



# Assesment of Economic and Social Exclusion of women – A Global Perspective

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*Abstract* : Exclusion in any form is painful. Especially when a particular group or a part of the society are excluded or prevented from all or few normal social activities by the so-called society's "superiors". What is social exclusion? According to Prof. Silver," Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live". In all societies, both developed and developing states, social exclusion takes place with greater or lesser intensity.

DISCRIMINATION IS NOT LIBERAL. ARGUING AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IS NOT INTOLERANCE.

RICHARD DAWKINS

## 1.1 Introduction:

Exclusion in any form is painful. Especially when a particular group or a part of the society are excluded or prevented from all or few normal social activities by the so-called society's "superiors". What is social exclusion? According to Prof. Silver," Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live". In all societies, both developed and developing states, social exclusion takes place with greater or lesser intensity.

Throughout the world, social exclusions have the main contributing reason for the occurrence of civil wars and the emergence of great leaders like Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, etc. Social exclusions occur throughout the world. It is not specific to any particular place or country. Exclusions predominantly happen on the basis of colour, caste, religion, to the physically or mentally challenged or on the basis of gender.

## **1.2 Discrimination and social exclusion:**

Discrimination is an attitude, usually in a negative way. It gradually leads to unfair treatment towards a particular group in the society based on various characteristics like caste, gender, disabilities, etc. Discrimination involves prejudging a group as inferior and refusal to admit or recognize their talents. According to sociologists, discrimination against a group is not inborn. It is rather learnt or inculcated from people around. Discrimination may not necessarily be a result

of bad experiences faced from the excluded group. Most of the times people discriminate or prejudice those persons whom they have never met or will never meet.

Social exclusion is just a result of “grown up” prejudice and discrimination. It gains momentum over a period of time and gets transformed into social exclusion. With time social exclusion is internalized by both the groups of the society and becomes a social norm. The excluded need to realize that they are excluded and the pain they go through is not natural, but imposed on them.

The outcome of this realization leads to a revolution.

## **1.3 Social exclusion and women**

Social exclusions against women have been in practice for centuries. Social exclusion among women becomes a hegemonic practice. Prejudice and discrimination has been so deep rooted in the minds of women, that a correct social path is seldom accepted by them. This is one of the greatest victories of a male dominated society.

## **1.4 Social exclusion and women – a global journey**

People are generally of the view that only women in less developed societies face exclusions. But this is not true. Irrespective of the country's growth status, women face exclusions.

In USA, during the eighteenth century a group of women were excluded as practicing witchcraft and were executed. Women were also excluded from inheriting the ancestral property. Women had to go through a long struggle to win rights to pursue education in law and to take position as jury in the court of law. Trading of women slaves was also in practice till nineteenth century.

Even United Kingdom, one of the most politically advanced countries, granted voting rights only to women over thirty years, and with a stipulated amount of property. After a long struggle, women received voting rights as men have in the year 1928, that is, any women who has reached twenty-one years of age can vote.

Social exclusion against women is severely practiced in the African countries. Around 54% of the women suffer from domestic violence. Nearly 40% of the women are victims of social violence. Thirty-Eight African countries are still practicing social exclusion against women LEGALLY. Nearly seventeen countries do not have laws against crime against women. FGM is still practiced in twenty-six countries (nearly 95% in Guinea and Somalia). There are no laws that actually prevent these crimes against women or to protect women.

Women with respect to household perform almost four times more than men domestically and are unpaid. (UN convention, 2014).

Middle Eastern women enjoy legal rights equal to men. This right has been given to them by the Islamic law. Even during the medieval period, the women in the middle east were enjoying equality with men in terms of education, profession, wages and salaries, rights to manage property, to sue and to be sued, etc. which the western women won much later. They are severely disadvantaged about their positions in the family like restricting the contacts of the women, leaving the house only with the permission and blessings of the husband and regarding the property inheritance, a woman actually inherited nothing.

### **1.5 Social exclusion and women- an overview in India**

According to Reuters (2017), amongst the G20 countries the plight of the Indian women is the worst followed by Saudi Arabia. Women in Canada are supposed to enjoy the best socio-economic lifestyle.

Indian women face challenges even before birth. Girl child feticide is still practiced in India even though the Government of India has banned the disclosure of sex of the baby before birth.

In India, exclusion for women starts right from their birth. The birth of a male child is looked upon as a blessing and celebrated, while the birth of a female child is considered to be inferior. They are looked upon as liabilities on the family. They are mainly trained for household chores and to serve the men folk of the house.

In India, women face social exclusions in many walks of life like social, political and economic. An Indian women laborer is paid 40-50% less than that of a male worker for the same work. According to Amartya Sen, Indian women face exclusions mainly from health and the educational sector. As per data(ISO,2017), the gender bias is more in northern states of India than in the southern states. Girl children are breastfed for a shorter time and given lesser quantity of food. They are mal-nourished and not given due care during times of medical emergencies. On an average, women live up to six years longer than men in Western countries. But this does not happen in India. An average Indian woman lives 8-10 years lesser than an average Indian male.

Indian families hold pride in educating a male child. Girl children are just granted basic education. Technical and professional educations are generally limited to males. But this scenario has been undergoing drastic changes. Women have also been extremely successful in pursuing a professional career. But the importance of education is not completely realized by the lower strata of the society.

The development of women has been skewed in our country. Strong government intervention is required to prevent women from being socially excluded.

While the status of women has been improving through the world in some aspects, while no improvements have been seen in some areas. This calls for a tool of measure or index to gauge the changes and to assess the impact of the programmes that have been implement towards the betterment of women and prevention of women exclusion.

## 1.6 GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX (GII):

GII is tool developed by the UN to measure the gender inequalities among the countries.

. The GII measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development-

1. **Reproductive health** measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates;
2. **Empowerment**, measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and
3. **Economic status** expressed as labour market participation and measured by labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older.

The GII sheds new light on the position of women in over 150 countries.

The Government of India has been implementing many schemes to tide over the issue of social exclusion to women. The literacy has reached 963 females to 1000 males which is a notable improvement. But in many parts of India, the female literacy levels have been really low. This is reflected in the low GII performance of India.

According to UNDP report, 2014, the value of GII is 0.53(0 denoting inequality and 1 denoting equality) which is very poor. Out of 150 countries India stands in the 126<sup>th</sup> rank. This shows that the inequality and the social exclusion is strongly prevalent in India. Painfully, India's rank has slipped down from 101<sup>st</sup> position in 2013 to 126<sup>th</sup> position in 2014. This calls for immediate and a focused plan to solve the problem of women social exclusion.

## 1.7 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND GENDER INDEX: (SIGI):

It is a cross country measure of discrimination against women in public institutions (managed by both government and private enterprises). It was formulated by the OECD development Centre.

According to OECD development center, SIGI covers five dimensions of discriminatory social institutions, spanning major socio-economic areas that affect women's lives: **discriminatory family code, restricted physical integrity, son bias, restricted resources and assets, and restricted civil liberties**

India holds the 96<sup>th</sup> rank out of 106 countries. The SIGI value is 0.56 (0 denoting inequality and 1 denoting equality) which is very high. (OECD development report, 2014). Even countries which have been recording a very low growth and development rate have performed better than India in terms of SIGI.

## 1.8 Conclusion

Societies which are free from social exclusion of women produces better citizens. Improvement in the status and the treatment of women improves the status of her family. Unfortunately, Indian women face exclusions from their families itself. Hence this problem should be dealt from the grass root level. What is now required is an ideological change in the minds of both men and women. Women themselves are not for any changes in their family and social status. Most of the men women are of the view that social inclusion or "thinking out of the box" leads to compromised integrity or slashing down of culture or aping the western world. This kind

of a mindset has to be removed. In fact, patronizing our own culture will only lead to reduction of exclusion. This has to be supplemented by relevant government policies. This can lead to promising results patronizing women and womanhood.

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