

Factors Determining Social Exclusion of the Jenu Kuruba Tribe: A Sociological Analysis

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Abstract

Social exclusion is a multifaceted sociological issue that includes economic hardship, social isolation, political disenfranchisement, cultural neglect, and unequal access to growth opportunities. The Jenu Kuruba tribe, designated as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in India, though protected by the constitution and programs aimed at tribal development, continues to encounter different types of exclusion. The sociological perspective examines the Mysuru region in Karnataka and investigates the main factors contributing to social exclusion among the Jenu Kuruba community. This descriptive research methodology integrates essential sociological perspectives, including Social Exclusion Theory, Political Ecology, Cultural Ecology, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, to delve into the intricate aspects of exclusion. The study points out historical prejudice, restricted deforestation, insufficient land availability, financial discrimination, inadequate political participation, and cultural neglect as the main reasons for social exclusion. The sociological inquiry shows that these factors are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, resulting in persistent income insecurity and diminished prospects for social mobility. The decline in employment associated with traditional forests, combined with an increase in temporary roles, has eroded established systems of knowledge and intensified economic instability. A significant bottleneck to community access to institutional support and decision-making processes exists, consequently hindering their equitable benefit from developmental initiatives.

Keywords: Jenu Kuruba, Social Exclusion, Tribal Communities, Livelihood, Occupational Change.

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I. Introduction

Social exclusion has emerged as a key concept in sociology and development studies, particularly in addressing the persistent inequalities faced by marginalized and indigenous communities. It centers around a complex, multi-layered framework that prevents certain individuals or social groups from obtaining fair access to economic resources, educational opportunities, political engagement, cultural participation, and social benefits. Though poverty indicates a shortfall in income, social exclusion is more extensive, encompassing systemic obstacles that hinder entire communities from fully engaging in social, economic, political, and cultural activities. It arises from historical discrimination, uneven power dynamics, institutional behaviors, and limited access to resources, leading to ongoing deprivation and exclusion.

The Jenu Kuruba community, classified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), predominantly resides in wooded areas within the Mysuru district and neighboring Karnataka regions. Historically, the Jenu Kuruba have relied on honey gathering, minor forest product collection, medicinal plant harvesting, fishing, and subsistence farming. How they existed was deeply connected to forests, biodiversity, and the indigenous ecological wisdom, serving as the foundation for their social structures, cultural identities, and economic well-being. With a deep connection to nature, they cultivated eco-friendly resource management methods, which were then passed down through generations via family traditions and word of mouth.

Theoretical foundation

The exclusion of the Jenu Kuruba cannot be attributed to a single cause but is a result of the multifaceted interaction of socio-economic, political, cultural, and environmental influences. These elements reinforce one another, creating a loop that restricts professional mobility, limits opportunities for growth, and diminishes community strength. To understand the social exclusion faced by the Jenu Kuruba community,

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various sociological methods must be utilized. The Social Exclusion Theory explains how persistent disparities in resource allocation generate long-term neglect and marginalization. The well-being of indigenous communities is significantly affected by the implementation of environmental regulatory protocols and conservation approaches, as Political Ecology points out. Cultural Ecology investigates Traditional occupations within forest ecosystem contexts. It explores how deficits in natural, human, social, financial, and physical capital influence livelihood insecurity. Structural Functionalism examines occupational shifts to understand their impact on families, communities, and cultural traditions. Collectively, these viewpoints offer a thorough comprehension of the influences on social exclusion and the daily struggles faced by the Jenu Kuruba community.

II. Objectives of the study

The objective of the sociological research is to identify and explain the main factors responsible for social exclusion within the Jenu Kuruba community in the Mysuru district. It evaluates how past precedents have impacted their socio-economic standing and potential income prospects. This study examines how these elements influence sustainable progress, social justice, and the preservation of indigenous knowledge.

Research methods

The study adopts a descriptive methodology to investigate the elements contributing to social exclusion within the Jenu Kuruba tribe in the Mysuru district of Karnataka. A thorough schematic allows the researcher to meticulously document and analyze the socio-economic, cultural, educational, political, and everyday living circumstances of the Jenu Kuruba community without altering the study parameters. The study was conducted in the Mysuru District, focusing on two regions significantly impacted by tribal populations: the Heggadadevanakote (H.D. Kote) Taluk and the Hunsur Taluk. These taluks were deliberately chosen due to their dense concentration of Jenu Kuruba settlements, which are situated near forests and protected areas. Including 300 respondents, selected from two taluks, resulted in the survey. Participants were adults from Jenu Kuruba communities, performing traditional tasks, holding paid jobs, cultivating crops, or conducting income-generating activities. The researcher collected data using multiple methods to improve the reliability and accuracy of the study outcomes. Information collection was the purpose of the house survey conducted. Conversations with village elders, tribal leaders, female members of the group, and government officials yielded qualitative insights regarding the origins and consequences of social exclusion.

III. Result and discussion

1. Historical Marginalization

The Jenu Kuruba have endured long-term socio-economic neglect for a considerable time. Historically, their interactions have been confined to forested areas with limited engagement with established institutions. Collaborating with colonial forestry rules and the ensuing conservation initiatives limited their access to customary resources, thus perpetuating long-standing disparities that continue to shape their present socio-economic conditions.

Table 1: Historical Marginalization

Historical Marginalization	H.D.kote (n=150)	Hunsur (n=150)	Total (N=300)	Percentage (%)
Very High	62	58	120	40.0
High	48	52	100	33.3
Moderate	25	24	49	16.3
Low	10	11	21	7.0
Very Low	5	5	10	3.4
Total	150	150	300	100.0

Table 1 shows the distribution of 300 Jenu Kuruba respondents from H.D.Kote and Hunsur taluks, according to their views on past societal neglect. The data show that 40.0% of 120 respondents faced very high historical marginalization, while 33.3% of 100 respondents experienced higher levels of historical marginalization. Additionally, 49 respondents (16.3%) reported moderate levels, 21 respondents (7.0%) indicated low levels, and only 10 respondents (3.4%) experienced very low historical marginalization. The findings show that about four out of every five respondents (73.3%) believe the Jenu Kuruba community has suffered from significant or severe historical neglect. Across both taluks, the distribution is the same, suggesting that past neglect has influenced the community's makeup irrespective of where residents live. The Jenu Kuruba tribe has endured significant social exclusion as a result of prolonged marginalization. Over the years, various generations have relied on forests for honey harvesting, collecting of lesser forest products, and other customary activities. Colonial-era forestry practices, conservation measures after independence, limitations on forest use,

reassignments of lands, and insufficient participation in broader development initiatives have all played a role in their ongoing marginalization.

2. Forest Conservation Policies and Restricted Forest Access

The Jenu Kuruba's traditional way of living was closely tied to forests. Significantly reducing access to resources such as honey, medicinal plants, bamboo, and other forest products has led to a decrease in the establishment of protected areas, including forests, wildlife sanctuaries, and tiger reserves.

Table 2: Perception on Forest Conservation Policies and Restricted Forest Access

Forest Conservation Policies and Restricted Forest Access	H.D.kote (n=150)	Hunsur (n=150)	Total (N=300)	Percentage (%)
Very High Impact	68	62	130	43.30
High Impact	47	48	95	31.7
Moderate Impact	22	25	47	15.7
Low Impact	9	11	20	6.7
Very Low Impact	4	4	8	2.6
Total	150	150	300	100.0

As Table 2 illustrates, the perceptions of 300 Jenu Kuruba respondents from H.D. Kote and Hunsur taluks were scrutinized concerning the impact of forest conservation guidelines. Marginalization and changes in how they live are due to forest accessibility limitations. The data indicates that 130 participants, constituting 43.3%, perceived a significant impact, whereas 95 individuals, accounting for 31.7%, noted high impact. It was found that 75.0% of the 225 respondents believed that forest conservation efforts and forest entry bans had significantly affected their traditional livelihoods and earning methods. Instead, 47 respondents (15.7%) noted a moderate effect, 20 respondents (6.7%) reported a low effect, and just 8 respondents (2.6%) experienced a very low effect. Responses from H.D.Kote and Hunsur taluks exhibit a comparable pattern, suggesting that limits on forest entry are a shared issue faced by the Jenu Kuruba community in Mysuru district. The study reveals that preserving forests and limiting access are key factors in isolating the Jenu Kuruba tribe socially. Historically, the community relied on forests for honey harvesting, gathering of lesser forest products, collecting medicinal plants, fishing, and other activities necessary for sustenance. Access to protected areas, wildlife sanctuaries, and conservation initiatives has been restricted. Occupational changes occur, with agricultural earnings and casual work becoming more significant.

3. Landlessness and Insecure Property Rights

Property rights play a crucial role in promoting social inclusion. Numerous Jenu Kuruba households face difficulties in locating cultivable land.

Table 3: Landlessness and Insecure Property Rights

Landlessness and Insecure Property Rights	H.D.kote (n=150)	Hunsur (n=150)	Total (N=300)	Percentage (%)
Very High	60	55	115	38.35
High	50	48	98	32.7
Moderate	24	28	52	17.3
Low	11	13	24	8.0
Very Low	5	6	11	3.7
Total	150	150	300	100.0

According to Table 3, data were gathered from 300 Jenu Kuruba participants in the H.D. Kote and Hunsur taluks concerning landlessness and insecure property rights, which contribute to social exclusion. The findings show that 115 respondents, or 38.3%, had very strong feelings about landlessness and insecure property rights, whereas 98 respondents, or 32.7%, reported high levels. A total of 130 participants, representing 71.0%, indicated that limitations on land ownership and insecure property rights are responsible for their social exclusion. Additionally, 52 respondents indicated a moderate level (17.3%), 24 reported a low level (8.0%), and only 11 (3.7%) deemed the issue as very low. Just slight discrepancies were noted between H.D.Kote and Hunsur taluks, suggesting significant issues including landlessness and insecure property rights that impacted the Jenu Kuruba community throughout the examination region.

4. Poverty and Economic Insecurity

Poverty and social exclusion reinforce each other, with exclusion stemming from poverty and poverty from exclusion.

Table 4: Poverty and Economic Insecurity

Poverty and Economic Insecurity	H.D.kote (n=150)	Hunsur (n=150)	Total (N=300)	Percentage (%)
Very High	64	61	125	41.75
High	49	46	95	31.7
Moderate	22	26	48	16.0
Low	10	12	22	7.3
Very Low	5	5	10	3.3
Total	150	150	300	100.0

Table 4 displays the responses of 300 Jenu Kuruba participants from H.D.Kote and Hunsur villages concerning poverty and economic distress as triggers for social exclusion. The results show that 125 respondents, or 41.7%, held very strong beliefs about poverty and economic instability, whereas 95 respondents, or 31.7%, reported higher levels. Combining responses from 220 individuals, 73.4 percent asserted that poverty and economic instability are key factors in their social isolation. Moreover, 48 respondents (16.0%) rated the level as moderate, 22 respondents (7.3%) noted a low level, and just 10 respondents (3.3%) thought the impact was very low. The response template is consistent in H.D.Kote and Hunsur taluks, showing that poverty and livelihood instability are substantial issues confronting Jenu Kuruba households throughout the research region.

5. Cultural Marginalization

Modifications in occupational duties have reduced several enduring cultural customs.

Table 5: Cultural Marginalization

Cultural Marginalization	H.D.kote (n=150)	Hunsur (n=150)	Total (N=300)	Percentage (%)
Very High	58	62	120	40.0
High	51	46	97	32.3
Moderate	25	24	49	16.3
Low	11	12	23	7.7
Very Low	5	6	11	3.7
Total	150	150	300	100.0

As depicted in Table 5, the allocation of 300 Jenu Kuruba respondents from the H.D.Kote and Hunsur taluks is showcased based on their views regarding cultural marginalization. The findings show that 40.0% of 300 respondents, or 120 individuals, experienced very high cultural marginalization, while 97 out of 300 reported high levels of marginalization. Among the 217 respondents, 72.3% reported that cultural marginalization serves as a critical driver behind social exclusion in the Jenu Kuruba community. Additionally, 49 participants (16.3%) assessed the impact as moderate, 23 participants (7.7%) noted a low impact, and only 11 participants (3.7%) regarded the effect as very low. Responses from H.D. Kote and Hunsur taluks are remarkably similar, indicating a common cultural marginalization experience among Jenu Kuruba households in the study area.

6. Political Exclusion

Community involvement in politics allows for influencing development policies.

Table 6: Political Exclusion

Political Exclusion	H.D.kote (n=150)	Hunsur (n=150)	Total (N=300)	Percentage (%)
Very High	56	59	115	38.35
High	50	48	98	32.7
Moderate	27	24	51	17.0
Low	12	13	25	8.3
Very Low	5	6	11	3.7
Total	150	150	300	100.0

The table compiled from views of 300 Jenu Kuruba respondents, located in the H.D. Kote and Hunsur taluks, links political exclusion to social exclusion. The results show that 115 respondents, or 38.3%, believed in very high political exclusion, whereas 98 respondents, or 32.7%, indicated high levels. A total of 213 participants, accounting for 71.0%, indicated that political underrepresentation and restricted participation were chiefly to blame for their social exclusion. Additionally, 51 respondents (17.0%) indicated a moderate level, 25 respondents (8.3%) reported a low level, and only 11 respondents (3.7%) deemed political exclusion as very low. The replies from both H.D.Kote and Hunsur taluks are remarkably similar, suggesting that electoral disenfranchisement affects the Jenu Kuruba community uniformly across the entire region explored in the study.

IV. Conclusion

The social exclusion of the Jenu Kuruba tribe in Mysuru district is shaped by a complex interaction of historical marginalization, restricted access to forests and land, poverty, educational disadvantage, employment insecurity, inadequate healthcare, gender inequality, weak political participation, and cultural marginalization. This amplification has resulted from a transition from traditional forestry employment to vulnerable wage work. Sociological analysis reveals that exclusion can't be effectively tackled through economic assistance alone. Inclusive measures are necessary to recognize tribal rights, boost earning opportunities, expand access to fundamental services, preserve cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, and safeguard the Jenu Kuruba community's legacy. Essentially, promoting sustainable and inclusive development is crucial for guaranteeing social equity, economic stability, and overall wellbeing for the Jenu Kuruba community in Mysuru district, Karnataka.

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