

Role of Caste in Indian Politics

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Abstract – Caste has always been a very significant and decisive factor of Indian politics. It is a deep rooted feature of Indian social structure. Firstly its evidence showed in Manusmriti, a document that compiles the code of conduct for human society. The Varna system of ancient time now turned into caste system. The word caste has been derived from the Spanish word 'CASTA' that means breed or race. The meaning of caste is, people belonging to same breed. It played a major role in Indian politics not only after independence but also in pre independence era. After caste based reservation, the importance of every caste increased and these are playing an important role in decision making process.

Key Words – Caste, Politics, Class, Party, Society

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Caste is playing a major role in Indian politics. To understand the Indian politics, it is very essential to understand the complexities of caste system. Even in ancient India, caste was a very important factor of politics. In this paper we will try to understand the role of caste in Indian politics.

Caste is a part of social structure of Indian society and has been always a subject of study for many years. Many scholars and sociologists like Andre Beteille, Rajni Kothari, M.N. Srinivas have studied and highlighted various aspects. This system is not new to Indian society. It is very old. As Rajni Kothari said, everyone recognizes that the traditional social system in India was organized around caste structures and caste identities in dealing with the relations between caste and politics. Even in ancient time caste system was prevailed. First of all its evidences showed in Manusmriti. Manusmriti is a document that compiles and organizes the code of conduct for human society. It came in to existence 1800 years ago. It is a work of Hindu law and ancient Indian society. Manu divides Hindu into four Varna's i.e basically the principle of casteism. He divides Hindus into Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaish and Shudra. He gave privileges to Brahmins and Swarn class. Because he wrote, Brahmins were born from the mouth of brahma and they are supreme. The Kshatriyas were born from the shoulders of Brahma, Vaish from thighs and Shudras from his feet. According to this description Brahmin were supreme and shudra were lower in the society

CASTE AND ANCIENT INDIA

Not only modern politics, even ancient Indian politics were also affected from Varna system or caste. Brahmins and Kshatriyas played major role in politics. Kshatriyas were always the king and most of the time Brahmins were there advisor. The condition of

Shudras was very poor. They did not have any political right. They were treated as untouchable and most of the time they lived outside from city. Their social as well as political condition was very worst. This condition remained almost same even at the time of British Empire. Although many social worker tried to improve their condition and run a lot of social reform movements to remove evils from society yet condition was not good.

CASTE AND INDEPENDENT INDIA

The use of caste factor for the political benefit is not a new thing in Indian scenario. Effect of casteism remained vital in politics of pre independence. After independence Indian politics continually used caste factor. Its effect is increasing rather than diminishing. According to M.N. Srinivas, The role played by caste politics is in close approximation to that of the pressure group. State politics has been more influenced with caste factor rather than center govt. politics. For example jat in Haryana politics holds the cabinet, same in Punjab, Yadav in Bihar politics etc. There are some dimensions that describe the role of caste in Indian politics.

Political socialization is very important in politics. It is a process by which citizens know their political values, orientation. Man is a social being. He cannot live alone and always lives in a society. Right from his birth, an Indian citizen grows up as a member of particular caste group. He may be the member of upper class or lower class. In the process of political socialisation, he naturally comes under the influence of particular caste because caste is one among many factors of socialization like school, peer group, media, family etc. Under the influence of caste he participates in politics and works according to that. Prof. Morris Jones has said, "The central discovery is

that politics is more important to caste and castes are more important to politics than before.”

Caste also plays a major role in the formation of party. There are many parties which are based on a particular caste or a group of castes like Bahujan Samaj Party. This party refers itself the representative of suppressed class. In Haryana and Punjab Jat always plays a very important role in politics, Yadav in Bihar. Caste is also an important element in the nomination of candidates. Every political party at the time of nomination of candidates, keep in mind the caste of candidate and the majority of particular caste in that constituency. By doing this political parties get assured about the vote of voters of that particular caste. If the maximum population of the constituency is Reddy then Reddy candidate is deployed, if constituency have Jat majority population then Jat candidate will be deployed.

After independence, India adopted adult franchise. Everyone, who is adult, cast their vote. But voting behavior of people is also decided under the influence of caste factor. Every political party demand votes in the name of caste. Which caste holds majority in state, also hold control on the politics. No party can ignore their interest. They do bargaining with party for their interest. The candidate raises the caste based slogans like “JAT KI BETI JAT KO, JAT KA VOTE JAT KO”. This kind of slogans effect a lot on voter and they cast their votes to the particular candidate belonging their caste. Caste merely not affects the voting behavior of Indian people. It also effects the formation of Cabinet. Every government try to satisfy each caste by giving post to their representatives in Cabinet. Majority based caste always holds more power in Cabinet and government. For ex. Jat always hold prominent post in govt. of Haryana. In the recent time, every caste has decision making power. If any caste does not get power in govt., they try to put pressure on authority.

After independence, a new factor was emerged in politics. Caste based reservation was made in constitution. After this caste consciousness emerged in schedule and backward classes. They demand more and more reservation in every field. Due to the process of adult franchise they turned in to a number of vote bank. Now almost every class has started putting pressure on govt. to make provision of reservation for them and for that they are doing agitations. Govt. cannot deny their demands because every caste is turned into a vote bank for each political party. Although caste system is very old in Indian society from years ago, it was prevailed yet after reservation and class consciousness society is divided into two parts, Reserved and General category. This process disturbed the social harmony. The older difference between upper and lower caste become vigorous and have turned into a violent struggle for power. In many states like U.P, Bihar caste violence is very common. Even in Haryana it is featured from past some years. It may be beneficial for political parties but it creates a lot of social tensions and destroyed the harmony of society.

CASTE AND INDIAN CONSTITUTION

India is a democratic country. Every person has equal rights. Our constitution makers were very familiar about the social and political condition of India. They knew the worst social and political condition of lower caste. To remove this problem, they did many provisions to improve their condition. Indian Constitution provides us six Fundamental Rights. These rights are equal for every Indian citizen. Under these rights, our constitution provides equality to every Indian citizen. Our first fundamental right under article 14-18 provides RIGHT TO EQUALITY to every Indian. The rights under this article are:

Article 14-Equality Before law

Article 15- Prohibition of discrimination on the base of caste, color, religion, race or gender.

Article 16- Equality of opportunity

Article 17- Abolition of Untouchability

Article 18- Abolition of Titles

These articles removes caste based discrimination. Not only Fundamental Rights, infect Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy also try to remove this evil from society. Fundamental Duties under article 51A (E) provision for equality are “To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women”. There are some Directive Principles in Indian constitution which provide equality and try to remove all inequality from society. These articles are Art. 38, Art. 44, Art. 46 etc. This caste system is very harmful for the development of whole society and to remove this, it is necessary to change the thinking of society

CONCLUSION

In the end of this research paper we can say that caste is very deep rooted in Indian social structure and played a major role in politics. From party formation to decision making, it becomes very important. After the introduction of Adult Franchise, every vote becomes very important and each party tried to influence more and more voters. Now a day's caste become more important for politics and politics also becomes more important for caste. Sometime political parties increase this caste system by using caste based slogans and other thing. It destroyed the social harmony and created violence in society. To the development of society it is very important to remove casteism. Government should try to remove this evil completely. All political parties should also try to maintain social harmony. It is very important for the development of world biggest democracy.

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