**Social Exclusion**

Social exclusion is a form of discrimination. It occurs when people are wholly or partially excluded from participating in the economic, social and political life of their community, based on their belonging to a certain social class, category or group. In India, social exclusion occurs on the basis of identities including caste, ethnicity, religion, gender and disability.

The three features of social exclusion

Social exclusion as a concept has three distinguishable features:

1. It involves culturally defined social categories, with associated cultural perceptions, values and norms that shape social interaction.
2. It is embedded in social relations.
3. It affects people’s rights and entitlements, denying them the opportunities they need to attain and maintain a universally acceptable standard of living and to fulfil their potential.

Social exclusion and poverty

Social exclusion has an undeniable impact on the poverty status of socially excluded communities.

Those who belong to socially excluded groups are not affected by a lack of resources ‘just like’ the rest of the poor. They face particular discrimination in gaining access to these resources. For example, there may be a clean water pump in a village but those who are socially excluded may not be allowed access to it.

Because social exclusion locks people out of the benefits of development, denying them opportunities, choices and a voice to claim their rights, it causes greater levels of poverty.

Degrees of social exclusion

Social exclusion occurs to different degrees. It can mean the complete denial of access to social services, such as the refusal of being treated at a hospital. Alternatively, it can take the form of selective inclusion, where socially excluded groups receive differential treatment, such as being required to pay different prices for goods and services.

Sometimes exclusion is deliberate and explicit – for example, when people from a certain social background are denied access to a particular facility. Sometimes it can be implicit and unintentional and is simply a result of people adhering to ingrained norms and values, and established forms of social interaction.