SOCIAL INCLUSION AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE POLICY OF POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION IN INDIA

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Abstract: Social exclusion and social inclusion are two terms most widely used in recent years by all sections of a society, especially the social scientists in their academic discourses. The term social exclusion means the process through which individuals and groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live, whereas the term social inclusion encompasses the entire population in the performances of the individual function system. On the other hand, positive discrimination is a process through which some special measures have been taken for the betterment of the marginalized sections of population of a country. Thus, positive discrimination can be considered as a means of social inclusion which leads socio-economic development of the marginalized groups.

In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the role of the policies of positive discrimination in the process of social inclusion of the socially excluded marginalized groups of the society and their development. The paper is based on secondary data and the same were collected from different documentary sources of data such as books, journals, research articles, etc.

Key words: Social exclusion, social inclusion, development, positive discrimination.

Introduction:

Social exclusion and social inclusion are two terms most widely used in recent years by politicians, social scientists and the public as well. The term social exclusion means the process through which individuals and groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live. It is defined as a social process which involves denial of fair and equal opportunities to certain social groups in multiple spheres in society, resulting in the inability of individuals from excluded groups to participate in the basic political, economic and social functioning of the society. On the other hand, social inclusion, which was originated in French social policy in the 1970s, is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights. In other words, it removes the barriers to people's participation in society. Social inclusion is thus a more deliberate process of encompassing and welcoming all persons and embracing greater equality and tolerance. Both the terms, social exclusion and social inclusion are closely associated with the concept of development. On the one hand, we can conceptualize social exclusion as a process of blocking the development of the marginalized communities with a series of institutionalized social system, whereas social inclusion, on the other hand, tries to popularize the concept of inclusive development in the society. It represents a vision for a 'society for all' in which every individual has rights, responsibilities and an active role to play in the society. In this manner of inclusive development, the policy of positive discrimination, which grants special privileges to the downtrodden and the underprivileged sections of society, plays an important role in the process of inclusion of such sections of population with the mainstream of a society and its development. Thus, social inclusion and

the policy of positive discrimination are closely associated with the concept of inclusive development.

Statement of the problem:
Social inclusion, as we know, is the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights. Here, it is contended that promoting social inclusion requires tackling social exclusion by removing barriers to people's participation in society, as well as by taking active inclusionary steps to facilitate such participation. Thus, it is a deliberate process of encompassing and welcoming all persons and embracing greater equality and tolerance. Theories of social inclusion argue that without encompassing the excluded groups in the process of development no society or country can be recognized as a developed one. So, inclusive measures for the excluded sections of society are very much necessary for the all-round development of a society or country. For that purpose, some especial measures have been adopted in every county who has the experience of social exclusion. In India, positive discrimination is one of the important measures of social inclusion which provides preferential treatment to the disadvantaged and socially excluded groups based on caste, race, community, ethnicity, etc. Therefore, in this paper, it is proposed to examine how the policy of positive discrimination is useful in case of social inclusion and development of the underprivileged or marginalized groups in India.

Objectives of the study:
The paper focuses on the emerging issue of the social inclusion and development through the policy of positive discrimination in India. Therefore, the paper is a modest attempt:
1. To understand the concept of social inclusion and development
2. To examine the role of the policy of positive discrimination in the process of social inclusion and development in India.

Methodology:
This paper is an attempt to examine the role of the policies of positive discrimination in the process of social inclusion of the socially excluded marginalized groups of the society and their development. It is based on secondary data and the same have been collected from different documentary sources of data such as books, journals, research articles, etc.

Social inclusion and development:
In the policy discourse, social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights. Thus, social inclusion is both a process and a goal. A review of the limited literatures has shown that social inclusion has not been defined in its own right. In literatures conceptualizing exclusion, conceptions of inclusions are implicit and unproblematized. In fact, social inclusion is seen to be defined in relation to social exclusion. Some analysts have argued that both inclusion and exclusion are inseparable side of the same coin. However, some comment that academic debate on social exclusion has been relatively silent on its assumed corollary.

However, social inclusion is a significant factor in development and requires policies that recognize the importance of societal levels of analysis, not simply economic or individual indicators. Social inclusion, also referred to as social integration or social cohesion, represents a vision for a "society for all" in which every individual has rights,

responsibilities and an active role to play. This is highly relevant for development work because it demands that research and policy reflect context-specific societal dimensions, as well as analysis of both individual and social factors.

The concept of social inclusion was popularized through discussions at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995. But since then, according to Cook, research to define, measure and enhance social inclusion has suffered from two key shortcomings: first, the continued marginalization of social as compared with economic dimensions; and second, a focus on individual as compared with societal dimensions (Al-Adhami, 2011).

Paid work and full employment are central to the realization of social inclusion, but these alone are not sufficient for the creation of an inclusive society, Cook explained. Overcoming social exclusion requires more than attention to economic exclusion. Despite the popularity of the social inclusion framework, the vast majority of research since the 1995 Summit has tended to assume that social inclusion can be achieved simply through the extension of economic inclusion. Yet as Cook pointed out, exclusion "also involves limits on the capacity of individuals or social groups to participate in society due to other social factors i.e., cultural, religious, gender (Al-Adhami, 2011).

Inclusive societies are built through individual actions in tandem with institutions that encourage inclusion. The emphasis on and enthusiasm for the concept of social capital over the last decade has often failed to recognize that social capital is only a means to an end. Research needs to focus on understanding what roles institutions can play in promoting social inclusion. This requires that we go beyond the level of individual or local social capital and examine which processes and policies contribute to the creation of institutions that promote cohesive societies.

Research indicates that social policies that promote the establishment of norms of solidarity and reciprocity, as well as practices based on universal rights-based entitlements, are more likely to lead to long-lasting social inclusion. These approaches promote the kind of integration and inclusion that fosters a more equitable and just society. The development of such policies must be conducted locally: countries need the capacity to analyse their own histories and problems and develop their own solutions. This requires strong social science capabilities at local and national levels but as the UNESCO World Social Science report highlights, there remain considerable inequalities. This must be addressed moving forward and is vital to the realization of the vision of social inclusion.

The policy of positive discrimination:

As stated earlier positive discrimination is the policy of granting special privileges to the downtrodden and the underprivileged sections of society. These are affirmative action programs, most visible in both the United States and India, where there has been a history of racial and caste discrimination. In India the need to discriminate positively in favour of the socially underprivileged was felt for the first time during the nationalist movement. It was Mahatma Gandhi, who realized the importance of the subject and to invoke the conscience of the upper castes to this age-old social malady of relegating whole communities to the degrading position of 'untouchables'.

Our society has always been full of inequalities. It was a caste ridden, stratified hierarchical society, and a particular segment of the society had been denied the bare human rights. Their education, wages, living conditions, social status was dictated by the whims of upper strata of society, reducing them to destitution. The economic backwardness brought social awkwardness which consequently made them downtrodden and thus depriving them even of the dignity of life. In a society compartmentalized on caste basis, upper castes controlled the levers of power enabling them to run their whips, prejudicial to the interests of lower segments of the society. Lower castes had to serve the upper castes without having any

say and grievance redressal mechanism. This inhumane and barbaric condition perpetuated for centuries, till "we the people" realized the malady impelling the framers of our constitution to think.

The aim of positive discrimination is to provide equality to all communities and to bring the historically discriminated communities into the main stream of education employment and political participation. This is basically formulated from a social justice perspective. The affirmative action clearly differentiates those communities with historical debilities and not those communities with contemporary debilities. The former group, constitutionally categorized as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), experienced several social, ritual and psychological discriminations by the rest of societies and excluded from the main stream of the society. This kind of discrimination had definite impact on the psyche of these communities in particular and the nation's development in general. This phenomenon is made a part of the social structure, the values of which are determined by the dominant communities practicing such discriminations.

Positive discrimination, as a measure of social inclusion, aims to achieve equality of outcome or results. This has made left-wing parties, with a more egalitarian ideology, more comfortable with this strategy. Most advocates admit that these strategies are not procedurally 'fair' for individual applicants. Some groups are thereby ruled into the recruitment process, while others are automatically ruled out, by virtue of certain ascriptive characteristics such as gender, race, ethno-nationalism, region, language, or religion. The process discriminates positively in favor of certain individuals on the basis of characteristics seen as common to their group. Nevertheless, proponents argue that underrepresented political minorities need positive discrimination; at least as a temporary stopgap measure, to overcome the historical disadvantages they face in winning elected office.

The Constitution of independent India made provisions for positive discrimination in favour of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs & STs) which constituted about 23% of the divided India's population. Besides reserving parliamentary seats for them they were given advantages in terms of admission to schools and colleges, jobs in the public sector, various pecuniary benefits for their overall development, and so on. The constitution indeed guaranteed the fundamental right of equality of all citizens before the law but it also categorically lay down that nothing in the constitution "shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Schedules Castes and the Scheduled Tribes". Thus, the policy of positive discrimination can be considered as a measure of social inclusion of the underprivileged groups in India.

Positive discrimination, social inclusion and development in India:
This paper looks at the positive discrimination programme as a measure of social inclusion that emerged in India, starting in the early decades of the 20th century, and was subsequently given a constitutional basis in 1950. In this context we can identify three significant aspects of India's positive discrimination policy i. e. (a) positive discrimination in India predates affirmative action in the United States by several decades: claims for 'reservations' or quotas in education and employment, (b) There is an important difference between the American policy of preferential treatment and the Indian policy which relies primarily on reservations through quotas and (c) Indian policies of positive discrimination are primarily located in the educational, political and administrative domains, and have not yet been legislated for the corporate sector or for civil society organizations.

As stated earlier positive discrimination measures in India can be considered as a way of social inclusion of the socially excluded sections of population who are traditionally discriminated on the basis of their caste, race, community, gender, etc. In the process of

social inclusion, the constitution of India has made some especial provisions which aimed at positive discrimination. Some of them are abolition of untouchability (article 17), promotion of educational and economic interests (article 46), preferential treatment in matters of employment in public services (article 16 and 335), reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha (article 330 and 332) and in some other non-political sectors, etc. are important.

Positive Discrimination in India is directed at members of the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs), and more recently members of the 'other backward classes' (OBCs). Scheduled Caste people are the ex-untouchables, those at the very bottom of the caste hierarchy and the Scheduled Tribes are members of 'tribal groups' spread across 16 states in concentrations varying from less than 1% to almost 95%. On the other hand, OBCs have been estimated at another roughly 36% of the total population.

In India the policy of positive discrimination has been offered through different ways. The policy of 'Reservation' and 'Quota' are the chief among them. As measures of social inclusion these policies are trying to offer special opportunities to the backward classes. In the following an attempt has been made to examine how these policies are useful in mainstreaming the socially excluded, underprivileged and backward classes of India and their socio-economic upliftment.

Reservation:
Reservation refers a set of affirmative action whereby a proportion of seats are set aside for the previously disadvantaged. Reservations in India take place in the parliament as well as state legislative assemblies, central and state civil services and other government departments and all public and private educational institutions. According to the Indian Constitution the exception lies in the minority and religious educational institutions for the socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who are perceived by the government to be inadequately represented in these services and institutions. Therefore, the term "reservations" indicates a set allocation of certain public service positions for recognized minorities. The reason for the implementation of reservation lies in the necessity to advance the needs and interests of the backward classes such as SCs, STs and OBCs who had been subjected to discrimination by the forwarded classes.

Apart from reservation in both parliament and state legislative assemblies, services under central and state and in educational institutions the constitution of India provides some other programmes for the upliftment of the backward classes such as:
a. Exemption from school fees,
b. Provision of stipends or scholarship including travel grants,
c. Provision of facilities like book grants,
d. Hostel facilities,
e. Special and pre-examination coaching and
f. Reservation in service, in some states, under the state and in educational institutions in favour of OBCs.

The key aim for providing reservations for backward classes in civil posts and the services of the Government is to provide jobs to some persons belonging to these communities and thereby increase their representation in the services; so as to facilitate their social and economic advancement and make due place for them in society. On the other hand, Article 16(4) of the Constitution specifically empowers the State to make any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which is not adequately represented in the services under the State. All these welfare schemes aimed at the economic development of the weaker sections, particularly the SCs and STs.

Quotas:

India has the most extensive quota system in the world through which government enforces preferences to the weaker sections. Of course, quotas are enforced through the system of reservations, whereby at least 40% of seats are reserved for persons from the SCs, STs and OBCs. The quota system as a "numbers game enforced by a policing system supported by industrial courts" and warns that the quota methods can prove to be counter-productive with companies resorting to filling quotas without developing skills.

Like the quota system in other constitutions, seats and jobs are reserved for persons from disadvantaged groups. This policy of special or preferential treatment of the disadvantaged sections of society is called by the name of "protective discrimination" or "protective measures", "compensatory discrimination programmes" or "reverse discrimination". These phrases however, have the same import and are not dissimilar to the concept of affirmative action as used in the South African and the US context. The difference is that whereas in the South African context affirmative action means more than just the achievement of numerical goals or targets, the Indian policy of affirmative action subscribes mainly to the policy of the reservations of jobs and the reservation of places for admissions at educational institutions.

General Programmes for Economic, Educational and Social Empowerment:

In India some general programmes for economic, educational and social empowerment of SCs and STs are introduced in the 1970s in a significant way. They include measures to increase education and human resource development; measures to increase capital and skills for self-employment; and measures to improve access to housing and basic social services. Many of them are part of anti-poverty and other government programmes, with special provisions for SCs and STs. There are special programmes dedicated to SCs and STs too. Likewise, the 1980s expansion of the PDS, the Mid-day Meal Scheme (MMS) which provides free meals for school children and other vulnerable groups, and the various Employment Guarantee Schemes (EGS's) for which India is well known. There are also anti-poverty programmes that provide subsidized credit for small scale business and for agriculture, in which subsidies are higher for SCs and STs. As much as 92% of the flagship Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) funding went to SCs and STs in the 1980s. The IRDP and related programmes fell behind in the 1990s and early 2000s, as did the various employment guarantee schemes. There are dedicated special development funds to support SCs engaged in business, agriculture and agriculture-related activities. There are funds to support SCs in Higher Secondary education and above. There are also dedicated SC housing and infrastructure funds that have been channeled into major SC housing developments in the 1980s and the 1990s.

Thus, India's positive discrimination programme ensures a minimum level of inclusiveness for disadvantaged groups and keeps discrimination issues in public view. So, there is no question of discarding affirmative action programmes in favour of socially disadvantaged groups. Rather, the need really is to make these affirmative action programmes more effective, instead of confining them to reservations alone. However, these programmes must be carried out in a way that is constitutionally acceptable.

Conclusion:

In conclusion it can be mentioned that the policy of positive discrimination has a vital role to play in social inclusion and development of the underprivileged groups of India. Positive discrimination policies have the potential to generate significant benefits – perhaps most importantly in facilitating greater integration of beneficiary communities into society's elite, which can contribute to a more vital democracy and more effective societal institutions as

well as greater equity across communities. On the other hand, positive discrimination policies also have the potential to give rise to significant costs – such as poorer performance by individuals in key positions and heightened tensions between ethnic communities. Last but not the least, though it is generally presumed that exclusion is detrimental and inclusion is for good, in practice this may not be true. Coercive inclusion in the form of child labour, women in wage labour with differential payments, putting tribal people in unskilled and unprotected labour force and as immigrant workers, etc. by market or by dominant social system may cause harm to the social web of the new entity. For similar reason, exclusion is not always bad.

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