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SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND DEPRIVATION OF SCHEDULED TRIBES: THE CASE OF JENU KURUBAS IN KODAGU DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

Jenu Kurubas is one of the primitive tribal groups of Karnataka. The primary objective of this paper is to examine the nature and extent of deprivation of socially disadvantage groups of Jenu Kuruba Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Kodagu district of Karnataka. As per 2011 census data, the population of Jenu Kurubas is 36,076 in Karnataka mostly living in the districts of Mysore, Kodagu, and Chamarajanagar. The Jenu Kurubas are primarily a hunter-gatherer tribe, who earned their name from the fact that they are expert honey gatherers. In Kannada, the term 'Jenu' means 'honey'. Traditionally they were collecting honey and forest produce. They have been deprived of various kinds of opportunity and advantages.

KEYWORDS : Scheduled Tribe, Jenu Kuruba, Kodagu, Social Exclusion, Deprivation.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of social exclusion is the denial of equal opportunities imposed by certain agents on other which leads to inability of an individual or group in the functioning of society in the context of economic, social and political aspect. Social scientists across the globe have elaborately dwelt on the inter-linkages of poverty social exclusion, multiple deprivation and inequality. Each condition implies that broader changes than simply increasing income of the worse-off members of society are necessary if poverty is to be eliminated. In recent years, some scholars have also tried to broaden the issues involved in thinking about the most deprived groups in society by using the term 'social exclusion' rather than poverty. They favour the use of the term 'social exclusion' to refer to a situation in which



multiple deprivations prevent individuals from participation in important areas of society's activities. Thus, the socially excluded might be unable to find work, take part in leisure activities or actively participate in a society's politics beyond voting at elections. In the broadest sense, social exclusion refers to the 'dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partly, from any of the social, economic, political and cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society' (Walker and Walker, 1997: p.303). Thus the 'social exclusion' perspective on poverty goes beyond confining the question of deprivation to commodities that can be directly purchased. The idea forces us to consider the role of those who do the excluding, as well as those who are excluded. It implies policies that move beyond the re-distribution of

resources to include the promotion of changes in social and economic structures (Alcock, 1997). However, because of its breadth and multi-dimensional features, 'social exclusion' is difficult to define precisely and measure reliably. Despite its definitional and measurement issues, the idea of 'social exclusion' provides valuable inputs for framing inclusive strategies for socially and economically marginalized groups like Scheduled Tribes STs.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION: APPROACH AND APPLICATIONS:

Discourse on poverty, deprivation and inequality worldwide has centered on three areas of controversy.

[a] Absolute and Relative Poverty: People are in [absolute] poverty if they don't have the resources to maintain human life. Measures of absolute poverty are usually based upon the idea of subsistence. Supporters of the concept of relative poverty argue that a definition must relate to the standards of a particular society at a particular time. According to this view, the point at which the dividing line that separates the poor from other members of society is drawn will vary according to how affluent that society is.

[b] Social Exclusion: Some scholars take the view that poverty is a form of multiple deprivations representing social exclusion. As observed at the outset, inadequate educational opportunities, unpleasant working conditions, or powerlessness can be regarded as dimensions of poverty. Each condition implies that broader and sustainable changes than simply increasing income of the worst-off members of the society are necessary if deep- rooted poverty signifying social exclusion is to be eliminated.

[c] Poverty Line: The third area of controversy concerns the relationship between inequality and poverty. Most sociologists argue that it is possible to establish a minimum standard-- a 'poverty line'-- which might be below the average income. The poor within a society can be defined as those whose income or resources fall so far short of the average that they don't have an acceptable standard of living. It is in the above theoretical background that some scholars have broadened the discourse on the development issues of most deprived groups in society in terms of the approach of social exclusion rather than poverty (Haralambos and Holborn, 2002).

The term "social exclusion" is so evocative, ambiguous, multi-dimensional and expansive that it can be defined in many different ways. The multiple meaning of the term reflects the range of empirical referents of the idea of 'exclusion' and it is conflated with the new poverty and inequality, discrimination and the underclass. It is associated with a variety of terms like marginality, deprivation, destitution (Silver, 1995). Silver elaborates a threefold typology of the multiple meaning of exclusion which are situated in different theoretical perspectives, political ideologies, and national discourses. The three paradigms of exclusion namely, solidarity, specialization and monopoly, are grounded in a different conception of integration and citizenship. A number of empirical research also suggests that the concept of social exclusion occurs within all societies, but has different meaning and manifests itself in different forms. Buvinic (2005) summarises the meaning of social exclusion as the inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic and social functioning of society and it involve in the denial of equal opportunities imposed by certain groups in society upon others. It is the inability of our society to keep all groups and individuals within the reach of what we expect as society to realize their full potential. Economic capability such as poverty, gender, age, caste and religion etc. are important variables which indicate exclusion from social and economic opportunities. Sen (2000) draws various meanings and dimensions of the concept of social exclusion. He distinguished between unfavourable exclusion and unfavourable inclusion. He defined unfavourable exclusion is the situation

where some people are kept out and unfavourable inclusion is the situation where some people are being included. Also he differentiates between active and passive exclusion. He defined active exclusion as the deliberate exclusion of people from opportunity through the government policy or other means. Passive exclusion works through the social process in which there are no deliberate attempts to exclude, but nevertheless, may result in exclusion from a set of circumstances (Sen, 2000).

Though the macro approach to an inclusive society, polity and economy has gained much popularity in India, particularly in the context of the Eleventh Five Year Plan [2007-2012], it is argued in the present paper that, so far, the exclusion hypothesis has been applied exclusively to the poverty and livelihood issues of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and not much to the Other Backward Classes [OBCs] in which traditional artisans constitute a significant percentage. In an interesting recent study using econometric analysis of primary data collected from the SITRA programme in India, it was found that the socially and economically disadvantaged sections of beneficiaries were more likely to have benefited from the programme, under which improved toolkits were provided to poor rural artisans at ninety per cent subsidy (Banik and Bhaumik, 2005). Conclusions of the study have important policy implications as they indicate that narrower targeting of the same poverty alleviation programme on more disadvantaged sections could achieve higher growth as well as greater reduction of poverty. In addition to such special/narrower poverty eradication programmes like SITRA targeting individual artisans, the present paper argues that there is also need for mega-projects that address social exclusion through promotion of collective and diversified production processes, market access [domestic & foreign], training and design, cultural entrepreneurship, research and development etc so as to equip artisan collectives for reaping the opportunities of technology transition, privatization and globalization. Though BPL targeted programmes may relieve poverty at the individual level, there is not much learning and involvement for artisans in the programme design or delivery. Hence, the fundamental issue of social exclusion of backward classes/ groups could be tackled only through innovative macro level participatory interventions that promote non-economic benefits also, in terms of confidence building and attitudinal changes among the groups. The scope of such socio-economic development through inclusion and participation of traditional artisans has not been explored adequately in the Centrally Sponsored Schemes or bottom-up planning of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Hence, STs in India continue to be victims of social and economic exclusion.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF STS:

In India as a whole, the tribal people today make up about 8 per cent of the total population. They belong to a range of kinship based communities associated with interior regions. Many are now unable to make a living from the low grade land they retain, and have to work as migrant labourers outside their own region. The socially disadvantaged groups such as SCs/STs have poor access to all type of resources including agricultural land and non land capital assets which directly and indirectly determine the level of income and capabilities to secure other sources of income. The persisting inequality in command over resources and human capabilities is related to a number of factors such as continuing process of exclusion and discrimination of disadvantage group and limited impact of the pro-poor and anti-discrimination government policies. It is recognized that the human deprivation of disadvantaged groups works through the societal process of exclusion, involving differential treatment and unequal access, which hinder human development. In India the caste and ethnicity-based exclusion and discrimination are linked with human deprivation of disadvantaged groups. In India, the deprivation of STs is due to the geographical and cultural exclusion. The scheduled caste suffers from deprivation on account of the residual power of a discriminatory caste system where as scheduled

tribes are the victims of the state which denies them property rights to their habitat. There is understanding of the societal inter-relations and the institutions of exclusion, the forms of exclusion, discrimination, and their consequences on the deprivation of these groups.

Deprivation and Social Exclusion of Jenu Kuruba Tribes in Kodagu District:

Kodagu is home to tribes such as Yerava, Kudiya, Jenu Kuruba, Kadu Kuruba, and Soliga who are believed to be the original settlers of the area. The majority of the tribal population of the district are either living within the forests or in resettled colonies in very interior rural areas. Some of them are still dependent on the forest substantially for their livelihoods. Kodagu also has dispersed settlements of three specific nomadic communities: Golla, Haavaadiga and Hakki-pikki.

The Kodavas are the major farming community in Kodagu. The Kurubas and the Yaravas depend on waged labor in coffee farms and forest products for their livelihoods. There are two subgroups of Kurubas. The Jenu Kurubas are primarily hunter-gatherers who are expert honey gatherers; they also work as casual laborers in the local coffee farms. The status of tribal communities in the district is a cause of worry, due to low retention rates in primary and secondary education, poor maternal and child health, persistent malnutrition, addiction to alcohol and lack of housing facilities. The Jenu Kurubas are rated very low on the human development parameters of food security, health, education, participation in democratic institutions, etc (<http://actionaid.org>). A research study conducted by the Karnataka State Tribal Research Institute (KSTRI), Mysore, on the status of health of tribals belonging to the Jenu Kuruba community has found that most of the pregnant women of the community suffer from malnutrition (The Indian Express, 2014). Jai Prabhakar and Gangadhar (2009) in their investigation among Jenu Kuruba tribes reported prevalence of anaemia in children to be 77 per cent.

CONCLUSIONS:

The isolated location and social exclusion of the Jenu Kuruba tribes from the main stream of life is hindering their economic activities. They are not able to participate wholly or partially in social, economic, cultural and political activities in the society. The high level of illiteracy, their ethnic identity and the rich forest produce tempted the money lenders, small traders and other dominant social groups to exploit the tribes. Further, the absence of monetary system and lack of communication facilities made their work easy to exploit the tribes. The traders in general follow the false measures and weights followed by lower prices. Some times the sub-ordinate staff and other department staff of the forest department take undue advantage of their power by demanding their needs to be at free of cost to enable them to live in the jungle. The agricultural and forest produce of the tribes cannot access and command good market, due to lack of proper infrastructure facilities and they do not know the prevailing price. They are forced by the dominant people to sell their agricultural produce for their immediate needs. A major stumbling block for them, is the lack of sustainable livelihoods and marginalization in the involvement of schemes like MGNREGA and job oriented skill development programmes.

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