



# Levels of Social Exclusion and Variations in Exclusion and Inclusion Practices Among Castes and Tribes of Andhra Pradesh: An Empirical Research Study

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**Abstract:** In rural India levels of social exclusion and inclusion vary from one social group to another social group and also from one ethnic group to another based on the ecological, geographical, social, cultural and economic factors. An individual or groups of individuals in any excluded social group or ethnic group invariably encounter the problem of exclusion in daily life. Moreover it is contextual and situational intertwined with the geographically culturally inbuilt mechanism. The forms of exclusion also differ from one ethnic group to another living in different social environments, geographical and economic conditions. This empirical research work paper presents the levels of social exclusion, mechanism, forms and variations in between the stratified caste society and egalitarian tribal society. The level of social exclusion at each excluded social group definitely correlates and corresponds with the development status of it in the caste based society of India, in specific to Rural India, Rural Andhra Pradesh. The empirical field work based observations in three multi caste villages of Manduru, Morampudi and Vedullapalle as well as in three multi tribal villages of Pasuvulabanda, Kolapari and Lammasingi, located in the newly carved Andhra Pradesh state have been presented in this research article. It is descriptive in nature and comprises Anthropological qualitative explanations with both *etic* and *emic* perspectives.

**Keywords:** Social Exclusion, Inclusion, Castes, Tribes, Cultural Variation

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## Introduction

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Caste is a unique feature of Indian society. It is considered as the root for the existence of the evil practices of social exclusion, physical isolation (social distance)

especially in between these two categories of castes. Lot of social gulf exists in between the touchable and untouchable castes. Lot of social gulf exists in between these two categories of caste groups especially in rural villages. The traditional social system of Indian society is centred on caste structure, its organisation and identities. Each individual in Indian society is identified with a particular caste, and he or she strictly follows the norms and customs of it, otherwise there is every possibility to encounter social boycott or ostracism. For each and every member of a particular caste, the rule of endogamy is the norm, if any one violates it, he or she certainly loses, its membership permanently. The caste system is more rigid in rural villages when compared to urban towns and cities. The elements of caste and its practices are very much reflected in the social, cultural, economic, political, and religious spheres of a rural village life. The caste system is still in operation especially in multi caste villages, where the principle of hierarchy is in vogue. The local caste hierarchy clearly shows the existing social inequality and discrimination in between the different castes of high and low social status as well as touchable and untouchables.

Earlier the tribal society was free from the social evil practices of caste and was egalitarian in nature. But over a period of time certain elements of caste entered into this society too due to the process of acculturation, communication, road connectivity and migration. In turn this resulted in the practice of the principle of hierarchy by different tribal communities specifically in multi tribal villages, but the social stigma of untouchability is not seen in the tribal society. At tribal sub-plan area levels, and in almost all the multi tribal villages of Andhra Pradesh, tribal hierarchy is observed. Ranking order of different tribes in the hierarchy at the regional, local and village level is based on the criteria of occupation, dietary habits, (beef eating and non- beef eating), wealth and power. The rules of endogamy, purity and pollution criteria are not followed in ranking of a particular tribe in the tribal hierarchy unlike that of caste hierarchy. The plain tribes (Lambada, Yerukula and Yanadi) inhabiting multi-caste villages are very well integrated into the caste system and occupy a specific social position in the local hierarchy. Generally these tribes have better social position and status when compared to that of the Scheduled Castes (Mala and Madiga) because the social stigma of untouchability is not attached with the aboriginal people and they are treated as touchable. They are indigenous people and usually referred to as *Adivasis* and *Vanavasis* (forest dwellers).

The exclusion and inclusion practices among different castes were observed in three multi caste villages like Manduru, Morampudi and Vedullapalle, located in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. Similarly these practices were also observed

among different tribes in three multi tribal villages viz, Pasuvulabanda, Kolapari and Lammasingi. Similarities and dissimilarities in practice of exclusion and inclusion by the castes and tribes were noted in the field villages. Mechanism and forms of exclusion in both the castes and tribes were also recorded through empirical fieldwork compared with participant observation. The research paper presents only the qualitative explanations in Anthropological *etic* and *emic* perspectives based on the field study observations along with the formal and informal interviews with the key informants, belonging to different castes and tribes of aforementioned six villages. The study covers two different ethnic categories of populations with varied cultural, ecological and geographical background, living in Andhra region exhibiting linguistic and religious diversity. The marginalised and deprived communities are mostly found in rural India and more specifically inhabit castes and tribal villages of the plateau (plain area) and forested mountains and hills (Agency area). However, a few such communities were found to be living in urban slums too. The habitats of these two ethnic categories of populations show cultural, ecological and geographical variations. The present research work of this research article has focused on castes and tribes living in rural and tribal environments, accustomed to village cultural life. The levels of social exclusion and variations in exclusion and inclusion practices among the castes and tribal people in the studied villages were observed and noted. Expressions of some of the scholars on the problem and concept of social exclusion have been very briefly presented in the following three paragraphs:

The concept of social exclusion has been extensively applied to India (Appaswamy et al. 1996; Borooh 2000, deHann and Dubey 2005; Thorat and Attewell 2007) the obvious exclusions are those of caste and community along with gender. Caste is formed as an exclusionary device and the Indian literature concentrates substantially on the exclusions faced by the Scheduled Castes (SCs) or *Dalits*. Gender exclusion too is in the main exclusionary strict divisions of labour that, however, do change over time. The exclusion of minorities is the result of the worthy political process of the modern nation state. de Hann and Dubey (2005) extend the analysis of exclusion to the Schedule Tribes (STs) or tribes/ *Adivasis* / *Indigenous* people. Social exclusion has two forms. One is exclusion from access to or denial of rights to various services, such as to health, education, housing and water with sanitation also being more recently included as an essential service. The other form of exclusion is that of deprivation of the right to express one's views of representation and voice, which was made famous by Hirschman (1970). These two forms of exclusion often go together, with lack of representation and voice, being manifested in inadequate provisions of services.

Social exclusion in the above senses is again, active and passive (Sen 2000). Both of these are related to the inability to access the above mentioned services. But there is a form of exclusion that is related to active exclusion through social norms of various types which may affect lower castes, minorities and women. The services are available or are accessible, such as drinking water wells in the village, but there is an exclusion of some communities, for example the lower castes, minorities, from using them. Market places too may be available but there may be an exclusion of women from operating in the market, often justified by seeing the market as the source of moral degradation. The other form of exclusion is that of sheer non-provision of facilities, passive as against the earlier form of active exclusion (Sen 2000). To evade or reduce the problem of social exclusion among marginalised and deprived communities in India, there is a need for inclusive policy measures from both government and non government sectors. The discourse on social policy has undergone sea change in the wake of globalisation, which has a profound impact on the dynamics of the labour market and has brought the issue of caste based economic discrimination to forefront. Hence, the need to re-examine the concept of exclusion and reframe the policy appears conspicuous (Subramanyam V & K. Sekhar 2010).

### **About the Field Villages, Exclusion and Inclusion Practices of Castes and Tribes**

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The studied three multi caste villages and three multi tribal villages represent multiple castes and tribes with cultural complexity. The castes and tribes found in three multi caste villages are Brahmin, Vaishya, Kamma, Reddy, Kapu, Yadava (Golla), Goundla (Goudu) Uppara, Vadrangi, Kummari, Chakali, Mangali, Jangam, Vaddera, Palli, Sali, Yerrukula (Plain Tribe) Yanadi (Plain Tribe), Muslim (Sunni and Dudekula) Madiga and Mala. The tribes and castes found in three multi tribal villages are Bagata, Konda Dora, Khond, Valmiki, Gadaba, Nooka Dora, Konda Kammara, Telakala (Caste) Koppula Velama (Caste), Kummari (Caste) and Madiga (Schedule Caste). In each village local hierarchy is noted in both caste and tribal system. Caste hierarchy in all the three multi caste villages was collectively recorded and similarly the tribal hierarchy was collectively noted in all the three multi tribal villages.

The issues of social exclusion and inclusion were examined in six rural villages of Andhra Pradesh, which comprised both castes and tribes, living in different geographical and ecological zones. The selected three multi caste villages namely Morampudi, Mandur, and Vedullapalle are located in the non scheduled plain

areas of Guntur district, whereas the selected multi tribal villages like Kolapari, Lammasingi and Pasuvula Banda are located in scheduled area (Agency area) of Visakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh State. Earlier the villages were self sufficient as well as self managing communities. The residents of a village lived a community life and everyone knew each other, intra caste, inter caste, intra village and inter village relations were very common. The social structure of a village contains the existing network of social relations in between individuals and in between the groups. Neighbourhood relations are also very common between the families residing side by side in a locality. Social, economic, political, and religious relations also exist between the different castes in multi caste villages and similarly in between the different tribes in multi tribal villages. Both exclusion and inclusion practices prevail among the residents of a village in their day-to-day life. In all three multi-caste villages the feature of caste hierarchy was noted and observed. Social inequality and discrimination in between the castes was the embodied feature of caste hierarchy or local hierarchy which caused exclusionary practices in the caste village setting. Similarly in all the three multi tribal villages tribal hierarchy was noted which showed the social position of each and every tribe. In all the studied tribal villages, Bagata tribe occupied the highest position in the local hierarchy (tribal hierarchy), and the Valmiki tribe stood at the bottom of the tribal hierarchy. In Visakha Agency area, Bagata was the dominant tribe with both wealth and power.

The village Morampudi, consisted of 18 different castes which were classified into different occupational groups like priests, traders, peasants, pastoralists, artisans, service castes, and leather workers. Kamma was a dominant peasant caste in this village holding political power, the members of which dictated terms to others. The Madiga (untouchable) caste in the village experienced the severity of social exclusion due to physical isolation and untouchability. The service castes like Mangali and Chakali were also experiencing the problem of social exclusion due to impure occupation and pollution. The Muslims in the village were also experiencing this problem due to being a religious minority and due to their dietary practice of beef eating. Lot of social gulf existed in between the touchable and untouchable castes especially in between the Brahmin and Madiga castes. Social inclusion practices were also noted in between the different castes in the economic sphere of agricultural production. The affirmative action programmes of Indian Constitution as well as the government (both Central and State) initiated development programmes were helping the marginalised communities like Madiga, Chakali, Magali, Goudu, Uppara, Kummari, Dudekula Muslim, Golla, Palli, Yanadi, and Yerukula to elevate their educational and economic status. In turn the people of

these castes were tending towards their inclusive growth and development in a slow pace manner.

The village Mandur consisted of twenty different castes, with four Varna groups such as Brahmin, Vaishya, Sudra and untouchables. There was no Kshatriya varna in the village. All these castes were classified into nine ranking divisions of local hierarchy (caste hierarchy), in which the Brahmin occupied the highest social position whereas the untouchable caste Mala and Madiga stood at the bottom. The Kamma, Reddy and Kapu (Telaga) castes were the traditional peasant castes having equal social status. Among these castes, Kamma was considered as economically and politically dominant. It was a dominant caste even though numerically inferior to the Mala caste. This village had better infrastructural facilities and was one of the large and developed villages of Guntur district. The exclusion and inclusion practices were noted among the castes of this village. The severity of exclusion was faced by the Mala and Madiga castes. Among these castes Mala claimed superiority over the Madiga caste, based on the criteria of traditional occupation and dietary habit. The Madiga caste people usually removed the dead cattle and ate carrion and also did leather work. Their occupation was considered more defile and more demeaning in practice. Social inequality and discrimination in between the Mala and Madiga castes was noted in this village. The Jajmani system still persists in this village. Patron and client relationship was also noted in between the traditional peasant castes and other castes in the village. Inclusion practices among the castes were observed in village economy, polity and religion. The excluded social groups were also availing the education and health facilities and benefiting with the affirmative action programmes. These groups were also participating in the ongoing development process of the village. But development among the Mala, Madiga, Chakali, and Mangali caste and also among the plain tribes Yerukula and Yanadi was taking place in a slow pace due to lapses at implementation level. However, all the excluded social groups in the village were tending towards inclusive growth and development due to government intervention. Age old traditions persisted in almost all the castes of village to some extent, at the same time the influence of modernity was also very much seen in the lives of the people in the village. In recent times due to formal education, urbanisation, communication and globalisation, social and cultural changes are taking place in almost all the castes.

The village Vedullapalle represented nineteen cases that exhibited the feature of local hierarchy (caste hierarchy) in which the Brahmin occupied the highest social position, whereas the untouchable castes Mala and Madiga castes stood at the bottom. The Dalits in this village were experiencing the severity of social exclusion



and they were in denial of equal opportunity to participate fully in the ongoing development process of the village, State and nation. It was also a large village and developed village, located on the road side well connected with the Mandal and district headquarters of Bapatla and Guntur respectively. Reddy was a dominant caste in this village. All the social groups in the village had access to the education and health; such facilities were available within the premises of this village. Christian and Muslim minority religious groups were also found in this village and both the groups were experiencing the problem of exclusion on the basis of being a religious minority. Village solidarity and integrity were noted and observed in between the different ethnic groups during socio-ceremonial and religious festival occasions. The religious institutions like churches, mosques and temples were located in the village. The residents of this village were leading a harmonious life and maintaining integrity, and cohesion irrespective of caste, creed and gender. But social inequality and discrimination prevailed in between the different castes due to continuation of caste system and its rigidity. But the marginalised communities of *Dalits* (Mala and Madiga) *Adivasis* (Yerukula and Yanadi), Bahujans, (Chakali, Mangali, Golla, Gouda, Uppara, Vaddera, and Kummari) and religious minorities (Turaka and Dudekula Muslim) were encountering the problem of social exclusion. The constitutionally extended affirmative action programmes and government initiated extended programmes were also unable to elevate the social status of these groups as per the estimated target of development policy planning due to lapses at implementation level, pilferage and corruption.

In the selected three multi tribal villages, namely Kolapari, Lammasingi, and Pasuvula Banda, it is noted that the people belonging to all the tribes were experiencing the problem of social exclusion due to geographical isolation, segregation, spatial distribution and poverty. A considerable number of tribal people in these villages do not have access to formal education and health. They were facing the problems of illiteracy, malnutrition, morbidity, poverty, food insecurity and exploitation. Tribal hierarchy was noted in all the three studied villages due to the process of acculturation i.e cultural contact of tribes with the neighbouring castes. In the study area Bagata and Valmiki benefited much with education and employment. These two tribal groups were economically and educationally forward, when compared to other tribes. The Valmiki were socially inferior to that of other aboriginal groups in the study area because once it was an untouchable caste in the plain area, whose ancestors migrated into the tribal areas during the Colonial period and permanently settled there. In due course of time they got the tribal status on the basis of their habitation in the scheduled area of hill tracts (agency area) in

Eastern Ghats forest environment. The Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) like Khond and Gadaba in the study area were still at pre-agricultural stage of economy, with low literacy rate, stagnant or diminishing population and living in most economic backward condition. These two tribal groups were relatively experiencing vulnerability, economic deprivation and impoverishment. The features of social inequality and discrimination were noted among the *Adivasis* in the studied villages. Once the tribal communities were egalitarian in nature but now we found economic inequality and political inequality in between the different tribes because resources are unequally distributed. The Bagatas claimed that the entire Visakha Agency area was once under their regime and the other tribes are the latter immigrants to the area from the neighbouring states of Orissa and Chhattisgarh. Different linguistic groups were also noted in the study area, for instance the Bagatas spoke the regional language Telugu, who were considered as the natives of Agency area, whereas Gadabas, Konda Doras, Kotiyas, Khonds and Porjas had their own dialects. Linguistic diversity was also noted among the tribes in Visakha Agency and in specific to the studied villages. All the tribes in the studied villages equally shared the forest and common property resources, since the aboriginals had established symbiotic relationship with the forests since age immemorial. The field observations in the study area clearly revealed that the exclusionary practices were relatively very limited in the tribal communities when compared to caste communities. At the same time inclusionary practices were also relatively more in contrast to the caste communities in the study area. The severity of social exclusion was being experienced by the Dalits in all the three multi caste villages But Madiga castes people (Dalits) in Pasuvula Banda tribal village were not experiencing the social stigma of untouchability as like that of Dalits in Morampudi, Mandur and Vedullapalle villages. Now the Valmiki tribe in the tribal areas were not attached with the social stigma of untouchability unlike that of the Valmiki in plain areas of A.P. State.

In the studied three multi-caste villages it was noted that each and every caste had specific social position in the respective village local hierarchy. Social inequality and discrimination noted in between the castes. Lot of social gulf existed in between the Brahmins and Dalits. In general the Brahmins accepted only uncooked food material and pucca food items prepared with oil or ghee from the Sudra castes. But they did not accept such food materials from the Dalits. In the study three multi tribal villages also noted the existence of local/tribal hierarchy, in which the Bagata tribe occupied the highest social position whereas the Valmiki tribe stood at the bottom. In all the three tribal villages it was observed that there were no commensal



restrictions between the different tribes. And also the tribal communities did not observe the purity and pollution concepts. However, social positional disparities existed between the different tribes. Economic and political inequality existed in between the different tribes, but social inequality was not found in between the different tribes alike that of different castes. Bagata is the economically and politically dominant group in the agency area of Visakhapatnam district. In general a tribal habitat was small in size. The residents of that habitat usually shared the common property resources equally and led very simple lives. The residents of all the three studied tribal villages were experiencing the problems of geographical isolation and segregation, but they maintained an eco-friendly relationship with nature and forests.

In general, the tribals and forests were inseparable and they had established a symbiotic relationship with the forests since age immemorial. For many tribes, forests were the main energy source. Earlier the tribal society is egalitarian in nature. In recent times certain caste elements entered into the tribal life due to the process of acculturation (Culture contact), communication and migration. The vulnerable tribes like Khond and Gadaba were still at a pre-agricultural stage of the economy living in most economically backward conditions. Majority of the people in these two tribes did not have access to public health facilities and formal education. More than 60 per cent of the population in these two tribes stood below the poverty line. Poverty is one of the major causes for exclusion of tribes in all the three studied villages. The government initiated affirmative action programmes are also not very effective among the tribes in the three studied tribal villages. Out of the three studied tribal villages, Lammasingi showed some progress due to the availability of proper infrastructural facilities like road, electricity, schools, primary health centre, and market and bore well drinking water. The residents of Kolapari and Pasuvulabanda were lacking the basic infrastructural facilities like, road, electricity, health, education and clean drinking water. In general the affirmative action programmes were not so effective in the lives of the tribal people in the study area. The people in the three studied multi-caste villages had access to health and education. Moreover they had much exposure to outside and mass media. Caste based social exclusion noted in all the three multi caste villages. The empirical research study in multi-caste villages clearly revealed that both exclusion and inclusion practices prevailed among different ethnic groups due to social stratification and social divisions. Different forms of social exclusion were noted in the study area especially among weaker sections such as *Dalits*, (Scheduled Castes) *Babujans* (backward classes / castes) and *Adivasis* (scheduled tribes). The women

in all these groups were experiencing gender discrimination due to the practice of patriarchy. The problem of social exclusion among these groups was associated with marginalisation, economic deprivation and impoverishment.

## Conclusion

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The study clearly revealed that social exclusion and inclusion practices among both castes and tribes existed even today. The practice of exclusion definitely hindered the development of excluded social groups, whereas the inclusive policy measures certainly promoted the growth and development among these groups. In the studied multi-caste villages the severity of exclusion was experienced by the Scheduled Castes like Mala and Madiga due to the social evil practice of untouchability and physical isolation, even though it was constitutionally abolished as per Article 17. Similarly in the studied multi tribal villages the severity of social exclusion was experienced by the particularly vulnerable tribal groups like Khond and Porja due to geographical isolation, poverty and economic backwardness. The people belonging to PVTGs did not have access to many basic amenities and were unable to avail the welfare and development facilities fully due to geographical and ecological constraints. Similar situations were observed in almost all the interior tribes in the study area. In general the excluded social groups were denied equal opportunities to participate fully in the ongoing development process of nations and states. Among the excluded castes / ethnic groups, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were experiencing the problem of social exclusion so much even today when compared to other excluded caste communities at local, regional and national levels.

Geographical and cultural variations of exclusionary practices were noted in castes and tribes. The levels of social exclusion also varied from one caste to another caste specifically in a caste based society. In general, the tribes or *Adivasis* were experiencing the problem of social exclusion due to geographical isolation, spatial distribution and segregation. Geography, habitat, living environment and available resources to the people were considered as the major factors for existence of variations in exclusionary practices among the tribes and castes or in any human group or ethnic group in human society. Exclusionary practices of people in a habitat, either multi caste village or multi tribal village were contextual and situational, but not a regular feature. Constitutionally extended inclusive policies and government initiated welfare and development programmes for the socially excluded social groups were not so much impactful or effective on them to eliminate the inbuilt mechanism of social exclusion in the stratified caste society, whereas the

*Adivasi* people were unable to participate fully in the ongoing development process of Nation or State due to their exclusion, based on geographical isolation, spatial distribution and segregation. Many people belonging to the socially excluded groups were not aware of Affirmative action programmes meant for them. Hence, there was a need to sensitise the issue of social exclusion among the general public. And also it is a prime responsibility of the extension agents, social activities, Academics, and Researchers to create awareness, motivation and capacity building among the excluded social groups in respect to inclusive policies through intervention and participatory action research. The investigator of this research study followed the participatory action research approach along with the conventional anthropological research methods with a view to benefit the excluded social groups of selected field villages. This research methodological approach is definitely useful to a certain extent to promote inclusive growth and development among marginalised communities belonging to the ethnic categories of both castes and tribes and also other excluded social groups, more specific to India and other nations in general.

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