Conceptualizing Social Exclusion from Hilary Silver's Multidimensional Perspective

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Abstract

Social exclusion as a concept evolved in the late twentieth century to analyze the structuralblockage of individuals. It started gaining momentum within a short two decade-period,and succeeded in overshadowing other issues of development and underdevelopment discourses. Eventually, a context was emerged in which different societies are labeled or analyzed in terms of their exclusionary or inclusionary practices. Attempts of analyzing societies from social exclusion theories were highly popular, but most of the scholar's focus were limited either to a single or a few dimensions of social exclusion. It is felt that the diverse and stratified society needs multidimensional perspective for being properly analyzed. This paper, therefore, aims to review pertinent theories of social exclusion, and synthesizes the main arguments from them. After reviewing a dozen of scholastic writings, this paper gives hand to Hilary Silver'sidea of multidimensional perspective in analyzingthe social exclusion. It concludes that the multidimensional form and nature of social exclusion analyzed more convincingly by Hilary Silver is more applicable to portray the picture of type and intensity of social exclusion in Nepal.

Keywords:exclusion, inclusion, inequality, perspective, poverty.

Introduction

Social exclusion as a concept was first coined in the mid-1970s by Red Lenoir, but it gained widespread recognition only from the 1980s (Silver, 1994). And as a heavyweight catchphrase, itentered to the development discourse of Nepal since the 1990s. Once the government of Nepal (GoN) in 2003AD incorporated social inclusion as one of the four pillars of poverty reduction initiatives viaits Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), social exclusion started to be widely detested within the country. In line with the strategy, the GoNwith support from its allies, including the national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs),introduced several programs and projectsin view of imparting the excludedgroup of peoplein the mainstreamsociety and overthrowthe historical process of exclusion. Social inclusion, in this way, started gaining speed momentum. Discussion on exclusion-versus-inclusion came gradually diffused from the official settings and reached to the multiple corners of society in the form of speech of political leaders, and gossips of civilian meetings. Despite inclusion being understooda necessary and quality weapon by the authentic stakeholders such as policy-makers, policy-implementors, and the excluded group of people to combat exclusion, it is widely heard that the inclusion of socially excluded group of people in mainstream Nepali society as desired is yet to be realized.It compels, thus, to think on whether the conceptsocial exclusion and its multiple forms

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of dimensions are properly understood and used. Throughout this piece of writing, theory and theme of social exclusion elaborated by roughly a dozen of scholarsis reviewed. Along with, scenario of social exclusion in Nepal is assessed with particular reference to Hilary Silver's multidimensional nature and form of exclusion. To put it other way, literature review is the only methodology that is inserted in developing this article.

Hilary Silver and Social Exclusion

Social exclusion refers to a process whereby individuals, groups or sometimes the particular communities of people are restrictedtoenterintothe key functional areas of a society. It blocks individuals to participate in the economic, social, political and cultural functioning of a mainstream society, and thus separates them from enjoying various rights, opportunities and resources. Many people, despite being part of the same community/society, are excluded either partially or fully, depending upon the social context of the given society. It precludes people from their "full participation in the normatively prescribed activities of a given society and denied access to information, resources, sociability, recognition, and identity, eroding self-respect and reducing capabilities to achieve personal goals" (Silver, 2007).This sort of systematic preventing of people from rights, resources and opportunities pushes them to poverty, isolation, deprivation and vulnerability.The problem of unequal distribution of resources and opportunities to people can be solved by providing resources and opportunities to them; it however depends upon the form and nature of the regime,but the socially excludedpeople's problems remain unsolved because they have to live in an underdog position unlesstheir inclusion is ascertained, and theirrights as other people have enjoyedare guaranteed. Despite the fact, Silver does not believe that the inclusion necessarily combats exclusion. Though exclusion and inclusion survive in a zero-sum relationship, they could never be the 'perfect antonyms'for Silver.

Silver is fully clear that no individual istotally excluded or included at the same time. People are included in some respectsand are excluded in other respects. Women have their own forums, where men are denied to enter. Old-age people make their own associations, where youths are excluded. It means that the goat's business is not the sheep's business. Workers have their own forums or trade unions, where employers are excluded.Some associations are open to people of particular caste and lineage, but are close to others. Member of one political party is denied to participate the activities carried by other political party. Therefore, it is simply that the process of inclusion of some groups reinforces the exclusion of others.Italso implies that the terms inclusion and exclusion do not carry the universal meaning,they moreover depend on the context of a particular society concerned. These concepts do not, however, impart similar meaning to isolation and belonging as well. There exists no society, which makes serious efforts for the inclusion of migrants, refugees, and newcomers. Hence, "from the perspective of agency, the process of exclusion ─ in the sense of discrimination, rejection, eviction, expulsion, or ineligibility ─ is a deliberate act of social domination with different motives than the impulse behind the intentional inclusion of outsiders. But a society that makes strong demands for inclusion may be more exclusive" (Silver, 2007).

Social exclusionisneither an individual problem nor a voluntary process, according to Silver.An underlying structuredeterminesthetype, degree, and scope of exclusion. There might be working agents, who use particular mechanisms to impede others from gaining the access of resources but,

their faith is also largely determined by the larger social structure. Social exclusion therefore should be understood as a multidimensional process, which constitutes of people with multiple categories like poor, landless, illiterate, disabled, abusers, abused, women, child laborers, refugees, minorities, unemployed, delinquents, disenfranchised, downwardly mobile, dissociated individuals having no friends" (Silver, 1995).But more important is to mark clearlyonwhich dimension of exclusion and its dynamic manifestation across time and space. These dimensions include both the economic and social aspects of disadvantage. "Social characteristicsthat reflect the distribution of honor, respect and social distance, not just the distribution of material and non-material resources, are central to the social exclusion approach. It accommodates of gender, race, ethnicity, caste, citizenship, disability, and any other socially constructed cleavages." (Silver, 2007)

Silver, concomitantly, has excavated the dialectic relationship between social exclusion and poverty, and attempted to verifythat relationship. People living under poverty are susceptible to multiple forms of exclusions, while those excluded people are more likely to experience a fall in incomefor the fact that they are precluded from owning the resources and opportunities. Chronic poverty shares with, argues Silver, social exclusion a multidimensional notion of disadvantage and those thriving with chronic poverty hardly come out of the vicious circle of exclusion. Political inclusion could be one way-out but,political participation alone does notnecessarily work for alleviating poverty. We should always keep in mind that other spheres of life are equally responsible forbeing included or excluded. Concomitantly, it is not poverty that always leads individuals to exclusion, nor does the exclusion thatnecessarilyimpedesto poverty. One may keep up poverty despite being excluded and some others may better-off without being included. This might be because exclusion is a horizontal process of rupturing while poverty is vertical. Hence, exclusion is a matter of being 'in' and 'out', and not 'up' and 'down' (Touraine, 1991). Nonetheless, it will be a serious mistake if someone treats poverty and social exclusion in isolation with each other. Poor people lack the resources and are excluded, while excluded people are denied of resources and remain isolated from the productive and functional areas of society.

Social exclusion has multiple occurrences, and Silver has identified major three dynamics of exclusion: the micro-level exclusion, meso-level exclusion, and macro-level exclusion. The micro-level social exclusion is often referred to as the individual level of social exclusion.Social rights play a significant role in shaping the life course of the individuals concerned. A deaf person in a village is hardly expected to live a conjugal life, and is thus excluded from the entire marital discourse and marriage ritual. Underthemeso-level of social exclusion there happens to be a categorization of individuals. These categories include the illiterate, unemployed, lower-caste, women, poor, vulnerable, disabled, and so on. Each of these categoriesshares particular cultural values which tend to differ from others, and the out-groups are kept out of opportunities and resources. For example, illiterate people are excluded by the job market. The macro-level exclusion represents the policy-making at the national level. And, the example may be the policy of a government to certify certain people as eligible and others ineligible to apply for the official post.

Silver seems to have seamlessly elaborated the multidimensional nature of exclusion, but fails to identify the indicators of social exclusion in a clear manner, taking the benefit by construing that social exclusion is an increasingly evolving concept. Social exclusion is vague, ambiguous, and contested in meaning, allowing its malleable, flexible application in many contexts at the cost of

conceptual precision. It gives context-dependent meaning as well. Hence, the safeside,while studying or analyzing social exclusion, would bethe consideration of underlying structural factors than the characteristics of the socially excluded categories.

Other Scholarly Ideas on Social Exclusion

AmartyaSen, a novel-prize laureate, attempts to assess exclusion in relation to poverty. He defines poverty in relation with multiple other social practices and processes like deprivation, exclusion, marginalization, etc. The defining of poverty would be inadequate if it does not take adequate consideration on the disadvantages that arise from being excluded from opportunities those accessible to others. For him, poverty and social exclusion are mutually reinforcing, rather competing with each other. Hence, the focus of sociologists or social scientists, should be on how social exclusion contributes to poverty and capability deprivation, rather than what it subtractsfrom or demolishes poverty and capacity deprivation.Making a more sensuous explanation of poverty, Senargues,is possible by imparting social exclusion as an appropriate perspective for a better diagnosis of poverty in general, and capability deprivation of people or group of people in particular.

Social exclusion and povertyare mutually reinforcing but not the same. Poverty is not a mere shortage or inadequacy of income, nordoes it connote a lack of material or other stuffs, but a state of poor-living, or living an impoverished life without freedom of choice, and a lacking of ability to appear in public without shame.Poorpeopleare excluded everywhere from a decent way of living. Their capability enhancement is always on the process means that the real capability enhancement of poor people is more an agenda than reality.People become poor, they cannot enhance their capability, and become excluded.

Charles Tilly also has similar ideas regarding the relationship between poverty and social exclusion. Both of the processesare interconnected, but exclusion is highly decisive for igniting poverty in any society. Exclusion contributes to poverty from two complementary ways; firstly, by excluding individuals from opportunities available to members of other categories, and secondly, by under-using an economy's productive potential (Tilly, 2006). People, who control and mobilize the resources concentrate the benefit only to their avail. Tilly's thesis rests upon the fact that the expropriation of benefits from the control of resources by a particular group of people leaves other people away from the use of and control over the resources, and make others excluded. The 'opportunity hoarding' groups exclude members of subordinate categories from benefits, and keep those subordinated peopleunder poverty for most of the time. This way, Tilly perceives exclusion as the most determining factor of producing poverty. In a peasant society, for example, sharp differences in access to land increase the likelihood that landless households will suffer from poverty. Likewise, in an extensively urbanized industrial region, people without employment suffer from poverty again.But, contrary to this possibility, people having greater access to land, i.e. particularly in agrarian societies, and those having greater access to industrial firms, i.e. particularly inhighly urbanized and industrial regions, are more likely to upgrade the economic status at the expense of the poor. Hence, Tilly concludes that the people who control the crucial resources reap disproportionate gains (Tilly, 2006). What eventually happens is that the unequal access to resources leads certain groups of people towards prosperity by leaving many others withpoverty.

Social exclusion is not as simple and narrow as inequality. It is the sum or more than the sum of inequality. It is the broader structural process, which results not only from the individual or society-level attempts, but also the government involvement in the production, reproduction, and transformation of inequality. The government produces, maintains, and transforms inequality directly and indirectly. It is through taxation, expropriation of resources through coercive means,state claims to organize production.And, in doing this, the state hardly concerns over whether or not individual citizens contribute willingly to the state without any coercion from its side. Sometimes, they engage in wars – civil or international – that destroy productive resources and thereby increase inequality between the protected few and the damaged many (Tilly, 2006).Moreover, the government ensures more protection for its own property than the protection of property of the general public.This way, Tilly emphasizes the interconnectedness of poverty and exclusion in which both processes contribute to promoting each other. Thus, Silver concludes, since social exclusion lies at the heart of inequality generating processes, exclusion itself promotes poverty, and that exits from poverty therefore depend on eliminating or bypassing the usual effects of social exclusion (Tilly, 2006).

Arjan De Hannmakes similar remarks of exclusion with Silver.Heconsiderssocial exclusion as a multidimensional process that renders deprivation. Social exclusion is the outcome of the particular social provisions that deny particular group of people from their access to employment, earnings, housing, consumption, education, citizenship, communication, respect, and social gatherings. These people, who are denied of access to their minimum social requirements, could hardly come out of the exclusion and become normal citizen. Similarly, exclusion does not merely signify what general people assume; such asexclusion from politics, denial from entering a temple, absence inadministrative bodies, denial of a woman to enter into a home late night.Peoplemay be excluded by otherdifferent groups. Landlords exclude people from access to land or housing; elite political groups exclude other civilians from legal and political rights; upper-caste people exclude lower-caste people from entering into temples; minorities may be denied of expressing their identity; trade unions may exclude non-members from employment opportunities and so on" (Hann, 1999). The forming of identity-based organizations, differentiation of people in terms of literacy, income, age, and physical state, specialization in division of labor, and many other processes exclude individuals or groups of individuals from being included in many areas. Group formation, hence, considers Hann, a fundamental characteristic of human society, which is accompanied by exclusion of others.

Iris Marion Young, a prominent political scientist argues, contrary to other scholars,that the concepts exclusion and inclusion lose meaning if they are used to label all problems of social conflict and injustice. If the problem is gender disparity, or sexual violence, or racial discrimination, or untouchability, or cultural intolerance, economic exploitation, or a refusal to allow entry at own home, or help needy people, it should be so named. The ambiguous use of the term social exclusion in any of the mentioned or other inequalities and exploitations poses complications in acknowledging the theme and conceptof social exclusion.It would be more scientific if social exclusion is conceptualized in terms of political participation or access to government. The state of political exclusion and marginalization could be dealt in an appropriate way.She does not however reject the notion that "cultural intolerance, racism, sexism, economic exploitation and deprivation, and other social and economic inequalities help to account for these political exclusions" (Young, 1991).

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Discourse on Social Exclusion in Nepal

Inclusion agendas have begun to strike the development debates of Nepal from the last decade of the twentieth century.However, literature on social exclusion of Nepal is limited to the caste and ethnic issue than other forms of exclusions. Economic, historical, political and broader social and cultural dimensions of social exclusion are missing from the scholarly debates. Nay these endeavors have taken serious concern on the theoretical and conceptual arguments made by the imminent scholars of social exclusion.

Dalit, an underprivileged group of Nepal and is often termed as untouchable, hasbeen living dignified an underdog position for centuries.Dalit people are kept at the bottom ladder of the social stratification. Their overall economic status is less likely to rise up due tothe prevailing caste-based division of labor, and the case of terai Dalit is more vulnerable. Stratification and inequality exist not only between Dalit and non-Dalit but also within the Dalits themselves. Folmar (2010) mentions Dalit as the heterogenous human group, in which hierarchy exists within the group. Practice of untouchability exists not only between Dalits and non-Dalits but also within the Dalits. People belong to Damai, a traditionally tailor community, are forbidden to enter into the houses of Sarki, a traditionally cobbler community. Oppression is common among dalitthemselves.This signifies the notion that exclusion moves not only in a line, nor does it followa particular direction. So, Folmar concludes that the depth and intensity of exclusion and segregation could be found nowhere than is easily available inDalit community. It is because that the Dalits have low-profile identity, their access to politics and government is far away from expectation. However, the caste-based exclusion is not too rigid as it used to be in the past.

The people of terai, plain area of the southern Nepal and also referred to as Madhesh broadly, are also the ones that have been struggling with injustice by the state. They are excluded from the mainstream politics and government system.Exclusion of terai people in Nepal indicates that the granting of citizenship by the state does not guarantee the freedom, equality, and inclusion of people living there. After observing the living condition of terai people in Nepal, BhaskarGautam (2008) realized that the ofMadhesh and its exclusion from the mainstream national political and development arena has been historically been neglected by the elites, political parties, intelligentsia and the development experts. Madhesh has been victimized as internal colony of Nepal since the 'Nepali' nationality has been unable to address the sentiment of Madhesi people, and are excluded by the nation itself. Despite his attempt to shed light on the broad exclusionary practices made by the Nepali state to Madhesi people, Gautam fails to assess the diversity within Madhesi community. Very little has been raised by Gautam about the caste, gender and class-based exclusion in Madhesh. In absence of the proper documentation of the historicity of state building, the growth of capitalism, the role of the Madhesh in the gross domestic production (GDP), social and cultural ties between India and southern Nepal, etc.the intensity of exclusion of Madhesh from mainstream Nepalese society in general, social exclusion in Madheshin particular, and above all, the theory-building of social exclusion in a multidimensional basis remains incomplete.

Ethnic groups of Nepalreside at the middle part of the social stratification ladder. They are thought of 'included' compared with Dalits and terai people and 'excluded' compared to Bahun and Chhetri, a typical sacred-thread wearing people, community. This comes closer to what Hilary Silver (2006) argues as 'no individual is totally excluded or included at the same time'. Also,

these ethnic people are not fully excluded from mainstream Nepali society.However, the diversity of ethnic people has been the challenge to impart them in the mainstream Nepali society because some of the ethnic people are really indigenous, traditional-living and endangered human species. Susan Hangen(2010) raises this issue seriously, takes ethnic groups of Nepal as a heterogeneous category of people, and recommends the heterogenous strategies to impart ethnic people so as to combat their state of exclusion. The mainstreaming of highly complex ethnic diversity in Nepal is highly challenging because multiple and overlapping categories of identity, and specific ethnic labels have shifted over time" (Hangen, 2010).

Social exclusion has gender dimension. And the Nepali form of gender-based exclusion must be analyzed through the patriarchal structure of Nepalese society (Tamang, 2000). Nepali society has long been practiced patriarchal culture, and the legalizing of patriarchal values through the constitution has promoted the domination of men over women thereby promoting exclusion of women from power and property. Tamang has successfully evaluated the structural gender dimension of exclusion, however, failed to link it with other social, cultural, economic, political, and global capitalist processes. She has nowhere talked about the heterogeneous livelihood of women, as women from well-to-do families have better access to resources and opportunities than the male from lower caste, marginalized region, and people with disabilities.

The multidimensional nature of exclusion is more satisfactorily analyzed by the UNDP, which has considered Nepal a mosaic of differential relationship among its people. It admits that the dimensions of exclusion overlap. "Gender, caste and ethnicity have cross-cutting dimensions; therefore, inclusion efforts need to be advocated within the many different hierarchies, sectors and institutions that make up Nepali society" (DFID and WB, 2006). This way, none of the literatureillustrated above has successfully assessedthe degree and dynamics of social exclusion as Silver does. They neither deny the multidimensional occurrence of exclusion nor are able to link the multidimensional nature and dimension of social exclusion in their exclusion-inclusion research in a satisfying way.

Conclusion

Theoretical literature on social exclusion developed by Hilary Silver incorporates the multidimensional forms and dimensions. It crosscuts the political, economic, social, cultural, regional, and gender relations of social exclusion. Each dimension mutually reinforces the other, and hence, it must be the kernel of study of social exclusion. The "material and non-material resources and relations, economic and social dimensions, horizontal ties of belonging and vertical redistribution, both individual and group dynamics, national and local contexts – from the law to the social organization of time and life course to cultural understandings -- shape the meaning and experience of exclusion, regardless of poverty" (Silver, 2007). AmartyaSen, Charles Tilly, Arjan De Hann, Irish Young and others have also studied social exclusion but their focus highly rests in limited sphere or dimension of exclusion. Their argument depends either upon material accessibility, or capability, or power inequality or other dimension, which hardly emphasizes the multidimensional nature of exclusion. Studies on the exclusion of Nepal by Folmar, Gautam, Tamang, Pradhan, Hangen, etc. too, could not escape the narrow scope of social exclusion research as their study lack multidimensional theoretical leverageas prescribed by Silver. It is not that other scholar's analysis of social exclusion in Nepal is worthless, but the apprehension of

Silver is quite applicable with regard to the diversified form of exclusion in Nepal. Therefore, Hilary Silver's multidimensional perspective is the most compatible conceptualization of the diverse social, cultural, economic and political exclusion in Nepal.

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