

Paper submitted to

Population Association of America
Annual Meeting 2015
San Diego California
April 30th - May 2nd
Session-216

Topic: Patterns of Racial and Ethnic Exclusion in India

Title: SOCIAL INCLUSION AT INDIAN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

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Abstract

Social exclusion in India has several dimensions. Indian society is characterized by a high degree of structural inequality based upon the organization of people into caste and ethnic groups. Caste system is the social organization of Hindus who comprise more than 80 percent of the Indian population. Race and caste have however dominated the discourse on social exclusion. In its simplest understanding, social exclusion is lack of access to resources and consequent inability to utilize them. People are divided into social groups of castes and assigned hierarchal and unequal social positions and rights which are predetermined during birth. Social exclusion between caste groups is ensured through the practices of endogamy and social separation. Indian society is characterized by high degree of structural inequality based upon the organization of people into caste and ethnic groups. Social exclusion between caste groups is ensured through the practices of endogamy and social separation. The untouchables known as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) located in bottom of the caste hierarchy, are suffered the most and lived under below poverty line. Manual labor and some occupations that were considered impure and

polluting, the erstwhile untouchables were denied the right to do business or own property and equal treatment and status. They are subjected to isolation, exclusion, neglect and underdevelopment owing to their geographical location and cultural exclusivity. It aimed to analyze the role of SMEs to eliminate the social exclusion in the job market. It concludes that SMEs play a vital in employment generation, promotion and equal pay to the dalits in the study area. It suggested practicing the equal treatment and pay, employment and promotion practices in the entire industrial sector will help to enrich the socio-economic status of the deprived people in the society. Practicing the equal treatment and pay, employment and promotion practices in the entire sector will enrich the socio-economic status of the deprived people. Further it open up new avenues for future researchers to conduct research to enhance the socio-economic status of deprived people especially scheduled castes or their growth and empowerment.

Keywords: *Society, Exclusion, Inclusion, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), India*

Introduction

In the post liberalization era, the Indian Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have assumed more significance and have become the principal forms of industry. Since independence, SMEs have been continuously encouraged as a matter of industrial policy in India. Today SMEs play a vital role in generating employment opportunities to the teeming local population. Promotion of SMEs in today's context is the most essential and a viable option for ensuring sustainable development with the large scale human resources at easy access in India. With the emergence and extensive development of SMEs, lakhs of both skilled and unskilled labourers could get remunerative employment which will ultimately help in economic independence of the people even in rural areas of the State. This helps in reducing large scale migration of unemployed rural masses. Dalit rights and dignity have often been abused by dominant vested interests from the longer period. It has been aggravated because of the continued animosity of the dominant vested interests, growing assertions of the aggrieved and the age long prejudice and the partisan attitudes of the State machinery towards the Dalits (Das, M. B., & Dutta. P. 2008). India is a nation having its own traditions and customs. Indian society is characterized by a high degree of structural inequality based upon the organization of people into caste, religion, language and ethnic

groups (Mohanty, B. B. 2001). The caste system is the basic social organization of Hindus who comprise more than 80 percent of the Indian population. People are divided into social groups of castes and assigned hierarchal and unequal social positions and rights which are predetermined during birth under this system (Nambissan, G. B. 2010). The caste system is highly exclusionary in nature and it is integral to the system. Social exclusion between caste groups is ensured through the practices of endogamy and social separation (Chakraborty, A. 2000). The exclusion practices were highly prevailed in the Mogul Emperors and British (East Indian Company) Government period for to separate people and make them to fight among them and rule them without much opposition from the public. After independence from the British Government this exclusion of own people was highly existing and upper caste people deny their justice and basic rights of the bottom line group (Radhakrishnan, P. 2002). Social exclusion and unequal development among the people lives in the country assuming an intimate relation between the social form of relations and the corresponding character of economic development is significant from the view of the constitutionally recognized excluded categories and classes of people, such as Scheduled Cates, Scheduled Tribes in India and also has in its scope the causes of other disadvantaged segments of population suffering some form of exclusion on account of their disabilities (Deshpande, A. 2007).

In India constitutional and statutory laws established a comprehensive list of human rights. Number of laws has been adopted to remove discriminatory practices towards Excluded/ Untouchables/ Dalits (Shah, G. 1998) and in recent days, the term “Untouchables” is not an appropriate word, as the practice of Untouchability has been legally restricted. Untouchables are known by different names in India; Mahatma Gandhi called them *Harijan*, children of god. Religious books of the Hindus called them *Sudras*, Ambedkar called them “depressed classes”. However since 1970 the term “Dalit” has been widely used. Dalit is a Marathi word, first used by Mahatma Jotiba Phule, a 19th century social reformer who led a movement for the upliftment of Untouchables, which means “broken people.” In official documents they are designated as the Scheduled Castes (SCs). Central government may introduce number of policies, programmes, Acts and schemes to prevent the Dalit people from social exclusion to create a healthy inclusive society. 70

percent of the SC people lives in rural areas, 16 percent are self employed cultivators, 12 percent are non farm business and only 28 percent had access to capital assets (Vettriselvan, R., Krishnan, S., & Balakrishnan, A. 2013). Due to lack of ownership of assets more number of people are depend on casual/manual work (Borooah, et. al. 2007). They receive lower wages compare to the cost of living of the society; it leads to infant and child mortality among the SCs. Recent decades the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Government of India offers number of schemes, subsidies, loans and reservation policies to the Deprived Castes for to uplift their standard of living, social status, entrepreneurial and employment opportunities. The present study is carried to measure the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in terms of creation of inclusive society to provide equal opportunities in the job markets in terms of employment and its aspects.

Small and Medium Enterprises

In India, the enterprises have been classified broadly into two categories: (i) manufacturing and (ii) those engaged in providing or rendering services. According to the micro, small and medium enterprises development (MSMED) Act, 2006 both categories of enterprises have been further classified into micro, small and medium enterprises based on their investment in plant and machinery (for manufacturing enterprises) or on equipments (in case of enterprises providing or rendering services). The present ceiling on investment for plant, machinery or equipments is like as follows:

Table 1

Distribution of MSMEs based on the Investment Ceiling

Nature Type	Manufacturing	Service
Micro	Upto ₹ 25 lakh (\$50,000)	Upto ₹ 10 lakh (\$20,000)
Small	₹ 25 lakh (\$50,000) to ₹ 5 crore (\$1 million)	₹ 10 lakh (\$20,000) to ₹ 2 crore (\$0.40 million)
Medium	₹ 5 crore (\$1 million) to ₹ 10 crore (\$2 million)	₹ 2 crore (\$0.40 million) to ₹ 5 crore (\$1 million)

Source: Ministry of MSME, Government of India. 2006.

The micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector contributes significantly to the manufacturing output, employment and exports of the country. For instance, India has more than 46.76 million MSMEs, which account for almost 45 percent of industrial output, 40 percent of India's total exports and 8 percent of the India GDP (Gross Domestic Product). It is the most important employment generating sector next to agriculture and is an effective tool for promotion of balanced regional development. It provides employment opportunity to more than 106.16 million people (MSMEs Annual Report 2013-14). Further, this sector has consistently registered a higher growth rate than the rest of the industrial sector (Vettriselvan, R., & Balakrishnan, A. 2014). There are over 6000 products ranging from traditional to high-tech items, which are being manufactured by the MSMEs in India. It is well known that, the MSMEs provide viable opportunities to people in terms of both self-employment and remunerative employment especially rural masses.

Statement of the Problem

India's affirmative action policy, more popularly known as "Reservation Policy", is authored by the provisions in the Indian Constitution which was adopted in 1950, though its initiation at the country level dates back to the early 1930s (Banerjee, B., & Knight J.B. 1985). The two important features of the provision in the constitution which needs to be acknowledged at this juncture are the principle of "Non-discrimination and Equal opportunity" and the provisions enshrined in the Constitution empowering the State to take steps to ensure equal opportunity. Article 16 provides for "equality of opportunity for all citizens in the matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State". It bans discrimination, particularly in any employment or appointment to any office under the State on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence, or any of them (Borooah, Vani K., & Sriya, I. 2005). In fact Article 17 abolished the institution of untouchability which sanctified discrimination and exclusion of the erstwhile untouchables. The Article states: "Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden". Social exclusion is defined as "the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live." Social exclusion is group-based in nature. Social and economic exclusion or discrimination affects whole groups in a society, independent of the income, societal status and productivity, or

merit of individuals within the group (Gaiha, R., & Vani, S.K. 2006). It is clear that exclusion and discrimination involve the denial of access to resources, employment, education, and public services which certainly impoverish the lives of excluded individuals. At present scenario anyone can be excluded from access to markets because of lack of income, or employment on the grounds of low productivity, or admission to educational institutions on the basis of low merit of their parents (Chakrabarty, G, & Gosh, P.K. 2000). Exclusion results in the denial of economic opportunities such as access to capital assets, development of skills, and education the originating cause is not lack of income, productivity, or merit but rather the individual's group identity. Economic theories also imply that such discrimination can hamper economic growth by reducing efficiency. Labor market discrimination causes less than optimal allocation of labor among firms and sectors (given that those who are discriminated against receive a lower wage than their marginal product), and it reduces the effort expended by workers who perceive themselves to be discriminated (Gaiha, et. al. 2007). Exclusion result in inefficiency by reducing the magnitude of investments in human capital by discriminated groups and by reducing the return on human capital investments made. Present attempt is aimed to understand the reality of the employees engaged in the selected small and medium enterprises.

Relevance of the Study

India has a rich and glorious cultural legacy and caste system is a unique feature of Indian life. The extent of discrimination is that perpetuated by one group of people against the other, as it is done in case of low caste Untouchables by the high caste Hindus in India. It is believed that from Indian scriptures originally there were only four broad/main castes the Brahmins (the priestly class), the Kshatriyas (the warrior class), the Vaisyas (the merchant and peasant class), and the Sudras (the Untouchable class). But over the last two thousand years, these four castes have been astronomically sub-divided into thousands of castes and sub-castes (Banerjee, A., & Rohini, S. 2001). The 2011 census revealed that there were two thousand three hundred and seventy eight “main castes” and tribes were exists in India. The official list of “scheduled castes” prepared by the then British authorities of the Government of India in 1935 contained four hundred twenty nine Untouchable castes. Thus, traditionally Sudras/Dalits were excluded from engaging themselves in reading and learning profession

and participating in Aryan religious customs and ceremonies. In this principle, marriage was permitted within one's own caste. This rule was often broken, but any Brahmin male who took a Sudra to be his wife would become the object of particular scorn. If a Brahmin male had only one wife and she was of Sudra status, he would be considered to be in a State of ritual impurity and would be forbidden to attend family ceremonies like *shradha* (rites for the dead) ancestor worship. On the other hand, any Sudra male who approached a Brahmin female, behaved like a Brahmin caste, or did any harm to a Brahmin person would be subject to serious punishment, sometimes even death (Yamazaki 1997). Zinkin (1962) cites that the rule from scriptures, which stated: If dalit assumes a position of equality with high caste men, either in sitting, or going along the road, they shall receive corporal punishment. A Sudra committing adultery with women of the first three castes shall suffer capital punishment, or shall be burnt alive tied up with straw. If a Sudra intentionally reviles a Brahmin or criminally assaults him; the limb with which he offends shall be cut off.

For centuries, and even now, these Untouchable castes have been subject to various restrictions in their movements or relationships with other people, especially the high caste persons (Hoff, K., & Pandey, P. 2004). They still face many social disabilities, like denial or restriction of access to public facilities such as wells, schools, roads, post offices and courts; denial or restriction of access to temples where their presence might pollute the deity as well as the higher caste worshippers; and from rest-houses, tanks and shrines connected to temples (Kabeer, 2006). They have been denied access to services such as those provided by barbers, laundrymen, restaurants, shops and theatres, and are required to use separate utensils and facilities within such places (Jodhka, S. 2008). They face a lot of restrictions on style of life, especially in the goods indicating comfort or luxury. Riding on horseback, use of bicycles, umbrellas, footwear, the wearing of gold and silver ornaments (in fact, their abject poverty could never afford them to do so), the use of palanquins to carry bridegrooms were all forbidden for these people (Khan, & Mumtaz Ali, 1995). Traditionally, they were required to have their homes/huts constructed outside the village and quite away from the high caste families; this practice is followed even now in almost all villages. This segregation is believed to have a divine sanction. While the touch of an animal was not considered polluting, the very sight of an Untouchable was enough to pollute and called for

the performance of special cleansing ceremonies (Kenneth, J. A. 1998). Domestic and agricultural animals could live and eat in the same house with high caste Hindus but the Untouchables could not even live in the same town. For many orthodox Hindus the cow dung is ritually so “clean”, that a Brahmin priest will use it to wash away his impurities. Even now untouchability continues to be widely prevalent and is practiced in one form or another in most of the villages in India (Shah, et al. 2006). Here, an attempt is made to analyze the role of small and medium enterprises to remove the social exclusion practices in Tamil Nadu which is more essential to understand the reality.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the role of small and medium enterprises in creation of inclusive society;
- To understand the present Status of Dalit Entrepreneurs and Employees;
- To understand the present problems existing among the working groups of SMEs; and
- To suggest suitable measures to eliminate the present problems faced by the employees of SMEs.

Hypotheses of the Study

- Small and medium enterprise sector generates more employment opportunities for the Dalits in the study area; and
- Entrepreneurial activities among the Dalits help to improve the Standard of Living.

Scope of the Study

Social exclusion is the highest shame of the nation. Present interdisciplinary attempt is made to understand the linkages between the social dilemma and industrial sector. This study will answer the question “How the Industrial Sector helps the Social Reforms in Indian Society?” There is no such kind of study have been conducted earlier to understand the role of small and medium enterprises in eradication of social exclusion. Hence, this

preliminary attempt will help to understand the reality of the sector and the marginalized groups in the study area.

Methodology of the Study

Present study is descriptive cum analytical in nature to describe the present status of the Dalits participation in small and medium enterprises sector and SMEs role in generation of employment opportunities to the marginal community people in the study area. It employed both primary and secondary data in order to fulfill the study objectives. Secondary data were collected from the Annual Report series of Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Government of India and to identify the Dalits participation in the entrepreneurial activities in the sector. Primary data were collected through structured interview schedule, field observation and focus group discussion.

Study Area and Sampling Frame

The study was conducted in the Tamil Nadu State of India which ranked second in the existence of MSMEs. Tamil Nadu State is the growing State and registered high volume of communal violence's against the marginal group in the last century (Chelliah, R.J. & Shanmugam, K.R. 2002). So, the present attempt was made in Tamil Nadu to realize the present condition. Multi-stage stratified random sampling method was used to select the study area and sampling units. Totally four districts which are mostly affected by communal violence's such as Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Salem and Tharmapuri. The sample covers 20 small and medium enterprises (10 small and 10 medium) from every district totally 80 SMEs were studied and 10 employees from each enterprise totally 800 employees surveyed to fulfill the study objectives.

Results and Discussion

Totally 13.59 percent (63.54 Lakhs) of the micro, small and medium enterprises located in India were owned by the marginal groups such as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. 30 percent (24 enterprises) of the entrepreneurs belong to scheduled castes. They are the first generation entrepreneurs and they were engaged in the present business for the last 2 decades. They were benefited in terms of Government subsidies, economic empowerment

and social recognition. In this section results and discussion of the study was presented on the basis of primary data collected from the field. Table 2 discusses about the distribution of the employees by their castes.

Table 2
Caste Wise Distribution of the Employees

S. No.	Community	Frequency	Percent
1	Forward Castes	48	6
2	Other Backward Castes	272	34
3	Scheduled Castes	480	60
Total		800	100

Source: Computed from field data

Three fifth (60 percent) of the employees engaged in the selected small and medium enterprises in the study area belongs to Scheduled Castes, more than one third (34 percent) are other backward castes and remaining (6 percent) are forward caste people. It shows that small and medium enterprises in the study area provide more employment opportunities to the dalit people.

Table 3 discuss about the economic status of the employees engaged in the sample units of the study area through monthly remuneration.

Table 3
Remuneration of the Employees

S. No.	Monthly Remuneration	Frequency	Percent
1.	Up to ₹ 5000	115	14.38
2.	₹ 5000- ₹10000	220	27.5
3.	₹ 10000- ₹ 15000	183	22.88
4.	₹ 15000- ₹20000	178	22.24
5.	₹ 20000 and above	104	13.0
Total		800	100

Source: Computed from field data

Table 3 provides the monthly remuneration of the selected employees from the SMEs. The result shows that more than one fourth (27.5 percent) are earning between ₹ 5000/- to ₹ 10000/-, 22.88 percent are earning ₹ 10000/- to ₹ 15000/-, 22.24 percent are earning ₹ 15000/- to ₹ 20000/- per month, 14.38 percent are paid up to ₹ 5000/- and the remaining (13 percent) are receiving ₹ 20000/- and above as salary from the enterprises. Thus, it is identified that, the monthly income of the majority (58.12 percent) of the employees working in small and medium enterprises is more than ₹ 10000/- and this indicates that their monthly income is enough to manage economic needs of their family in the study area.

All (100 percent) the respondents in the study area opined that there is no caste wise discrimination at work place. This result is more controversial to the existing literature about social exclusion. It shows that inclusive growth of small and medium enterprise work place in the study area.

Table 4 discuss about the type of discrimination faced by the selected employees of small and medium enterprises at work place in the study area other than the caste.

Table 4
Type of Discrimination at Work place

S. No.	Discrimination at work place	Frequency	Percent
1.	Religion based	110	13.75
2.	Gender based	84	10.5
3.	Job title based	504	63.0
4.	Economy based	452	56.5
5.	Education based	572	71.5

Source: Computed from primary data

The result clearly reveals discrimination prevails due to the difference in the education qualification (71.5 percent), job title (63 percent), economic background (56.5

percent), religion basis (13.75 percent) and gender difference (10.5 percent). It is noteworthy that the religion and gender based discrimination seems to be less.

Table 5
Commanding power enjoyed by the Dalit employees

S.No.	Commanding power	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	192	40
2	No	288	60
Total		480	100

Source: Computed from field data

Table 5 discusses about the commanding power enjoyed by the selected dalit employees in the small and medium enterprises of the study area. Two fifth (40 percent) of the dalit employees are having commanding power in their working establishments and it is noteworthy that 36 percent of the sample units are controlled/commanded by dalit employees. It reveals the empowerment of dalit people at their worksite in terms of commanding or supervising their subordinates especially in manufacturing process and human resource related activities.

Garrett's Ranking Technique

The employees of small and medium enterprises were suffering lot of problems due to informal and unwritten rules and regulations and management practices. Garrett ranking technique is used to understand the problems faced by the selected employees in the small and medium enterprises. The following formula has been used to obtain the rank under the Garrett Ranking technique to rank the problems faced by the selected small and medium enterprises employees in the study area.

working condition, delayed grievance redressal, job insecurity, inadequate wages and bonus and absence of provisions (wage, working hours, maternity, accident, old age and related aspects) are the problems ranked respectively in the study area. Thus, it is concluded that the workers of small and medium enterprises were facing economic discrimination, victimization and poor working condition are the major problems.

Results of Focus Group Discussions

Employers of the selected small and medium enterprises were benefited through the entrepreneurial activities in terms of economic independence, self sustainability and social recognition. Employees engaged in the Small and Medium enterprises share their food and there is no inequality in work place in the name of caste as well as they help other co-workers in their needy time and participate more to subordinate the family events. Promotion will be based on experience and efficiency at work place. Welfare measures are poor at the work place and they are engaged in the particular job due to wage and vicinity. Exclusion practiced in the other form of discrimination based on wealth holding and educational status. Dalit or Non-Dalit is not a matter for this kind of discrimination, economically weaker people has been excluded by the economically wealthy people and poor people are treated only as a worker not as friends/co-worker. Still higher education is the dream for economically poor dalit people. The government schemes and benefits are enjoyed by economically well people in terms of government jobs, government subsidies, reservation in educational institutions and high social status too. The discrimination in terms of education and economic power is evidence by itself for the denial of basic rights of needy people in the society.

Suggestions

- ▶ Government reservation policies should be modified according to the present scenario and ensure the benefits to the excluded among the excluded people (poor dalit);
- ▶ Reservation and benefits in jobs and educational institutions should be given to the first generation poor dalit people in the reservation quota; and

- ▶ More attention is needed in the area of exclusion due to educational and economic status of the people while frame the policies and programmes.

Conclusion

Social exclusion is the shame for the developing nations especially India which having the mantra of Unity is Strength. A rational attentiveness on poor dalit by planners and policy makers while framing the schemes for other sectors of the economy will help to get more employment and that will result in inclusive Indian society. Study result found that social exclusion in the name of caste is reduced and SMEs play a vital role to provide employment opportunities, promotion and equal pay to the dalit in the study area. Exclusion based on economic status and educational status can be reduced by empowering the poor/needly dalit people. Economic and education discrimination and poor working standards are the major problems faced by the small and medium enterprise employees in the study area. The needy and poor dalit people cannot fully attain the government schemes and reservation policies due to the high involvement of economically and educationally well dalit people. Economically and educationally weaker dalit people were still in the poor status and they were mostly engaged as the unskilled manual workers and wage earners. Practicing equal treatment and pay, employment and promotion practices in the entire sector will help to enrich the socio-economic status of the deprived people in the society. For this government should monitor in depth and evaluate policies and programmes specially meant for the deprived society. The study conclude that both Central and the State governments should ensure that the schemes are perennial rather than seasonal and the schemes should reach the unreached vulnerable segment of the nation which is more essential for the upliftment and self sustainability of the marginalized segment of the Indian society.

Area for further Research

Present study and its results are limited to select small and medium enterprises located in four districts of Tamil Nadu. Similar studies may be conducted in other parts of Tamil Nadu and also at the interstate and national level to get real picture of the society. Further research is needed to find “How to make the policies and programmes reachable to

the needy people.” The researchers may analyze all the aspects of the social exclusion among the manual workers and suggest suitable policies and programmes to enrich the socio-economic status of the dalits and other deprived people in the Indian society.

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