

## Religion, Culture, Society And Process Of Marginalization

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### **Abstract**

Marginalization is a process whereby something or someone is pushed to the edge of a group and accorded lesser importance. This is predominantly a social phenomenon by which a minority or sub-group is excluded and their needs to ignored. Marginalisation is both a historical reality and a context specific phenomenon. Structure and variants of marginality indicate a common character of domination of some groups and individuals and weakness and ineffectiveness of a large number of people at a same time. In other words, it shows dominance of a minority of people and subjugation of a large majority in specific societies. Marginalization is often described as a social process where people are relegated to the fringes or `margins of the society. It is defined as a process, in which individuals or communities are socially excluded, systematically blocked from, or are denied access to participate in social and political processes which are basic to integrate with the society. The Encyclopedia of Public Health defines marginalized groups as, ‘To be marginalized is to be placed in the margins, and thus excluded from the privilege and power found at the center’. Latin observes that, “‘Marginality’ is so thoroughly demeaning, for economic wellbeing, for human dignity, as well as for physical security.

Marginal groups can always be identified by members of dominant society, and will face irrevocable discrimination.” Inequality in educational opportunities has emerged as a major issue in India. It has also become pertinent, as the increasing influence of globalization has jeopardized educational opportunities for the marginalized. Marginalization is often described as a social process where people are relegated to the fringes or `margins of the society. It is defined as a process, in which individuals or communities are socially excluded, systematically blocked from, or are denied access to participate in social and political processes which are basic to integrate with the society. Cultural marginality as a unique identity phenomenon exhibits growing salience in contemporary societies and revolutionizes our traditional understanding of cultural identity and sense of selfhood by alluding to an obscure and dynamic configuration of individual identity that pertains to multiple cultural systems. The concept of cultural marginality can be traced to the “Marginal Man” concept proposed by Park (1924) from the Chicago School of Sociology and has since caused considerable controversy largely due to a predominantly negative connotation perceived towards the notion.

**Keywords:** Marginalized, Subaltern, Racism, Dalit, Oppression

People live in harmony with each other, they frame society, family and other relations to make their own existence. But one thing we can see that within family, within society and

even in mindset of many people there is a concept that you are low than mine. Though every people want to be a part of society, culture etc. But we can not ignore the fact that within these all concepts there exist the concept of marginalization. Any human being who is having a position in society or in family always think other as inferior and himself/herself as superior. In every place more or less this idea exists, for that many human beings are still in darkness. Marginalization is a process whereby something or someone is pushed to the edge of a group and accorded lesser importance. This is predominantly a social phenomenon by which a minority or sub-group is excluded and their needs to ignored. For example, some products will undergo marginalization when they longer have the need to fill that they used to have in the part.

The primary theorists identified seven properties of marginalization: Intermediacy, Differentiation, Power, Secrecy, Reflectiveness, Voice, and Liminality (Hall et al., 1994; Mohammed, 2006.) There is always a power structure between the upper classes and lower classes. In free, democratic societies, we have a lot to be happy about. We may have good schools and hospitals, a vibrant economy built on good infrastructure, and the freedom to choose who represents us. But even in such a society, not all members have the same access to the opportunities, services and benefits. This inequality is also called marginalization, and it exists even in the strongest, wealthiest countries in the world. All societies are built by those in power. In a democracy, the people get to pick who gets the power to shape our societies, but it is still the case that important policies and decisions will be affected by a select few. And the further one is from these people, the greater chance there is that their needs will be ignored. Think about minority groups. Even in democracies, they often struggle to gain equal access to schools, jobs, or even housing opportunities that would allow them to live in new communities.

In any field, it may be public sphere and it also may be the private sphere, many people till now becomes harassed by others. Marginalization exists in multiple forms, and against many groups of people. It may be social marginalization, Religion marginalization, economic marginalization, Cultural marginalization, and political marginalization. Mounting empirical research suggests that violations of religious freedom and agency, both by governments and

powerful social actors, tend to reinforce oppressive structures that marginalize, or prevent integration of, impoverished people, exploited women, migrants, ethnic and religious minorities, and outcasts. The dominant paradigm in the sociology of religion finds that, at the deepest ontological level, the default condition of religion is diversity. Religion is a force under which we understand the framework of social exclusion or integration across the world. The religion, have created certain formulas/new guidelines and the people who does not maintain those rules he/she instantly becomes oppresses, suppressed.

Marginalisation is both a historical reality and a context specific phenomenon. Structure and variants of marginality indicate a common character of domination of some groups and individuals and weakness and ineffectiveness of a large number of people at a same time. In other words, it shows dominance of a minority of people and subjugation of a large majority in specific societies. Patterns of injustice and inequality characterize the phenomenon of marginalisation in all over the world. In the Indian subcontinent and especially within the broad fold of Hindu social orders, the marginalised are designated to be the out- castes represented by the antyajas and the shudras belonging to the social categories of untouchables and others practising unclean ascribed occupations and extra- mural manual activities of various sorts. Within the conventional cultural framework of the varna system they are provided with stigmatised existence and are considered to be impure and are kept away from varieties of social and cultural interactions with the higher varnas, like the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. They are conditioned to survive at the margin of society – socially, culturally, politically, economically and even geographically. Traditionally they have remained associated to ascribed occupations compelling them to concentrate on low – paying jobs, or ‘unclean’ occupations to accept exploitative terms and conditions of work and to remain insecure socially and politically. Many of these social and cultural stigmas are also extended to women, tribal and religious minority groups. There is continuous exclusion of women towards men.

When we talk about understanding marginalization, we must turn our focus to the minorities in India. Minorities refer to a group of people that live within the society that are different than the majority of people on the base of religion, race, beliefs, language etc. They are

basically numerically smaller in numbers than the majority. In India minorities (on the base of religion) include Muslims, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, and others. Religion has powerfully anchored forms of identity, meaning, community, and purpose. And the same religion, through cultural roots, has created newer forms of marginalization across the societies and nations. the rural economy of the coastal and north-eastern regions is in a state of collapse, a consequence of the adverse effects exacerbated by the ineffective governance of the postcolonial regimes (Njonjo 2013). Because of the economic deprivation, the impoverished category of the Muslim community explores opportunities to survive, which see them turning to the jihadi groups. And due to the seemingly relative success of their Christian compatriots, Muslims' resentment increases, fuelling ethno-religious-regional hatred, making religiously-based violence 'more attractive to the desperate and dispossessed' (Hansen 2016). In addition, the perception created by Muslim clerics is that the members of the jihadi movement in Kenya are always the unemployed sections of the community - those who suffer marginalization and discrimination. This underscores the finding of a 2009 study in Europe, that found that most of the jihadist members of jihadi groups in Europe, while well educated, middle class and individuals in European societies, were driven to jihadi acts by their 'perceived suffering of their brothers in the Islamic world' (Mutua 2015). The Pope recently visited England. While addressing parliamentarians and other dignitaries at the Palace of Westminster, he denounced what he described as the "increasing marginalization of religion, particularly Christianity." The Pope is right that religion is rapidly becoming a marginalized relic in public life and discourse. Larger and larger numbers of people, according to the recent American Religious Identification Survey.

Marginalization is often described as a social process where people are relegated to the fringes or `margins of the society. It is defined as a process, in which individuals or communities are socially excluded, systematically blocked from, or are denied access to participate in social and political processes which are basic to integrate with the society. Marginalization inhibits a person, a group, a section or a community to enjoy rights, privileges, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of a society. It may therefore be considered as a discordant relationship between those who marginalize as compared to those who are being marginalized. Then possibly the term `marginalized' may be used synonymously with the term `oppressed' in comparison to an `oppressor' as Paolo

Freire used in his famous 'Pedagogy of Oppressed', 'proletariat' as used by Karl Marx, 'subaltern' used by Gramsci, 'powerless' as elaborated by Michel Foucault, or exploited, vulnerable, discriminated, disadvantaged, subjugated, socially excluded, alienated or downtrodden as used elsewhere in the available literature. All over the world nowadays people are discussing the problems of marginalized groups -their social, ethnic, economic, and cultural problems. Marginality with all aspects is indeed a major problem to be reckoned with in the world. By and large, most of the marginalized groups constitute minorities religious, ethnic, linguistic, or otherwise- in different countries. There are sub-cultures in mainstream cultures or religions. Invariably they are impoverished people constituting minority groups. They suffer from economic, social or political impoverishment and find themselves estranged from this mainstream. Their marginality may vary in degree, extent or intensity.

Society in the United States is becoming increasingly culturally diverse. To facilitate nurses' understanding of immigrant adolescents' unique experiences, this article explores the concept of cultural marginality. Cultural marginality is defined by the author as "situations and feelings of passive between when people exist between two different cultures and do not yet perceive themselves as centrally belonging to either one." The Theory of Cultural Marginality was developed to increase understanding of the unique experiences of individuals who are straddling distinct cultures and to offer direction for providing culturally relevant care. Theories contributing to the development of the Theory of Cultural Marginality were acculturation, acculturative stress, and marginality. The major concepts of this theory are across-culture conflict recognition, marginal living, and easing cultural tension. Marginal living is viewed as a process of being in between two cultures with emphasis on being in transition rather than being on the periphery of one culture. Across-culture conflict recognition is a beginning understanding of differences between two contradicting cultural values, customs, behaviours, and norms. Easing cultural tension resolves across-culture conflict. The factors influencing the process of across-culture conflict recognition, marginal living, and easing cultural tensions are described as contextual/personal influences. This chapter describes the use of this theory in nursing research, education and practice. Sometimes, whole societies can be marginalized at national and global levels, while classes and communities can be marginalized from the dominant social order within the local level.

In some other contexts, the same community can be marginalized in certain country (Jews in Germany or Russia) whereas they are not marginalized in another country (Jews in the U.S.A.). Marginalization also increases or decreases at certain stages of life cycle. For example, the marginalized status of children and youth may decrease as they get older; the marginalized status of adults may increase as they become older; the marginalized status of single mother may change as their children grow up. Individuals or groups might enjoy high social status at some point of time, but as social change takes place, they may lose this status and become Marginalization Thus, marginalization n is a complex as well as shifting phenomenon linked to social status.

Cultural marginality as a unique identity phenomenon exhibits growing salience in contemporary societies and revolutionizes our traditional understanding of cultural identity and sense of selfhood by alluding to an obscure and dynamic configuration of individual identity that pertains to multiple cultural systems. The concept of cultural marginality can be traced to the “Marginal Man” concept proposed by Park (1924) from the Chicago School of Sociology and has since caused considerable controversy largely due to a predominantly negative connotation perceived towards the notion. In recent decades with the prevalence of multiculturalism, the issue of multicultural identity has particularly been brought to extensive debate and correspondingly spurred conceptions of the multicultural personhood that are more or less distanced from Park's original formulation. Janet Bennett conceptualized the term cultural marginality as encompassing two outcomes: encapsulated marginality and constructive marginality (Bennett 1993). Encapsulated marginality, according to Bennett's framework, is indicative of a loneliness, alienation, self-segregation, and internal distress. She identifies "the degree of similarity between internalized cultures as a factor in the intensity of disintegration for the encapsulated marginal" (Bennett 1993: 114). Thus, the more vastly different two cultures are from one another, the more prone an individual is to "internal culture shock" (112). People who are socially marginalized are largely deprived of social opportunities. They may become stigmatized and are often at the receiving end of negative public attitudes. Their opportunities to make social contributions may be limited, and they may develop low self confidence and self-esteem. Social policies and practices may mean that they have relatively limited access to valued social resources such as education and health services, housing, income, leisure activities, and work. The

impact of marginalization, in terms of social exclusion, is similar, whatever the origins and processes of marginalization, irrespective of whether these are located in social attitudes such as, towards impairment, sexuality, ethnicity, and so on or, social circumstance such as closure of workplaces, absence of affordable housing, and so on. Different people will react differently to marginalization depending on the personal and social resources available to them.

The Encyclopedia of Public Health defines marginalized groups as, ‘To be marginalized is to be placed in the margins, and thus excluded from the privilege and power found at the center’. Latin observes that, ‘‘Marginality’ is so thoroughly demeaning, for economic wellbeing, for human dignity, as well as for physical security. Marginal groups can always be identified by members of dominant society, and will face irrevocable discrimination.’’ According to Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary ‘to put or keep (someone) in a powerless or unimportant position within a society or group’. Ghana S. Gurung and Michael Kollmair mention that the concept of marginality is generally used to analyse socioeconomic, political, and cultural spheres, where disadvantaged people struggle to gain access to resources and full participation in social life. In other words, marginalized people might be socially, economically, politically and legally ignored, excluded, or neglected, and, therefore vulnerable to livelihood change. According to Sommers et. al., "Socio-economic marginality is a condition of socio-spatial structure and process in which components of society and space in a territorial unit are observed 4 to lag behind an expected level of performance in economic, political and social wellbeing, compared with average conditions in the territory as a whole." These definitions are mentioned in different contexts, and show that marginalization is a slippery and multilayered concept. Marginalization has aspects in sociological, economic, and political debates. Marginalization may manifest itself in forms varying from genocide/ethnic-cleansing and other xenophobic acts/activities at one end of the spectrum, to more basic economic and social hardships at the unitary (individual/family) level. The nature of marginalization also varies in relation to elderly people living in different countries and cultures. In some societies, the elderly are given more respect compared to other and, hence, are subject to less marginalization. The strong and supportive traditional family system in some cultures often provides better respect and care to elders than the public aided system available in others. Similarly, the level of awareness among the matgmahed

groups plays very important role, and the nature of marginalization varies accordingly. Organized communities who are aware of their rights, demand more justice than unorganized communities. This also depends upon the political- economy of the country where they live in. For example, physically challenged people form organizations in the U.S. and Europe more effectively than in other countries, and demand justice easily. This cannot always happen if the political-economic system is not supportive. Usually, democratic institutions are favourable for most of the disadvantaged groups.

Economic marginalization as a process relates to economic structures, in particular, to the structure of markets and their integration. To the extent in the markets that some individuals or groups engage in are segmented from the others in general, these individuals can be said to be marginalized from the rest of the economy. Segmentation and exclusion may, however, have non-economic and non-financial origins, for example in discrimination by gender, caste, or ethnicity. Here, integration takes on a broader meaning. People who are experiencing marginalization are likely to have tenuous involvement in the economy. The sources of their income will vary. These experiences affect men and women differently and vary with age. Poverty and economic marginalization have both direct and indirect impacts on people's health and wellbeing. Political marginalization does not allow the group to participate democratically in decision making, and, hence, they lose their right to every social, economic, and political benefit. Political empowerment is one of the most important tools for accessing other social and economic privileges. In every society, lack of political empowerment affects large sections of people, including women, ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled persons, elderly, etc. So far as gender is concerned, we find that participation by women is minimized across the globe. It is men who hold power and lead politics around the world. This is true at all levels of power in politics, whether it is party leadership, elected offices, appointed offices, or at policy making levels. This is a particularly acute problem in third world countries, where women's participation in political affairs is mostly linked with the dominant, male-oriented social cultural and religious environment. This kind of marginalization is also felt by ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled persons, elderly, etc. Marginalization happens simultaneously at micro and macro levels. The micro and macro levels often intersect each other in many ways. Marginalization occurs at individual, group, community, and global levels. Marginalization occurs at the community level where a community experiences



exclusion from the mainstream as a result of the development of practices, policies, and programs. And certain global forces directly contribute to marginalization. Globalization (global capitalism), immigration, social welfare, and policy are broader social structures that have the potential to contribute negatively to one's access to resources and services, and result in marginalization of individuals and groups, as well as nations.

If we go for the plot of “The Shroud” by Munshi Premchand then the entire plot of the story is embedded in the rural society. The story narrates life of a Dalit family that consists of Ghisu, Madhav, his son, and daughter-in-law, Budhia. Through the depiction of ‘helplessness’ faced by Dalits, Premchand very thoughtfully also underlined a fundamental aspect of the relation between class and caste. Here, it becomes essential to note how the untouchables could not escape from the poverty and also how their caste played a pivotal role in subjugating their financial stability. Premchand had identified reason behind the oppression of Dalits as the acceptance of the Varna system and therefore had struck at its very roots. Thus, Premchand provided an eventful illustration of rural life and also highlighted the state of merciless exploitation of Dalits prevalent in the contemporary society. In Mahasweta Devi's short story Draupadi where a Santhal tribal woman, Draupadi is subjected to third degree sexual violence. It depicts how a marginalized tribal woman derives strength from her body and her inner feminine core to fight against her marginality. The female protagonist, Draupadi, who is a tribal insurgent, gets captured during her outrageous tribal uprisings against the government. After her capture, she is beguiled for giving information about her companions. Because of her dedication, she is subjected to third degree in police custody; Though the story is about the exploitation of the tribes, but it predominantly focuses on the oppression of woman through the flouting of their bodies, especially tribal women who repay the price of raising their voice (5). “Your sex is a terrible wound,” says Draupadi (28). The most important question that this text poses is not only why Dopdi was raped, but it also analyses why women fall as an easy prey to be raped? Through this story, the author challenges the commodification” and “subsequent victimization” of a woman’s body. Dopdi becomes a symbol of resistance here, but she was marginalized by upper classes.

Marginalization can also take the form of symbolic violence. Bourdieu (1998) defined symbolic violence as an extension of the term violence to include other forms of violence. According to Bourdieu, symbolic violence is an imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning upon groups or classes, accepted as legitimate. It is related to various modes of social and cultural domination. Symbolic violence is the unnoticed (partly unconscious) domination that people maintain in everyday living. Because symbolic violence is practiced and repeated in everyday life, people do not realize that certain acts or attitudes contain symbolic violence. He further states that symbolic violence is a soft violence applied by subject to other subjects. Symbolic violence is repeated from time to time through education in the family, formal schooling or informal learning. Bourdieu (1998) used the term “symbolic violence” to describe how the ideas and values of a ruling cultural class are purposefully imposed (often through subconscious means) onto a dominated social group. Culture plays a role as maintenance of the power relations. He claimed that culture contributes to the systematic reproduction of symbolic violence. The concept of marginalisation is an abstract and multi-faceted idea and has been employed in various academic fields, including education. According to a United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) report, marginalisation in education is “a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities” (UNESCO, 2010). This definition suggests that educational marginalisation depends upon marginalised groups’ social and cultural context. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines marginalisation as “the state of being considered unimportant, undesirable, unworthy, insignificant and different resulting in inequity, unfairness, deprivation and enforced lack of access to mainstream power” (UNDP, 1996). Oroonoko is an African prince who is captured and becomes a slave. The racial tensions he faces are similar to those faced by Shakespeare’s Othello. The white English view the Africans as total savages. In this novel “Oroonoko” there is a post-colonial perspective. Regarding the racial issue, the authorial voice concurrently advocates and rejects seventeenth-century racial stereotypes. Behn vindicates the Western supremacy over African people. On the one hand, Oroonoko’s Europeanised description leads to consider that westernisation is used as a tool to domesticate his blackness, which was considered inferior and primitive. Physically, Oroonoko is described under the Caucasian standard of beauty, his entire attractiveness depends on qualities accepted by European societies, thus his „Africanness is tamed in order to make him suitable for a white text“

(Manzanas 100). Likewise, his culture and manners are obtained from his Western education, the tutelage of a Frenchman moves him away from the barbarity innate to his black nature and strengthens his royal blood and his most virtuous qualities.

Inequality in educational opportunities has emerged as a major issue in India. It has also become pertinent, as the increasing influence of globalization has jeopardized educational opportunities for the marginalized. Although the provision of basic education in most countries is the responsibility of the State, experience shows that, over the years, the role of the State as the main provider of educational services has reduced owing to privatization and commercialization of education leading to a denial of education for the marginalized groups. Another perspective to marginalization stems from Michael Apple's concept of hidden curriculum. In *Official Knowledge* (1993), Apple maintains that textbooks represent a "selective tradition": "someone's selection, someone's vision of legitimate knowledge and culture, one that in the process of enfranchising one group's cultural capital disenfranchises another's. Apple refers to the process of depriving a particular group of privilege and power, while simultaneously enhancing the privilege and power of another group. He suggests that this happens through the preservation of a curriculum that reinforces the knowledge and culture of a particular population while concurrently ignoring the knowledge and culture of other populations. Apple further goes on to state that curricula aren't imposed, but rather negotiated, as non-dominant groups struggle to be heard. What tends to occur through this process of deliberation and negotiation is that the knowledge and perspectives of marginalized groups are included but become marginalized.

The practice of untouchability and a large number of atrocities inflicted on Dalits continue even today mainly because of hidden prejudices and neglect on the part of officials responsible for the implementation of Special Legislations; i.e. the Protection of Civil Rights Act (PCRA) and the Prevention of Atrocities Act (POA). The Government should make a meaningful intervention in this regard so as to mitigate the sufferings of Dalits due to the practice of untouchability and atrocities inflicted upon them and should also treat this matter on a priority basis to ensure that the officials and the civil society at large are sensitized on this issue. Marginalization is one of the forms of gender inequality under various economic conditions and under the influence of unique historical, cultural, legal, and religious elements.

To put it another way, women may be excluded from some jobs and occupations, incorporated into others, and marginalized in yet others. In every place and society, they are always marginalized in comparison to men. All of this demonstrates that, despite improvements, India's information ecology still favours the upper castes. Even when they are well-intentioned and sensitive, their understanding of India on the ground is distant from reality, just as many political figures from the rural belt do not appear to grasp gender discrimination. It is past time for India's liberals and leftists to recognise caste.

### References

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4. According to Sommers et. al., "Socio-economic marginality is a condition of socio-spatial structure and process in which components of society and space in a territorial unit are observed 4 to lag behind an expected level of performance in economic, political and social wellbeing, compared with average conditions in the territory as a whole."