

An Insight into Socially Excluded Groups in India through Gender and Social Exclusion Indicators

Suman Sarmah¹

Abstract

The term social exclusion is very much used in the field of intellectuals and policy planners worldwide for identifying the gaps for the development of the neglected people and the pertaining country. The causes for exclusion can vary from country to country in different times; reflecting deferent situation such geographically, historically and politically but the results will be the same in the form of lack of people development and the country. As a result of social exclusion, it impacts the livelihood of the people such as increase in rate of poverty, health, and others. The exclusion is practiced worldwide mostly on the identity of gender, caste, religion, ethnicity, color, race, nationality, and others. In the Indian context, caste may be considered as the most important indicator of social exclusion and broadly as a proxy for socio-economic status and poverty. In the identification of the poor, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes and in some cases the Other Backward Castes are considered as socially disadvantaged groups and such groups have a higher probability of living under adverse conditions and poverty. In India specific measures have undertaken to address the problem of exclusion and to overcome the problems of accessibility to the excluded populations. Although the public goods being reviewed in the India Exclusion Report 2013-14 – education, urban housing, decent work in labour markets and legal justice in relation to anti-terror legislations – are very diverse, the dominant and striking finding from the report is that for these public goods the groups being most severely and consistently excluded are almost always the same: women, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and persons with disabilities. Members of these groups tend to be either excluded completely from access to these public goods, or excluded on unequal and discriminatory terms compared to other sections of society. The consistent exclusion of these communities from just and equitable access to diverse public goods suggests that both in their design and functioning state institutions, policies and laws tend to mirror, produce and reproduce discrimination and exploitation based on gender, caste, class, religion and disability. The report finds that exclusion is deeper when the multiple layers of these diverse forms of exclusions occur within an individual, household or group; for instance, a Dalit woman seeking work or a disabled Muslim child attending school.

Keywords: *SCs, STs, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, India Exclusion Reports, Social Exclusion Indicators.*

¹ Suman Sarmah, Assistant Professor, GCC Centre of Management Studies (GCMS), Gauhati Commerce College, Guwahati – 781021. Email : sumansarmah@yahoo.com

Introduction:

Social exclusion is a process which involves denial of rights and opportunities which the majority enjoy, resulting in the inability of individuals from excluded groups to participate in the basic political, economic and social functioning of the society, thereby causing high human poverty and deprivation among them (Thorat, 2005). Social exclusion is lack of access to resources and consequent inability to utilize them. It is further accentuated by denial of opportunities which enhance access to resources and their utilization. It can be experienced by anyone who is in position which is vulnerable to such impeding conditions. Amartya Sen (2000) has pointed out that the historical roots of the concept of social exclusion go back as far as Aristotle.

In 2010, India ranked 119 among 192 countries across the world, with a medium level HDI of 0.52, moving one notch higher as compared to 2005. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) data, it is among the top 10 movers in gross domestic product (GDP) growth. However, despite this, certain sections of society remain excluded, especially in terms of improvements in human capabilities and entitlements. For historical reasons, Indian society is segregated into castes, and some of them are economically and socially deprived to a great extent. It is therefore essential to bridge the caste gaps and ultimately eliminate all forms of discriminating social barriers. Also, the tribal groups of central and eastern India in particular have remained deprived in multiple dimensions (a factor that cannot be ignored if the extremist violence in that region is to be addressed).

Need for the Study:

One of the important social determinants that need to be addressed with respect to India's multi dimensional society is 'social exclusion'. Social exclusion mainly refers to the inability of our society to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what we expect as society to realize their full potential. Economic capability (poverty), gender, age, caste and religion, etc. are important variables which indicate exclusion from social and economic opportunities. In the Indian context, social organization on the basis of caste and other social groups such as tribes represent a form of social stratification. Such an organization may be considered as the most important indicator of social inclusion/exclusion and broadly as a proxy for socio-economic status. In the identification of the poor, Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and in some cases the Other Backward Classes (OBC) are considered as socially disadvantaged social groups and such groups have a higher probability of living under adverse conditions and poverty. The Indian government has specific programs for economically and socially uplifting the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes such as provision

of development packages, reservation in educational institutions and employment etc. Such measures are intended to reduce the adverse conditions and social exclusion. Against this backdrop, this paper aims to highlight some key social exclusion indicators which would attempt to reflect the present state of this problem for some important categories of socially excluded groups.

Objectives of the Study:

Given the above scenario, this paper would attempt to document the problem of social exclusion have been addressed with respect to some distinct socially excluded groups in India. The objective of the paper is to document:

- a) The concept of social exclusion – drawing mainly from the present theoretical social science literature,
- b) The indicators or identifiers of social exclusion and discrimination in multiple spheres,
- c) The detailed statistical data of some key social exclusion indicators with respect to some important socially excluded groups in India.

Review of related Literature:

In social science literature, there is general agreement on the core features of social exclusion (Buvinic, 2005). Social exclusion is defined as social process which involves denial of fair and equal opportunities to certain social groups in multiple spheres in society, resulting in the inability of individuals from excluded groups to participate in the basic political, economic and social functioning of the society.

Three defining characteristics of social exclusion are particularly relevant. First, social exclusion involves denial of equal opportunity in multiple spheres. Second, social exclusion is embedded in the social inter-relations – the channel and processes through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live. Thirdly, the denial to equal opportunities or access results in lack of freedom and human poverty and general deprivation of excluded social groups (Sen, 2000 & Haan, 1999). The consequences of social exclusion thus depend crucially on the functioning of social institutions and the degree to which they are exclusionary and discriminatory in their outcomes. Social exclusion has considerable impact on individual's access to equal opportunity if social interactions occur between groups in a power subordinate relationship. The focus on groups emphasises the importance of social relations in the analysis of poverty and inequality (Buvinic, 2005).

Amartya Sen draws attention to various meanings and dimensions of the concept of social exclusion (Sen, 2000). Distinction is drawn between the situation where some people are being kept out (or at least left out), and where some people are being included (may even be forcibly included) – at greatly unfavourable terms; and describing these two situations as “unfavourable exclusion” and “unfavourable inclusion”. “Unfavourable inclusion”, with unequal treatment, may have the same adverse effects as “unfavourable exclusion”. Mainstream economic literature throws more light on discrimination that works through markets and develops the concept of market discrimination with some analytical clarity (Becker, 1956). In the market discrimination framework, exclusion may operate through restrictions on entry into the market, and/or through “selective inclusion”, but with unequal treatment in market and non-market transactions (this is closer to Sen’s concept of unfavourable inclusion).

In India, exclusion revolves around the societal inter-relations and institutions that exclude, discriminate, isolate and deprive some groups on the basis of their group identity like caste, ethnicity and religion (Thorat and Louis, 2003). Historically, the caste system has regulated social, economic and political life not only of the Hindu society alone but also of other religions through carrying forward and spilling over effect of the caste system. The nature of exclusion revolving around the caste system particularly needs to be understood and conceptualised, in so far as caste based exclusion form the basis for various anti-discriminatory policies in India for other social groups like tribal, women and religious groups (Thorat and Joel, 2004). The practice of caste and untouchability-based exclusion and discrimination thus necessarily involves the failure of access and entitlements, not only to economic rights, but also to civil, cultural, religious and political rights. It involves what has been described as “living mode exclusion” (UNDP, 2004). Caste and untouchability-based exclusion thus reflects the inability of individuals and groups like former ‘untouchables’ and similar groups to interact freely and productively with others and to take part in the full economic, social and political life of a community (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997). Incomplete citizenship or denial of civil rights (freedom of expression, rule of law, right to justice), political rights (right and means to participate in the exercise of political power), and socioeconomic rights (economic security and equality of opportunities) are key to impoverished lives (Zoninsein, 2001).

Research Methodology:

The study is basically analytical in nature, as it used secondary data from the India Exclusion Report, 2014 to highlight important social exclusion indicators.

Limitations and Scope of the Study:

The study was limited to only five categories of socially excluded people viz. Dalits, Muslims, Adivasis, Persons with Disabilities and Women. The study could be extended to other categories of socially excluded groups on many more indicators.

Analysis and Interpretation:

The Indian Exclusion Report, 2014 tried to define a public good to be a good, service, attainment, capability or freedom—individual or collective— that is essential for every human being to be able to live a life of dignity. The basic assumption of the report is that it is the duty of accountable state action to ensure that all persons are enabled to live such a life of essential human dignity and worth. This understanding of a public good departs in many ways from the definitions of the term in liberal economic theory, and Keynesian, neoclassical and welfare economics. The term was first proposed by Adam Smith in 1776. He referred to goods ‘which though they may be in the highest degree advantageous to a great society are, however, of such a nature that the profits could never repay the expenses to any individual or small number of individuals, and which it therefore cannot be expected that any individual or small number of individuals should erect.’ He concluded that the government must provide these goods as the market would fail to.

In welfare economics, pure ‘public goods’ are those that are: (a) perfectly non-rivalrous, meaning that a number of consumers can consume the good at the same time, and one person’s consumption of the good does not affect another’s opportunity to consume it; and (b) perfectly non-excludable, meaning no one can be prevented from enjoying the benefits of the good once it has been produced. A classic example of such a public good is national defence. In the post-war period, Paul Samuelson, a Keynesian economist, proposed that goods may also be classified as ‘impure public goods’ due to their excludable nature, as they may not be both perfectly non-rivalrous and non-excludable. Public goods are seen mainly in their opposition to private goods, which are both rivalrous and excludable, such as an ice cream (typically traded in markets, where the price is decided through the interaction of buyers and sellers).

In contemporary political and social analysis, it is generally concluded that public goods include both pure public goods as well as these goods of social value. School education for instance has been theorized the world over as being a public good, even though it does not strictly fulfill such a good’s non-rival and non-excludable characteristics. Inge Kaul and Ronald Mendoza made a useful

distinction between the original characteristics of the goods, and what aspects society attributes to them. They made the case that what is defined as 'public' and 'private' should not be left solely to the market, and should, instead, be defined by public policy. They also demonstrated how excludable resources like forests, water and even land, can be considered a public good. The terminology depends on how the entity is defined by society in public policy. This depends less on what its original characteristics are, and more on the characteristics assigned to that good by society. In the case of India, for example, the recognition of school education as a fundamental right – through Supreme Court judgments, amendments to the Constitution and, finally, the passage of a rights-based statute – implies its redefinition as a public good, and the resistance to this redefinition has come from some private schools, that argue that education is and should be a private good. There are also compelling arguments that education can never be a truly non excludable public good as long as there is private, for-profit provisioning of education, and that education can become a true public good only when there is a state-provided common school system.

Who is being Excluded?

Although the public goods being reviewed in the India Exclusion Report 2013–14 – education, urban housing, decent work in labour markets and legal justice in relation to anti-terror legislations – are very diverse, the dominant and striking finding from the report is that for these public goods the groups being most severely and consistently excluded are almost always the same: women, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and persons with disabilities. Members of these groups tend to be either excluded completely from access to these public goods, or excluded on unequal and discriminatory terms compared to other sections of society. The consistent exclusion of these communities from just and equitable access to diverse public goods suggests that both in their design and functioning state institutions, policies and laws tend to mirror, produce and reproduce discrimination and exploitation based on gender, caste, class, religion and disability. The report finds that exclusion is deeper when the multiple layers of these diverse forms of exclusion occur within an individual, household or group; for instance, a Dalit woman seeking work or a disabled Muslim child attending school.

School Education:

While it is officially reported that elementary school enrolment is nearing 100 per cent, there is cause to be skeptical about this finding, because it is 'blind' to sizeable numbers of children who are completely invisible to the state. This invisibility is particularly shocking with respect to one category of these children, namely urban street children, who are physically visible to policy makers every

day but continue to be excluded from the education system. There are few reliable estimates of these children but a 2011 study found 50,000 street children in Delhi alone. About half of them were illiterate, and only about 20 per cent had received some formal education. As per United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) estimates, there were 11 million street children in India in 1994, a number that is likely to have gone up significantly since then. There are, in addition, according to the government, about 12 million working children in the five-to 14-years age group in 2001, but unofficial estimates put the number at as high as 60 million. Child Rights and You (CRY) in India estimate that there are about five million children in commercial sex work in the country, 71 per cent of who are illiterate. An estimated six million migrating children find their schooling interrupted and do not attend school; while at least 500,000 people were internally displaced due to conflict and violence in India by the end of 2011.¹⁶ About 145,000 of the estimated 2.1 million living with HIV/AIDS in India in 2011 were children below the age of 15.

Urban Housing:

Turning to urban housing, the picture is similar. The Kundu Committee report argues that the overall housing shortage in India is of the order of 18.78 million units. It is found that 95 per cent of the shortage in housing affects families classified as either Low Income Group (LIG, household income between Rs. 5,000–10,000 a month) or Economically Weaker Sections (EWS, household income under Rs 5,000 a month). In addition to these households facing housing shortage, the Kundu Committee estimates that there are 530,000 homeless households. However, this figure is widely thought to be an underestimation, with a more realistic number being closer to 3 million households.

Results and Discussions:

A consistent finding across the range of public goods and excluded groups looked at in this paper is the lack of reliable, timely and sufficiently disaggregated data on access to public goods and related human development outcomes. This paper attempted to collate relevant statistics on exclusion in India, relying almost exclusively on official sources – the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Census of India and data from government ministries and departments.

The table 1 provides basic demographic information on the major excluded groups namely, women, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and persons with disabilities (PWDs), both in Indian context and state level. It reflects the rural-urban and inter-state variations in the proportions of population among the excluded groups. It is found that 48.5% of country's population were females, 19.5% were minorities of which 13.4% Muslims, 16.6% Dalits, 8.6% Adivasis and 2.2% PWDs.

The highest proportion of women, Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, Muslims and PWDs were in the states/UT of Kerala (52%), Himachal Pradesh (25.2%), Lakshadweep (94.8%), Mizoram (96.4%), Lakshadweep (95.5%) and Jammu & Kashmir (2.9%) respectively. Further, it was also found that majority of females, Dalits and Adivasis resided in rural areas.

The table 2 shows the educational indicators for major groups of excluded children in India. It reflects that as per 2011 census the literacy rate of all the excluded groups enlisted in the table were much lower than the overall literacy rate of the country. Similarly, the attendance rate of the excluded groups was also lower. On the other hand, the drop-out rate and out-of-school rates were higher among the excluded groups, especially among the children with disabilities, followed by Muslims, Adivasis, Dalits and girls.

Therefore, it is clear that social exclusions in Indian society are reality. There are particular groups of people who were both traditionally as well in the present context are deprived of equality and equity in resource sharing and social development. Further, social exclusion in one variable is interrelated and interdependent on other aspects of exclusions. The policy makers and planners need to take into account such dynamics of social exclusions in Indian context for formulating any policy or programme and for its implementations.

Table 1: Demographic Indicators of Excluded Groups in India (Across States and Union Territories)

India/ State/ UTs	Total Population (2011)	Percentage Share of Total Population										
		By Gender		By Group				By Age				
		Male	Female	Dalits	Adivasis	Muslims*	Minorities*	Person with Disabilities	0 - 6 Years	0-17 Years	18-59 Years	60+ Years
India	1,21,08,54,977	51.5	48.5	16.6	8.6	13.4	19.5	2.2	13.6	36.7	54.4	8.6
Rural	83,37,48,852	51.3	48.7	18.5	11.3	NA	NA	2.2	14.6	38.9	52	8.8
Urban	37,71,06,125	51.8	48.2	12.6	2.8	NA	NA	2.2	11.5	31.8	59.6	8.1
Andhra Pradesh	8,45,80,777	50.2	49.8	16.4	7	9.2	10.9	2.7	10.8	31.3	58	9.8
Arunachal Pradesh	13,83,727	51.6	48.4	NA	68.8	1.9	64.5	1.9	15.3	42.6	52.7	4.6
Assam	3,12,05,576	51.1	48.9	7.2	12.4	30.9	35.1	1.5	14.9	38.7	54.6	6.7
Bihar	10,40,99,452	52.1	47.9	15.9	1.3	16.5	16.7	2.2	18.4	45.6	46.6	7.4
Chhattisgarh	2,55,45,198	50.2	49.8	12.8	30.6	2	5.3	2.4	14.3	38.2	53.9	7.8
Delhi	1,67,87,941	53.5	46.5	16.8	NA	11.7	18	1.4	12	33	60.1	6.8
Goa	14,58,545	50.7	49.3	1.7	10.2	6.8	33.7	2.3	9.9	26.2	62.4	11.2
Gujarat	6,04,39,692	52.1	47.9	6.7	14.8	9.1	10.8	1.8	12.9	34.6	57.1	7.9
Haryana	2,53,51,462	53.2	46.8	20.2	NA	5.8	11.8	2.2	13.3	36	55.2	8.7
Himachal Pradesh	68,64,602	50.7	49.3	25.2	5.7	2	4.6	2.3	11.3	31.4	58.2	10.2
Jammu & Kashmir	1,25,41,302	53	47	7.4	11.9	67	70.4	2.9	16.1	39.8	52.7	7.4
Jharkhand	3,29,88,134	51.3	48.7	12.1	26.2	13.8	31.3	2.3	16.3	41.9	50.6	7.1
Karnataka	6,10,95,297	50.7	49.3	17.1	7	12.2	15.9	2.2	11.7	31.7	58.8	9.5
Kerala	3,34,06,061	48	52	9.1	1.5	24.7	43.8	2.3	10.4	28.2	59.2	12.6

Madhya Pradesh	7,26,26,809	51.8	48.2	15.6	21.1	6.4	8.8	2.1	14.9	39.6	52.4	7.9
Maharashtra	11,23,74,333	51.8	48.2	11.8	9.4	10.6	19.5	2.6	11.9	32.1	57.6	9.9
Manipur	28,55,794	50.4	49.6	3.4	40.9	8.8	53.9	1.9	13.1	36.2	56.5	7
Meghalaya	29,66,889	50.3	49.7	0.6	86.1	4.3	86.4	1.5	19.2	46.5	48.64	4.7
Mizoram	10,97,206	50.6	49.4	0.1	94.4	1.1	96.4	1.4	15.4	38.5	55.2	6.3
Nagaland	19,78,502	51.8	48.2	NA	86.5	1.8	92.3	1.5	14.7	41.5	53.3	5.2
Odisha	4,19,74,218	50.5	49.5	17.1	22.8	2.1	5.6	3	12.6	34.3	55.9	9.5
Punjab	2,77,43,338	52.8	47.2	31.9	NA	1.6	63	2.4	11.1	31.5	58	10.3
Rajasthan	6,85,48,437	51.9	48.1	17.8	13.5	8.5	11.2	2.3	15.5	41	51.1	7.5
Sikkim	6,10,577	52.9	47.1	4.6	33.8	1.4	38.9	3	10.5	33.7	59.4	6.7
Tamil Nadu	7,21,47,030	50.1	49.9	20	1.1	5.6	11.8	1.6	10.3	28.6	60.9	10.4
Tripura	36,73,917	51	49	17.8	31.8	8	14.3	1.8	12.5	33.4	58.6	7.9
Uttar Pradesh	19,98,12,341	52.3	47.7	20.7	0.6	18.5	19.3	2.1	15.4	42.7	48.8	7.7
Uttarakhand	1,00,86,292	50.9	49.1	18.8	2.9	11.9	15	1.8	13.4	37.7	53.2	8.9
West Bengal	9,12,76,115	51.3	48.7	23.5	5.8	25.2	27.5	2.2	11.6	32.9	58.5	8.5
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	3,80,581	53.3	46.7	NA	7.5	8.2	30.5	1.7	10.7	29.5	63.7	6.7
Chandigarh	10,55,450	55	45	18.9	NA	3.9	21.4	1.4	11.3	30.7	62.9	6.4
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	3,43,709	56.4	43.6	1.8	52	3	6.4	1	14.8	36.4	59.4	4
Daman & Diu	2,43,247	61.8	38.2	2.5	6.3	7.8	10.3	0.9	11.1	27.5	67.7	4.7
Lakshadweep	64,473	51.4	48.6	NA	94.8	95.5	96.3	2.5	11.3	30.9	60.8	8.2
Puducherry	12,47,953	49.1	50.9	15.7	NA	6.1	13.2	2.4	10.6	28.7	61.5	9.7

Source: Census of India, 2011, * Population estimates for Muslims and minorities are from Census of India 2001.

Table 2: Educational Indicators for Major Groups of Excluded Children, 2011

	Literacy Rate (%)	Current Attendance Rate among 5-14 year olds (%)	Drop in Enrolment from Primary to Upper Primary Level (%)	Out of School Rate (%)
Overall	74.0	87.1	51.8	4.28
Girls	64.6	85.8	51.4	4.71
Dalits	66.1	85.2	54.4	5.96
Adivasis	58.9	81.7	58.5	5.60
Muslims	-	82.3	58.9	7.67
Children with Disabilities	48.0*	-	63.3	34.12

Sources: BFC, 2014, *India Exclusion Report 2013-14 - A comprehensive, annually updated analysis on the exclusion of disadvantaged groups in India*, Bangalore: Book for Change.

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