



## Politics of Caste Mobilization

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### ABSTRACT

*A new trend has begun to field a candidate of their own caste irrespective of the merits or demerits. The caste leaders pressurise the political parties to provide seats to those whose number is in majority so that people of a caste can vote en bloc for a candidate of the same or different caste either in pursuance of the decision of Caste Panchayat or their leaders. In case a single caste is not found to be effective, alliances are made on caste basis. At present the political parties are also intelligent to pick up the caste based leaders to mobilize the votes on caste considerations.*

**KEYWORDS : caste Politics, caste mobilization, Political mobilization.**

Political mobilization has become an important component of political analysis. Mobilization involves releasing the inert inactive concealed and potential resources into active and usable resources to achieve goals. Elite play a significant role in mobilization process. Many leaders mobilize people on various ideologies. In democracy political mobilization ultimately leads to expanding participation in politics by various sections of the societies. Mobilized democratic political systems are always vibrant and dynamic which in turn will become responsive and responsible to people. Today of late the caste mobilization is gaining significance in the political process. Caste is considered as one of the main determinants of voting behaviour in India. It has a decisive role in political matters, particularly voting. Voting provides an opportunity to castes to assert their influence. Just as in Britain, voting is class determinant, in United States, it is race determinant.

Many scholars like D. Millar (1950), Key (1955), Colin Campbell (1960), Rajni Kothari (1970) and Norman Palmer (1976) and many others have contributed immensely on the linkages between caste and politics in India. These days the caste politics is on the rise. Right from the selection of candidates the caste plays a significant role. Several empirical field studies of elections conducted by sociologists and political scientists have revealed that caste not only exerts influence during voting but also acts as an important factor.

Most of the political leaders invariably attempt to mobilize caste groups and identities in order to gain political power. They utilize caste identities and solidarities to cast votes on caste lines in every democratic institution from Gram Panchayats to state assemblies and even parliament. Renowned sociologist, Andre Beteille is of the opinion that caste loyalties are exploited in voting. Bhikhu Parekh, Professor at the London School of Economics (India Today, December 26, 2005) observed, during 2004 national election survey, nearly 40 per cent of the people voted for their castes'. Rudolph and Rudolph also said that caste plays an important political role in India.

Caste thus provides an extensive basis for the organization of democratic politics in India. It is the most convenient means of political mobilization. Elections are always fought utilizing the resources of caste loyalties. Number of social reformers fought for centuries to eradicate caste practices but unfortunately the selection of candidates for a constituency is made on the basis of caste, who have a significant voice and can muster good number of votes in the constituency. Every party takes utmost care to see that its candidate in a particular constituency belongs to the caste which has a majority in the area.

A new trend has begun to field a candidate of their own caste irrespective of the merits or demerits. The caste leaders pressurise the political parties to provide seats to those whose number is in majority so that people of a caste can vote en bloc for a candidate of the same or different caste either in pursuance of the decision of Caste Panchayat or their leaders. In case a single caste is not found to be effective, alliances are made on caste basis. At present the political parties are also intelligent to pick up the caste based leaders to mobilize the votes on caste considerations.

As a matter of fact the political parties who once declared of being casteless and secular are encouraging the caste politics. Commenting on the role of caste in democratic elections, S.C. Dube a renowned sociologist commented on this some time before and opined that this is not a good sign for the developing democracy.

In India the political parties consider both, candidates individual capacity along with caste base which can bring votes. It observed over the decades that some castes supporting and being with some political parties and they are the strong vote banks of those political parties. People belonging some major communities and castes bargain with political parties and get political berths. Some times this affects the societal harmony. The political parties most of the time keep calculating on these factors. The ruling parties do influence caste groups by attractive announcements and concessions on the eve of elections. Most of the time this works out in encashing the situation.

Today, the Indian electorate, like the electorate of other nation are also influenced by several elements such as religion, caste, community, money and personality or charismatic leadership. A unique feature of several political parties in India is that they mobilize caste support. Many studies relating to the role of caste in politics Rajni Kothari, Andre Beteille, Sydney Verba, B. Ahmad and Anil Bhatt and others have studied the role of caste in the present political situation and conclude that political parties invariably mobilize castes for functioning and seek their support in winning elections.

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