

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

ABSTRACT

The tribal communities in Kerala constitute 1.4 percent of the general population. Despite, Kerala's remarkable social sector development, it is observed that the tribal communities still remain the most vulnerable community in the state. Hence, the present study was an attempt to study the extent of social exclusion of Adiya tribal communities of Wayanad. Social exclusion was measured using five indicators and primary data was collected from 90 respondents, using structured questionnaire. The data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that Adiyas faced an overall exclusion of 66.38 percent. Analysis of extent of social exclusion indicator wise showed that economic exclusion was felt to the extent of 74.54 percent followed by political-legal exclusion (69.89%). Also, Adiya tribe experienced geographical exclusion to the extent of 69.76 percent followed by service exclusion (67.96 %) and socio-cultural exclusion (48.92 %) respectively. Further 50.00 percent 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 defence 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 are 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).**

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

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

64 65 **METHODOLOGY**

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

84 85 **2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

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

92 **2.1. Geographical exclusion**

93 A close perusal of Table 1 clearly shows that this tribe strongly feels that infrastructural facilities
94 (MS= 4.87), employment opportunities (MS=4.52) and educational facilities (MS=4.48) are not available
95 to them on account of the location of their settlements which is a clear indication of geographical isolation.
96 Health facility (MS=3.98) which is an important factor was also not easily accessible to this community
97 due to the remoteness of their location.

98 Adiyas faced geographical exclusion to an extent of 70.60 percent as shown in Table 2. The
99 extent of geographical exclusion faced by Adiyas in Thirunelli and Panamaram panchayat were 73.13
100 percent and 68.07 percent respectively. Normal infrastructural provisions were denied to this tribal
101 community due to their remote residency in Thirunelli panchayat. These settlements could be reached
102 only by foot. Mud roads in these hamlets made transport facilities very difficult for the residents living
103 there. Other reasons which contributed to their geographical exclusion included lack of a primary health

104 centre, school and a market within their reach. They had to traverse long distances to go for work as most
105 of them were employed as estate labourers in Coorg in Karnataka. This clearly depicted the fact that
106 Adiyas faced difficulties in gaining employment and access to basic health and education facilities due to
107 their remote residency.

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

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114 **2.2. Economic exclusion**

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

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

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134 **2.3. Service exclusion**

135 The extent of overall service exclusion was observed to be 67.96 percent while it was 73.02
136 percent in Thirunelli and 62.90 percent in Panamaram respectively. The study revealed that majority of
137 Adiya tribes in Panamaram panchayat had access to school within the reach of five kilometers, while the
138 schools in Thirunelli were located more than five kilometers from the tribal settlements. Though Model
139 Residential Schools have been established in Wayanad district, geographical isolation remains an acute
140 problem. Inaccessibility is highly visible with regard to higher education as the majority of all tribes did not
141 have access to colleges.

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

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

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153 **2.4. Socio-cultural exclusion**

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

159 population(MS=2.45) was given low scores by the respondents indicating that Adiyas did not perceive any
 160 socio-cultural exclusion.

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

166 2.5. Political-legal exclusion

167 The extent of political-legal exclusion was found to be 74.22 percent and 65.56 percent in
 168 Thirunelli and Panamaram panchayat respectively accounting for an overall political-legal exclusion of
 169 69.89 percent. Negligence of officials (MS=4.86) and difficulty in availing the benefits extended to them
 170 by the Government (MS=4.95) were the two major reasons contributing the political-legal exclusion. It is
 171 worthwhile to note that most of them responded that no government officials visited their settlement
 172 during previous 365 days prior to the survey and that the officials failed in providing adequate information
 173 regarding the schemes for the tribe. Corruption and bribery were evident in these tribal hamlets. The level
 174 of participation of Adiyas in political and societal mechanisms (MS=4.37) and the restricted freedom to
 175 choose candidates(MS=3.42) have led to the ignorance of Adiya tribes about their constitutional rights.
 176 Callous attitude on the part of bureaucracy and law conferring mechanisms to protect them against the
 177 exploitation, especially their women, resulted in a relatively high level of politico-legal exclusion (20).
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180 **Table1: Measurement of indicators of social exclusion**

181 (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)

Based on mean \pm ½ SD, the respondents were classified into 3 categories, i.e., those facing high, medium and low level of social exclusion as indicated in Table 3.

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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Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on the 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

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

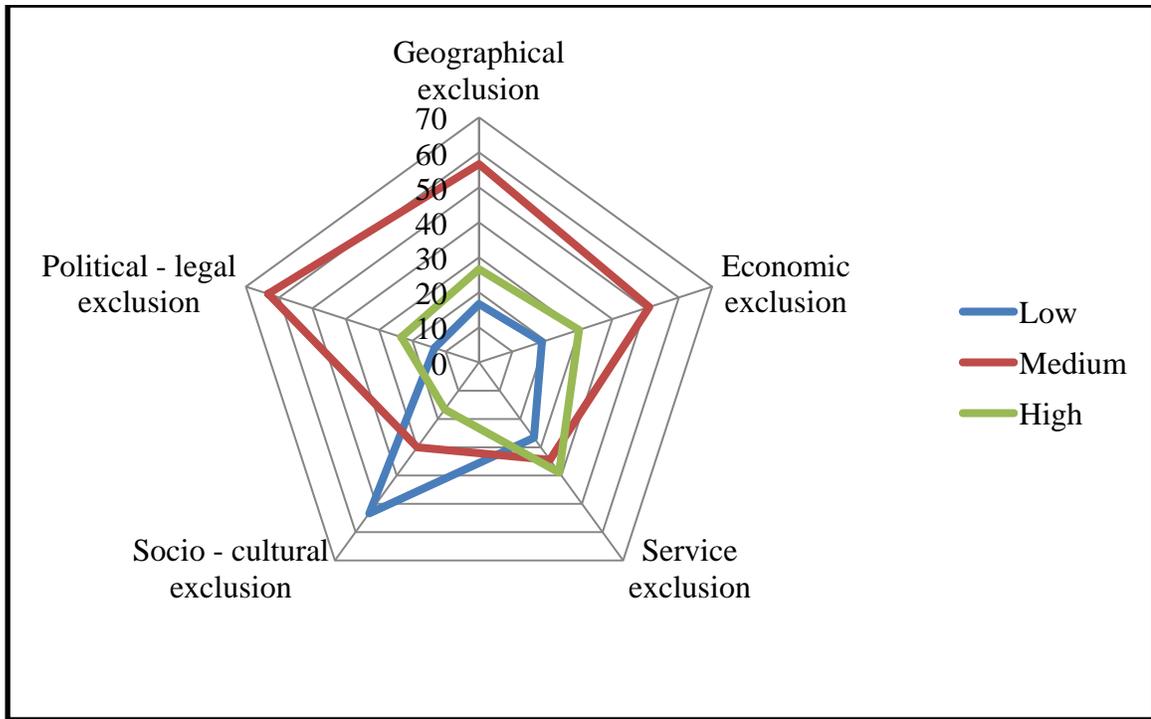


Fig. 1: Comparison of extent of exclusion felt on each indicator

3. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the Adiya tribal community remains as an excluded group even though exposure to non-tribal domain at different period of ethnic history has earmarked numerous changes in their tribal cultural component. Lack of adequate support, inappropriate implementation of developmental plans, pilferage of funds and exploitation has often been the reasons for the social exclusion of Adiya tribal community. Few developmental interventions for the empowerment of Adiyas in social, economic and educational spheres are listed below for ensuring food and livelihood security and for defence against exploitation.

1. Education should be promoted among the tribals for their development. Organizing night schools for adults, employing tribal sensitive teachers, starting schools exclusively for tribal children and providing facilities that are on par with that of non – tribal schools are some of the interventions that can be introduced to improve the literacy level of tribals. Strengthening the facilities at Model residential school can encourage the tribal students to excel in the studies.
2. Improvement in the quality of healthcare facilities provided to them will help in improving their health status. This can be ensured through organising frequent health camps, upgrading the facilities in nearby primary health centres, and ensuring the availability of doctors.
3. Most of the enabling and empowering efforts carried out successfully in the mainstream society either do not succeed or do not find a place among the tribes. An example in point is the central government funded the project on training for skill development of students in association with core groups (core groups here means registered youth clubs affiliated to National Yuva Kendras). Future initiatives should be organized taking this into consideration.

- 244 4. The study highlights the importance of providing better infrastructural facilities in their hamlets,
245 like metalled roads, quality housing, electricity, etc. which will help improve the living conditions of
246 Adiyas.
- 247 5. Adiyas with high level of education can be selected as opinion leaders. Development
248 interventions can be implemented in these hamlets through them. This would also facilitate
249 formulation of developmental plans based on their needs.
- 250 6. Strengthening of Oorukootams can improve their decision making power. The Oorukootams
251 should be empowered to function as the vital agency for formulation and implementation of all
252 programmes meant for them.
- 253 7. Policy interventions focussing on the implementation of wage generating activities, like
254 MGNREGA, Kudumbashrees (SHGs) need to be emphasized. This will serve as a livelihood
255 sustenance option for the tribals and help reduce their dependency level on Govt. subsidies.
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257 **Consent Disclaimer:**

258 As per international standard or university standard, written consent has been collected and
259 preserved by the authors.

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