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## Book Review: Politics of Inclusion Castes, Minorities, and Affirmative Action

Bhavya Sehajpal<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>OP Jindal Global University, Sonipat, India

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### INTRODUCTION

Even though Zoya Hasan's book *Politics of Inclusion: Caste, Minorities, and Affirmative Action* was released more than a decade ago in 2009, its points are more relevant than ever now that the BJP is in power.<sup>1</sup> Domestic politics and majoritarianism, despite India's categorization as a democratic country, continue to subject its population to discrimination, unfairness, and a lack of voice. The main goal of this book is to look into the politics of inclusion by looking at policies and arguments about state programs aimed at lower castes and minorities, as well as the consequences of the disparate approach. Another significant goal of this work is to look at the current definition of social backwardness and affirmative action criteria considering evidence of disparity and deprivation among groups outside of castes. She asserts that the requests and underrepresentation of Muslims were simply overlooked and that everyone accepted the single logic of "Historical Injustice" as the primary criterion for obtaining a reservation. Hasan also examines the processes and procedures used to achieve the

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<sup>1</sup> Zoya Hasan, *Politics of Inclusion: Castes, Minorities, and Affirmative Action* (Oxford University Press 2011) 40

political incorporation, representation, and what is known as 'inclusion' for previously underrepresented groups such as SC, ST, and OBCs, as well as how women and most minorities are left unrepresented in the political realm.

## **RESERVATION AND MINORITY RIGHTS IN THE CONSTITUTION**

To begin, Zoya Hasan discusses the underrepresentation of numerous caste-based groups, such as SCs and STs, as well as minorities, such as Muslims and Christians, in India's political and public spaces. She explains why the reserve was granted to SC and ST. SCs and STs were the first to be awarded reservations, and they were granted not because they were poor or came from a low-income family, but because they are untouchables who had endured discrimination since the beginning of time. She further emphasized how every caste that has been subjected to untouchability has the right to be included in the SC reservation system. She stated that the majority of people supported reserves for SCs and STs because they had faced severe discrimination and exclusion and that having access to power would help them grow socially.

Minorities are the other category she mentions that is underrepresented. After delving into the constitution and all the discussions, Right-wing groups like the BJP argue that extending affirmative action or reservations to minorities is illegal under the constitution. Community disturbances are likely to develop, as the right parties claim. After all, we live in a democratic and secular country. All religions should be treated equally, and granting special rights to minority religions will irritate other religious groups. She does, however, continue to underline Muslims' social and economic disadvantages and disc numerous parts and reasons why Muslim minorities should be given affirmative treatment. She discusses how the Constitution guarantees minorities the right to freedom of religion and the preservation of their language, but that these rights have given them a new identity as citizens without the political or socio-economic rights that come with citizenship.

## **POLICIES AND FRAMEWORK FOR MINORITY AND CASTE GROUPS**

Zoya Hasan highlights several committees established to investigate the status of minorities and other caste groups in the public and political realm, such as the Rajinder Sachar committee, Gopal Singh Committee, Mandal Commission, and others. Many of these reports went unnoticed, although the government established commissions and policies for the welfare and advancement of all backward groups and religions. She then goes on to describe the foundation and operation of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Tribes (NCSC/T), as well as the distinctions in their operations and autonomy. Apart from their constitutional mandates, she adds, there was little difference between the two commissions. She claims that the NCSC has assisted and taken an active interest in investigating and implementing reservations and policies for SC and ST, whereas the NCM works to protect minority rights and implement the constitutional framework. She claims that the workings of these two commissions are dissimilar because NCSC has more autonomy and power than NCM.

## **OBCs AND THEIR INCLUSION**

Only SC and ST were granted reservations by the constitution, whereas OBCs had a difficult time obtaining one. According to Zoya Hasan, there were no difficulties with the underrepresentation of OBCs in politics, but there was a lot of underrepresentation in the public sector, including colleges, jobs, and schools. The character, experience, and behaviour of disadvantaged groups have been examined as outlines of the political context surrounding the emergence of the backwards-caste reservation issue in the 1970s and 1980s, culminating in the implementation of the Mandal Commission(I) recommendations on OBC reservations beginning in 1994. In the backdrop of economic reforms and the growing importance of technical and professional education, the author also discusses the OBC reservations decision by the government in 2006, i.e. Mandal commission (II) to extend the reservation in the field of higher education.

## MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN DALITS

The book's principal theme is the inequity and ignorance with which Muslim minorities, particularly women, are treated. The author mentions Christians, but only briefly, as she discusses the under-representation of Muslims in both social and political life. She discusses these parties' tenacious fight for SC reservations, although many states have previously granted OBC reservations to Muslim minorities based on economically disadvantaged groups. She writes from both the government's and people's perspectives, claiming that under OBC, Dalit minorities are unable to get their fair share due to dominant castes and that they are eager to move to SC reservation, which is unconstitutional because SC is based on untouchable groups rather than economic factors, and Islam and Christianity are both egalitarian religions. As a result, Dalit persuasion of the minority faith is impossible to achieve because it is unconstitutional. Zoya Hasan comes with many arguments to defend the Dalit's point of view and how they should be added to SC reservations.

## WHAT THE AUTHOR THINKS ABOUT THE BOOK

I believe that this book's incisively critical approach to caste, socio-economic backwardness, and OBC reservations distinguishes it from much previous inclusion research. Zoya Hasan addresses the inclusion of caste and the exclusion of minorities in a very clear and precise manner. She attempted to be neutral most of the time, presenting the government's castes, and religious groups' points of view. She interrogated the government and explained their position. She went over all the reports and commissions constituted for the religious and caste group's social and political advancement in detail. However, I believe the author was biased toward the Dalit community because, even though Dalit Muslims and Christians had already received OBC category reservations, she was attempting to demonstrate how important it is to obtain SC reservation as well. She also said virtually nothing about women's rights or reservations.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the book emphasizes the importance of affirmative action and safeguards for religious minorities and women. It discusses a variety of forms of discrimination beyond caste, as well as expanding the scope of affirmative action to include Muslims and women. Economic or social backwardness cannot be the sole condition for representation. For a group to be considered for representation or reservation, there must be proof of significant prejudice. Hasan isn't opposed to affirmative action for OBCs. The OBC movement slowed the rise of Hindutva in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Hasan contends that affirmative action should be expanded to include religious minorities (Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and Buddhists) and women. Discrimination, in its broadest sense, should include both past and present forms of discrimination. People want to progress from the government, and every area of the country receives equal treatment. What we're seeing now is the state backing away from welfare, and discrimination against the poor is on the rise. It's past time for us to acknowledge that diversity is both useful and valuable in and of itself.