

Social Exclusion: Historical or Colonial Legacy?

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Introduction

Through the constructs of political systems in South Asia, the subject of exclusion has a close corollary with policy perspectives. This paper looks at the paradigm of exclusion in South Asia and seeks to explore the relationship between 'exclusion' and 'political bidding', notably, reading through the 'colonial legacy'. One of the striking features in the emergence of South Asia is the pattern on which states emerged- former colonies of the same 'imperial power'. Thus, arrival of modern nation-states following de-colonization spearheaded the transition of colonial states under the British Empire into different political systems and patterns in South Asia. The nation-welding process, to stabilize socio-economic and political conditions, following protracted struggle for independence was thought to become a lynchpin between pre- and post- independent periods.

This paper has two broad fault-lines to look through. First explicates the irony in nation-building processes and the other tracks vernacular antagonism; to bring to light incompatibility and ambiguity in employing a concept like 'social exclusion'. The concept being ubiquitous beseeches to turn to specific contexts and policy initiatives. This is explored by drawing comparison with different experiences of colonialism and de-colonization in south and southeast Asia. The discussion of the nation-building processes in India and Pakistan are in tandem with the continuing dilemma of post-colonial conditioning and often the policy initiatives in case of Sri Lanka and Malaysia underwrite the process in which policies largely conform to the political bidding. These comparisons shall also bring to light more complex processes that weave the geo-political fabric in South and Southeast Asia, primarily in international relations.

Ideologically, social exclusion constitutes specific forms of approach towards participation in the construction of

both social problems and policy responses. The coinage of the term is attributed to Rene Lenoir. Appearing in Lenoir's work, *Les Exclus: Un Français sur dix* in 1974, the term gained wide acceptance since 1980's and has grown wider since then; adhering to different situations (Blanc: 1998). Peter Hall's (1993) widely cited work on policy paradigms and degrees of institutional change is 'a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing.'¹Arjan de Haan in his article *Social Exclusion: Enriching the Understanding of Deprivation* makes a strong plea for the use of the concept of social exclusion and argues that it has relevance for richer as well as poorer countries. However, social exclusion in South Asia and Southeast Asia, largely a policy instrument for reform, encompasses the entwined relationship between policy paradigms and inconspicuous political objectives of welfare state reforms.

Legacies from the Imperial

South Asian geo-politics with its contact with the European powers particularly through the British Empire developed a political order, which altered both traditional regimes and territorial boundaries. In the South Asian context, de-colonization (quite often interchangeable with Independence) synonymous with the departure of the British is crucially an important time period of reference. The importance of the period lies in understanding the distinction between de-colonization and independence; since the two are distinct in so far as sustaining power structures in South Asia are concerned. The concession to contain nationalism was assumed as an over-arching bi-polar contest, one of the indirect goals during the Cold War (Martin Griffith & Sullivan: 1997). One is enmeshed in redundant arguments regarding the British recognition of American support during the post war period that

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was instrumental to a great extent in patterning nation-states in South Asia—a strategy to combat the communist bloc (Singh: 1993). It is important to mention here that I have adapted the terms ‘nationalism’ and ‘nation-states’ as discussed through modernist paradigm of European nationalist movements largely spun out of a fabric of European cultural notions.

Prior to the departure of the British, political systems derived from European nationalist movements were instituted so as to keep the disruptive tensions, in successive state building at minimal. The rhetoric of modern nationalist movement as it traversed the colonial landscapes, especially in South Asia added to unprecedented aggression across the state frontiers. In drawing familiarity with colonial legacy, the relationship between power-sharing and policy initiatives are significant to understand while addressing some crucial questions: How authorities took over the instrument of power in each of the countries freed by Britain? What were the terms of negotiation, during the transfer of power, between ‘nationalists’ and imperial power? Whether nationalism substituted imperial power? Was the freedom announced in return for nationalists becoming pawns in larger rhetoric? Were the policy patterns coerced before the transfer of power anticipating Communism, with greater success and appeal in China, Korea, Vietnam, and U.S.S.R., as stable alternate political system in South Asia? The nation-states were heavily mortgaged to ‘urbanization’. ‘Democracy’ became a mobilizing tool to subvert the political expectations and demands of the citizens (Crouch: 1996). The English-educated class recruited from members of elite classes filled up the echelons of bureaucracy and administration after independence. This does entice a tautological conclusion of a colonial legacy that was partly coercive and partly flexible in negotiation of power.

This backdrop and conceptual similarity in patterning nation-states encourages considering all nations alike. However, the question of emergence of independent states in South and Southeast Asia on divergent patterns as argued by Asma Barlas (1995), was due to the differing roles dispensed to the Muslim and the Hindu communities by the British and explicit divisive policies which colonial administrators perpetrated. Sudipta Kaviraj (2000) argues that modernity must not be taken as homogenous, resulting in the same kind of social processes and reconstitutions in all historical and cultural contexts. Unlike Barlas, his reasoning for modernity as a non-monolithic character follows from pluralism in Europe, whose extensions to different cultures and historical circumstances could not have produced uniform historical results. Kaviraj adheres to the notion of the ‘de-centered empire’, which questioned the homogeneity of

the Empire and acknowledged overlapping conditions in which both the colonizers and the colonized were mutually engaged. Sumantra Bose (2004) emphasizes the importance of political organizations as a broad legitimacy in the society capable of aggregating interest and identity groups. It follows from Sumantra’s emphasis that the consequences of modernization are likely to be associated with the legacy inherent in the social regimes of the society; wherefrom the political organization strengthen those patterns. However, it cannot be overlooked that socio-cultural entitlements and political regimes in South Asia led to critical imbroglio. The introduction of Imperial Legislative Council by the British that laid out foundations of All India National Congress in 1885 and later separate electorate for All India Muslim League in 1909 carried forward respective protocols into the post-independence chapter (Ahsan: 2003).

Ironies of Nation-Building: Transition and After

At the dissolution of the British Empire in South Asia, the major challenge was settling the political volatility and reorganization of statesmanship. The foremost discontent came through economic and spatial instability; apart from littered groups, which were sifted by language, religion, region and caste differences. Notwithstanding the religious-political spiral; most brutal communal riots and deadly violence substantially polarized state policies and legal provisions in India and Pakistan.

All India National Congress and All India Muslim League, two main political parties, in India and Pakistan; respectively were leading two newly independent nations. The interplay between modernizing and nation building shaped up the post independent nationalist discourse and later the transnational identity politics (Barabantseva: 2010). The tide of anti-colonial nationalism was resistant in nature, which eventually turned coercive by the end of colonial authority and played dominant role in border demarcations across the sub-continent. It is important for understanding of the post-independent era that how self-conscious nationalist movements shaped up distinct national culture and identity, overtly forged by language-based territorial yearnings. The polity coalition of Indian National Congress featured regional patriotism; whereas Nehruvian ideals of secular-democratic nation appeared at variance with the Party agenda. Anti-colonial nationalism saw Indian polity becoming communalized. (Vinaik: 1992).

The “Untouchable” communities, relatively not so straightforward to classify, attracted the attention of British Officials for administrative purposes, which initiated listing and clubbing them together as ‘depressed classes’. As part of administration, the British proposal

to create separate electorates in 1932 rallied support from the leader of then 'depressed classes' Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. This was strongly resisted by the leader of the Congress Party, Mohandas Gandhi, who undertook a fast unto death to have it revoked. Ambedkar had to withdraw his campaign to create separate electorates for the untouchables. Marc Galanter (1984) argues that 'it is evident that Congress opposition, if not Gandhi's personally, was inspired by fear that the great Hindu base of Congress support would be weakened.' The threat to Hindu electoral unity was clearly foreseen with the separation. However, the safeguarding the 'depressed classes' was needed to be ensured for which the legal status (Scheduled Caste) was introduced in the Indian Constitution.

Initially, for the first decade, Congress showed resistance to the overwhelming claims to the Hindu nationhood. Though, constitutionally India remained a secular state based on equality for all citizens and religions, nonetheless discrimination of and violence towards vulnerable groups and religious minorities became increasingly explicit. The nation envisioned in territorial form was forged through language that served to be the binding thread. The option of Hindi as the national language provoked debates in the Constituent Assembly that were resolved by re-organizing territorial lines on the basis of 'dominant' language group in the regions (Report of the States Reorganisation: 1955). Nationalism did not replace religion, instead sought its origin in religion and marked its development by nationalizing the religion (der Veer: 1996). Over the period "intermediate castes" (much confusing and vague category largely referring to the OBC's) called for legal safeguards and advantages. The dominance of caste identity altered electoral coalition and politics with unexpected consequences (Kaviraj: 2000).

While Nicholas Dirks (2001) has discussed 'caste as a politically modern [c]onstruction (emphasis mine) that served to categorize and delimit previously more fluid social organization throughout India', he argues that it was the British imperialist who, 'made caste what it is today'. The engagements of colonial power to foment Hinduism - otherwise fragmented and diverse, had been instrumental in creating communal divide apart from constructing caste as the rigid category. Ambedkar's prognosis of irrevocable dangers to democracy from the conceptual *Hindu Rajya* into a reality stands true till date; of late in the reactionary attempts of the Hindutva forces. The cooption by absorbing into its organizational structures as well as state controlled opportunity structures has largely driven Dalits into alliance with BJP (Guru: 1991). Nevertheless, one is drawn to question the ascendancy of new 'nomenclature'

by the avatars endorsing constitutional safeguards; since the horizontal array of over-lapping sub-group(s) was not to be unexpected. The features of caste highlighting fluidity during pre-colonial times and officially imposed rigidity in colonial era are premises on which post-colonial theorists analyze the colonial administration. Peter van der Veer argues that the importance of former untouchable participation achieved significance in the light of Hindu-Muslim conflict.

As caste became a springboard for mobilizing fierce rhetoric in identity politics, former untouchables were brought under the fore fold of the Hindu as 'internal other'. Simultaneously the Muslims more of an immediate threat to the integrity of a nation became 'external other'.² More surprisingly, the politics of caste reservations, strongly opposed by BJP till early 1980's was played out successfully in later years of the decade. Here, I would briefly reflect on the much-discussed transformation of the Hindutva politics, noticeably forging an ally with Dalits. The right wing supporting reservations for the OBCs and wooing them to affiliate with the BJP and the systematic campaign to include Dalits are crucial aspects one confronts with, in engaging with trajectory of contemporary Indian politics. A curious parallelism has emerged between Dalits and Hindutva politics; and Adivasi populations increasingly binding into political alliances.³

The configuration of Indian nation has been ironical, especially in the polarization of communities largely based on religion as against regional and linguistic differences. The polarization based on regional differences and inter-ethnic differences or linguistic affiliations led to coercive nation-building transition in Pakistan. After Pakistan came into existence, the All India Muslim League became the Pakistan Muslim League. The country did not experience transition; indeed a newly formed state posed with challenging situation. The fundamental issue at hand was to frame a new constitution and strike balance at various levels. Pakistan although from its inception defined itself as a religious (Islamic) nation, the makers of the constitution encountered major challenges in fulfilling the commitment of enforcing the Islamic Law. The Muslim League failed to weld together the nation. The ideology to weld the country posed a challenge and difficulty in nation building because in principle nationalism rooted in the concept of modernization was in many ways contradictory to the idea of an Islamic Republic. The coalescence of diverse identities and interests of the League for Muslim self-rule dissolved into a chaotic squabble.

On the ground, Pakistan inherited the British constitution and legal systems with the Parliament as the sovereign institution in 1947. A military coup by general Ayub Khan abolished the Constitution by overthrowing

civilian governance and declared martial law in October 1958, to address the political and economic crisis of the state (Allen: 1992). This saw the collapse of and moving away from the British parliamentary system.

The question of regional representation and power sharing was strategically very crucial as the disruptions in the country were rooted in ethnic and tribal differences. Stephen Rittenberg (1988), in his study of the independence movement of the North-West Frontier Province, discusses how the Sindhis, Baluchis, and Pashtun leaders forming the major minority groups have had uneasy and most often hostile relationship with the central authority, which anticipated an impediment to the state building by those in power. On the other hand, Punjabis who were a politically active group dominated to a great extent both bureaucracy and military; also the Urdu-speaking emigrants from India ever since exercised influence in the national politics. 'Urdu' was recognized as the official language of the country against majority Punjabi-speaking populace. The recognition of Urdu as the national language was challenged and this changed the political space by separating East Pakistan that led to the formation of Bangladesh in 1971.

The military administrators framed a new constitution in 1962, which was abolished with the restoration of civilian government in 1970. The civilian government that succeeded dictatorial rule received its third constitution in 1973 under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. However, the elections of 1977 having been rigged resulted in huge demonstrations and the army under General Zia ul Haq intervened to take over the administration of the country (Embree: 1997). Ayesha Jalal's reading of the military rule in Pakistan suggests that 'the alliance of civil bureaucrats and the military was stretching the (ambit of central authority in order to give a long delayed impetus to their ambitious plans to industrialize and militarize Pakistan, while at the same time nurturing their own recently forged links in the international arena).' The formation of Bangladesh, anti-Bhutto movement, Islamic Revolution in Iran, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Kashmir conflict- all drove the state into vulnerable conditions to uphold the diktats of modern nation-state.

In the case of Pakistan, the military rulers aspired to create modern states with an exclusive monopoly of coercive authority and control over the territories including the ones having international judicial authority. Banuazizi and Myron (1986) have brought to light this intricate trans-border ethnic mosaic of Pakistan (including Afghanistan and Iran). The Pashtuns are a majority in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, but a majority of the Pashtun- speakers live in neighbouring Afghanistan. The Baluch population is divided among Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. A majority of the

Baluchis live in Pakistan, but substantial minorities live in Iran and in southern Afghanistan.

The British had described the frontiers of northwest as 'un-administered' areas, where tribal chiefs or *sardars* of ethnic groups exercised power independent of the central government, thus constantly defying the state power). In an effort to strengthen the central authority and hegemonic position, the state pursued coercion. Consequently, one or more ethnic groups ahs constantly challenged the state authority (Hewitt: 1996). The ethnic minorities - Pashtuns, Baluchis, and Sindhis contested the Punjabi-Muhajir domination; the political parties rejected the military rule and the claim of the military rule to Islamise the country met with resistance from a substantial segment of the middle class. Islam was seen as an overarching ideological link between the state and the people and amongst the people. John Esposito in *Islam: Ideology and Politics in Pakistan* discusses how successive governing elites sought to harness Islam as an instrument for strengthening the state and legitimizing their power. The attempts of the secular Zulfikar Ali Bhutto failed and the efforts of the martial-law government of President Zia ul-Haq mobilized the sectarian schism amongst the Sunnis, Shi'ites and Ahmadiyas. This however could not bridge the cleavages between the country's ethnic groups and between state and the community. Instead, it created more complexity, giving rise to sectarian polity. Leonard Binder stresses that 'the Punjabi- dominated Pakistan government has denied the legitimacy of politicized ethnicity while insisting upon the legitimacy of politicized Islam, viewing the former as subversive force and the latter as an instrument of integration and legitimacy'. The religious nationalism proved to be a weaker force in Pakistan.

In one, military intervention curbed democracy and in another the elected government sabotaged opposition time and again to hold on to power. India legitimized antagonisms through 'cosmetic'⁴democratic institutions and later explicit contestation of neutrality towards religious difference, which over the period became detrimental for religious minorities; whereas the suppression of tribal and ethno-linguistic diversity escalated violent military and dictatorial leadership in Pakistan. Nevertheless, in both cases, the ideological cloak of modern nation-state could not stop the state-system to be hegemonic and the aggression that rallied from time to time. The nation-states in the west associated nationalism with one language, one country, one state; separation between religious authority and political institutions. On the contrary, religion and political apparatus were not separated in Asia; hence the secular agendas fell into dilapidated structures with serious flaws in the economic strategies. This consequently distorted both economic

resources and sharing of social benefits. The burden of economic discontent among different strata of the society and different regions of the countries has drawn larger population into extreme poverty. Though the percolation of resources down to the provinces and local bodies remained on agenda; however the implementation of the same has never come to its realistic orientation.

Casket of Vernaculars: Toward Antagonism

'Often the demotic 'vertical' ethnies are forged into ethnic nations through vernacular mobilization of the masses. Ethnic nationalists politicize its culture and are drawn into purifying the community of the 'outsider within'.'⁵

In this section I shall look through the following theme: how ethnic nationalism functions closely with power and involves subtle, and not so subtle, policy initiatives for mobilisation. As a part of development, the policies unfurling consequences in terms of advantages to some and disadvantages to too many have led to the coinage of 'shared deprivation'. It is here how one can largely engage critically with the shibboleth of 'participatory development', that is, participation and reliance (on vernaculars), which while imagined to melt down the grievances in terms of disadvantages became antagonist, both in the Sri Lankan and Malaysian context.

The panorama of modern transformations in Sri Lanka unlike other states in South Asia took place peacefully, and it was declared a free country in 1948. The postcolonial transition to nationhood instituted 'modern-secular-democracy', which could not escape for long the ensuing political crisis. Quite often discussed in historical discourse of the nineteenth-century British and South Asia, the coffee plantations established by the British in Sri Lanka and Malaysia brought people from South Asia. The coffee plantations established in Sri Lanka brought more than a million Tamil workers from South India to plantation as labour migrants. Initially they were seasonal migrants, but eventually as the plantations developed, majority of these opted to settle permanently and became permanently domiciled on the plantations.⁶The Tamil migrants settled mainly in Jaffna and the growth of educational facility in English was quite popular.

The legislation passed in late 1940s, under 'rights-and-entitlement' had somewhat deep-rooted political implications for the minority discourse as certain groups became stultified as minorities (Wickramasinghe: 1995). The three Constitutions of post-independence Sri Lanka helped to demarcate and define a majority from within the citizens, pitting non-Buddhists and non-Sinhala speaking minority communities against Sinhala-Buddhist majority. In the fractured polity, question of language was the most vulnerable one, largely to be seen

as disadvantage and discriminatory (closely related to power-sharing). The English educated Tamilians were at an advantage to avail the benefits during colonial administration and after de-colonization occupied all important positions in the state. The majority Sinhala-Buddhists voiced their grievances that despite having a majority status in the country, they were disadvantaged. In order to cure the disproportionate advantages, Sinhalese was declared as the national language; which meant English language was relegated to the spheres of government, education and business. These, however, led to further endorsements such as re-instituting the sacred history and mythology and declare Sri Lanka as a Buddhist country (Allen: 1992). The republican Constitution of 1972, while proclaiming 'Sinhala' as the official language also declared Buddhism as the state religion.

The Tamil-speaking communities that had moved into Sri Lanka centuries back and later during the nineteenth century (altogether constituting twenty per cent of the population) formed the majority in Jaffna. The Tamilians strongly contested the politics of state language and claimed economic equality. In the course of language grievances and discrimination, the articulation turned violent leading to an on-going armed struggle under the auspices of LTTE (Embree: 1997). The fierce ethnic antagonism was strengthened by nationalist myth making, 'Dravidian Drive' to mobilize support for the armed struggle and later the demand for a separate region. Sri Lanka's long agony continues despite all efforts at the peace process. On one hand, re-instituting Sinhalese as the only official language was supported as the democratic and egalitarian move for majority (Buddhist Sinhala constituting seventy per cent of the population), which had unfortunate consequences for non-Sinhalese speakers. As Subrata K. Mitra and R. Alison Lewis in their concluding section (*Subnational Movements in South Asia* 1996) remark that, 'the role of cultural self-assertion in stimulating sub-nationalism can be greatly over-emphasized for obvious reasons since the cultural agenda of Dravidianism was directed both at internal adversaries as well as external, and the cultural group being defended changed over time". More importantly, "such sentiments by themselves were incapable of acquiring a mass base, although their presence may well have given a distinct coloration to phenomena that elsewhere in India were expressed simply as backward class or other kinds of movements.'

In mapping the political history of the Malaya, Freedman Amy has tracked a diverse trajectory and categorised it into pre-colonial Malay states, British Malaya, independent Malaya, Malaysia between 1963 and 1965, and post-1965 Malaysia. These categorizations

explain the policy implications from time to time and clearly outline the consequences thereof. During the de-colonization in 1946-47, one of the alternate proposals from the British was to form a Federal system of Malay sovereignty. The United Malays National Organization accepted this and thereafter only the de-colonization was allowed to proceed smoothly.

After its independence in 1957, Malaysia enforced strict measures with regard to non-Malays' citizenship. The British actively had encouraged mass Asian immigration into the Malay Peninsula. The immigrants had been mostly Chinese and Indian, recruited for various purposes. The immigrants from India and China flooded the Malay Peninsula and provided cheap labour for tin mines and rubber plantation respectively.⁷The immigration of Indians was promoted and facilitated by establishing the 'Indian Immigration Fund' in 1907 so that labourers were given accommodation and free passage to the place of employment in Malaya.

It is interesting to see the settlement patterns of migrants for understanding the community formations along ethnic lines. Broadly speaking, the main ethnic groups that exist in Malaysia are Malays, Chinese and Indians. *Bumiputera* (indigenous groups) engaged in rice cultivation, fishing, and rubber tapping developed distinctly and away from the emerging urban centres. These urban centres were potent sites of trade and commerce that were wholly dominated by the Chinese. Since the Chinese were mostly involved with tin mining and commercial agriculture, the urban centres came under the Chinese domination; whereas Indian population mainly engaged on rubber estates and plantations settled in towns and the indigenous Malay population engaged with paddy plantation was concentrated in rural areas. Initially labourers stayed in the Malay Peninsula for shorter periods before they returned to India either on 'home vacation' or for permanent retirement. Over a period of time provision for 'permanent domicile' encouraged the otherwise known 'transients' to settle permanently on the Peninsula. In the shift from transitory to permanent settlements, groups are and in this case were usually drawn into the political fray as the process of exclusion became overt (Freedman: 2000).

The large number of non-Malays with increasing control on the economy created resentment amongst the Malay population (largely engaged in paddy plantations). The patterns of uneven development, economic disparities and social stratification started surfacing. In addition to the resentment against the British, the insecurity against non-Malays mobilized the Malay nationalism that became instrumental in organizing the Malays politically. Harold Crouch in his analysis of government and society in Malaysia looks at the variations in political

systems during the transitions of regime and finds that the categorization of Malaysian polity was rather ambiguous. However, there is no denial of the fact how the ethnic demography has been altered from time to time, which led the drive to 'Malayanise' the Peninsular composition. When Malaya became independent in 1957, its constitution was modeled on British democracy in which a national Parliament was constituted after elections at least in once every five years. Malaysian ethnic diversity coincided with linguistic, cultural, religious and economic differences. In 1957, demographic divisions were almost even between the indigenous and the immigrant communities; slightly less than 50% Malays, 37% Chinese and 12% Indians (Hirschman: 1994). In 1963, Singapore joined the Malay federation and that resulted in increase in the proportion of Chinese population. However, secession of Singapore in 1965 was very critical in that it altered the demographic proportion resulting in higher percentage of the indigenous or *Bumiputera* (sons of the soil or ethnic Malays) communities.

Following the ethnic riots in 1969, the development strategy in Malaysia underwent an intensive review to ensure and achieve growth proportionally. By 1970 poverty was markedly higher among the *Bumiputeras* than other ethnic communities. Therefore the National Vision Policy (NVP) built upon the New Economic Policy (NEP) and National Development Policy (NDP) incorporated Vision 2020 as an objective for transforming Malaysia into the developed nation by the year 2020 (Embong 2000). The NEP and NDP aimed at bringing the *Bumiputras* into economically dominant sectors, previously dominated by the Chinese. Apart from according preferential policies for the Malays in job allocations, scholarships, and university seats, *Bahasa Malaysia* was declared as the national language.

From independence in 1950 until 1990s, the drive to 'Malayanise' the country had pervasive impact on the Chinese and the Indian in being incorporated into a larger polity and social matrix. Political rhetoric and economic development as national goals reinforced ethnic segregation and inequalities. The New Economic Policy (1971-90), which saw rapid industrialization and subsequent historical developments, was accompanied by cultural policies to symbolize ascendancy of the Malays (Embong: 2000). English no longer served to be the language of administration and education; instead *Bahasa Malaysia* became the lingua franca and the only official language. (Pong: 1995). Noticeably, the proportion of managers, professionals and administrators among the Malays/*Bumiputera* increased six fold. Apart from class analysis, state intervention in various socio-economic sectors directly affected ethnic structures and patterns of inequalities during the NEP period; particularly the

direct imposition upon division of labour, corporate wealth and professionals (Embong: 2000). Over the years, through the operation of the Malay special rights in recruitment and promotions, the whole structure of government services turned into a bastion of Malay power particularly at higher administrative and policy making levels where Malay dominance came closer to reality (Means & Gordon: 1991).

Discussing politics in plural society, Harold Crouch throws light on the United Malays National Organization's call for Malay unity to preserve the community position, which has had a strong appeal on the west coast and in the south where the Malays were faced with large non-Malay communities. Reading through Harold's analysis one can come to see how the non-Malay partners, especially the representatives of the Chinese and Indian communities in organizations like UMNO, MCA and MIC experienced steady erosion of credibility. Also the dependence of MCA and MIC on UMNO could not advance the non-Malay cause beyond securing certain popular demands. Both MCA and MIC were headed by the English-educated; whereas at the grassroots level both were dominated by vernaculars, local Chinese business men (not well conversant with English, who patronized Chinese medium schools and cultural associations) and MIC was dependent on local leaders with influence over plantation workers, Tamil school teachers, clerical workers on plantations and shopkeepers patronizing Tamil. MCA and MIC attempted to promote the interests of their respective communities by raising vernacular issues, education, citizenship, and recruitment to the civil service. But the failure to achieve clear-cut progress led both MCA and MIC leaders vulnerable to selling out to the Malays. The parties mobilized patronage to the middle class, especially businessmen and access to Malay-dominated government and bureaucracy. This certainly offered little or no benefits to the supporters and community members at the lower levels.

Here it is quite interesting to note the fact that despite the support from, below from the grass root level, the economically dominant communities failed to promote policies and advocacy in their favour; whereas the policy initiatives from above largely benefitted Malay population of all classes. It does not necessarily mean power operations via top to bottom, or minority as powerless. One can look at how negotiations are largely catalyzed through 'bidding' in political institutions to secure respective benefits.

Conclusion: Exclusion and Everyday Experiences

As the nexus of power embroiders moral and ethical mandates of 'justness', policy benefits for one or another

group become largely 'Janus-faced'. Consequently one groups' advance and rapid growth (according to modernization theory and practice) tends to cause deprivation to other groups. The consequences of disproportionate distribution of resources cannot be understated.

The former British colonies in South Asia were not patterned on European structure and the state-power was shared by English-educated administrative class, including those, who received education in Britain and on returning back filled up the echelons of bureaucracy and administration. The mobility during the nineteenth century, largely a complex process of movements of people from South Asia, has been interpreted as geographical and social interaction between peoples. Though cross community migrations were considered as the apparatus of social, economic and cultural interaction; the migration during the nineteenth century both free and coerced motivated by modernization and urban-centricism created sharply uneven developments. The emigration into Sri Lanka and Malaysia encouraged by the British officials on plantation sites began showing crisis of mobility patterns later towards the twentieth century.

When the post-independent governments sought to empower indigenous populations as the major objective of development public policy, the rise of *Bumiputera* culture in Malaysia and Sinhala culture in Sri Lanka surfaced largely based on ethnic and vernacular stratification. This eventually turned to be a convenient apparatus in the hands and minds of politicians and administrators. Over the period, the complex relationship of ethnicity in Sri Lanka as interlocking markers of discrimination having taken violent forms became one of the major conflict zone of the contemporary world. The caste-based discrimination in India framed the discourse on and about Dalits, which underwent a major shuffle with the rise of contemporary identity discourses. The ossification of identities not only pitted Dalits as the 'internal other' but ostracized the Muslims from the mainstream by 'Othering'. The religious ideologue failed to weld together diverse populace of Pakistan and level out grievances in the country. The country's politics has been oscillating often between civilian governance and military rule since its emergence.

This does not mean that disadvantages cannot be redressed or disadvantaged groups may not be prioritized. The intent of the paper is to argue that academic discourses (apart from state policies and legal provisions) on South and Southeast Asia continue along the legacy of colonial constructs; perpetuated along 'I/Thou' paradigm in which groups successfully played the role to produce (us/them, we/they, our/their) binaries.

Whether historically antagonist or fluid in nature, the phenomenon of social exclusion in the South Asian context demands a reading of the inter-related and inter-locked contestations for benefits by different groups more closely structured and theorized as colonial constructs. State policies have played a critical role in mobilizing political identities to a large extent in these countries.

The Muslim League in Pakistan and Indian National Congress in India got their hands on nation-welding roles; whereas Sinhalese and *Bahasa Malaysia* were endorsed as weapons of vernaculars to ensure relative balance between different ethnic groups. India and Pakistan envisaged nationalism beyond real (utopian semblance); whereas Sri Lanka and Malaysia interlocked antagonism of power sharing with participation.

Social exclusion and political discourses are essentially linked through social crisis and policy responses, enabling to create compatibility between social systems and policies aimed at resolving social problems. Nevertheless, the focuses on certain social problems relegate others to periphery on policy agenda. In the South Asian context the blind spots in policy paradigms are inherently a part of the colonial legacy and social stratification is practiced along multiple lines. Also, this paper has argued at length the failures to establish stable state authority, constantly engaged in resolving political crisis and violent ruptures. The colonial policies and legal instruments to maintain the social patterns well suited the imperial needs. The coming of South Asia into global academic discourses was to a large extent consequence of critical power shuffle and to some extent post-cold war polity. The states in South Asia emerged on distinct tracks. Nevertheless South Asia as a geographical block has come to mean important political and economic entity crucially pivotal in international arena, so to say, in laying the geo-political strategies. Unlike other policy initiatives and paradigms, social exclusion can engage in certain crucial issues, but one must not lose sight of the fact that proportionate distribution and participation has limitations in so far the overlapping differences and stratifications co-exist.

Having discussed the corollary of political rhetoric and social exclusion, there is much ambiguity than assumed in social exclusion becoming a policy paradigm to encompass overlapping notions and fluidity of group identities. While promoting specific policy alternative reform, there is a critical need to understand the relative context in which such needs surface and the manner in which benefits are diffused.

NOTES

1. Social Exclusion has become central to British policies and debates. The concept across Europe differs significantly. Of

late, the most notable by Lenoir has become popular as a social paradigm in the time of crisis of the welfare state. For discursive analysis and an in-depth study on social exclusion, see, Rene Lenoir, *Les Exclus: Un franc, ais sur dix*, Seuil, Paris, 1974, Ruth Levitas, *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005; M. Blanc, 'Social Integration and Exclusion in France: Some Introductory Remarks from a Social Transaction Perspective', *Housing Studies*, 13 (6), 1998, 781-92; H. Silver, 'Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three Paradigms', *International Labour Review*, 133, 1994, 531-78.

2. To use terms used and discussed by Dilip Menon as to how the Muslims considered as outsiders were classified clearly as 'external Other' and the lower caste Hindus or former untouchables were brought under the fold of Hindu religion by classifying the same as 'internal other'. For details, see, Dilip Menon, *The Blindness of Insight. Essays on Caste in Modern India*, Chennai: Navayana Publications, 2004.
3. Citations and a comprehensive analysis on Hindutva Politics: Dipankar Gupta, 'Limits of Tolerance Prospects of Secularism in India after Gujarat', *Economic Political Weekly*, Nov. 16, 2002, 4615-20; Amita Baviskar, 'Adivasi Encounters with Hindu Nationalism in MP', *Economic Political Weekly* Nov. 26, 2005, 5105-13; Prakash Louis, 'Gujarat Earthquake and After', March 17, *Economic Political Weekly*, 2001, 908-10.

One may not draw straightforward conclusions yet, the enigma of modern Indian politics has come to a critically complex condition, as of existentialist dilemma of identities. The routes to adivasi power have come to coincide with expanding Hindu nationalism in a potent mix of religious faith, cultural aspirations and economic opportunity. On Hindutva' agenda of the 'Sangh Parivar' alliances like the one between *Bhim Shakti* and *Shiv Shakti* in Maharashtra, Bhilala adivasis in western MP joining the battle for Hindu supremacy, attacking Christian adivasis and later, the Muslims are re-defining roles. In 2001 Luthra Earth Quake, RSS cadres effectively engaged in relocating victims to safer places which was well received by the Dalits who could foresee chances for social mobility in physically moving out of the former spaces. Nonetheless, rehabilitation packages brought along the patterns which led to the building of physical ghettos. The trend of "only Dalit residential societies" was evidently growing, around 300 alone in Ahmedabad. Whereas displaced Muslim families relocated to religiously homogeneous settlements. This physical ghettoization easily enabled RSS to spot and mobilise Dalits against the Muslims during 2002 post-Godhra carnage.

4. Borrowing John M. Richardson's term from, John and Shinjinee Sen, *Ethnic Conflict and Economic Development: A Policy Oriented Analysis*, School of International Services: American University, 1996.
5. For a discursive explanation, see, Thomas Engelbert and Andreas Schneider, eds, *Ethnic Minorities and Nationalism in South Asia*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000.

6. The extensive literature on the labour history of the nineteenth century has comprehensively dealt with issues such as indentured labour, coerced migration, slave trade, etc. See, Filippo Osella and Katy Gardner, eds., *Migration, Modernity and Social Transformation in South Asia*, New Delhi: Sage, 2004; Sasil Lubbock, *Collie Ships and Oil Sailors*, Glasgow: Brown, Son and Ferguson, 1935; Marina Carter, *Voices from Indenture: Experiences of Indian Migrants in the British Empire*, London, New York: Leicester University Press, 1996; David Etlis, ed., *Coerced and Free Migration: Global Perspectives*, California: Stanford University Press, 2004.
7. Studies on migration, displacement, diaspora are bringing in new insight, Judith M. Brown, *Global South-Asians, Introducing the Modern Diaspora*, Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Michael Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism. Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain 1600-1857*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004.

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