities, it is religious demarcation that defines the principle of exclusion. Religious minorities are excluded in many societies from many areas of public life. The Hindus, the Ahmadiyas and the Christians for example do not have the same access to public space in Pakistan, a predominantly Islamic state. Similarly in many countries non-majoritarian public space is also small. In Sri Lanka for example the Tamils were excluded from many public offices precisely because the language and region began to be the sole criterion for accessing public offices and spaces.

(F) *Caste*: In India caste has, for long, defined the hierarchical and exclusionary social order. Discrimination has been practiced at many levels on the basis of caste. The worst sufferers of the caste-based exclusion had been the untouchables in most parts of the country where they were excluded from even the normal village existence and they could come to the village for food and other things only by announcing their arrival so that the other caste could save themselves from getting polluted by going away from the public spaces. Public spaces were denied to them which included the village well, or village temple or pond. Centuries of exclusion had created manifold disadvantages.

The contemporary global capitalist formation is also bringing new phenomenon like human trafficking, environmental refugees, forced displaced people, and many groups which are victims of exclusion in the society they take shelter.

11.5 FORMS AND EXPERIENCE OF INCLUSION

As we know the process and the basis of exclusion, we understand the way inclusion principle works. Interestingly, there has always been very powerful movement to protest the state of exclusion, thereby making the society more inclusive of the diverse communities, and groups. However, in a society defined and divided by caste, it was always very difficult to include people without defining their exact location. In 1941, N.K.Bose talked about the Hindu ways of absorption and how different tribes have been absorbed within Hindu society by accommodating them as a group practising the particular specialised crafts. This was a significant mode of inclusion that was historically obtained. Historians have pointed out that the most significant process of inclusion, both vertically and horizontally, for centuries, had been through assumption of particular *jati* name and become part of the large pantheon of Indian society. Many have suggested that with Conversion to another religion one has

introduced a new element and organisation principle but a careful observation would suggest that even after conversion many groups have retained their previous *jati* identity to preserve its domain and space in the larger social frame.

With the widening of the Indian national and social horizon, new elements like, for example, Naga, Mizos, or other tribes from extreme East came under the national rubric who were socially not part of the erstwhile socio-cultural setting based either on *jati* or *dharma*. The ethnic variety from north-eastern part brought a fresh new component and was to be accommodated in the social horizon. It remains an extremely significant issue as to what facilitates inclusion of the new groups into a new national space coming to life during the last 100 years or so. The idea of a nation in India, with its distinctive inclusive appeal, has helped to bring many groups and people to a common world of economy, polity and in many cases a cultural dialogue. The democratic template provides this new nation with its distinct inclusiveness. The modern base of the nation in the Indian setting in fact allows one to avoid two particular extremes, i.e, identity-based exclusive nation and second, the exacerbation of the primordial identity to the exclusion of all others.

Historically, religious movements like Bhakti movement in the 8th to 12th and later during 15-17th centuries provided strong critique of the principle of exclusive and orthodox social order. The Veersaiva movement in the South and Nanak, Kabir, Ravi Das, provided strong indictment of the existing social order and brought a new social philosophy of openness. Coming of Islam, with its strong emphasis on a new social order based on equality, too brought openness which was further advanced by the Sufi orders which went far and beyond to bring many groups into close proximity a prerequisite for a sense of togetherness. Social reforms were integrally connected with religious reforms. That is why when in the nineteenth century social reform movement phase came, the reformers clearly attacked the religious core of the legitimising principles inherent in social inequalities. It is significant here that the attack on the Hindu social order and its practice of exclusion of lower castes by the Christian missionaries since the nineteenth century, an attack which is continued even today by the evangelists, provided one of the major thrust for the religious and social reformers to work for removing inequalities from the Hindu social order. It is no wonder that from 1820s onwards, many intellectuals and social leaders like Raja Rammohun Roy, Jyotiba Phule, Sri Narayan Guru, Ayothiadas, Dayananad Saraswati, Dadabhai Naoroji and others saw the urgency of changing the existing social order. In this they all attacked caste system and practices like untouchability prevalent in India. Raja Rammohun Roy, for example, attacked the prevailing social division based on caste as antagonistic to any new vision of a new world. It was later when the Indian Social Conference was set up with the efforts of the great reformer of India, M.G.Ranade, N.G. Chandravarkar, etc., that a dedicated modern movement to change such practices came into mainstream. In the meantime, however, individual efforts to empower groups and communities were carried on by individuals and groups with tremendous zeal and sacrifice. Jyotiba Phule in Maharashtra, for example, opened school for women and through his writings, carried on campaign to attack the basis of inequality. When the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885, it took up a social change agenda but soon it realised that it can take up social issues only at the peril of its

political plank of bringing people together and became cautious. However the social conference had very close cooperation with the Congress and it held its annual session along with the Congress session when the new and aggressive section led by Tilak led to the ouster of the Social Conference from the Congress session. It also signifies a complete divorce between the political movement for freedom and social movement for changes in society. It was only with the arrival of Gandhi that the agenda of social reform got entwined with the political vision.

It is this integration of social and political with a modern vision that defined the social vision of Indian nationalism. The formation of a large space in India with nation as an abstract but assemblage of values has helped evolve a very powerful inclusion principle. The national space evolving in opposition to colonialism was in fact imbued with a strong notion of justice and equality. The idea emerged when the middle class intelligentsia in Bengal, Maharashtra and other provinces began to give shape to the territorial idea of a nation. This was the time most of the North east and many other parts were not part of India as such. Assam, for example, became part of the British India only after 1826. The level of ignorance about many parts of India was widespread. Notwithstanding this ignorance about territory, large numbers of people have been coming under the fold of the Indian nation to realise their democratic ideals.

The creation of this space began during the national movement for freedom. The Indian national movement was the largest mass movement and this led to its acquiring its democratic, open and inclusive character. In a mass movement people join the movement breaking all boundaries of class, caste, region etc. As Visalakshi Menon opines, during the non-cooperation movement and civil disobedience movement a large number of women had come out in public breaking the gender prejudice and went to jail. Similarly, different shades of the communist and socialists who tried to mobilise the peasants, the working class during the national movement helped in bringing large sections of the marginalised people into the democratic mainstream of the nation.

11.6 GANDHIAN WAYS OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

Gandhi's intervention has been truly phenomenon in the realm of social inclusion. His success in bringing people of all hues to the national movement and thereby enlarging the space of further extending the frontiers of freedom was enormous. By bringing up the social issues to the centre of his movement, he provided that space with a social conscience. This defined the democratic order later. He brought issues of untouchability and Hindu-Muslim divide at the highest priority level and did not prioritise freedom from colonial rule at the cost of these issues. He argued that freedom from foreign rule is meaningless unless accompanied by freedom from our own ills.

The **Anti-caste movement** led by Gandhi can be said to be unique in the history of movement for a human society based on the principle of non-hierarchical arrangement. Gandhi personally led the movement to mobilise public opinion for such a society and

particularly against the prevailing practice of untouchability. In 1924-25 and again in 1934-35 he toured the whole country to mobilise opinion against untouchability- a practice which saw a major chunk of humanity being treated as beyond sub-human level.

The thrust of Gandhi was that the savarnas or the upper caste who perpetrated the treatment should own up the responsibility for their acts of omission and commission and take initiative to end the practice in such a way that the fundamental principle behind the exclusion is wiped out. He argued that it was the idea of hierarchy that underlies the practice of untouchability. Once this principle is wiped out of existence, the caste system can be said to have purged of this principle. He therefore considered other practices as a symbol or symptom of the disease while the disease was the idea of hierarchy. One of the areas that symbolically attacked was the temple entry movement in Guruvayur and Vaikom. Gandhi wanted the upper caste who practised discrimination to change and invite those who were denied admission. Thus he wanted the social inclusion to take place not on the basis of the right but of acceptance because he felt that right-based approach does not endure but the change of heart and mind would.

There were famous temple entry movements in Kerala, one in Guruvayur and the other in Vaikom. The congress and many other Satyagrahis marched to open the doors of the temple so that the deprived sections too could gain entry. The movement aroused the whole of the country and had Gandhi's blessing. Though there were moves by the Maharajas' government to resist it, the movement remained non-violent and aroused the conscience of the society against the practice of untouchability and exclusion.

Gandhi made the **Hindu Muslim divide** a major political plank and advocated that the divide needs to be broken and both begin to respect each other's religion and live like brothers. In Noakhali, which was affected by riots, he asked the Hindu women to make the Muslim women literate as this not only brings education but also brings down the walls of separation. He negotiated with Jinnah and resigned to the fact of partition, which he felt, was not to be based on the Two-Nations theory as that would have been exclusionary.

On the issue of the dalits being converted to Christianity, he attacked the idea of conversion as he thought that was a wrong way to address the issue. He argued that it shows disrespect to other religion as it privileges one religion over the other. It does not address the question of correcting the aberration if any that has crept in any religious practice. In practice too, one found that conversion- instead of creating a more inclusive principle- brings a new exclusionary base to come into operation. This also meant that the process of inclusion should be without violence. However, what is unique in the Gandhian approach was the attack of the very foundation of the principle of exclusion. Mandela adopted this approach during the anti-apartheid struggle. Martin Luther King had approached the issue of blacks in the US similarly.

Democratic inclusion: Gandhi's idea of inclusion through non-violent means also foresees a democratic system to operationalise it. He was in favour of broad-based democratic order reaching up to the villages. Non-violent inclusion was in some way coterminous with the democratic ways of inclusion. This interestingly was also the basis on which most of the Indian leaders fought for inclusion, including Nehru who wanted a socialistic order, Ambedkar who wanted the current caste-based exclusion to be eliminated, and many others. Democracy and development seemed to all of them to be the guaranteed way to bring inclusion without violence and in the most effective way. The idea of justice and equity was to be prioritised over anything else. Interestingly the critique of internal social order was not delinked from the critique of external social order as it was realised by the leadership in India that the exclusionary principles in the world are all related and legitimise each other. For example, the racial understanding of society at the global level gives credence to racial theories at home and similarly class-based discrimination abroad also legitimises class-based exclusion at home. Therefore, from the beginning, at the international level, it argued for non-racial organisation of the world institutions and polity. India was the first country to raise the voice of anti-racial and anti-colonial world.

A very critical component was the tradition and traditional institutions like community, caste etc. were found to be legitimising the social order based on discrimination. It is here the role of the education and educational institution was most critical. The public institution has done the most effective inclusion throughout the world and the independent India tried to imbibe socially inclusive educational policy. There are heavy roadblocks as nearly 40% of Indian school going children do not go to school. Experiments involving millions of children by groups like MV Foundation in Andhra Pradesh have found that it is not poverty but wrong policy that prevents children from going to school. Thus education remains the most significant inclusive agenda as it not only brings different social groups onto a single platform but it also fosters modern ideas of democracy, gender equality, justice which would sustain the inclusive ideas for the generation. Ambedkar for example argued that Hindu religion legitimised castes and untouchability; the communists argued that communities based on religion hide the fact of internal exploitation based on gender or class. The template of modernisation was adopted along with development so that the idea of citizenship is developed and idea of justice and democracy takes deep root.

11.7 IMPEDIMENTS TO INCLUSION

Some movements for inclusion adopted the right-based approach and argued that as individual and community and nation, it is the inalienable right to be treated humanely and with dignity. Ambedkar for example insisted that the depressed classes have to be given their right not by changing the heart of the upper castes but with attacking the basis of the exclusion, i.e., that legitimised the caste discrimination. Ambedkar's theory is the most modern right-based approach and in fact he was also one of the key figures who helped Nehru to use legal angle to change the laws detrimental to women. Interestingly it is the legal and right-based approach that the women's groups have demanded as a means to create space in public. In fact modern Indian state has tried to employ fundamental rights as guarantee for

socio-cultural diverse groups and communities to come into the national fold without losing their particular tradition and religio-cultural traits.

Certain Modern Political Processes and phenomenon have become impediments to an inclusive society. In the international context racial ideas are still the biggest impediment against the vision of inclusive society. Till recently it was very difficult for the Jews to get socially acceptable paces due the entrenched anti-Semitism in many places in world including in America. In the Indian context, the phenomena of communalism and caste are major impediments. Both refer to a process that began in the late nineteenth and first half of twentieth century whereby the people of one particular caste or religious community is invoked in achieving certain political goals and the group is defined in terms exclusively of its primordial identity and its secular interests are seen completely in variance as well as antagonistic to the caste and religious community. Now the communal political mobilisation in the 1940s led to communal violence of large scale and finally led to the division of the nation. Thought it was based on the issue of religion, it could not bind the country and the issue of language led to the division of the state into two, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Inside India, the communitarian mobilisation around the idea of Language led to the demand of linguistic states. It led to lot of passion and consequently agitation and violence. From 1952 to 1956 – state reorganisation commission which toured the country, and recommend the division of many areas, have helped the passion to subside only to come up again in the forefront in the 1980s when regions like Vidarbha, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Darjeeling etc. began to demand separation from the states. This was in addition to the demand of separation of various groups in North-eastern part of the country. In 1972 with the creation of Meghalaya and other states in North-east, the Indian government had tried to scotch any further inter-ethnic antagonism. Currently the demand for the greater Nagaland has been a major problem for an inclusive society as it has created very strong feelings between Nagas and Manipur and the later felt they are forced to accept something against their collective wishes. The affairs in the North-east bring together the issue of tribal and non-tribal inclusion, inter-tribal issue, and intrusion of foreign agent into the country. On the other hand, economic inclusion has taken place with the Indian market becoming larger and bigger. This has led to the Marxist formulation that the capitalism stream rolls all diversities and creates a homogenous society. The Indian democracy too has worked to bring substantial classes into the Indian political, economic and educational system. However loss of diversities might create the demand for cultural tightening. It creates cultural systems like, for example, the new inheritance law for the Khasi women in Meghalaya where women who married outside their community are deprived right over property.

11.8 SUMMARY

There have been contradictory processes taking place in the world today. While there has been serious efforts to create one large society called European Union by including many nations of Europe, many nations are in the meantime breaking up releasing ancient hatred and prejudices that has led to brutal ethnic cleansing and wanton massacre in many such parts, i.e., Yugoslavia, between Serbian, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims, between the

erstwhile communist and the non-communist, the developed west and the east Europe. Similarly while there has been need for immigrant labour, the same immigrant labour lives an excluded and marginal life in all such societies. Similarly, at the intellectual level, while the new globalisation is invoking the inclusion of all the societies into one world order, the practice of the neo-colonial economy is excluding many communities from the political and economic order. One the most prominent trends within the new liberal order is invoking fragmenting rather than connecting, exclusion rather than inclusion in its correct sense. The core of the neo-liberal intellectual exercise has been that there are fragments and that there must not be inclusion into any whole and rather fragments should hang around. Nevertheless, empowering individual and communities has become the core principle for the new ideas of inclusion. The origin or the source of empowerment however has not been very apparent. Quite often it is from a source outside the individual or community, i.e, outside, from World Bank, or from international agencies. It is again here that a critique of “state” emerges as an agency. Thus all arguments which bring state into picture are discarded as non-empowering principle. However, a close appraisal would show that the state and nation are some of the key agencies that still play a very crucial role in bringing communities, individuals and groups together by removing many of the exclusionary ingredients in the society.

11.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by social inclusion? Trace the historical background for the emergence of this concept.
2. Discuss at length the bases of exclusion.
3. Analyse the Gandhian methods of social inclusion.
4. What, in your opinion, are the impediments to the process of inclusion?

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