CASTE, WOMEN AND POLITICS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Caste system is a predominant feature of the social structure in India. It is an inscriptive system of status and hierarchy. It is pervasive and all embracing and controls and defines all social, economic and political relationships for the individual. Recently, it has been argued that political competition may have similar effects on economic performance as market competition. This study empirically examines the role of caste in Indian politics. At the same time, it also envisages the role of women in Indian politics and the challenges they face in managing their responsibilities.

Keywords: Caste, Indian Politics, Women participation, Democracy, Equality, Legislative Principles

1. INTRODUCTION

Caste is based on inequality by birth. Democracy is based on principles of equality. In connection with democracy, the things that are associated with the caste system are: 1. Participation of all adults in the process of decision making, i.e. (a) High castes like Reddi (Andhra Pradesh), Patidars (Gujarat),Lingayats (Karnataka), Rajputs and Jats (Rajasthan), and Kayasthas (Bihar) and Intellectuals with high social status. (b) Lower castes and masses. In this first stage, only three components of caste were involved: (i) the power structure of caste. (ii) Distribution of economic benefits. (iii) Caste consciousness.

Along with Caste norms, there are several protocols of the society, which are followed with respect to gender. For a long time, it had been seen that the role of women in the traditional society was limited only to household chores. She was not allowed to participate in any event in the society outside. Same thing was even applicable to her participation in politics and related activities. Due to lack of knowledge and stricter freedom, she was not even aware of the existing situation. However, many reformers in the period have brought about revolutionary changes that have led to the transformation of the overall perspective of the society in the modern times. Clubbed with her right to education, she was also given freedom on her decision to perform her political rights. Gradually, this has modified the social thoughts in the lines of progress.

This stage is divided into three sub-stages and first substage into three phases:

1.1　First Substage: First Phase: Entrenched classes were struggling very hard for power and the benefits. In this sense it is different from the dominant caste. Second Phase: Includes ascendant castes these caste groups have two characteristics: (i) they are dissatisfied castes wanting higher roles. (ii) They want to achieve high and prestigious positions in society through power. Third Phase: There was not only competition between

the ascendant and entrenched castes but also within these castes. This may be described as the stage of caste fragmentation or factionalism. At the end of the First substage we find that high competition among different caste categories to acquire power and prestige in society.

1.2 Second Substage: We find: 1. Involvement of the mass in politics. 2. Entrance of leaders with some specific changes. These leaders have certain characteristics. They are: a. less modem, b. not more educated c. more rural based. d. Having innovative ideas. e. Ability to organise people. f. Capacity to take risks'. Westernized leaders were replaced by the local leaders, h. more importance is given to the leadership quality than western education.

1.3 Third Substage: It involves: (a) Achieved status is given more importance than ascribed status. (b) Greater diversification of the base of politics. (c) Different other factors, other than caste came into picture. Second Stage:

In this stage three important things occurred: (a) A process of factionalism started within the entrenched caste group. (b) A similar process started within the ascendant group. (c) A system of agreement and coalition also started in a condition. The condition was that both fragmentation and coalition were based on caste system and caste identity.

Thus leads to two consequences: (i) some of the caste values were modified according to the rules and regulation of political parties. It was a politicized value system. (ii) There was also conflict to acquire personal power which led to intense fragmentation of political parties. Third Stage: In this stage there was: (i) Weakening of older Identities. (ii) Introduction of new values. Due to the impact of education, technology, industrialization, urbanization, several changes are taking place in the society.

2 AWARENESS OF CASTE AND POLITICS IN INDIA

The intrigue and attention to different ranks in governmental issues might be considered as far as four elements: enthusiasm of positions in legislative issues, political information and political familiarity with standings, identification of castes with political parties, and influence of castes on political affairs. These four perspectives were examined by Anil Bhatt during the 1970s by contemplating 1,713 people of high, centre, and low ranks with various foundations in four states (Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh). Breaking down the political enthusiasm by taking all standings together, he found that around 25 present positions had high enthusiasm for political issues, 45 presidents had moderate intrigue, and 30 present had no enthusiasm by any means. With respect to the attention to political changes and major political issues in the nation, he found that higher positions had more enthusiasm than the centre and the lower castes. He didn't discover any connection between position status and distinguishing proof with political par-ties. In conclusion, he found that some high positions are politically powerful while centre and low castes overwhelm just in scarcely any towns.

3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CASTE AND POLITICS

Rajni Kothari (1970) inspected the connection among caste and governmental issues by breaking down the issue with respect to what befalls the political framework as a result of the vote of standings. He found that three components—instruction, government support, and gradually extending establishment (counting 18-multi year old youthful people in electorate)— have infiltrated the standing framework due to which it (position framework) has come to influence equitable legislative issues in the coun-try. Monetary chance, managerial support, and places of intensity offered by the new organizations and the new initiative brought standings into legislative issues.

This inclusion (of standings in governmental issues) brought about two things: the position framework made accessible to the administration the auxiliary and the ideological reason for political activation, and two, authority had to make concessions to nearby assessment and sort out ranks for eco-nomic and political purposes.

The subsequent stage included factionalism and frag-mentation inside the contending (settled in and ascendant) ranks because of which multi-position and multi-factional arrangements create. The lower castes likewise are acquired to help high position pioneers and to fortify a group.

In the principal organization, just three parts of position are included—the power structure of caste, circulation of monetary benefits, and standing cognizance. However, in the subsequent stage, different segments of ranks like caste cognizance, customer loyalties and so on likewise come to be involved. Further, three sub-stages are brought up by Kothari in the principal arrange. In the primary sub-arrange, the battle for power and advantages is from the start restricted to the dug in positions, i.e., those which practiced prevalent impact financially and politically however not really numerically. In the subsequent sub-arrange, ascendant castes (i.e., unsatisfied standings needing higher jobs) additionally start going after power.

In the third sub-arrange, there isn't just challenge among dug in and ascendant positions (for power and advantages) yet in addition inside these castes. In the subsequent stage, called as the phase of rank fracture or factionalism, the initiative cleavages are made and multi-caste and multi-factional arrangements appear. This likewise makes the issue of adversary caste pioneers in governmental issues. These pioneers come to include masses too in light of the fact that they (pioneers) need to engage more extensive characters. There is likewise a change in authority at this stage.

Kothari has discussed the third stage additionally in connection among rank and governmental issues. While in the principal organize, 'settled in' high standings are first politicized and 'ascendant' high positions react with hatred and feeling of relative hardship (e.g., settled in rank of Brahmins and ascendant position of Marathas in Maharashtra) and in the second stage fac-tions rise inside the contending (dug in and ascendant) castes and lower standings are likewise gotten for help, in the third stage, identifications other than those of standing are probably going to turn out to be progressively significant with propelling instruction, urbanization and selection of current accomplishment direction. There, consequently, develop cross-cutting collusions.

The procedure of combination of castes is represented by the DMK in Tamil Nadu and Republican Party (comprising Mahars and other distant positions) in Maharashtra. The previous party is politically ground-breaking yet the last party has not yet used a lot of political power.

The politics of Maharashtra is long known for its placid and well knit Congress system that survived intact for almost three decades of the post independence period. It survived on the basis of successful accommodation of the entrenched interests, a neat and institutionalized system of patronage and favorable caste equations under the leadership of the dominant Maratha-Kunbi caste cluster. The Maratha- Kunbi caste cluster is famous for its numerical preponderance and political dominance in the State. The most conservative estimate of their numerical strength places Maratha-Kunbis at around 31 percent of Maharashtra's population.

4 CASTE AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR

Casting a vote gives a chance to positions to attest their impact. Schol-ars like Rajni Kothari (1970), Lindzey Gardner, Miller (1950), Key (1955), Campbell (1960), and Norman Palmer (1976) have alluded to standing as a democratic determinant. Similarly as in Britain, casting a ballot is class-determinant, in the United States, it is race-determinant, in India it is rank-determinant. For those stations which are at the base of the chain of importance, casting a ballot right fills in as a ground-breaking action. The lower the social and financial status of a standing, the higher the significance of the vote.

A few examinations like those of Kothari, Mayer, Verma and Bhambhri, Ramashray Roy, Cohn, and so forth., have indicated that ranks apply impact and have increased a dealing power be-cause of their democratic

quality. Andre Beteille (see Kothari, 1970:291) has likewise said that loyalties of stations are misused in casting a ballot.

New coalitions cutting crosswise over position are likewise shaped. Rudolph is of the feeling that standing affiliation has given station another essentialness and popular government has empowered rank to assume a significant political job in India. D.L. Seth (Economic and Political Weekly, January 1970:147) led an investigation in 1967 in which he met 2,287 people from various voting demographics of India and found that among different elements, casting a ballot conduct was resolved on the guidance of rank pioneers just in 1 percent cases, by family in 46 percent cases and by voters' own choice in 49 percent cases.

In 4 percent cases, the determinant couldn't be followed. Another investigation directed among 1,000 voters in Puna around the same time (1967) uncovered that rank influenced casting a ballot in 58 percent cases. In the last three Lok Sabha decisions (1996, 1998 and September 1999) just as in the Vidhan Sabha races in four states in December 1998, standing was seen as a significant factor in voting. Harold Gould (Economic and Political Weekly, August 1977), be that as it may, is of the assessment that standing has stopped to be a determinant of legislative issues in India.

In modern politics, the process of caste system can be participated, where we find- (a) Caste was exposed to many divisions. (b) In the later stage there was a new form of integration. The result was a new system or scheme of universalistic- particularistic, relationships i.e. democracy/politics-caste relationship. Effect of Caste on Voting Behavior: Voting provides a periodic opportunity to individuals, castes and other groups to participate in politics. Thus, caste is considered only the basic action of participation in politics. But its implications should not be undermined. According to Lindzey Gardener, the important factors which affect individuals voting behaviour are: campaigning. Issues at election time (like inflammation, corruption etc.) loyalty to party, mass media, primary groups, voters social background (Education, sex, age, religion, class etc.) and voters personality variables (intelligence, values etc.) Miller (1950), Key(1955), Campbell (1960) have referred to four factors that affect individual's voting behaviour: 1. Demographic predictors (Religion, caste, class, residence etc.) 2. Party identification (whether identification is strong, moderate, weak and totally absent). 3. Issue orientation. 4. Candidate's orientation (voter's attitude towards candidate). Norman Palmer (1976) was totally absent). 3. Issue orientation. 4. Candidate's orientation (voter's attitude towards candidate). Norman Palmer (1976) has focused on four voting Determinants: : 1. Environmental 2. Political 3. Social 4.Factionalism.

It is concluded that all scholars have emphasized the role of social determinants on voting. .Four important social determinants in India have been identified as Family, Kinship, Caste, Factions and Communalism. Mobilization of Castes by Political Parties: How do political parties mobilise caste support? Andre Beteille has discussed this on the basis of his study of castes in Tamil Nadu in 1970's. The problem of low caste enters into politics. He describes the different ways in which caste enters into the political process. In this connection he refers to three ways: (i) by making appeals to caste loyalties in a general way like exhorting vanniyar to vote for vanniyar. (ii) By articulating caste interests in an organised manner. (iii) By activating networks on interpersonal relations both during elections and at other times for mobilizing support along caste lines.

5 WOMEN AND POLITICS IN INDIA

The term 'political participation' has a very wide meaning. It is not only related to 'Right to Vote', but simultaneously relates to participation in: decision-making process, political activism, political consciousness, etc. Women in India participate in voting, run for public offices and political parties at lower levels more than men. Political activism and voting are the strongest areas of women's political participation.[1] To combat gender inequality in politics, the Indian Government has instituted reservations for seats in local governments.

Women turnout during India's parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. India ranks 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament. Women have held

the posts of president and prime minister in India, as well as chief ministers of various states. Indian voters have elected women to numerous state legislative assemblies and national parliament for many decades.

5.1 Challenges to women's participation

The level and forms of women's participation in politics is largely shaped by cultural and societal barriers in the form of violence, discrimination and illiteracy.

5.1.1 Sexual violence

It has been highlighted by Martha Nussbaum about the barrier to women's capability to participate in politics to be the threat of violence. Sexual violence in India is become a worst issue for the women as they get sexually abused. Various issues like child marriage, low literacy rates, domestic violence, etc. are the reason that female don't get the opportunities and get affected by the sexual violence. As per one study in 2011 it was revealed that, "24% of Indian men have committed sexual violence at some point in their lives, 20% have forced their partners to have sex with them...38% of men admitting they had physically abused their partners." It is assumed by the people that violence within the marriage is legal, therefore the sexual violence get unpunished. Martha C. Nussbaum states that "In the larger society, violence and the threat of violence affects many women's ability to participate actively in many forms of social and political relationship, to speak in public, to be recognized as dignified beings whose worth is equal to that of others."

5.1.2 Discrimination

The constitution of India has stated the gender equality among all the caste, but still it there is discrimination about women and mainly their participation in the political. As per one study in 2012 of the 3000 Indian women has found out various barriers of women participation in politics. Those barriers were huge work load in household work, low literacy rate, discrimination, family issues. This discrimination led the low information to the women. Among all the various reasons, the household burden is a big one for women not participating in politics. As compared to the male, the female has very few opportunities for getting involved in gaining leadership skills. Therefore the political arena is dominated by men, since the past many years in the country.

Discrimination is mainly done by the class and caste. The Dalit women's are continuously discriminated. This seat has been reserved by the government for Dalit and scheduled caste, but still women suffered from the abuse and discrimination in political career. Women have been ignored or kept silent in the meetings.

5.1.3 Illiteracy

As per the United nation, in January 2014, around 25.6% of adults were illiterate in India, which is high among females about 65.46%. This illiteracy brings the obstacle for females in understanding the political system and its issues. Even many times females are left aside from the voting list.

5.2 Overcoming barriers to participation

For overcoming the issues of violence and discrimination, women's organizations has made focus on women empowerment. Empowerment helps the woman to improve her status. Various socio-economic conditions like literacy and poverty stop women from entering public office, and voting. For this the government should bridge the gap of the education, reduce the discrimination, develop the programs for the women empowerment. The Government of India has addressed the issue of empowerment by consolidating all programmes for women under the National Mission of Empowerment of Women (NMEW). The mission of NEW is to "enhance economic empowerment of girls and women through skill development, micro credit, vocational training and entrepreneurship."

6 CONCLUSION

It may be concluded that political parties mobilize castes for their functioning and seek their support in winning elections. Rajni Kothari (1970), while analyzing the problem of relationship between caste and politics, has referred to three different approaches of three types of people. 1.First he refers to those people who lament over the role which caste plays in politics and think that politics should be free of caste and casteism. 2. The second type of people who talk of association between caste and politics are those who think that political relationships are projections of social relationships and have no independent capacity to influence the social relationships. 3. The third type of people are those who proclaim the autonomy of either caste or politics or both. In this group there are great variations amongst the scholars. They have brought a change in the social thoughts, wherein even women are given equal liberalization in their political activities. There are progressive economists who are committed to brand anything to do with caste, women and politics as reactionary. Ideologists who want to protect caste and gender issues from any pollution of politics, political scientists who consider caste as an important political force in contemporary India and social anthropologists who though realise the importance of political forms yet feel compelled to protect the caste system by proclaiming the autonomy of both caste and politics. The consequences as a whole: (a) Caste is no more regarded as the only base of politics. (b) Caste is used as a tool of political mobilization or articulation. (c) Caste has a decisive influence on the political system. (d) Simultaneously caste also has a new strength to form a new integration. (e) Caste has the power to accommodate many groups and it acts as a cohesive element which absorbs tension and frustration. (f) Emergence of a new elite structure in which the leaders are drawn from varied caste groups. (g) Sharing of common secular outlook. (h) Emergence of caste associations and institutions like caste club, caste conference etc. (i) Emergence of caste federation composed of many castes having specific interests such as fighting to get reservation facility. Therefore, in conclusion we find a new type of integration and the whole process is described as secularization of the social system.

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