

Complexities of inclusion and exclusion: Dalit students and higher education in India

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ABSTRACT

Caste determines the field of education in India. Students who belong to the lower structure of caste experience discrimination based on caste in their day to day academic as well as non-academic life. This paper attempts to explore the ways of caste driven social inclusion/exclusion which challenge their lives. Constitutional privileges provide rights to the students who belong to these communities. At the same time, the ideology of caste is hegemonic in the Indian society and they face different forms of social exclusions. Thus, they are caught in between social inclusion and social exclusion. This highlights the forms of exclusion which structure their lives irrespective of the policies based on social inclusion. This paper traces the history of dalit struggles for education in the midst of the reactionary ideology of caste

Keywords: Dalit, caste, education, social mobility, inclusion, exclusion

Introduction

This paper is based on the experiences of dalit students in the field of Indian higher education. It will explore the ways in which caste based-social locations determine the existence and mobility of dalit students. This article focuses on five key themes: history of the idea-'dalit'; nature of caste; dalit struggles for education; portrait of the included/excluded and reflections on resistance. The complex realities that structure the life chances of dalit students have to be examined in context of the debates on the caste in India.

History of the idea -'dalit'

The social spaces of dalits have become an enduring theme in the social sciences in India. History of the idea called dalit abounds with struggles of the oppressed by the caste for the practice of that idea. It is symbolic and revolutionary in nature. It is argued that Mahatma Gandhi used the term *Harijan* to refer to untouchables and it was earlier used by the saint from Gujarat called Narasinh Mehta. On the other hand, B.R. Ambedkar, the organic dalit intellectual, denounced it as a pejorative and introduced the term 'dalit' in his publication *Bahishkrut Bharath* to signify the broken, oppressed life of 'untouchables'. The word 'harijan' questioned the legitimacy of ancestry of untouchables (Jaffrelot, 2004, p.182). Ambedkar stresses that:

...dalithood is a kind of life conditions which characterize the exploitation, suppression and marginalization of dalits by the social, economic, cultural political domination of the uppercastes, Brahmanic ideology'
(Ambedkar, Cited in Guru ,2006,p. 259)

According to Gopal Guru, the term 'dalit' is human centered rather than the god centered term 'harijan' (Guru, 2006, p.261). It is argued that the radical dalit movement from Maharashtra called Dalit Panthers considered it as a 'revolutionary category' which has 'hermeneutic ability' to engage with the major sections of the people. It also possesses a materialist epistemology (Guru, 2006, p.257).The terms such as 'untouchables' and 'scheduled castes' are also interchangeable and used to refer to this category of people. The following section attempts to deliberate on some of the important debates on the category of caste.

Nature of Caste

Interpretations of the category of caste vary according to the ideology of the scholars, movements and so on. We include the explanations of dalit and non-dalit intellectuals on caste. We emphasise the identity of the intellectuals because dalit intellectuals such as Ambedkar provided theory and praxis for the struggle against caste.

B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) studied in Columbia University and the London School of Economics. According to Meera Nanda, Ambedkar 'hybridized' the thoughts of the philosophers such as John Dewey and Buddha (Nanda, 2006, p.4). He founded a

political party named 'Independent Labour Party' in the year 1936. He also formed an organization called 'Scheduled Caste Federation' in the year 1942. He demanded a separate electorate for the untouchables from the British rulers. He became the minister of law and head of the drafting committee of the constitution (Jaffrelot, 2004, pp.4-5).

Ambedkar described caste as a 'hoary institution which is familiar and unexplained in nature' (Ambedkar, 2006, p.132). Caste is recognized by many as a counterproductive institution but not analyzed due to certain interests related to power. Ambedkar challenges some of the ethnologists' ideas on the category of caste. Caste, according to Senart is a 'close, traditional and independent organization' which comprises chief and council, in which the members are linked by similar occupations and they gather during festivals. At the same time, they have particular notions of marriage, food and ceremonial pollutions. Senart argued that they possess particular jurisprudence which maintains power through penalties over its members. Those who do not obey these codes of law are excluded from that group (Senart, cited in Ambedkar, 2006, p.132). On the other hand, Nesfield interpreted caste as a 'class of community' who do not maintain any relationship with other communities and do not indulge in marriage and dining outside their community (Nesfield, cited in Ambedkar, 2006, p.132). Sir H. Risley argued that caste as a homogenous community with common name and human/divine ancestor (Risley, cited in Ambedkar, 2006, 2006, p.132). Caste, according to Dr. Ketkar, possess certain membership that is connected within the members, and marriage outside caste is restricted (Ketkar, cited in Ambedkar, 2006, p.132). Ambedkar asserted that the aforementioned views on caste reduced caste to an 'isolated unit' and failed to explore the relations within the whole system of caste. Ambedkar questioned Senart's view by asserting that the idea of pollution is linked to priestly ceremonialism and it will remain as a feature of caste till caste maintains its religious nature (Ambedkar, 2006, p.134). He also scrutinizes Nesfield for not analyzing the exclusiveness related to caste. Ketkar, for Ambedkar, misconceived the 'prohibition of intermarriage' and 'membership of autogeny' 'as two separate characteristics which are the obverse and reverse sides of the same model' (Ambedkar, 2006, p.135). Ambedkar appreciated Ketkar as one scholar who tried to explore the system of caste and emphasize prohibition of intermarriage as the 'essence of caste'. As Ambedkar explains:

Caste in India means an artificial chopping of the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing in to another through the custom of endogamy. Thus, the conclusion is inevitable that Endogamy is the only characteristic that is peculiar to caste, and if we succeed in showing how endogamy is maintained we shall practically have proved the genesis and also the mechanism of caste (2006, p.135).

Ambedkar in one of his epoch shattering works argues:

Caste is a notion; it is a state of the mind. The destruction of caste does not mean the destruction of a physical barrier. It means a notional change. (1989, p.68)

Caste, according to Anand Chakravarti, is also linked to the rights related to principal modes of production such as the land. Thus, it determines the communities who are part of the agrarian class structure. Caste structures the agrarian class structure in Bihar and decides the access and exclusion related to land based on how one is located in the class structure. This caste dynamics converts in to caste based violence in Bihar. This form of caste consolidation of the dominant castes converted in to atrocities against dalits in Bihar (Chakravarti, 2006, pp.78-79)

The caste system and hierarchy based on Hindu religion, according to Sukhdeo Thorat, challenges the universal human rights frame work. Thus, the Hindu religious and social order creates conflict on the discourse of human rights. There is constitution based legal support to the dalits such as the Anti-untouchability Act-1955, the Protection of Civic Rights Act-1975 and the Prevention of Atrocities Act-1989. It is stated that constitutional privileges have changed the lives of dalits and tribals (Srinivas, 2006, p.154) However, Sukhdeo Thorat argued that 'caste discrimination' and untouchability' exist outside the realm of 'non-legal process'. By using the category of 'non-legal process', he refers to the majority of Hindus who dominate the religious and economic spheres in India and it is also percolated into state machineries such as the police and executive who are meant to practise the law (Thorat, 2004, p.4). The legal provisions such as Article 17 considers untouchability as an offence and argue that it should not be practised by the people. Those who practise untouchability can be punished on the basis of the Anti-Untouchability Act, 1955. This act was amended in the year 1976 and was endorsed as the Protection of Civil Rights Act (PCR). According to Sukhdeo Thorat:

The PCR Act provides penalties for refusing admission to hospitals, or temples etc., for refusing to sell goods or vendor services for preventing the exercise of any rights under Article 17 (which includes access to shops, public restaurants and places of public entertainment or wells, tanks, public bathing places, roads and places of public resort) for demanding unlawful compulsory labour from the untouchables, like scavenging, sweeping, removal of carcasses, flaying animals or removing the umbilical cord or any job of similar nature. (Thorat, 2004, p 6)

The Government of India also passed the Scheduled Caste/Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act which prohibits atrocities against dalits and scheduled tribes. This Act was enacted to prevent atrocities such as 'forcing them (dalits) to eat human excreta, dumping carcasses or other waste matter in their (dalits') premises, polluting the drinking

water used by them (dalits), implicating them (dalits) in false cases.’ (Commission for Scheduled Castes /Scheduled Tribes, 1998, cited in Thorat, 2004, p. 6).

However, one has to understand the number of human rights violation of the dalits in India. Sukhdev Thorat demonstrates the average number of human rights violations of dalits such as ‘480 during 1950s, 903 during 1960s , 3,240 during 1970s and 3,875 during 1980s, 1,672 during 1990s and so on (Thorat, 2004, p 11). Caste identities also get articulated in the milieu of politics. Politicians deploy the caste locations of the people and manipulate the polity in a contested fashion. Governmental aspects of secular organization of caste, according to Rajni Kothari, are reflected in the caste based formations of power. Thus, caste gets legitimized through its secular avatar. Political consciousness of oppressed communities transformed them into a political class. They challenge the exploiting uppercastes through their political articulations. Co-option through different caste members is carried out through caste federations (Kothari, 2006, pp.183-206). In what ways does caste exist in the contemporary India?

Sociologists such as Andre Beteille questioned the perceptions of the educated class who believe that caste does not exist in India. They exhibit a form of self-deception. He analyses matrimonial advertisements which produce constructions such as ‘good family’, ‘status of family’, ‘cultured family’, ‘caste dowry no bar’ and so on (Beteille, 2000, pp.163-164). Caste corrupts the basic principle of fraternity which is stated in the Preamble of the Constitution of India (Krishnan, 2006, p.3). Thus, caste polarizes the different spheres of India. In the following section, we examine the trajectory of the mobilization of dalits for education.

Dalit struggles for education.

Organic dalit and other non-brahmin intellectuals questioned caste that acts as an impediment for the education and empowerment of the dalits and other castes that faced the oppression on the basis of caste. Paradoxically, it is contested that higher castes achieved social mobility through colonial education and lower castes turned in to occupations based on liquor and the hides trade that are abhorred by the upper castes (Srinivas, 2006, p.157). What are the forms of dalit struggles that are erased from the value-neutral, common, mainstream field of social sciences? The history of the struggles by organic dalit intellectuals help us to understand their theoretical and pragmatic engagements with the questions related to education and social mobility.

B. R. Ambedkar provided a radical slogan such as ‘educate, agitate and organize’ for the upliftment of dalits. He was influenced by one of the most radical anti-caste intellectuals, Mahatma Jotiba Phule from Maharashtra. In order to challenge the caste system, Phule decided to learn the Hindu scriptures. This passion for knowledge resulted in the formation of schools for girls in the year 1848. He also trained his wife Savitribai Phule as a teacher. Phule started high schools and adult schools (cited in Patil, 2008, pp.25-27). Phule wrote a play named “The Third Eye” in the year 1885. It is argued that this play questioned the symbolic capital of Brahmins and debunked the dominance of brahmanic knowledge systems (Patil, 2008, p.32)

Anti-caste intellectual such as Shahu Maharaj from Maharashtra realized that lower castes did not have any representation in the state services and started five independent schools for lower caste students during the period 1896-1897 (cited in Patil, 2008, p.38). Similar forms of dalit assertions emerged in the different states in India. It is asserted that Ayyankali, an organic dalit intellectual from Kerala formed an organization for dalits named *Sadhujanaparipalana Sangham* (Group that protects the Marginalized) and argued for the education of dalit children in the year 1907 to the British colonizers (Chentharassery, cited in Neelakandan, 2010, p.12). This moment of assertion is similar to Mahatma Jotiba Phule's approach towards the education of the dalits (Neelakandan, 2010, p.12).

Ayyankali educated dalits girls at a place named *Ooratambalam* and started lower primary school for dalit children. He challenged the upper caste Hindus who disrupted the education of untouchable students in the year 1910. Dalit faced atrocities from upper castes during their protests for the right to education. He argued that graduates should emerge from his community and construct library and infrastructure for vocational skill development (Ramadas, cited in Neelakandan, 2010, p.12).

Another organic dalit intellectual from Kerala, Poykayil Appachan, converted to Christianity to challenge the caste based exploitation of the Hindu religion and realized that Christianity too reproduced the ideology of caste in India. Thus, he founded an alternative dalit-theological praxis named *Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha* (Kochukunju, 2008, p.299). Therefore, he burned the *Bible* like Ambedkar burned the *Manusmriti* (Neelakandan, 2010, p.13). Poykayil Appachan founded primary schools, English medium schools and schools of vocational education for dalit students in the year 1910 (Kochukunju, cited in Neelakandan, 2010, p.13). Due to the constraints of space, it is impossible for us to delineate the diverse forms of struggles by dalits in different states in India.

The next section explores the measures of social inclusion that exist for dalits. We are focusing on the diverse dimensions of this rights discourse and responses of non-dalit communities to it.

Portrait of the included/excluded?

Mark Gallanter argued that the Indian constitution (1950) reserved spaces in employment that come under the public sector for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes which exist under the public sector (Galanter, 1991). According to Thomas Weisskopf, Positive Discrimination policies (reservation policies in India) equipped dalit students to get entry in to the higher education and their performance becomes affected due to their 'weaker educational background'. These policies leverage the integration of dalits in to societal elites and influential positions (Weisskopf, 2004, p.4349). According to Thomas Weisskopf:

Positive discrimination can be defined as the provision of some amount of preference, in processes of selection to desirable positions in a society, to

members of groups that are underrepresented in those positions. The preferences may be provided in various forms-reserved seats in separate competitions, or preferential boost in a single competition; but it always has the effect of increasing the number of members of an eligible underrepresented group selected to a desirable position. (Weisskopf, 2006, p.25)

However, the specificity of dalit identity produces conflicts related to their education. Dalits face constraints due to their prior status as untouchables (Nambissan, 1996). Consequently, ethnocentrism which has to be confronted on the basis of caste, starts from their birth. It is important to explore the social dimensions of their schooling before engaging with their issues related to higher education.

Caste location influences their representation in the schools (Nambissan, 2006, p.259). The enrolment and literacy rates of dalits were low during 1940s (Nambissan, 2009, p.1). In a study based on the education of dalit children, Rajasthan noted:

Among SC (scheduled caste) household, the enrolment of children among *Balmikis* drops from a low of 34 percent in the 5-10 year cohort to an abysmal 20 percent in the 14-18 year age group. Among *Bhagarias*, hardly any child goes to school. Gender differences are sharp. Among *Balmikis* for instance, the percentage enrolment of girls barely reaches double figures. (Nambissan, 2009, p.3)

Dalit pupils face different forms of discrimination in the school. They are not allowed to drink water from the common tap. Dominant caste pupils think that by doing so, dalit students will pollute the water. Teachers do not take any action against uppercaste students for their recalcitrant behaviour (Nambissan, 2009, p.5). According to Geeta Nambissan, the class room is segregated on the basis of caste. Dalit students are forced to sit in the corners of the class room or in the back rows (Nambissan, 2009, pp.7-8). Absence of dalit history was reflected in the curriculum. It is argued that some of the students argued that including the history of dalit leaders such as Ambedkar may create consciousness among dalit students (Nambissan, 2009, p.10). They do not participate in the co-curricular activities because teachers do not trust in their competence. According to Geeta Nambissan, they lack cultural capital when compared to the students from the higher castes (Nambissan, 2009, p.11). The drop out percentage of dalit students during the period up to class Vth were 41.47 percent, up to class VIIIth 59.93 and up to class X, 71.92 respectively (Mungekar, 2006. p.16).

The exclusion that is prevalent in the higher education also restricts their social mobility. Dalit students thus face tangible and intangible ways of social exclusions during their school days to that of higher education. The following section examines the manner in which dalit students respond to the question of caste.

What are the modalities of resistance against caste in higher education? How does dalit community engage with their right to education? We argue that the diverse

forms of their experience reflect the persistence of horrendous caste based inclusion. Therefore, we are mapping those experiences through some of the write-ups, biographical narratives, information produced by dalit activist groups and so on.

What are the social forces that lead a dalit student to commit suicide? Senthil Kumar, a doctoral candidate of the University of Hyderabad, who belonged to the dalit community, committed suicide on February, 24, 2008. The Senthil Solidarity Committee (henceforth SSC) which was organized to address this issue argued that university authorities neglected this issue. Senthil was the first who entered in to the field of higher education. The aspiration of a first generation dalit student for higher education has to be understood as an undercurrent of this incident. A Supervisor/ Advisor for his doctoral research was not allotted. His fellowship was stopped and SSC argued that a fellowship is important in the academic life of poor dalit students. However, SSC interpreted that faculty who teach 'pure sciences' undermined the issue of caste based discrimination under the guise of 'objectivity' and 'national progress'. Interestingly, SSC draws parallel between the discrimination of dalit students in other states of India. They pointed out that another dalit student committed suicide in the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (Senthil Solidarity Committee, 2008, pp.10-12). Dalit students are undergoing acute forms of discrimination in different institutes in India. Another dalit doctoral candidate of the National Institute of Immunology committed suicide on 16th April, 2011 and this reflects the feudal character of Indian society (Insight Foundation, 2011). According to the Insight Foundation, dalit students such as Shrikant, Ajay. S. Chnadra, Jaspreet Singh, Prashant Kureel, G. Suman, Ankita Veghda, D. Syam Kumar, S. Amaravathy, Bandi Anusha, Pushpanjali Poorty, Sushil Kumar Chaudhury, Balmkund Bharti, J.K. Ramesh, Madhuri Sale, G. Varalakshmi and Manish Kumar committed suicide during the period of 2009-2011 (Insight Foundation, 2011). The information on suicides which are given by the non-governmental organization does not explore the forms of caste based ideologies that exist in Indian higher education.

However, the inclusion acquires a stark dimension in the public as well as the private life of dalit students. According to Sukumar, so called 'liberal' and 'progressive' non-dalit students and non-dalit teachers were absent in the public meeting organised by the dalit students organization in relation to the suicide of Senthil Kumar (Sukumar, 2008, p.14). Death, for Sukumar, happens in the day to day life of the dalit student in 'merit' mongering higher echelons of education. He deploys death as a metaphor to explain the severity of the oppression of the dalit students. In other words, death as a metaphor symbolizes the social exclusion. Consequentially, Sumkumar classifies those dalit students as 'inferior outsiders' (Sukumar, 2008, p.15) who confront an ethnocentric-caste based public. For example, dalit students are made to sit separately while writing entrance examinations for some universities. At the same time, harassment of dalit students happens in the form of calling by caste name, comments on the base of habits, colour, culture and so on. These oppressive conditions expose the caste hegemony (Sukumar, 2008, p.15). Dalits, for Sukumar, are excluded from the cultural festivals, birthday parties and farewell by the non-dalit/higher caste peers because of dalits' lack

of proper dress and sophisticated language. Dalit students cannot reproduce dominant caste based etiquettes because of their fixed identities. This alienation also permeates to the regulation of dominant caste girls by dominant caste boys in order to avoid mixing with dalit boys. Dalit students who articulate dalit student politics are boycotted by the non-dalit students (Sukumar, 2008, p.16). Sukumar illustrates these incidents as part of the 'day to day exclusion' of the dalit students. Interestingly, he links these forms of marginalizing tendencies with the production of knowledge in the universities. Non-dalit teachers do not supervise dalit students for research by blaming that dalit students are not fluent in English language. Ideology of caste structures the sense of pollution and workers in the mess halls were reluctant to serve dalit students. Non-dalit students used to have separate dish and cups, rather than using the common utensils to avoid the pollution by the presence of the dalit students. Sukumar also maps the derogatory language used by non-dalit students for dalit students. Non-dalit students use terms such as 'pigs', 'government's son-in-laws' (This term signifies that dalit students avail the benefits of positive discrimination), "bastards", "son of god" (translation of the Indian Gandhian term), 'beggar' and so on. They also wrote the word 'bastard' in a poster on B. R. Ambedkar (Sukumar, 2008, p.17). It shows that higher castes students hate Ambedkar for providing revolutionary potentials to dalits. They face discrimination while searching for jobs after the completion of higher education.

Social exclusion of dalits is not only based on the past identities but it can be visible in the 'caste favouritism' and social exclusion of dalits and Muslims in the modern sector of the economy (Thorat & Attewell, 2007, pp.4141-4145). Those dalits who are converted in to Islam and Christianity are not getting any benefits of reservation (Sikand, 2006. pp.79-82). Hiring practices in India too suffer from the loss of transparency and it has repercussions in the dalit students' search for jobs (Deshpande & Newman, 2007, pp.4133-4140).

Dalit students are facing the threats from the emerging anti-reservationist groups. Media in India which is supposed to be a part of democracy is also supporting such non-democratic, totalitarian, caste based political groups. The print and electronic media which provided coverage for the candle light protests of anti-reservationist medical students and junior doctors of Delhi's elite public funded medical institutions. The same media did not cover the rallies by the pro-reservation students (Sadgopal, 2006, p.90).

The logic of anti-reservation projects dalit students in a particular fashion:

Mainstream Indian society, which is largely casteist, associates reservation with low academic performances of dalit students. In other words, it has become a reactionary metaphor in the minds of non-dalit candidates. Most of them consider dalit candidates as mere beneficiaries of reservation. (Sanil, 2006, p.98).

Education is a means to dignity for the dalits in the north India. They are caught in the lack of access to formal education and salaried jobs. They are excluded from 'dignity', 'individual freedom' and 'meaningful employment' (Jeffrey, Jeffrey & Jeffrey: 2004,

p.976). Education signifies different meanings for the stratified, dalit communities in India. It is pivotal to understand some of the key arguments of dalit intellectuals related to their social mobility. They emphasized on the 'diversity in the admissions' in the educational institutes and 'diversity in the workforce'. It is opined that demands for diversity have to recognize the absence of dalits in the enrolment in higher disciplines and jobs that ensure their social mobility (Rao, 2002, p.2998). How does upward mobility affect the existence of dalits? Dalits with upper income too face different forms of exclusion and discrimination (Desai and Kulkarni, 2008, p.268). Thus, a sort of cynicism enters among the dalit writers who have reflected on the subtle forms of caste based discrimination in higher education (Gajarawala, 2010, p.348). How do dalit students respond to the persistence of the ideology of caste?

According to a dalit student, educational institutes internalize caste based oppression and diverse aspects of education such as textbooks, examinations, and evaluation systems that exclude others and privilege brahminical castes. Simultaneously, universities do operate as the 'gatekeepers to the uppercaste kingdom in India' (cited in Tharu, Poduval & Kumar, 1998, p.2702).

The discourse of development also is tainted by the caste. States in India such as Kerala which has highest social development indicators, also witnessed suicides of dalit students:

...dalit students like Rajani and Neethu have committed suicide in Kerala. Rajani the daughter of a daily wage labourer could not pay for her education. Nor could she get education loans, since like most impoverished dalits, her family had no land or property against which she could take a loan. She had difficulty coping with college lessons and being from a family of daily labourers, had no parental guidance in her education. In desperation, she killed herself. And Neethu, a student of class XI in a Christian management school, killed herself because of her abusive class teacher, Reji. The teacher used to insult her with derogatory remarks about her caste and the quota system and also made harsh sexual comments. As we can see Christians retain the subordinate stereotypes regarding dalits and reservation (Sanil, 2006, p.98).

Dalit students undergo certain intangible forms of social exclusion. Parents of dalit children too experience bias based on caste:

...when the results of the joint entrance examinations for Medical and Engineering courses were announced, non-dalit parents offended the feelings of dalit parents. In a brahmanical public space, the reservation debate was a regular fixture. Not only do the uppercastes believe quotas to be a tool, to deal with dalit inefficiency, they also believe that their own wretchedness, if any is simply a side effect of the reservation policy. And the education system does not help. Dalit

students who score high marks in the entrance examinations are shunted to the Scheduled caste list and not included in the general category (Sanil, 2006, p.99).

Practice or thinking on social exclusion differs when we consider the internal differentiations among dalits. For instance, dalit women experience internal patriarchy from dalit men and external patriarchy from non-dalit women/men (Guru, 1995; Rege, 1998). Thus, their lower socio economic development conditions their gender inequality irrespective of the constitutional safeguards for the weaker sections (Dunn, 1993, pp.53-70). The development of dalit women through higher education aggravate when we look at their caste-class location from other non-dalit women. It remains as a central question in the demands for reservation for women. It is asserted that reservation for dalit women and Muslim women should differ from the non-dalit/Muslim- elite women (Patil, 2005, pp.7-12). Thus, we argue that dalit students undergo policies of social exclusion and multiple practices of social exclusion. Their grievances and angst are registered in different forms. Ironically, the ideology of caste remains in the psyche of the majority in India .It constantly reproduces the oppression of dalits.

Reflections on Resistance

Scholastic enclosures on social inclusion/ exclusion in India are detached from the realities of the dalit students. Inclusive policies on education have become common words in the Indian policy regime (Thorat, 2008, p.10). According to Gopal Guru, social sciences in India operate with a certain form of divisive interests which convert academicians to different camps of producers of theory and constructors of empirical investigation. Thus, it produces 'theoretical brahmins' and 'empirical shudras'. In other words, producers of knowledge are classified according to the nature of the production of their knowledge. So, he raises the questions whether dalits can do theory and what are the parameters that are legitimized in the field of theory production. This divide marginalizes the dalits in to stigmatized identities in the terrain of intelligentsia (Guru, 2002, pp.5003-5009). However, the dilemmas of dalit before becoming a thinker or theorist lies in their social inclusion or exclusion related to education in general and higher education in particular. As a result, the process of becoming a dalit theorist is essential for the registering of their voices, but the fundamental question is to address the forms of inclusion/ exclusion. Scholastic enclosures on exclusion, theory building is superficial and avoids the basic dalit issues related to education.

Pierre Bourdieu theorized scholastic enclosures as follows:

....The effects of scholastic enclosure, reinforced by those of academic elitism and the prolonged existence of a socially very homogenous group, inevitably favour an intellectualocentric distance from the world. The social and mental separation is , paradoxically, never clearer than in the attempts-often pathetic and ephemeral –to rejoin the real world....whose irresponsible utopianism and

unrealistic radicality bear witness that they are still a way of denying the realities of the social world. (2000, p.41)

It is criticized that discourses of social exclusion do not challenge the insufficiency of the capitalist system and presuppose the instrumentalist approach of including the excluded (Verma, 2011, p.96). Dalit students are situated within the paradoxical sphere of caste based exclusion, positive discrimination and a socially (caste based) regulated economy.

Social exclusion/inclusion of dalit students operates in conjunction with the rapid privatization of education. Thus the question of affirmative action for dalit students is challenged as a threat to the 'merit' of the non-dalit students who do not have access to affirmative action. The experiences of the dalit individuals show us the diverse dimensions of social space of the higher education in India. Social space, for Pierre Bourdieu, is composed of the possession of the diverse forms of capital and it is related to the space of dispositions (Bourdieu, 2001, p.15). Some of the critiques on the nature of the social sciences in India and their engagements with dalits or the social space of the dalits within the realm of social sciences can be taken as one of the primary way of our critical investigation related to the exclusion/inclusion of dalit students. In a Bourdieuan sense, the aforementioned debate prompts us to engage with certain form of reflexivity. According to Pierre Bourdieu, reflexivity is a device to construct science and responsible politics (Bourdieu, 1996, p.194). We argue that dalit reflexivity that critically examines the fashionable academic and policy is required to produce critical knowledge on social inclusion/exclusion. The ideology of caste acquires new forms and strengthens the exclusion of dalits in general and dalit students in particular. Dalit students have to regain their self respect through genuine political assertions and detach themselves from the depoliticized-civil societal (Non-Governmental Organized) dalit groups. The challenge lies in addressing the complex webs social inclusion policies, caste bound social exclusions and shifting notions of educational practices.

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