

Social Exclusion of Tribal Agricultural Labourers: The Case of Adiya Tribal Community of Wayanad District

ABSTRACT

The tribal communities in Kerala are considered to be the most vulnerable community in the state. Though, Kerala has achieved remarkable social sector development, celebrated as 'Kerala Model of Development', it is observed that the development process fell short to encompass tribal communities in its development process, which makes them outliers in the Kerala model of development. The present study was an attempt to study the extent of social exclusion of tribal communities of Wayanad. Adiyas was purposively selected for the study as they form the major part of workforce in the cash crop economy of Wayanad district and their status is far below the other tribal communities in the state. To study the phenomenon of social exclusion, primary data was collected from 90 respondents of three villages of Thirunelli and Panamaram panchayats, using structured questionnaire. Social exclusion was operationalized as the process by which individuals and population groups face barriers in relation to their access to public goods and were measured under five different dimensions. The data obtained was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that Adiyas faced an overall exclusion of 66.38 per cent, with Adiyas in Thirunelly and Panamaram facing exclusion to the extent of 70.90 and 61.87 per cent respectively. Analysis of extent of social exclusion indicator wise showed that economic exclusion was felt to an extent of 74.54 per cent followed by political-legal exclusion (69.89%). Also, Adiya tribe experienced geographical exclusion to an extent of 69.76 per cent followed by service exclusion (67.96 %) and socio-cultural exclusion (48.92 %) respectively. Further the Adiya tribes were classified into three categories -high, medium and low based on overall exclusion as well as different dimensions of social exclusion and it was observed that 50.00 per cent of the respondents felt medium level of social exclusion. Considering the significant level of social exclusion faced by this tribal community, developmental interventions for the empowerment of Adiyas in social, economic and educational spheres for ensuring food and livelihood security and for defense against exploitation is the need of the hour.

Keywords: Adiyas, Wayanad, social exclusion, indicators

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of development and well-being has undergone significant changes from the time of its inception during the past century. The notion of well-being has shifted from just material attainment or physical means of development to outcomes that are either desirable in themselves or desirable because of their role in supporting better opportunities for people. Income is clearly only one option that people would like to have, though an important one. But it is not the sum total of their lives. Income is also a means, with human development, to an end. Thus, the latest notion of development assumes that human development is the end and economic growth is just a means to this end (1).

It is in this context that the term social exclusion gained popularity. Social exclusion is defined as the process by which individuals and population groups face barriers in relation to their access to public goods, resulting in inequitable social attainments, capabilities, development, justice and dignity outcomes (2,3). Public goods in this context, is defined as goods, services, attainment, capability or freedom, that is essential for every human being to be able to live a life of dignity. There are several barriers that may arise from a number of causes, including social or state neglect, social or state discrimination, tacit or active social or state denial, social or state violence and dispossession, customary practices and cultural norms, and or by faulty design and implementation of state laws, policies and programmes, or a combination of all of these. The exclusion of the poor from participation in and access to opportunities and activities is a major non material dimension of poverty that needs to be recognized and addressed (4). It is both a process and an outcome that leads to disempowerment and isolation (5). Social exclusion can be viewed as a relative problem with people remaining disconnected from others and from social, economic and political structures around them (6).

52 The identity based form of discrimination which is common among the tribal communities, is a
53 form of social exclusion which has resulted in the cultural devaluation of these groups and has led to an
54 institutionalized form of inequality. Such social inequalities passed on from one generation to another (7)
55 has further led to isolation, shame and humiliation and in turn to self-exclusion (8). The inability of tribes to
56 actively participate in the economic, social, cultural and political life due to the remoteness of their
57 hamlets, coupled with failure of the society to extend economic resources and social recognition, has led
58 to their isolation from major societal mechanisms (9).

59 India is home to more than 533 tribal communities. Almost 90 per cent of them live in difficult
60 terrains like interiors of forests or remote areas, which are less accessible to the mainstream population.
61 This has led to the socio-economic backwardness of these communities (10). Studies have shown that
62 tribals are deprived of regular supply of food (11), and face high degrees of education exclusion due to
63 their peculiar habitation (12). Besides, the poor access to financial resources especially from the banking
64 sector has made these communities more vulnerable to the exploitations by the money lenders (13).
65 Coming to Kerala, there are 36 different tribal communities which constitute 1.4 per cent of the general
66 population of the state (14). Though, Kerala has achieved remarkable social sector development,
67 celebrated as 'Kerala Model of Development', it is observed that the development process fell short to
68 encompass tribal communities in its development process (15), which makes them outliers in the Kerala
69 model of development (16). The tribal communities in Kerala are considered to be the most vulnerable
70 community in the state. Against this background, the present study investigated the extent of social
71 exclusion of tribal communities of Waynad district in Kerala.

72 73 **METHODOLOGY**

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75 Wayanad district of Kerala was purposively selected for the study owing to the highest proportion
76 of Scheduled tribe in the district (18.53%). Since reports suggest that the level of development differs
77 within the tribal communities as some communities seem to be better off than the others (17), Adiyas was
78 purposively selected to study social exclusion. Their status is far below the other tribal communities and
79 they perform worst on human development indicators like health and education (18). Considering the
80 highest concentration of Adiya tribal settlements in Mananthavady block of the district, this block was
81 purposively chosen for the study. 30 respondents each were selected using simple random procedure
82 from Thirunelli and Thrissilery villages of Thirunelli panchayat and Panamaram village of Panamaram
83 panchayat respectively. Thus the sample consisted of 90 respondents. Ex post facto research design
84 which is very commonly used in social research was employed for the study. Social exclusion was
85 operationalised as the extent to which Adiyas were deprived of having access to public goods like
86 education, health care facilities, infrastructural facilities, credit facilities, employment and participating in
87 decision making activities of the society. In order to measure this variable, five indicators were selected
88 using principal component analysis (19). Statements were developed to identify how they felt about their
89 extent of exclusion by depriving them of their rights and scores were given for their levels of feeling
90 ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Statistical measures like frequency, percentage,
91 mean, standard deviation and t - test were utilized for data interpretation.

92 93 **2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

94 Social exclusion was measured using five indicators. Mean score of each statement was
95 computed to measure the extent to which Adiyas felt they were excluded from the society. The results
96 obtained are explained in detail under the following sub sections. A close perusal of the table clearly
97 shows that Coming to economic exclusion, these tribes found it very difficult to get a suitable job for
98 sustainable development (MS=4.63), and even if they were given a job they were not paid the same
99 wages as that of non-tribal workers (MS=4.02). Difficulty in getting a reasonable wage (MS=3.86) and I

100 **2.1. Geographical exclusion**

101 A close perusal of Table 1 clearly shows that this tribe strongly feels that infrastructural facilities
102 (MS= 4.87), employment opportunities (MS=4.52) and educational facilities (MS=4.48) are not available
103 to them on account of the location of their settlements which is a clear indication of geographical isolation.

104 Health facility (MS=3.98) which is an important factor was also not easily accessible to this community
105 due to the remoteness of their location.

106 Adiyas faced geographical exclusion to an extent of 70.60 per cent as shown in Table 2. The
107 extent of geographical exclusion faced by Adiyas in Thirunelli and Panamaram panchayat were 73.13 per
108 cent and 68.07 per cent respectively. Normal infrastructural provisions were denied to this tribal
109 community due to their remote residency in Thirunelli panchayat. These settlements could be reached
110 only by foot. Mud roads in these hamlets made transport facilities very difficult for the residents living
111 there. Other reasons which contributed to their geographical exclusion included lack of a primary health
112 centre, school and a market within their reach. They had to traverse long distances to go for work as most
113 of them were employed as estate labourers in Coorg in Karnataka. This clearly depicted the fact that
114 Adiyas faced difficulties in gaining employment and access to basic health and education facilities due to
115 their remote residency.

116 The situation in Panamaram panchayat was quite different, as the tribal hamlets here were
117 exposed settlements. The Adiyas in these settlements lived along with the mainstream of the population
118 where there were normal infrastructural provisions. Moreover the distance of this Panchayat from the city
119 was less compared to Thirunelli panchayat. Adiyas living in these panchayats had better access in terms
120 of roads, schools, hospitals, public gathering places and other infrastructural connectivity.

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122 **2.2. Economic exclusion**

123 Adiya tribe forms the major part of the workforce in the cash crop economy of Wayanad and
124 Coorg. The agrarian crisis which has affected this economy, has in turn affected the livelihood of Adiyas,
125 who are already deprived on many terms. The extent of economic exclusion (74.54 %) felt was high
126 compared to all other indicators of social exclusion. The difficulty to get a suitable job to sustain their
127 livelihood (MS=4.63), and even when they get employed it was difficult for this tribe to get equal wages as
128 others (MS=4.02). Also, there was no choice of employment for this tribe (MS=3.74), and they had
129 difficulty in getting land for agriculture (MS=3.25). As a result, most of them were engaged as agricultural
130 labourers and many agreed that they didn't get reasonable wages for the job they did (MS=3.86). The lean
131 agricultural season falling between July and November was the season of extreme poverty for them.
132 Since this community was not equipped with skills that the local market demand, they did not have ample
133 employment opportunities. Moreover, impoverization of the region owed to crashes in agricultural prices
134 which resulted in the entry of non-tribals in the labour market, further reducing opportunities for the
135 communities in question (18).

136 In day to day financial transactions tribal identity was not considered as relevant and important.
137 Shop keepers and other service providers did not discriminate between tribes and non-tribes provided
138 they had adequate money. Adiyas living in Panamaram had better access to employment opportunities,
139 than those living in Thirunelli. This was the main reason for lesser extent of economic exclusion in
140 Panamaram compared to Thirunelli.

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142 **2.3. Service exclusion**

143 Extent of overall service exclusion was observed to be 67.96 per cent while it was 73.02 per cent
144 in Thirunelli and 62.90 per cent in Panamaram respectively. The study revealed that majority of Adiya
145 tribes in Panamaram panchayat had access to school within the reach of five kilometers, while the
146 schools in Thirunelli were located more than five kilometers from the tribal settlements. Though Model
147 Residential Schools have been established in Wayanad district, geographical isolation remains an acute
148 problem. Inaccessibility is highly visible with regard to higher education as the majority of all tribes did not
149 have access to colleges.

150 Educational infrastructure is a decisive factor in determining the educational attainment of the
151 tribes. The schools in the tribal areas lacked the basic necessities (MS=3.29). There is shortage of
152 teachers (MS=4.61). Even the majority of available teachers were not 'tribal sensitive' leading to structural
153 problems in tribal education.

154 Adiyas, when compared to the other tribal communities performed the lowest on health indicator.
155 Health care services were not extended to these communities, due to their poor economic status and
156 doctor's unavailability and shortage of medicines (MS=4.72). Formal credit facilities were not utilized by
157 this section of the society due to the cumbersome procedures, discriminatory attitude of the officials and
158 their inability to pledge security for loan (MS=4.05). As a result they relied on the money lenders which
159 further aggravate their misery.

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2.4. Socio – cultural exclusion

Socio-cultural dimension of social exclusion was not perceived as an important dimension of social exclusion based on the survey result. Though the level of socio-cultural exclusion was perceived as low by the tribal community, they still feel that they are denied of gaining social recognition in public functions (MS=4.32). However, practices like discrimination in the name of caste(MS=2.92), denial to make personal and family decisions(MS=2.85), and denial to interact with the non-tribal population(MS=2.45) was given low scores by the respondents indicating that Adiyas did not perceive any socio-cultural exclusion.

The figures in Table 1 revealed that the extent of socio – cultural exclusion in Thirunelli (55.58 %) was more compared to Panamaram (42.26 %). The plausible reason for this is the exposure of Adiya settlement in Panamaram to the non – tribal population. The continued exposure to non – tribal population has resulted in changes in their culture and way of living which attributes to their low level of socio – cultural exclusion compared to those in Thirunelli.

2.5. Political – legal exclusion

The extent of political – legal exclusion was found to be 74.22 per cent and 65.56 per cent in Thirunelli and Panamaram panchayat respectively accounting for an overall political – legal exclusion of 69.89 per cent. Negligence of officials (MS=4.86) and difficulty in availing the benefits extended to them by the Government (MS=4.95) were the two major reasons contributing the political-legal exclusion. It is worthwhile to note that most of them responded that no government officials visited their settlement during previous 365 days prior to the survey and that the officials failed in providing adequate information regarding the schemes for the tribe. Corruption and bribery was evident in these tribal hamlets. The level of participation of Adiyas in political and societal mechanisms (MS=4.37) and the restricted freedom to choose candidates(MS=3.42) have led to the ignorance of Adiya tribes about their constitutional rights. Callus attitude on the part of bureaucracy and law conferring mechanisms to protect them against the exploitation, especially their women, resulted in a relatively high level of politico-legal exclusion (20).

Table1: Measurement of indicators of social exclusion

(n=90)

Sl. No.	Statements	Mean Score
I.	Geographical Exclusion	
1.	Deprived of good infrastructural facilities due to remoteness of your residency	4.87
2.	Deprived of availing good educational facilities due to remoteness of your village	4.48
3.	Deprived of availing employment opportunities due to remoteness of your residency	4.52
4.	Deprived of availing good health facilities due to remoteness of your residency	3.98
II.	Economic Exclusion	
6.	Difficulty in getting a suitable job for your sustainable livelihood	4.63
7.	Difficulty in getting equal wage for the same job as that of others	4.02
8.	Difficulty in getting a reasonable wage for job	3.86
9.	Difficulty in acquiring land for agriculture	3.25
10.	No choice of livelihood/ employment options	3.74
III.	Service Exclusion	
11.	Difficulty in availing health care facilities on account of doctor's unavailability and shortage of medicines	4.72

12.	Difficulty in availing educational facilities on account of unavailability of teaching staff	4.61
13.	Difficulty in availing educational facilities on account of unavailability of teaching aids and other equipments	3.29
14.	Difficulty in availing credit/ loan facilities due to the cumbersome procedure, discriminatory attitude of officials or inability to pledge security for loans	4.05
IV.	Socio-cultural Exclusion	
15.	Denied of personal and family's decision making and needs	2.85
16.	Denied of getting social recognition by your presence during public or social functions and meetings.	4.32
17.	Discrimination in name of cast which prevents integration with the society.	2.92
18.	Denied while interacting and mingling with others.	2.45
V.	Political-legal Exclusion	
19.	Difficulty in availing the benefits and protection extended to you by the Govt. as scheduled tribe.	4.95
20.	Negligence on the part of Govt. officials at local level due to your poor economic status and illiteracy.	4.86
21.	Difficulty in participating in the political and societal decision making	4.37
22.	Denied of freedom of choice of candidate to votes	3.42

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Table 2: Extent of social exclusion

(n=90)

Sl. no.	Indicators of Social Exclusion	Panchayat		Overall exclusion in both the panchayats
		Thirunelli	Panamaram	
1.	Geographical Exclusion	73.13	68.07	70.60
2.	Economic Exclusion	78.52	70.56	74.54
3.	Service Exclusion	73.02	62.90	67.96
4.	Socio – cultural Exclusion	55.58	42.26	48.92
5.	Political – legal Exclusion	74.22	65.56	69.89
	Total	70.90	61.87	66.38

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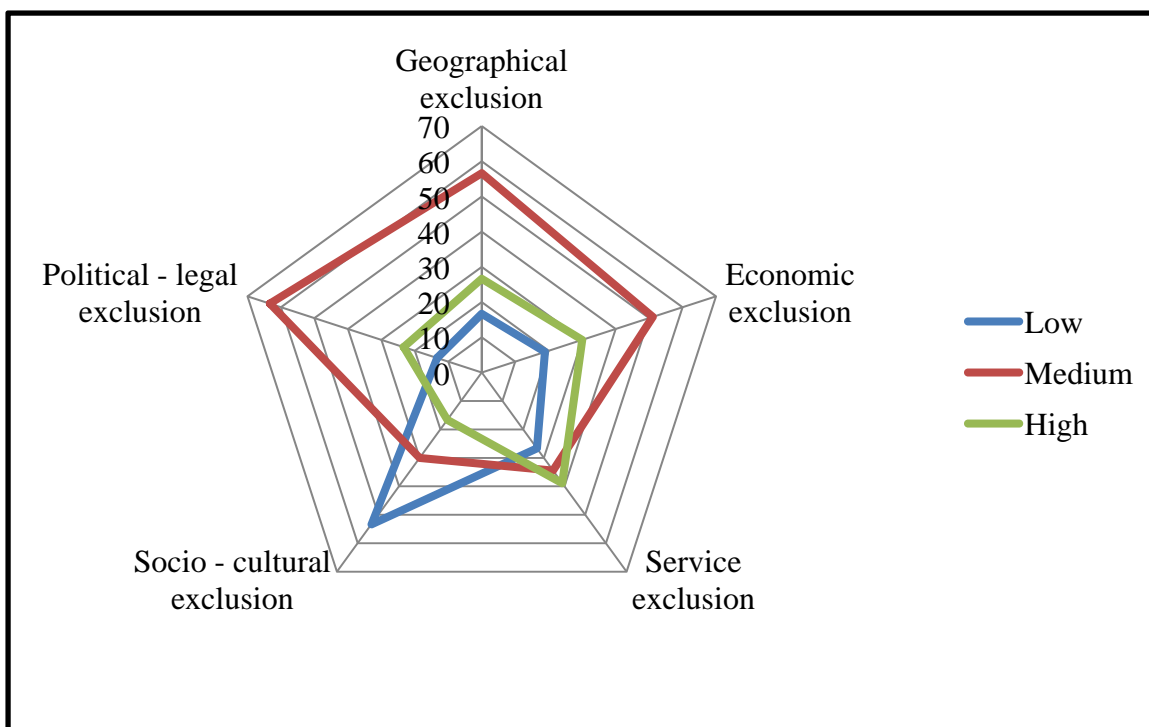
Based on mean $\pm \frac{1}{2}$ SD, the respondents were classified into 3 categories, ie., those facing high, medium and low level of social exclusion as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on extent of social exclusion

(n=90)

Sl. No.	Dependent variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Social Exclusion	Low	21	23.33
		Medium	45	50.00
		High	24	26.67

199 A critical analysis of Fig. 1 shows the extent of exclusion felt on the five indicators of social
 200 exclusion. Slightly more than half (56.67 %) of the respondents in the study area felt medium level of
 201 geographical exclusion, followed by high (26.66 %) and low (16.67 %) level of geographical exclusion. A
 202 close perusal of the table further reveals that 51.11 per cent of the Adiyas felt medium level of economic
 203 exclusion. Slightly less than one third (30.00 %) of the respondents felt high level of economic exclusion
 204 while less than one fifth (18.89 %) of the respondents in the study area faced low level of economic
 205 exclusion. Slightly greater than one third (34.44 %) of the respondents faced medium level of service
 206 exclusion followed by 38.89 per cent of the tribes facing high level of service exclusion. Slightly more than
 207 one fourth (26.67 %) of the Adiyas faced low level of service exclusion. A critical analysis of the table
 208 further reveals the distribution of respondents based on socio – cultural exclusion. It is evident that 53.33
 209 per cent of the respondents felt low level of socio – cultural exclusion while slightly less than one third of
 210 the respondents in the study area felt socio – cultural exclusion at a medium level. Only 16.67 per cent of
 211 the Adiyas faced high level of socio – cultural exclusion. More than half (63.33 %) of the Adiyas faced
 212 medium level of political – legal exclusion while slightly greater than one fifth (26.67 %) of the
 213 respondents reported that they faced high level of political – legal exclusion. Only 13.33 per cent of the
 214 respondents from the sample area reported that they faced low level of political - legal exclusion.



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 216 **Fig. 1: Comparison of extent of exclusion felt on each indicator**
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 219 **3. CONCLUSION**
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221 The study revealed that the Adiya tribal community remains as an excluded group even though
 222 exposure to non-tribal domain at different period of ethnic history has earmarked numerous changes in
 223 their tribal cultural component. Lack of adequate support, inappropriate implementation of developmental
 224 plans, pilferage of funds and exploitation has often been the reasons for the social exclusion of Adiya
 225 tribal community. Few developmental interventions for the empowerment of Adiyas in social, economic
 226 and educational spheres are listed below for ensuring food and livelihood security and for defense against
 227 exploitation.
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- 229 1. Education should be promoted among the tribals for their development. Organizing night schools
 230 for adults, employing tribal sensitive teachers, starting schools exclusively for tribal children and

- 231 providing facilities that are on par with that of non – tribal schools are some of the interventions
 232 that can be introduced to improve the literacy level of tribals. Strengthening the facilities at Model
 233 residential school can encourage the tribal students to excel in the studies.
- 234 2. Improvement in the quality of health care facilities provided to them will help in improving their
 235 health status. This can be ensured through organising frequent health camps, upgrading the
 236 facilities in nearby primary health centres, and ensuring the availability of doctors.
- 237 3. Most of the enabling and empowering efforts carried out successfully in the mainstream society
 238 either do not succeed or do not find a place among the tribes. An example in point is the central
 239 government funded project on training for skill development of students in association with core
 240 groups (core groups here means registered youth clubs affiliated to National Yuva Kendras).
 241 Future initiatives should be organized taking this into consideration.
- 242 4. The study highlights the importance of providing better infrastructural facilities in their hamlets,
 243 like metalled roads, quality housing, electricity, etc. which will help improve the living conditions of
 244 Adiyas.
- 245 5. Adiyas with high level of education can be selected as opinion leaders. Development
 246 interventions can be implemented in these hamlets through them. This would also facilitate
 247 formulation of developmental plans based on their needs.
- 248 6. Strengthening of Oorukootams can improve their decision making power. The Oorukootams
 249 should be empowered to function as the vital agency for formulation and implementation of all
 250 programmes meant for them.
- 251 7. Policy interventions focussing on implementation of wage generating activities, like MGNREGA,
 252 Kudumbashrees (SHGs) need to be emphasized. This will serve as a livelihood sustenance
 253 option for the tribals and help reduce their dependency level on Govt. subsidies.
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