

# Empowering the Marginalised at grassroots level: Evidences from Villages of Ujjain District of Madhya Pradesh

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## Abstract

*Social exclusion in India is not a new phenomenon. These groups were excluded on the basis of caste, class, gender and religion. After independence, efforts were made to set up Panchayats at village level through various legislations in all states and Union Territories. Despite these provisions for equal participation and empowerment, exclusion and discrimination of these excluded groups continued till 73rd Constitutional amendment act was enacted in the Parliament and reservation was provided to these classes to empower them socially. Through PRI there has been major change in the rural power structure in favour of the weaker sections. Panchayat Raj leadership pattern as well as the authority structure in rural Madhya Pradesh has also registered a major shift. Still much need to be done in this regard*

Social exclusion involves the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live on the basis of perceived group attributes like social origin, ethnicity and religious conviction. It is the denial of equal opportunities imposed by certain groups of society upon others which leads to inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic and social functioning of the society (Chinna Rao, 2010).

If we look at the history of India, social exclusion is not a new phenomenon. History bears witness to exclusion of social groups on the bases of caste, class, gender and religion. Most notable is the category of Dalits (constitutionally categorised as ‘Scheduled Caste’ and ‘Scheduled Tribes’) and women. They were denied the access and control over economic and social opportunities as a result they were relegated to the category of excluded groups.

At the time of Independence, the rural society was mostly feudal in nature. Dalits were socially excluded from the mainstream of society in every aspect i.e. cultural,

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