



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Political Science

THE ROLE OF CASTE IN INDIAN POLITICS

KEY WORDS: Politics, Caste, System, group, power

Smt. Gousiya Begum*

Asst. Professor & Head Dept. of Political Science Government First Grade College, Sedam Dist; Kalaburagi State; Karnataka. *Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

India is one of the biggest democracy country in the world. In India Caste plays a vital role in elections and voting. In India most of the Political parties select their candidates on the basis of caste composition in the constituency. The voting in elections and mobilization of political support from top to bottom moves on the caste lines. Caste in Indian society refers to a group of social where membership is decided by birth. Members of such local group is the practice of marrying within a specific social group. In India the caste system has traditionally had influence over people's access to power. The upper caste groups benefit more by obtaining substantially more economic benefit and political power, while the lower caste groups have limited opportunities to those powers. The caste system classified to different castes different economic strengths. The upper caste groups can then manipulate the economic and political system to transfer economic strength into political power in India. In this article we have attempt has been made by the current situation of politics while concerned with the caste in India. This trend of politics in India is harmful for national integration, social harmony and economic development.

INTRODUCTION:

The caste system plays a very pivot and predicament role in Indian society. The formation role of caste association is also playing as important role in influencing voting pattern. Even most of the political parties are considering caste as a vote bank. This enabled the lower castes to be politically influential on the basis of numerical preponderance. In selecting candidates for elections, political parties often giving consideration to the caste composition of constituencies. Sometimes several castes are using politics in their attempt to better their conditions or to achieve their goal. Reservation policy is another aspect where we can see that caste system also influence Indian politics.

Before 1990s there began a shift in caste politics. The continuation of a one party system, which was the Congress party, composed mostly of upper-caste leadership, came to an end. This was partly due to economic liberalisation in India which reduced the control the state had on the economy and thus the lower castes, and partly due to an upsurge in caste based parties that made the politics of lower caste empowerment a central part of their political agenda. It is observed that these new political parties emerged not on a national level but on a panchayat level and regional level, and were most dominant in North India.

Caste among other groups:

Caste is Hindu phenomenon yet there is a group of sociologists like Bailay, Harper, Barreman etc. which defines caste in structural terms and believe that it has also influenced other religious groups in India.

Caste among Christians:

Christianity is India's third most followed religion according to the census of 2011. Christians are live in Kerala within caste framework. There is a clear cut distinction among original Christians and converts from untouchable groups. The stigma of untouchability is quit obvious within the Christian community.

Caste among Sikhs:

The Punjab state in northwest India has a majority Sikh population, and sizeable communities of Sikhs exist around the world. Many countries, such as the United Kingdom, recognize Sikhs as a designated religion on their censuses. The Sikhs is categorically against caste system still castes among Sikhs exist in the same manner as the Hindu group e.g. Jats are mostly land owners/cultivators who prefer to marry within the Jat castes only. Khatri Sikhs avoid marrying in Jats or

Ramgharia(Kohar, Tarkhans by traditional occupation)castes. Mazhabi Sikhs are the low caste groups. Converts are often placed at the bottom of social hierarchy. Upper and lower castes are clearly distinguished among the Sikhs.

Caste among Muslims:

The Muslims are the second largest religious community of India. Muslim society in India is divided into numerous castes like groups and has various elements of the caste system such as endogamy, hereditary occupations, caste names and social hierarchy. Ritual purity and pollution is also present among Muslims. The role of caste in Indian Politics can be specially discussed as under

Caste factor in Indian politics

The caste system plays a very pivot and predicament role in Indian society. In Indian Different caste groups their loyalties behind political parties and their ideologies. He belongs either to one of the high castes or to scheduled castes. In the process of picking up his political orientations, attitudes and beliefs, he naturally comes under the influence of caste groups and casteism. Caste values and caste interests influence his socialization and consequently his political thinking, awareness and participation. Caste influences the process of leadership recruitment. This is particularly true of caste conscious people of States like Haryana, Rajasthan Andhra Pradesh Telangana and. In Andhra Pradesh Reddys, Kammas and Kapus provide state leaders in Hariyana Rajputs provide state leaders and Karnataka lingayats and Okkaligas provide state leaders.

Caste and party politics

Most of the Regional parties formed by on the basis of caste in India. Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP): Formed in 1984 to represent the lower castes such as Scheduled Castes (also known as Dalits), Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and the religious minorities, the party has been broadening its support base and fielding upper-caste and Muslim candidates in recent elections. AIMIM is a recognized regional political party based in the Indian state of Telangana, they were representing the Muslims. The Samajwadi Party and the Janata Dal started claiming that they were representing the backward castes. Many such parties, relying primarily on Backward Classes' support, often in alliance with Dalits and Muslims, rose to power in Indian states.

Caste and elections:

The caste factor is play an important role in Election in India. All political parties give impotence to the caste factor in

selecting their candidates, in allocating constituencies to their candidates and in canvassing support for their nominees in the elections. In constituencies predominated by Muslims, Muslim candidates are fielded, in areas predominated by Lingayats, Lingayat and in constituencies pre dominated by okkaliga, Okkaliga candidates are fielded Even secularist parties like Congress, Janata Dal, CPI and CPM take into consideration caste fact in selecting their candidates. In the election campaigns votes are demanded in the names of caste.

Caste and organization of government:

Caste is a major feature of Indian society and acts as an important factor in various processes of politics, it also plays a basic role in the decision-making process. Even the issue of re-organization of State was handled with an eye upon the prevention of undue predominance of a caste group in a particular territory. Caste factor influences the policies and decisions of the State Governments. The party in power tries to use its decision-making power to win the favour of major caste groups. Congress has always tried to nurture people belonging to Scheduled Castes and Muslims are its vote banks. Regional political power for furthering the interests of the caste groups which support or can support their regimes. Recruitment to political offices is mostly done with due considerations for the caste of the persons.

Caste factor and Panchayat Raj

In India, the Panchayati Raj now functions as a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of local administration. The role of caste in the working of panchayati Raj and other institutions of local self-government has been recognized reality. Caste based factionalism in rural areas of India has been the most major hindering factor in the organization and effective working of Panchayati Raj.

Caste and Indian constitution

The Constitution of India states in article 15(4): "Nothing in [article 15] or in clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens. In the States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa also reflects indirect recognition of caste factor. Article 331 and 333 provides for the reservation of seats and jobs in government offices, schools, colleges, universities and other public sector undertakings also reflects this feature. The emergence of strong proreservation and anti-reservation groups in India has been the direct consequences of these provisions of the constitution.

Caste and rural Politics

In India, upper and middle-ranking castes dominate the ownership of land. They are able to transfer this control over wealth into political dominance over the Panchayat decision. The Panchayat is a local government unit that is in-charge of resources disbursement. The dominant caste groups monopolised leadership positions in the Panchayat, thus gaining more opportunities to government contracts, employment and funding.

Caste violence:

In recent year violence has become common phenomena in India. Caste-related violence has occurred and occurs in India in various forms. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, "Dalits and indigenous people continue to face discrimination, exclusion, and acts of communal violence. Laws and policies adopted by the Indian government provide a strong basis for protection, but are not being faithfully implemented by local authorities. The growing terrorization of the lower castes by the higher or even intermediary castes, has been becoming a par of rural India's political reality till today most of caste based violence continues to characterize rural politics.

CONCLUSION:

Recent evidence reveal that the influence of caste has been declining. Rather than a long-established, unchanging institution, caste is subject to political influence For instance, the Bahujan Samaj Party in the state of Punjab was first initiated by urban political entrepreneurs who belonged to the former lower caste groups. The pliable caste system in the post-independence era acts as a tool for identifying marginal groups and political mobilisation . Various political leaderships can alter and influence the caste system to give different groups of people unequal rights in accessing public services and political competition.

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