
Social Exclusion in India - from gender perspective**Dr. Meenu Jain**Associate professor
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D.A.V. College Yamunanagar , Haryana**Abstract**

Exclusion is defined as the processes by which individuals and groups face barriers in relation to their access to public goods, resulting in inequitable social attainments, capabilities, development and justice. These barriers arise from a number of causes. Amartya Sen has pointed out that the historical roots of this concept go back as far as Aristotle. As elsewhere in the world, social exclusion is rampant in India. Growth in the economy has bypassed those very people who deserve to be helped most. There is a broad category of poor in India, but certain socially excluded groups (Dalits, Muslims, Tribals and Women) experience greater challenges in accessing rights, entitlements and opportunities, and in moving out of poverty. Though India is developing economically and technologically by leaps and bounds, women here still continue to be discriminated. Women are the most marginalized among the excluded community; they don't have access to the same resources as others; they lack the opportunities to be productive members of society; they don't have access to basic services. The access of women to development opportunities and the impact of development programmes on women assumes importance as women constitute half of human resources in all societies. For growth to be truly inclusive, we have to ensure their protection, well-being, development, empowerment and participation. This paper is about the social exclusion of women in the development process.

Key words : Social Exclusion, Poverty, Health, Women, literacy, Plans

Introduction

Exclusion is defined as the processes by which individuals and groups face barriers in relation to their access to public goods, resulting in inequitable social attainments, capabilities, development and justice. Social exclusion is multidimensional – it encompasses social, political, cultural and economic dimensions, and operates at different social levels. It is also dynamic as it impacts people in various ways. It is relational – it is the product of social interactions which result in a lack of social participation. It complements the concept of inequality. Exclusionary processes can have various dimensions:

- **Political exclusion** includes the denial of citizenship rights such as political participation and the right to organise, freedom of expression and equality of opportunity.
- **Economic exclusion** includes lack of access to labour markets, credit and other forms of assets.
- **Social exclusion** may take the form of discrimination along a number of dimensions including gender, ethnicity and age.
- **Cultural exclusion** refers to the extent to which diverse values, norms and ways of living are accepted and respected.

These relationships are interconnected and overlapping. Social exclusion can also be seen as a part of Sen's capability approach, which is based on the ideas of 'functionings' and 'capabilities'. Amartya Sen has pointed out that the historical roots of this concept of social exclusion goes back as far as Aristotle. As elsewhere in the world, social exclusion is rampant in India. Growth in the economy has bypassed those very people who deserve to be helped most. Social exclusion is often a cause of poverty, conflict and insecurity. There is a broad category of poor in India, but certain socially excluded groups (Dalits, Muslims, Tribals and Women) experience greater challenges in accessing rights, entitlements and opportunities, and in moving out of poverty. They don't have access to the same resources as others; they lack the opportunities to be productive members of society; they don't have access to basic services. Social exclusion reduces the productive capacity and increases the level of economic inequality in society. The access of women to development opportunities and the impact of development programmes on women assumes importance as women constitutes half of human resources in all societies. Though India is developing economically and technologically by leaps and bounds, women here still continue to be discriminated.

World Bank's 'Gender Mainstreaming Strategy' launched in 2001 highlighted that societies that discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction than societies that treat males and females more equally, and that social gender disparities produce economically inefficient outcomes. Economic growth is positively related to equality as excluded groups gradually gain greater access to education, employment and business opportunities. The poverty-reducing effects of economic growth fall as inequality rises. In addition, the interaction of economic inequalities with other inequalities may result in negative consequences for growth. The issue of socio-economic exclusion and inclusion of deprived groups particularly of women has been a subject matter of intense debate among the academics, social scientists, gender activists and intellectuals particularly in the context of the new emerging scenario of Globalisation, Liberalisation and Privatisation.

Review of Literature

Bhalla, A. and Lapeyre, F., (1997) has argued that social exclusion has gone beyond poverty by explicitly embracing the relational as well as the distributional aspects of poverty. Atkinson, A. B. (1998) has explored the three-way relationship between poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. De Haan, A. (1999) has considered the usefulness of social exclusion as a framework for understanding deprivation. Jackson, C. (1999) has stated that the gender analysis could strengthen social exclusion perspectives by revealing the specifics of particular forms of disadvantage but neglected dimension of development.

United Nations Development Programme (2005) has argued that even modest moves towards greater distributional equity could advance human development and accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Mehta (2006) opined that Panchayat raj system has achieved in improving socio-economic status and empowerment of women.

Mathieson, J. et al. (2008) argued that the present focus on a state of social exclusion fails to recognise the crucial causal link to power inequalities across society. Hoff K. and Pandey P., 2008, reported the link between discrimination, social identity and behaviour causes the effects of past discrimination to persist over time for well-identified groups in village India. Fraser, E. (2009) has shown that conflict could reduce the voice of less powerful groups (including women). Thorat, S., Attewell, P. and Rizvi, F. F. (2009) stated that Caste favouritism and social exclusion still exist in the labour market in today's urban India.

Quisumbing, A. and Pandolfelli, L.(2009) has reviewed attempts to increase poor female farmers' access to, and control of, productive resources in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Tadros, M.(2010) concluded that the focus on women's representation in parliament is too narrow; gender hierarchies that have remained unchallenged in other key power bases (such as key ministries) must be identified and targeted. World Bank, 2011, examined the impacts of economic integration, technical change and access to information on gender inequality. While the forces unleashed by globalisation have lifted some of the barriers to greater gender equality, public action is needed to lift these further. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted that "...women are often denied equal enjoyment of their human rights, in particular by virtue of the lesser status ascribed to them by tradition and custom, or as a result of overt or covert discrimination." This paper highlights the disparities between men and women in terms of their access to work, education and health and explores intervention strategies needed to address the constraints in accessing such facilities .

Constitutional Provisions

In Independent India 'women's problems were never sought to be treated on gender basis but as a social malaise of a common society to be cured by the effects of all members of society ,men and women alike .' The importance of women as a important human resource was recognized by the constitution of India .The constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality ,no discrimination by the state ,equality of opportunity , equal pay for equal work .In addition ,it allows special provisions to be made by the state in favour of women and children .

The legal system of a country is a primary factor which determines the status and rights of women .State enacted several women-specific and women-related legislations to protect women against social discrimination, violence and atrocities and also to prevent social evils like child marriages, dowry, rape, practice of Sati etc. Prevention of Domestic Violence Act is a landmark law in acting as a deterrent as well as providing legal recourse to the women who are victims of any form of domestic violence. Apart from these, there are a number of laws which may not be gender specific but still have ramifications on women.

Women and Five year Plans

Women development has remained an integral part of our development plans .In the First five Year Plan (1951-56) ,the concept of women's development was mainly 'welfare oriented'The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) set up in 1953 , undertook a number of welfare measures through the voluntary sector .In Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) women were organized into Mahila Mandals to act as focal points at the grass-root levels for the development of women .During the sixties (Third ,Fourth and other interim plans) ,education received priority along with measures to improve maternal and child health and nutrition services .During seventies (Fifth Five Year Plan 1974-78), there was a definite shift in the approach from 'Welfare to development which recognized women as participants in development programmes.

In the eighties (Sixth Five year Plan 1980-85) ,The Government of India adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with a special thrust on the' three core sectors of education ,health and employment .Beneficiary -oriented programmes for women were promoted in Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90).Eight Five Year Plan (1992-97) marked a shift from 'development to empowerment of women'. A further impetus for sectoral contribution to women's programmes was received with the introduction of the concept of Women's Component Plan in the Ninth Plan . With the introduction of the National Policy for Empowerment of women , the Government of India had declared year 2001 as women's Empowerment Year .

The Tenth Five Year Plan(2002-07) called for the three pronged strategy of social empowerment, economic empowerment and providing gender justice to create an enabling environment of positive economic and social policies for women and eliminating all forms of discrimination against them and thus advance gender equality goals .The country amended and enacted women related legislations during Tenth Five Year Plan .The married women's Property Act (1874) ,The Hindu Succession Act (1956) were amended and the Protection of women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) was passed . For the first time in the history of Indian planning there is an attempt to move beyond empowerment and recognize women as agents of sustained socio- economic growth and change in Eleventh Five Year .The vision for the XII Five Year Plan is to ensure improving the position and condition of women by addressing structural and institutional barriers as well as strengthening gender mainstreaming.

Though the Constitutional commitments of the nation to women was translated through the planning process , legislation , policies and programs over the last seven decades yet, a situational analysis of social and economic status of women reflects less than satisfactory achievements in almost all important human development indicators. A study in the Himalayan region tells us that a pair of bullock works 1064 hours ,a man works 1212 hours and a women works 3485 hours on a one hectare farm. But the income they earn is not commensurate with the task they perform . In this context, recollect what Baba SahebAmbedkar had to say, "On 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. "How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? "If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has laboriously built up." (25th November, 1949)

Over the years, significant advancements have been made in India on many of these counts. Data on literacy rates, enrolment and drop rates in primary education, life expectancy, infant mortality, maternal mortality rates, etc has shown a progressive trend. However, other parameters that reflect the status and position of women in society such as work participation rates, sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 years and gender based violence continue to be heavily skewed against women (Table 1). In the Population Census of 2011 it was revealed that the population ratio in India 2011 is 940 females per 1000 of males. The Sex Ratio 2011 shows an upward trend .

Work participation rate

The participation of women in the workforce, the quality of work allotted to them and their contribution to the GDP are indicators of the extent of their being mainstreamed into the economy. On all these parameters women in India are worse than men and the challenge is to bridge the inequality. Opening up of the economy and rapid economic growth have escalated some of the existing structural barriers faced by women and new challenges in the form of dismantling of traditional support structures and displacement due to migration and obsolescence of traditional skill. Overall, the labour force participation rate for women is falling: from 37% in 2004-05 to 29% in 2009-10. In 2011-2012, women comprised 24.8% of all rural workers, down from 31.8% in 1972-73. In 2011-2012, women comprised 14.7% of all urban workers, a small increase from 13.4% in 1972-73. Data from the 66th round of the NSSO indicates that female work participation rate has decreased between 2004-05 to 2009-10. The share of women in usual status workers declined from 28.7% to 22.8%. In rural areas this has declined from 32.7% to 26.1% and in urban areas from 16.6% to 13.8%.

Table 1: Selected Indicators on Status of Women

Indicators	Male	Female
Literacy Rate (%) Census 2011	82.14	65.46
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) SRS 2009-10		212
Sex Ratio Census 2011	1000	940
Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years) Census 2011	1000	914
Worker Population ratios (Per 1000)	819	336

Source : Census of India

A little under four-fifths (about 79 per cent) of the rural women workers are employed in the agriculture sector, a sector that is marked by shortage of paid jobs, decelerating and differential wages on basis of gender and degradation of resources. It is estimated that about 60% of all agricultural operations are handled exclusively by women. Female hourly wage rates in agriculture vary from 50 to 75% of male rates, and are too low to overcome absolute poverty. Women's economic participation is hindered by low skills, capacities as well as lack of ownership and control over assets. One of the major concerns is the gender gap in educational level of the labour force. In addition to decent work and inclusion of women's work in the economy, another area of concern is the financial inclusion of the marginalised, which is crucial for their integration into the economy.

Education

The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan's focus on creation of educational infrastructure and improving quality of education has had positive outcomes. The youth (15-24 years) literacy rate has increased from 61.9% to 86.14 per cent during the period 1991-2011. Female literacy rates in the total population (7 age group) 53.7%; Gender gap in literacy rate (7 age group) 21.6%. At present, in primary education the enrolment is favourable to females as Gender Parity Index (GPI) of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is 1.03 in 2013-14. In Secondary education also gender parity has achieved GPI of GER is 1 in 2013-14. and in tertiary level of education, the GPI of GER is 0.89 in 2012-13. As per Census 2011 male literacy rate is 82.14% whereas female literacy rate is 65.46%. As per Census 2011, the ratio of female youth literacy rate to male youth literacy rate is 0.91 at all India level. The challenge, however, remains is that the high enrolment rate has not translated into high attendance rates as well.

Health

On the health front implementation of the National Rural Health Mission has resulted in an improvement in many development indicators related to women. Fertility Rates have come down and have reached replacement levels in a number of states; Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is improving, from 301 per 100,000 live births in 2003 it has come down to 212 in 2009; Infant Mortality Rate, though still high, has reduced to 50 per 1000 in 2009. According to National Family Health Survey III: 55 per cent women were anaemic, 36 per cent of women had body mass index (BMI) which was less

than normal .Birth—is relatively low and 940 girls per 1000 boys in 2011 .It is 926 in urban and 947 in rural India in 2011. As per to 2011 statistics: Life expectancy of women was 64.2 years. Dr.Amartya Sen says, “... education is also an unfulfilled promise here ,but in health there is not even a promise .We want to press it .”

Violence against women

Violence against women is becoming an endemic part of our society, and is getting dangerously institutionalised. They are increasingly unsafe, whether within or outside their homes. women” make them commodities even in this era of 21st century. A.K. Bagchi rightly observed, “She has had less control over resources, including her own body”.

Suggestions

Social exclusion, lack of freedom for women and extreme inequalities have been part of life in India from time immemorial to the present. After sixty years of planned efforts, Indian economic development has not come anywhere close to fulfilling Gandhi’s economic aspirations. Still women suffer from womb to tomb in the male dominated society .Poverty and economic dependence are the roots of women’s self degradation and crimes against them . Women continue to be victims of violence ,neglect and injustice . The Constitutional amendments for reservation for women in Panchayats and urban local bodies has brought more than 1 million women into positions of leadership and governance at the grassroots.

No doubt ,It is only education that will hasten their economic empowerment .It is the seed that has to be planted in the their minds as it is a route to awareness regarding available opportunities ,their rights and responsibilities . Investment in the human capital, health and education, of women and girls is presented as a key way forward as witnessed by the MDGs. The logic is that ‘educated, healthy women are more able to engage in productive activities, find formal sector employment, earn higher incomes and enjoy greater returns to schooling than are uneducated women...’ (WBGDG2003: 6). Educated women are more likely to invest in the education of their own children,and they are also more likely to have fewer children. Thus investment in human capital has positive short and longer term/inter-generational outcomes and is good for both productivity gains and limiting unsustainable population growth. However, attention has narrowly focussed on ensuring the equal access of girls to primary education . The biased attitude of parents should be discouraged so that the girl child is second to none when competing for the opportunities with their male counterparts . During the recent financial crisis, measures to protect ‘the poor’ through employment programmes have not considered the gendered dimensions of crisis, yet women may have been more severely affected than men and in more diverse ways. Economic and financial crises cannot be seen in isolation from food, fuel, water, environment, human rights, and care crises (AWID 2012) .New challenges such as increased intra-country migration, changing labour markets requiring new skill sets and rapidly changing technology have also emerged. Women entrepreneur still have a long way to go .There is short supply of women entrepreneur in society because of the absence of entrepreneurial element in the education system so entrepreneurial development must be the part of curriculum .Growth of women entrepreneurship would be supplementary and complementary for women in particular and country in general .Their enthusiasm and skill in constructive performance is met and simultaneously they can earn enough for proper maintenance and improvement of their socio-economic status .By use of electronic media ,field demonstrations ,printed materials and study visits to expose women farmers to the success stories of other women ,women can be encouraged for effective participation .Government started women’s vocational training programme .But still no. of female extension workers is not adequate .

Women are not aware of their rights .Those who are aware of it ,find difficult to approach the courts .Fast tracked courts especially dealing in women's rights should be established for speedy justice procedures for redressal of grievances should be made simple and fast .The establishment of courts with judges chosen for their interest in female matters would be an improvement .It will provide more opportunities to female aspirants in the legal profession .Agrarian reforms should include at least joint ownership of land .Certain states are offering more concessional stamp duties while transferring land in name of female .Such a step would stimulate a chain of changes of relationships and will provide more economic security .

Above all most important is the sensitization of women to become independent .Usually , a lady Sarpanch or a lady minister are a rubber stamp to their male counter part .Here I will recall Fatima Bee, the sarpanch of Kalra village in Andhra Pradesh .earlier she was a rubber stamp but later on she decided to fight for the cause of women empowerment and got a UNO award on 17th october 1998 in New York for her courage and inspiration to fight against poverty . It is the women who can bring the change in society .Women herself should become brave ,courageous and try to develop will power among themselves .

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