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Politics of Inclusion of Sc/St in India- Problems and Prospects



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Abstract

The Deprived sections such as SC'S & ST'S described as untouchables have a long history of Ostracism and denunciation from social mainstream, Thus to remove the obstacles of growth of the deprived and the bondage of antiquity became one of the policy objectives for the people responsible for drafting the framework of a New India in the post-Independent Period. Social exclusion and initiative for inclusion is not a new term for most of the developing nations. Inclusive growth had been the key word for the XI & XII five year plan. Inclusion encompasses not only the elimination of socio-economic deprivation of the marginalized sections but also the assurance of civil and political rights and their access to resources ensuring greater representation & voice. Social inclusion thus requires both economic development and Pro-active state. Social inclusion demands pro-active measures on the part of the state ensuring that the constitutional endowments and the policies of states are translated into action. Meaningful participation of citizens and civil society are key for social inclusion.

Keywords: Exclusion, Sustainable Development, Ostracism & Denunciation

Introduction

The Problem- India has a vast pool of human resource. In this pool of human resource scheduled caste constitute around 16% and scheduled tribes constitute 8% of the total Indian population. This human resource of the country has been downtrodden, undeveloped and one of the most deprived sections named as 'Dalits' in Indian society. Since the time immemorial these sections were cursed to live in obscurity, being invisible in terms of their socio-economic and educational development. These were the untouchables described as 'shudras' due to the nature of work and profession they were destined to perform in socio-cultural set up. They have suffered greatly the curse of ostracism, denunciation and social-exclusion. Post-Independent India has witnessed major changes in the socio-economic status of the deprived sections through the initiatives of inclusion and affirmative state action reflected in the welfare schemes and policy initiatives of the Government. The socio-political mobilization of a democratic culture, urban migration, Occupational change, their access to education and employment are the key factors responsible for socio-economic emancipation and Status change of the St /Sc's. The process of change has been very slow and acquisition of new social Identity is still at risk. To quote Andrae Beteille - 'Whereas in the past the social condition of the scheduled castes was strongly governed by ritual opposition of purity and pollution, the calculus of democratic politics has become important today'. He further asserts-'It is not easy to form a single constant view of the present position of scheduled castes, because the regional diversity is so large and the balance between continuity and change'(2001).

The effort for affirmative action for the deprived section has been a major issue for those engaged in policy framework. The constitution contains the policy of preferential treatment in the preamble, Part III & IV of the constitution. The preamble speaks of the socio-economic political justice, liberty and equality. The demand for plural and equalitarian social structure of India towards the socio-economic and political inclusion of deprived class (Specially SC/ST) has been the policy-initiative of the governments.

The objective of the current paper is to-

1. Investigate the nature of social exclusion that the deprived sections of society, specially SC/ST has to suffer.
2. To enquire the pro-active measures of state for these section and their effect on eliminating the discrimination that causes social exclusion.

3. To observe the problems that the state has to face in its inclusive policy.

The data has been collected from secondary sources, Reports, NCRB Reports and internet for the purpose of the research paper. The research is based on following propositions-

1. In India exclusion is reflected in lower level of employment, occupation and mobility of SC's /ST's.
2. Excluded groups are less likely to participate in political process.
3. Historically Sc's & St's are the most oppressed groups in Indian society and continue to suffer from discrimination and exclusion even in contemporary times. They constituted 16.2% and 8% of the country's entire population but have lower access to opportunities.
4. The Sc's and St's experience resistance, violence and even atrocities in their attempt to secure human rights and lawful entitlements-

Description and interpretation of Data

To quote Pt. Nehru- "In India we must aim at equality. That does not mean and cannot mean that everybody is physically or intellectually or spiritually equal or can be made so. But it does mean equal opportunities for all, and no political, economic or social barrier.....It means a faith in humanity and a belief that there is no race or group that cannot advance and make goods in its own way, given the chance to do so. It means a realization of the fact that the backwardness or degradation of any group is not due to inherent failings in it, but principally to lack of opportunities and long suppression by other groups.(Jawaharlal Nehru, *The discovery of India-1946*)

The nature of social exclusion in India has been embedded in Its Social Structures in which the **shudras** were at the lowest ladder of social hierarchy and were destined to perform the manual work of the most demeaning & stigmatized in nature. They were untouchables and scavengers. Social exclusion in Indian context is applied for the groups who had faced discrimination in the social set up on the basis of caste and the work they were destined to play in social structure having lower access to health, education, opportunities and assets. They are more likely to be poor and this likelihood is passed down through generation reflected in their level of employment, literacy, occupation and lower level of participation in political process. Globally excluded groups tend to be ethnic or religious minorities that by virtue of their distinct considered practices are considered the other. This consideration has passed down through ages and the long deprivation and disdain was the result. Historically, the Sc's and St's are the most oppressed groups in Indian society and continue to suffer from discrimination and exclusion even in contemporary times. They constituted 16.2% of the country's entire population in 2001. More than 1/2 of the Scheduled Caste population is concentrated in five states.

The term social exclusion was first used by France in the 1970's to distinguish the excluded, who then comprised a wide variety of people, the disabled and elderly persons and abused children among others (Silver 1994). Globally excluded groups tend to be ethnic or religious minorities that by virtue of their distinct cultural practices are considered others. Social

exclusion is the inability of an individual to participate in the basic political, economic and social functioning of society upon others. Social exclusion is the denial of equal access to opportunities imposed by certain groups of society upon others. (Buvinic, 2005)

Social exclusion has its root on historical divisions along lines of caste, tribe and the excluded sex, that is woman. These inequalities are structural in nature and have kept entire groups trapped, unable to take advantage of opportunities that economic growth offers. Culturally rooted systems perpetuate inequality and rather than a **culture of poverty*** that afflicts disadvantaged groups, it is, in fact these inequality traps that prevent these groups from stepping out (2013). Social ostracism is probably the appropriate word to describe these sections. The strategy for inclusive growth should not be just a conventional strategy for growth to which some elements aimed at inclusion have been added. On the contrary it should be a strategy which aims at a particular type of growth process, which will meet the objectives of inclusiveness and sustainability (Saxena 2013).

How Inclusion?-

The inequality traps caused by the culture and the structure of caste system has adverse impact on the disadvantaged section and they remain isolated from the policies of inclusion. The mechanism involved in

**The term Culture of Poverty was coined by anthropologist Oscar Lewis to refer to unique value system of the poor. It was his belief that the poor are socialized into believing they deserve to be poor, leading to low aspirations, low efforts and inability to escape poverty.*

sustaining the cultural factors becomes visible in culturally shaped behavior including preferences that limits the prospects of poorer or subordinate groups. The structure of caste system, its invisible consequences and effect on employment, education and the rules of social and economic exchange cut the opportunities of inclusion for these sections. Inclusion policies are more than new programs or new institutions to redress past injustices; they imply fundamental changes in the way decisions are made, resources are allocated and policies are implemented in democratic societies (2013). Exclusion involves unequal access to full exercise and protection of rights and liberties including sometimes the basic human rights. The SC'S and ST's have been among those groups who have suffered a lot in the mechanized and traditional social structure even after the affirmative state action and implementation of inclusive policies for the underprivileged. The underdevelopment, inequality, poverty and potential inter-group conflict are the concern of social exclusion even today.

The Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes are the two distinct categories; whereas, the Scheduled castes were subject to historical and ritualistic discrimination; *Scheduled tribes** were the groups who were excluded from the National context because of their physical isolation, and inhabitant. Their access to health, education and development paradigms is very poor even today. Unlike Sc's who have been effective in claiming some form of political representation including nationally known political parties; the tribal groups exercise little voice over their own development. These

sections have suffered socio- Economic and political exclusion having transferred through generations due to the work and the place they have been assigned in the society. De Haan (1997), states 'Globally excluded groups tend to be ethnic or religious minorities that, by virtue of their distinct cultural practices, are considered the **'other'**. Social exclusion as a concept perceives the individual as an entity embedded in society and groups. The focus is thus not on outcomes such as increased consumption or income alone but on relations that constrain individuals from achieving these outcomes'. The initiative should therefore be for the removal of the constraints or wiping out the feeling of 'otherness'; thus an affirmative action is needed to get the deprived sections an identity of their own as a member of the civil society.

Nobel laureate Amartya sen (1998) calls these 'the relational roots of deprivation, whereby membership in a particular group (women, lower castes, indigenous people or persons with disabilities) limits the functioning of individuals to acquire or use their capabilities'. The affirmative action policies to remove the poverty and social vulnerability is one of the initiatives for removing the economic constraints and exclusion, and their inclusion in the process of development ensuring the dignity of an Individual in a social group. Social exclusion is thus associated more to the processes that lead to the outcomes and not about the outcomes alone. Inclusion should not only be Eradication of poverty or the distribution of resources but equal access to the means essential for individual well being. Inclusion is not just about changing outcomes but crucially about changing the processes that produce and reproduce exclusionary outcomes.

The three characteristics of social exclusion as perceived by Hann (1997) & Sen (2000) are-

That it affects culturally defined groups. That it is embedded in social interrelations (the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in society in which they live) and that it's outcome is deprivation, low income and high degree of poverty of excluded groups.

Culturally rooted systems perpetuate inequality and thus retard the policy of inclusion as well as the affirmative action of state. Social exclusion is reflected in myriad forms such as-

1. Poor access to income earning assets.
2. Poor Access to higher quality productive employment
3. Poor Access to legal remedies
4. Poor Access to secure human rights and lawful entitlements
5. Poor Access to education, health
6. Poor Access to resources representation and political process
7. Poor Access to their identity as an individual entity.

**533 tribes are scheduled in the Indian*

Constitution

Affirmative Action Policies-

The state response to social exclusion has been revealed in the affirmative and positive actions policies of inclusion. These policies have been translated into laws, programs and procedures, from very beginning of Indian independence. Inclusive growth does not meant having some social protection for the

people having faced exclusion in the term of the level of their access to income earning assets (land and capital gainful employment adequate access to social needs like civil amenities, education, health, and even more their identity as autonomous entity. Inclusion policies are more than new programs, new institutions to redress past injustices against the deprived sections. They imply fundamental changes in the way decisions are made, resource are allocated and policies are implemented in democratic societies. The affirmative action of the state needed to check the institutionalization of deprivation and discrimination through caste, class, gender, religious and ethnic status. Initiative towards productive inclusion in terms of generating productive or quality employment is the need of the hour for the sections who have suffered the exclusion in socio-economic set up. Availing productive employment is central to the sustainable growth and developments for those who have lagged behind during the seven decades of independence. Strengthening democratic values with the 73rd and 74th amendment act have successfully in accelerating the institutional effort of the socio-economic and political linkage of these groups. The assertion of deprived sections is reflected not only in politics but also in their increased mobility in job sections and in education as well. The process of social-engineering has been successful in diminishing the inter-caste conflicts and they have proved their potential to be recognized as a social group.

Affirmative action policies in India is assured by providing the marginalized section (specially Sc's and St's) different types of safeguards-

1. Preventive safeguards
2. Protective safeguards
3. Productive safeguards

The preamble of the constitution ensures socio-economic political justice. The demand of plural and equalitarian social structure of India has been towards socio-economic political inclusion of the deprived sections. The preferential treatment was reflected as the very basic concept in the preamble. The preamble speaks of the socio-economic, political justice, liberty and equality, with an assurance of dignity of individuals. Part 3rd of the constitution mentions for the provision of special treatment supported by the directive to the state mentioned in part 4th of the constitution.

The constitution of India provides safeguards to the marginalized sections in the form of constitutional endowments vested in part III and IV and other important sections of the constitution. Articles 14, 15(4), 16, 16(4) provide provisions for affirmative action by the state to compensate the factual equalities needed for the inclusion of the deprived. Article 15(4) points to states' basic commitment in favour of socially and educationally deprived sections. Article 15 mentions freedom of the state to make any provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The reservation is extended in matters of employment, promotion as well as reservation of seats in the representative institutions (Central, State & local bodies)*.

At the initial stage of policy framework the reservation for the Sc/St's on the grounds that they have suffered extreme discrimination and exclusion and that

access to power would facilitate their social advancement. 'Social backwardness was the most legitimate ground for reservation and was considered as effective means for inclusion of the social untouchables and the socially excluded. The logic of preferential treatment was based on the commitment to social equality and the need to deal with the exclusion of lower castes identified as deprived. The constitution did not provide for reservation for the Sc's and St's because they were poor and economically disadvantaged it did so because they faced explicit, structured and systematic exclusion from public life for centuries on the ground of the descent'. (Zoya Hasan-2005)

Several commissions have been constituted to redress the grievances of the St/St's and monitor the implementation of the welfare programs. DOPT (Department of Personal and training), Committee of parliament on Welfare of ST/St, Ministry of Social justice and Empowerment, Ministry of tribal affairs and National commission for Sc/St** are the Regulatory administrative mechanism for the implementation of welfare programs.

1. *Article 330 provides for the reservation of seats for Sc/St in The House of People (except the Sts' in the autonomous Districts of Assam). Article 332 provides for the reservation of Seats for these sections in the legislative assemblies (except the scheduled tribes in the tribal areas of Assam, Nagaland and Meghalaya).*
2. *Article 338 provides for a National Commission for Sc/St's'. Article 339 mentions provision for the control of the union over the administration of scheduled areas and welfare of scheduled tribes.*

Protective safeguards intend to ensure legal entitlements giving protection against atrocities-

1. Protection of civil rights act -1955
2. SC/St (prevention of atrocities act- 1989)
3. Wages and labour act.

Productive safeguards are provided through the policies of creating opportunities of empowerment, ensuring employability of the unemployed people. MNREGA and self employment schemes launched by the Government intend to ensure the empowerment of Sc/St's'. Reservations in employment, education, legislatures giving space for Sc's/St's in executive and legislature process. Reservation policy in the government sector and the general development and empowerment measures in the private sector have contributed to an improvement in the human development of SC/St.

Affirmative action policies addressing social exclusion have helped these sections to overcome the past injustices to a greater extent specially, in terms of structural discrimination which has been the potent cause of their disadvantage. The policy of inclusion has witnessed considerable progress. Much improvement has taken place in the economic position of Dalits, though large disparities remain with other sections of society. Capitalist development together with competitive politics has weakened the caste system though it has created inequality among Dalits themselves (Sudha Pai 2013). The national sample survey in it's report 1999-2000 report show that in 2000 only about 29.9% of the rural population of the sc's had acquired some access to fixed capital assets like

agricultural land and non-land capital assets through 75% of the sc's were in the category of landless agricultural labour (Sudha Pai- 2013). The Inclusive provisions and Affirmative action policies have been helpful in Empowerment of the disadvantaged communities; but the structural inequalities of high degree based on the institutions of caste, ethnicity and the causes of their sufferings, isolation & social ostracism still persists. The fundamental features of the caste system namely fixed social and economic rights for each caste by birth has been changing and the state's effort of equity and social inclusion by ensuring reservation of seats in the cases of public employment and other safeguards assigned to weaker section has changed the scenario; still the substantial level of marginalization and exclusion exists. The effort to create a more egalitarian and inclusive democracy has resulted in substantial level of marginalization and inclusion.

Several studies have revealed that the deprived sections such as Sc/St's' are under heavy weight pressure of different type of isolation and segregation visible in a psychological conflict of protected discrimination between 'Reserved Vs Non-Reserved'. They are treated as a separate group in the organizations they are employed or the institutions they are enrolled. They face the structured and attitudinal discrimination in the public-sphere and it is visible in the higher dropout rate, low expectation of performance in educational institutions, the quality of jobs they are mostly placed in. Manica vicziany (2005) refers to college educated Dalits as the 'breakthrough generation'. Ravindar kaur's observation (2004) of the functioning reservation in the IIT's indicates 'that a lack of openness and concerted support to these students continues to be the basis of their segregation, low self-esteem and poor academic performance'. Disparities in higher level employment of Sc's & St's still exist. According to second round NFHS (1990) National family health survey 68% of Sc's and 75% of St's are agricultural and manual laborers (Despandey 2011).

In 1989, the total percentage of Sc/St including OBC in Indian population was 68.85% but their share in higher services was 8%. At the same time 5.2% population of Brahmins had owned 70.2% of jobs. 22.60% Population of ST/St represented 5.68% of class first jobs, whereas 25.34% Population of upper class represented 89.63% job share in class first services as per Mandal Commission's report; though the scenario has changed since then. The report of national commission for enterprises in the unorganized sectors indicates the extent of marginalization of weaker sections in the Indian economy. Informal workers who have no employment work or social security now constitute 92% of the total workforce and discrimination is reinforced by one's social identity, rural location and low or no education (Pai Sudha. 2013).

Poverty has declined among all the groups but the economic status of Sc/St's still needs improvement. Most of the population living below poverty line are reported to be Sc/St. Their access to higher education (specially technical or skill based) & resources is still very critical. Despite a sharp decline in poverty rates St's in 2004-05 were 20 years behind the National average.

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% of Population Below Poverty Line in 2004-05

Sr.No.	Social groups	Rural	Urban	Total
1.	Scheduled Castes	44.7	34.3	43.8
2.	Scheduled tribes	37.1	40.9	37.9
3.	Others	22.7	22.7	22.7
4.	All	28.1	25.8	27.5

Source- poverty and social exclusion in India (world bank) report 2011, oxford university press- 2013

There has been slow progress in poverty reduction of SC/ST'S and St's are the poorer group in 2004-05. The depth and severity of poverty have declined more slowly among Sc's/St's in comparison to other social groups.

Trends in Depth & Severity of Poverty 2004-05

Sections	Depth of Poverty			Section	Severity of Poverty		
	Rural	Urban	Total		Rural	Urban	Total
ST	10.7	10.9	10.7	ST	3.7	4.7	3.8
SC	7.5	10.4	8.1	SC	2.2	3.8	2.5
Others	4.1	5.2	4.4	Others	1.1	1.8	1.3
ALL	5.5	6.2	5.7	ALL	1.6	2.2	1.8

There has been improvement and expansion of education, employment and development of other types; but the Dalits in most parts do not hold land of their own and have been workers. According to NSS Data 2004-05, over 41% of Dalit Men And 20% Of Dalit woman were casual labor compared with 19% of non-SC/ST men and 8% of Non-Sc/St woman. The Dalits lag behind in terms of public sector and self employment. Dalit men are engaged in menial, low paying and often socially stigmatized occupations in comparison to upper class who have been concentrated in higher occupations.

The Welfare Indicators in India is Not Satisfactory As Regards Sc/St-

	Sc	ST	NON-SC/ST
Poverty, Rural (%)	36	46	21
Poverty, Urban(%)	38	35	22
Child mortality (per 1000)	39	46	22
Assets Per Hosehold (000)	49	53	135
Percentage of wagelabour,rural	61	49	25
Literacy, Rural (%)	51	45	63
Literacy Urban (%)	68	69	82

Source- National Sample Survey Organisation, Delhi: Commission for Sc/St, Delhi (thorat) www.odi.org.uk/inter-regional_inequality

The concentration of Dalits in casual work or in low paid employment compared with the upper castes either by compulsion or by choice is a question mark about policy of inclusion of Sc/St population. The % of Dalits in government is no very enthusiastic-

The % of Representation of SC's in Government Jobs 2006

Group	% of Representation of SC's
A	13.0
B	14.5
C	16.4
D(Excluding Sweepers)	18.3
Sweepers	59.4

Source- Calculated form Data of Ministry of Personnel,Public Grievances and Pensions (quoted form World Bank Report 2011 P.20)

In general after the implementation of the reservation policy while Sc's were represented proportionately to their population overall at each employment level within central Government Services, they were vastly overrepresented (about 60% as sweepers) in the least skilled employment at the lowest level indicating that Sc's are more likely to undertake unclean manual work. The total enrolment ratio of these sections has increased in Urban areas specially in traditional courses in Government aided institutions, where they have access to the concessions like scholarships, freeships & accommodation facility. Their representation in Management & other technical skill based courses is poor in comparison to upper class students.

Das & Dutta (2008) proposed the notion of glass walls, whereby occupationally slotted castes can not leave their traditional trades or jobs. Micro- level studies, for instance, point to the possibility that small scale Dalit entrepreneurs specially in rural areas, are being prevented from moving out of caste based occupations into self-employed ventures through social pressures and social ostracism. State has responded well to improve the socio- economic inclusion of the weaker sections specially St/Sc by introducing some development schemes at the rural and urban level to ensure employability of these sections. Policy of reservation in government jobs has benefitted much but, it has created a new type feeling of segregation in the sections having privilege of reservation. Several studies of schools and treatment of Dalit children have observed the ways in which discrimination accounts for the higher dropout rates among such children (Subramanian 2003). Most upper caste students are insouciant about the disadvantages and differences of Dalit students and form opinions about them on the basis of competition, resentment and apathy towards them. A few studies on the impact of reservation in higher institutions have indicated the experience of stigma, social divide and even segregation account for the poor academic performance of most scheduled community students who also come from socio-economically disadvantaged family (Kirpal & Gupta 1999). Weisskopf (2004) states that- The failure to address the localized, institutional context of reservations, the continued hostility of others to the policy, and the association of it with decline in standards, have led to making the policy itself less effective than it could have been. Inclusive growth does mean having some social protection programs or giving freebies to certain sections of population. There should be productive inclusion in terms of generating productive or quality employment.

To Conclude-

The problem of social inclusion in India is not as serious as in other Developing Nations grappling with the challenges of Exclusion; though it is a formidable one. In India unparalleled affirmative action policy has been made, translated into laws, programs and procedures. At the level of implementation of the policies to promote inclusion, positive efforts are required. The implementation of policies and the reform of Institutions are the key to ensuring the equity, social justice & inclusion. To quote Marquez (2007)-'Inclusion is not just about changing outcomes, but crucially about

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changing the process that produce and reproduce exclusionary outcomes. Productive inclusion is center to sustainable growth and development. Strengthening Democratic values have strengthened the Non-elite assertion and it is reflected in their increased mobility in all the sectors including jobs, education & politics. It has helped them to establish their identity as a distinct social group. Panchayati Raj has begun to change the grammar of politics. The empowerment of historically disadvantaged groups like women, Sc/St has gone a long way to deepen democracy. The structural inequality is losing its significance giving way to productive inclusion of the deprived.

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