PARTICIPATIVE AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY: A SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT:

This paper is an effort to evaluate how social inclusion is gaining importance and how increased social participation by the members is benefitting the society. In recent years social inclusion has evolved as an ideal for policy development and community practice in India. Despite its increased importance, it has remained a peripheral evocation, primarily championed by non-governmental organizations and community service agencies rather than a core directive.

This paper shows what are the various measures that can be taken to increase participation of all sections of society and what are the steps taken in order to include all sections of the society. This is the one of the fundamental objectives of social development. It also highlights the role of the social workers in creating an actively participative and an inclusive society. Other Goals of social development such as achieving universal education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, and improving maternal health cannot be met unless there is social inclusion. Unless we pay closer attention to the issue of social inclusion/exclusion, some segments of the population will continue to be excluded from the progress made so far.

Key Words: Social inclusion, Social participation, Community Development, Policy Development.

INTRODUCTION

Social inclusion

Social inclusion is understood as a process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background, so that they can achieve their full potential in life. It is a multi-dimensional process aimed at creating conditions which enable full and active participation of every member of the society in all aspects of life, including civic, social, economic, and political activities, as well as participation in decision-making processes. Social inclusion is understood as the process by which societies combat poverty and social exclusion as well.

A participative society

Active participation is an empowering and enabling process through which people participate in the processes and decision-making that affects their lives.

Elements necessary for creating an inclusive and a highly participative society

The goal of social integration is to establish a more inclusive and participatory society in which each person has rights and obligations and may play an active role. It is a society in which all people are able and motivated to participate in civic, social, economic, and political activities, regardless of their backgrounds. To achieve this, legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks must be inclusive, and just and inclusive processes must be upheld and promoted in all areas of implementation, ensuring equal access to basic education, public space, facilities, and information, as well as respecting and accommodating diversity and cultural pluralism.

Some of the essential aspects that contribute to a participatory and inclusive society are listed below:

➢ Respect for all human rights, freedoms, and the rule of law, at both the national and international levels, is a prerequisite. Every member of society must be treated equally under the law, regardless of his or her economic means, political stature, or social standing. Legal tools establish the concepts that will assure equity, justice, and opportunity for all citizens. Human rights violators should be brought to justice. To give weight to the viewpoints of individuals who defend the society's inclusiveness at the local, regional, and national levels, the court that works to maintain just societies must be impartial, accountable, and inclusive. Maintaining the safety of all persons and their living environments is critical to fostering a sense of belonging and engagement in society.

➢ It is vital that all members of society are able and motivated to participate in civic, social, economic, and political activities at both the local and national levels in order to develop and preserve inclusive societies. A society in which the majority, if not all, people believe they are contributing, have access to their fundamental needs/livelihoods, and are given the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives will best support inclusivity principles.

➢ A vibrant civil society is necessary for active involvement and accountability of governmental policies and institutions. It promotes respect for all people's rights, dignity, and privileges while presuming that they perform their societal responsibilities. People must be able to communicate a variety of viewpoints and come up with uncommon, distinctive ideas. Members of society must have the confidence to engage and interact with one another, establishing mutual trust while respecting their diversity.

➢ Universal access to public infrastructure and facilities is required to facilitate all-inclusive engagement (such as community centers, recreational facilities, public libraries, resource centres with internet facilities, well maintained public schools, clinics, water supplies and sanitations). These are the fundamental services that, when partially or fully implemented, will provide people with a sense of belonging by preventing them from enduring the painful consequences of being unable to afford them.

➢ As long as both the privileged and the underprivileged have equal access to and benefit from these public facilities and services, they will all feel less burdened by their socioeconomic status inequalities, reducing feelings of alienation and resentment. It is crucial to highlight, however, that access alone does not guarantee usage of public amenities, as uneven relationships within communities and households may prevent vulnerable groups from using facilities. As a result, addressing unequal power relations is a vital step towards increasing participation.

➢ Equal access to public information is critical to the development of an inclusive society because it allows well-informed citizens to participate in society. Information about society, such as what a community owns, generates, or benefits from, should be made publicly available. Collective engagement in the development, implementation, and assessment of community activities should be sought through accepted representations of all classes and backgrounds. Doubts and suspicions about the community's actions will be eliminated by publication/information sharing and increased accessibility to the community's activities, which could otherwise lead to a sense of exclusion. The mass media may be a powerful tool for educating and enlightening society's members.

➢ Another important aspect of inclusive communities is equity in the distribution of wealth and resources. How resources are allocated and used will have a considerable impact on a society's orientation, whether it is toward a more integrated, inclusive society or one that is exclusive, polarized, and disintegrating. As a result, socioeconomic policy should be focused on achieving equitable distribution and equal opportunity. In all areas/sectors, including public health, inclusive policies, instructions, and programmes that are sensitive to and cater to the less advantaged and vulnerable must be put in place and efficiently executed. Strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are required to demonstrate whether inclusion was achieved and to identify areas for improvement.

➢ Tolerance and acceptance of cultural variety is another facet of inclusive communities. This encompasses societies that value and celebrate a wide range of identity expressions. By celebrating variety, cultures are able to recognize and affirm differences between and among members of society, allowing them to move away from labeling, categorizing, and classifying people and toward policies that are more inclusive.

Enabling a diversity of viewpoints also provides the necessary checks and balances for society's progress, while allowing the greatest number of various viewpoints to enter each debate. Improvement.

➢ Education is important in this field because it allows students to learn about the history and culture of their own and other societies, which fosters understanding and appreciation of other societies, cultures, and religions. Education provides the opportunity to impart ideals of respect and acceptance of variety, particularly in young people. At the same time, education has the potential to empower individuals who have been marginalized or excluded from discussions and decision-making. Learning about historical processes and changes helps people comprehend how socially inclusive or exclusionary policies have influenced their values, choices, and judgments, which in turn influence the values, choices, and judgments of individuals, particularly those in decision-making positions.

➢ Effective leadership is critical to the development of a society that is inclusive. A disconnect between the people and their leaders may develop if leadership is not representative of the society. The most common strategy to address this crucial feature at the local level is to undertake open dialogues with members of the public regarding municipal issues such as the budget and to improve the free and timely flow of information to citizens and other stakeholders. At all levels of government, public participation in decision-making and policy formation processes could be sought. At the same time, all decision-makers and stakeholders must make an effort to ensure transparency and accountability.

➢ Positive narratives of a future inclusive society must be created, and each member of society must be able to share, comprehend, and contribute to such narratives. Future-oriented narratives can operate as a magnet, pulling society toward its desired future. A society in decline is one that has no vision for the future. Societies that retain a shared vision supported by the community and allow broad-based stakeholder participation in the formation of that vision will be more inclusive because every member will be working synergistically toward a common goal.

CONCLUSION:

Local government planners and policymakers have a clear responsibility to develop unity among varied communities and create a vision for a common future based on acceptance of difference and societal vitality with the goal of leveraging the inherent assets of diverse cultures. It is critical that all members of society participate. While emphasizing the necessity of equality and equal access for all citizens, as well as their participation in choices that affect them, there must also be a procedure in place that attempts to foster diversity and the participation of 'groups of difference' in the governance process. It is obvious that successful engagement with all prospective stakeholders is required. Everyone should be encouraged to participate, and collaboration should be made easier. Not simply identifying and involving all key actors is the actual problem for municipal government. However, there is a need to encourage genuine participation in the process among possibly hesitant stakeholders.

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