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Social Inclusion in the Vision of Viksit Bharat - 2047: Conceptual Foundations and Policy Perspectives

Rudi. Durga Rao, Research Scholar, Adult and Continuing Education, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati
Prof. R.B. Sathyavathi, Adult and Continuing Education, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati
Vemala. Kiran, Adult and Continuing Education, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

Abstract

The vision of Viksit Bharat-2047 that is focal in India focuses on inclusive and equitable development as one of the pillars to stable national development. In spite of significant improvement in economy and technology, there are still ingrained social inequalities that have been marginalizing huge parts of the population such as the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, and persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and other vulnerable populations. In this paper, the principle underpinning the conceptualization of social inclusion, as well as the policy views of it within the context of Viksit Bharat -2047 are critically analysed. The study is based on qualitative and policy-focused approach in which major policies and development programs on education, health, livelihoods, social security, and digital governance in the country are reviewed. The discussion identifies the successes and failures in the efforts to ensure exclusion, intersectional weaknesses, and regional inequalities. The paper presents the thesis that inclusive development involves the shift in policy frameworks in place of welfare-oriented interventions to rights-based, participatory and empowerment-based development models. It emphasizes the need for integrated governance, community participation and evidence-based policymaking to ensure people are given equal access to resources and opportunities. The purpose of paper by suggesting the strategic pathways of enhancing social inclusion by institutional reforms, inclusive policy development, and stakeholder partnerships, and social equity is made central to the long-term development process in India.

Keywords: Social Inclusion; Viksit Bharat2047; Inclusive Development; Social Equity; Marginalized Communities; Public Policy.

Introduction

India has a vision of becoming Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by the year 2047, which is a major milestone towards the 100th anniversary of its independence. This is the long-term national vision that focuses on high economic growth, technology, global competitiveness, and efficiency in the institution. Nonetheless, development would not be relevant and sustainable without inclusivity and equity. India still faces persistent types of social exclusion due to caste, gender, region, disability, age, and socio-economic status, which limits the future growth of this country and worsens social cohesion . Social inclusion can be defined as the act of enhancing the conditions of the involvement in the society to people and groups that are disadvantaged or marginalized. The mentioned aspects include equitable access to education, health care, means of livelihood, social security, political representation, and digital devices. The historical discrimination of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), women, persons with disabilities, elderly, migrants, and most other marginalized groups in India has made it necessary to provide targeted policy interventions for inclusive developments to be ensured.

The Viksit Bharat-2047 vision acknowledges social inclusion as a national pillar that supports transformation in the country. These changes in policy which include rights-based, technology-enabled and participatory development approaches are very much reflected in the policy documents like National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Digital India Mission, Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana

and other social protection schemes. Such programs are to reduce the socio-economic gap and increase the opportunities of marginalized groups.

Although there is remarkable improvement, there are still severe gaps in the translation of the intent of inclusion policy into practice. Inequality in regional development, digital divide, inefficiency in governance, and lack of community participation are structural barriers that still hinder the attainment of inclusive growth. Furthermore, intersectional vulnerabilities, the scenario in which people have a combination of disadvantages, are complicated difficulties to the current policy frameworks. In this regard, a critical analysis of social inclusion as it is in context of Viksit Bharat -2047 is necessary. The paper will focus on the conceptual framework surrounding social inclusion, reviewing policy processes that focus on inclusive development, and finally demonstrate some of the challenges that need to be overcome in ensuring equitable development. Placing social inclusion as a fundamental development agenda, the research study can also serve as part of current policy discourse and give policy implications to enhance the inclusive governance and empowerment policies in India becoming a developed country.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to

1. To review the concept and significance of social inclusion within the developmental vision of Viksit Bharat–2047.
2. To examine major policy frameworks and initiatives addressing social inclusion, equity, and empowerment of marginalized communities in India.
3. To identify key challenges and policy gaps influencing inclusive development and to propose strategic policy recommendations for strengthening social inclusion in the Indian context.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions.

1. How is social inclusion conceptualized in the vision and policy discourse of Viksit Bharat–2047?
2. To what extent do current policy frameworks and development programmes in India address social exclusion, inequality, and marginalization?
3. What are the key challenges and structural constraints affecting the effective implementation of inclusive development policies in India?
4. What role can rights-based, participatory, and empowerment-oriented approaches to social inclusion play in achieving the goals of Viksit Bharat–2047?

Theoretical Framework: Social Inclusion in the Vision Viksit Bharat -2047

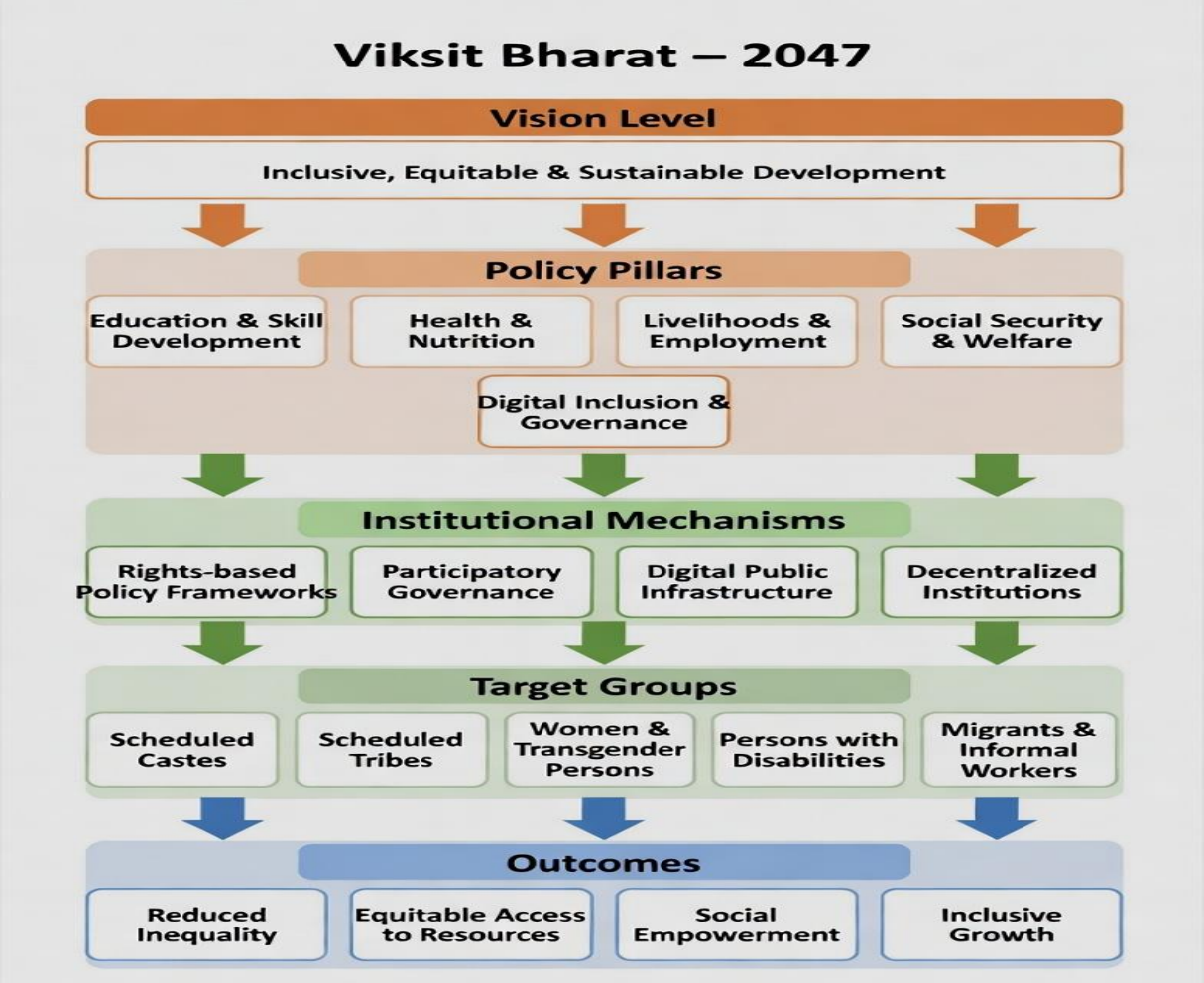
The concept of social inclusion extends beyond income growth as a development concept and focuses on the fair access to opportunities, resources and participation of the entire sections of society. Social inclusion is also a growing part of the vision of Viksit Bharat -2047 as the key to sustainable, resilient and people-centred development. The theoretical structure of the research is based upon the fact that the comprehensive progress of inclusive development needs the synthesis of economic, social, institutional, and technological aspects. The main principle of the framework is that the issues of marginalization are multi-dimensional and are influenced by caste, gender, region, disability, age, and socio-economic status. The disadvantages that are faced by groups such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), women, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, older adults, and other vulnerable groups usually overlap, leading to intersecting disadvantages.

The framework links the inputs of policies with the inclusive outputs. Policy input elements incorporate human rights laws, welfare, and social security measures, education and vocational training schemes, digital governance models, and institutional reforms for decentralization and citizen participation. One can notice this change in the area of policy from the large-scale national programs like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Digital India, Ayushman Bharat, and social security programs (Ministry of Education, 2020; NITI Aayog, 2023). The ways in which these policy interventions work are through making available education, healthcare, livelihoods, social security, digital connectivity and participatory governance. Well implemented, these mechanisms will help achieve inclusive developmental results, such as lowering inequality, increasing social mobility, empowering the marginalized community, and bolstering social cohesion.

The institutional capacity and the role of governance is also a mediating factor in the framework. Poor coordination, disparities between different territories, weak community involvement, and digital divide may act as barriers for the policy dogma of inclusiveness of the results. Therefore, inclusive development of Viksit Bharat2047 should be the outcome of fairly planned policies in conjunction with accountable institutions, participation of the community, and monitoring systems based on empirical evidence. In general, this theoretical framework makes social inclusion both a measure and an end of development. It highlights the

point that the dream of India to become a developed country in 2047 cannot be achieved without attentiveness to equity, justice, and empowerment of the marginalized communities.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Social Inclusion in the Vision of Viksit Bharat–2047



Source: Author's conceptualization based on reading of policy documents and development frameworks related to Viksit Bharat-2047.

Explanation of Figure-1

In Figure 1, it is possible to find a conceptual framework that describes the way social inclusion is placed at the centre of the vision of Viksit Bharat-2047 in India. On the vision level, the overall national objective is inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. This vision is being implemented based on five policy pillars that interrelate with each other, including education and skill development, health and nutrition, livelihoods and employment, social security and welfare and digital inclusion and governance. The combination of these pillars covers various aspects of deprivation and capacity building.

The framework emphasizes that institutional mechanisms are important mediators between the policy purpose and results. Participatory governance, rights-based policy frameworks, digital public infrastructure and decentralized institutions are a guarantee to the effective implementation, accountability and last-mile delivery of services. These processes make policies reach out to a wide range of target populations including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women and transgender persons, persons with disabilities, and migrants and informal workers, which have overlapping and intersectional vulnerabilities. The final layer of the framework shows the desired results of inclusive development which include the lessening of inequality, equal access to resources, social empowerment and inclusive development. The figure shows clearly that Viksit Bharat 2047 should be achieved through a composite strategy whereby economic development is supported by institutional fortification, social justice, and empowerment of the marginalized groups. Social inclusion is therefore not only provided as a welfare goal, but also as a tool and goal of sustainable national development.

Policy Analysis: Viksit Bharat 2047 Social Inclusion

The Viksit Bharat -2047 vision points out that economic growth is not sufficient to guarantee the development of a nation without social inclusion, equity and empowerment of the marginalized groups. India has launched a number of policy frameworks and flagship programs in the last 10 years to counter historical disparity of the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled tribes (STs), women, individuals with disabilities, migrant workers and other vulnerable groups. The changes in the policy priorities to the inclusive development are demonstrated by key national policies like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Ayushman Bharat,

Digital India Mission, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, National Social Assistance Programme, and Skill India Mission. From a policy perspective, social inclusion under Viksit Bharat–2047 operates through three broad dimensions.

- **Access-based inclusion** (education, health, digital services),
- **Economic inclusion** (livelihoods, employment, financial security), and.
- **Institutional inclusion** (participation, rights-based governance, decentralization).

Although there has been a significant improvement, the implementation of the policies has been found to be unequal between regions and social groups. Despite the efficiency in service delivery brought about by digital governance and the use of the direct benefit transfer (DBT) mechanisms, there are weaknesses in the last-mile connectivity, digital literacy, and institutional capacity especially in rural, tribal, and backward areas (World Bank, 2022). In addition, most of the schemes remain in silos thus they cannot have any cumulative effects on the social empowerment in the long run.

Table-1 Maintaining Viksit Bharat-2047: Major Policy Initiatives on Social Inclusion

Policy / Programme	Focus Area	Target Groups	Contribution to Social Inclusion	Key Challenges
National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Educating and skills	SCs, STs, women, rural youth	Enhances access, equity, lifelong learning	Digital divide, regional differences
Ayushman Bharat	Health and Social Protection	Poor families, needy groups, targeted, all households	Universal health services, and less out of pocket, all households	Infrastructure disparities in rural regions
Digital India Mission	Digital Inclusion	Citizens, marginalized groups	E-governance, DBT, digital access, digital literacy	Connectivity issues
PM Jan Dhan Yojana	Financial Inclusion	Low-income households	Banking and credit accessibility	Dormant account, financial awareness
Skill India Mission	Livelihoods and Employment	Youth and informal workers	Employability and skills improvement	Skill mismatch and low rural access

Source: The author compiled them, basing on the Government of India policy documents and Development. The reports (Ministry of Education, 2020; NITI Aayog, 2023; World Bank, 2022).

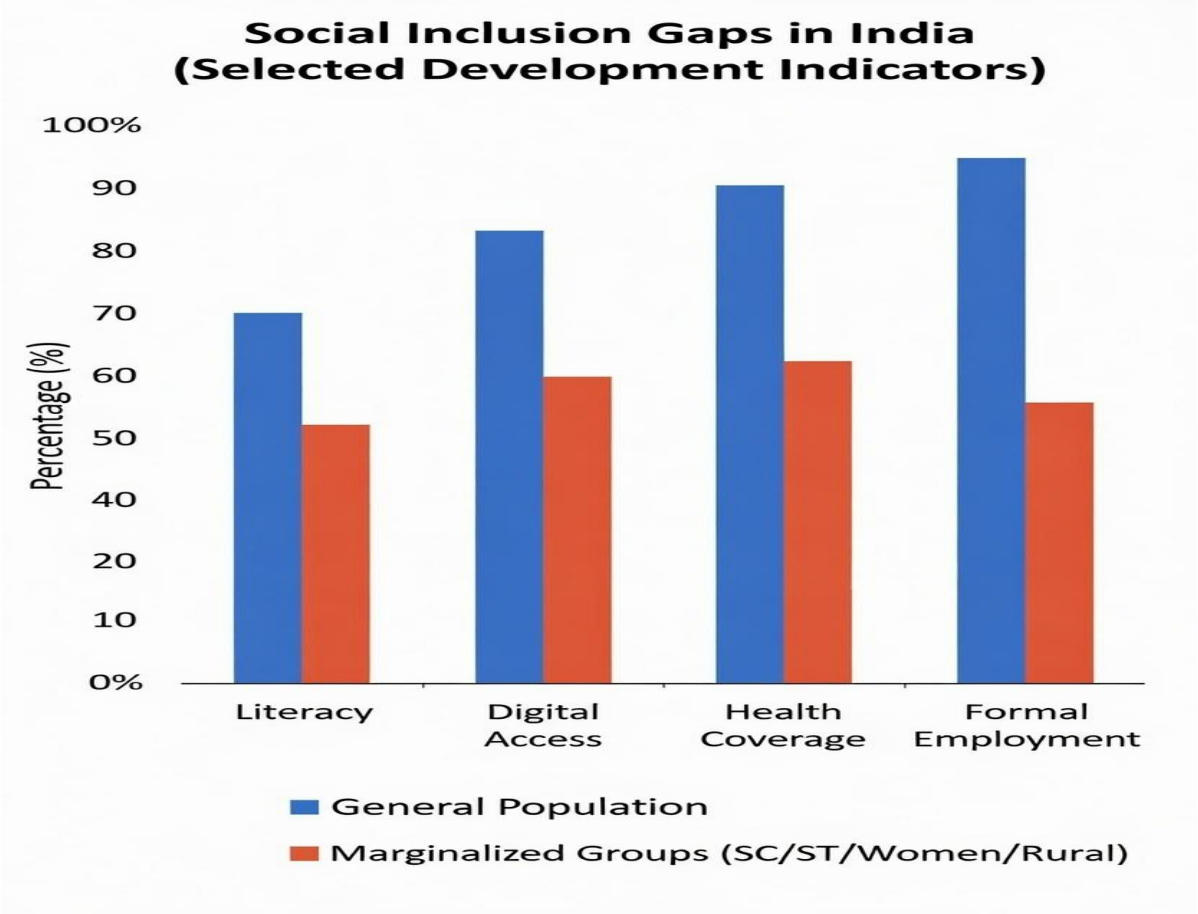
Implementation Gaps and Regional Disparities

Viksit Bharat 2047 vision has acknowledged social inclusion as one of the pillars of long-term development of India. It stresses that economic development, without equity, access, and empowerment of the marginalized groups cannot be the guarantee of sustainable development. India has in turn implemented various forms of inclusive policies targeting the creation of opportunities in education, health, access to digital information and financial inclusion as well as employment. Key national programs aim at enhancing human capacity and minimize structural inequalities experienced by Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, rural community, people with disabilities, and households with low income. These are policies that have enhanced access to basic services, welfare delivery and institutional support. Nevertheless, their effect is still uneven because of flaws in the implementation and regional imbalance and a shortage of institutional capacity. There are still issues of infrastructural shortage and unequal service delivery particularly the rural and tribal areas which are still a problem to the educational and health inclusion.

Challenges to Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is a challenge despite policy promises as Viksit Bharat 2047. Set of ingrained inequalities founded on caste, gender, region, occupation, and disability still restrict access to opportunities. The existence of regional and urban-rural differences enhances the development gaps further undermining the national growth that is balanced. Digital divide has become one of the major hindrances that shut out parts of the population to digital services and government. The challenge in governance and implementation such as poor coordination, ineffective decentralization, and poor monitoring diminish the effectiveness of the policy at the grassroots level. Moreover, the intersectional vulnerability and the low level of community involvement limit the capacity of inclusive policies to handle the complex social reality. All in all, Viksit Bharat-2047 vision offers a robust framework to the inclusive development, however, to reach meaningful social inclusion, it is necessary to have stronger governance, lower regional inequalities, digital access, and more marginalized groups as participants in the development process.

Figure 2: Social Inclusion Gaps in India across Selected Development Indicators



Source: Author's conceptual representation based on secondary policy reports and development indicators.

Figure 2 shows how there has been incessant differences in major development indicators among the general population and the marginalized groups in India. Although the general population displays comparatively better literacy, access to the digital world, health insurance, and formal jobs, the disadvantaged groups of the population, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, and rural communities, still fall behind. The differences are specifically apparent in digital access and formally employed workers, which underscores structural and institutional effects of inclusion. The figure supports the importance of specific, inclusive, and rights-based policy interventions according to the vision Viksit Bharat -2047 to close these gaps and provide equitable development results.

Strategies and Way Forward

The vision of social inclusion under Viksit Bharat 2047 demands the shift of the policy-making stage to the effective, inclusive, and participatory stages of the policy. The inclusion development outcomes can be enhanced with the help of the following strategic directions. To begin with, there is the need to change the welfare-based approach to the rights-based and empowerment-oriented approach to development. The policies must not be used to offer benefits but also allow the marginalized communities to actively engage in the decision-making, planning and monitoring processes. Community ownership and accountability can be improved through strengthening local self-governance institutions.

Second, narrowing down regional and rural urban inequalities should be made a priority by investing in underdeveloped and backward areas. Access to better education, health services, infrastructure and livelihoods in the rural and tribal regions can support a balanced and inclusive development. Third, it is important to bridge the digital divide. Digital exclusion can be avoided through the expansion of digital infrastructure, facilitating digital literacy, and making devices and connectivity accessible and affordable to everyone through promoting fair access to governance and welfare services.

Fourth, there is the need to have governance reforms to enhance policy convergence, departmental coordination, and decentralized implementation. Effectiveness and transparency can be enhanced through strong monitoring mechanisms, evaluation based on data and evidence-based policy changes. Lastly, the intersectional vulnerabilities can only be addressed with combined policy frameworks that can acknowledge the presence of overlapping disadvantages citing caste, gender, disability, region and occupation. The partnership with civil society communities, educational organizations, and grassroots can enable developing inclusive, context-specific solutions. All these measures can ensure that social inclusion is no longer a policy

goal, but rather a quantifiable and sustainable development outcome in line with the Viksit Bharat – 2047 vision.

Limitations and Future Directions

In the present study, the research is mainly conceptual and policy-oriented and grounded on research on secondary sources like policy documents, government reports and the available literature. Consequently, it lacks primary empirical information and field level evidence in particular regions or communities. The lack of disaggregated quantitative information restrains the capacity of quantifying the actual extent of the social inclusion results in various social cohorts and in various geographic areas. Also, the differences in the state-level application of the inclusion policies are not discussed in detail, which can affect the effectiveness of the national frameworks as a whole.

Regardless of the constraints, the study can offer a profound analytical basis in getting to know the concept of social inclusion in the vision of Viksit Bharat-2047. The future research can center on regional case studies, impact analysis by sector, and longitudinal assessment of the inclusive policies to include more ground-level realities. Political analysis of marginalized communities can also be enriched through empirical research with communities, which emphasizes lived experiences and intersectional vulnerabilities and local challenges. These studies will be useful in evidence-based policy-making and inform the formulation of more responsive, inclusive, and sustainable development policies in India.

Conclusion

Viksit Bharat-2047 vision is an elaborate roadmap on how India can transform into a developed country. Nevertheless, this vision will become achievable in case there is social inclusion at the center of the development process. Without resolving long-running social inequalities and exclusion, economic growth, technological advancement and global competitiveness will not be sufficient to guarantee sustainable development. As pointed out in this paper, India has a powerful policy framework which is intended to enhance inclusion in education, health, livelihoods, access to financial services and digital governance. With all these attempts, there are still big gaps in implementation, particularly because of regional inequalities, digital inequalities, limitations to governance and the prevalence of intersectional vulnerabilities within marginalized groups.

The discussion highlights that the development of inclusive development needs paradigm shift where welfare-based interventions are replaced with rights based, participatory, and empowerment-based development. To realize effective social inclusion, it is necessary to strengthen the idea of decentralized governance, better community engagement, better convergence of policies, and equitable digital access. To sum up, social inclusion is not a supportive pillar but one of the cornerstones of the Viksit Bharat-2047 vision. By ensuring that equity, justice and empowerment are incorporated into the development planning, India will be capable of realizing growth that is not only fast but inclusive, balanced and sustainable. Such an inclusive process is the only way that the positive aspects of development can be applied across the board to every section of the society and help to make India a fully-fledged developed state in 2047.

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