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Communal and caste politics in India and its impact on voter

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ABSTRACT

In this research project, the researcher attempts to bring out the impact of caste and communal politics in the Election and how the voters are being influenced by the name of the caste. So, in order to bring out the impacts, the researcher would be discussing first the "Evolution of caste politics in India" and then would move on to the important question as to "Why Caste and Communal Politics still persists and increasing in India?" Then the researcher would analyse the role of Election Commission in restricting the communal and caste politics during the election and whether any legal restrictions have been imposed in this regard. And what can be done further to restrict the Communal and Caste politics?

Keywords— *Communal and caste politics, Indian politics, Superstitious beliefs, Impact on voter, Feeling of hatred*

1. INTRODUCTION

Communal Politics and caste politics has always been the essential ingredient of Indian political infrastructure. The foundations of all the major political parties are laid on the politics of caste and community. They cannot survive without targeting the caste votes and communal propaganda. This has so much inculcated in the entire system of politics that everything from the grass root level to the uppermost level of the hierarchy is being dominated by caste and community. The politics of communalism laid the foundation stone of partitioning of India (Hindustan) into India and Pakistan as two different countries with a different set of communal population. The two major political parties of India are Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress. Both of them are real-time players of caste politics. The BJP target Hindu votes on the name of 'Hindutva' whereas Congress targets Muslim votes on the name of 'Hindu Muslim unity'. (For Example: In the recent polls result it was clearly visible that the major reason of downfall of BJP government in Rajasthan is its failure to resolve the reservation issue led by 'Gujjars' and it's a live example of caste politics. In Jammu & Kashmir, BJP won 11 seats which are its highest in the state till date is only because they played their main trump card of 'Hindutva' asking land for the Amarnath pilgrims). These leaders divide people and make caste and communal politics their main agenda in order to allure a particular group of the society and gather their maximum votes. The nominations from their party are given to the candidates of some particular castes so that they can get maximum votes from their community people. The flagship leader is not chosen on the base of his intelligence or social work but on the basis of his caste and community so that he can disguise innocent masses of the society and get their valuable votes so as to win the election. On the short term, these parties and leaders unite the people of a particular caste but on the contrary, they break the society and inculcate the feeling of hatred amongst the different communities. They are the once who portray some castes as inferior or superior. The politics of caste and community has a major impact on the votes as virtually no election can be won without targeting this. Another major reasons are un-education and superstitions prevailing in the society which still prevails in the major part of India; some parties make them their agenda and seek votes on the name of the same. Thus it can be said very loud and clear that the impact of caste politics and community politics has a great impact on the votes and winning elections.

2. EVOLUTION OF CASTE POLITICS AND ITS INFLUENCE IN INDIAN POLITICS

"Lloyd and Susan Rudolph" [1] who was considered as the greatest scholars of South Asian politics and the political scientists had studied India more than half a century. They have analyzed the Politics and the Influence of caste in Indian politics for a decade. They said, "Within the new context of Political Democracy, caste remains a central event of Indian society even while adapting itself to the values and methods of democratic policies." They also added that it was the "chief means by which the Indian mass electorate had been attached to the processes of Democratic Politics." [2] This caste politics covered a larger part of their book "The Modernity of Tradition" through which the Rudolph's argued that Caste and modernity were not "radically contradictory" and they could infiltrate and transform each other. [3] So there is a question in this regard as to "Why Caste was Subject of Rudolph research and not the Caste Associations"? Which is very much relevant to analyze Indian democracy by looking at two things:

- The course of caste in Indian since the 1950s and
- The policy of the Indian state on caste-based affirmative action or reservation.

And it is very important to remember that when Rudolph's wrote their article in Pacific affairs the consensus among the Indian elites under Nehru was that the caste is a backward institution which should be directed to the dustbin of history as soon as possible. [4] Rudolph's claim of caste being center in the future of Indian politics is nothing new, because a few years earlier M.N. Srinivas, a Sociologist had pointed out that out, "Caste is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all, including those who are most vocal in condemning it, that it is everywhere the unit of social action." [5] And it was rightly recognized by the newspapers of that time too. [6] But Rudolph's claim that caste in the guise of caste associations took on the form of voluntary associations, which were perhaps more "truly indigenous assertions of liberties than the liberalism of the modern Indian middle classes" was something new and Controversial. [7] But Rajni Kothari another scholar disagreed with Rudolph's saying that caste was the "political force in contemporary India" through his volume titled "Caste in Indian politics" and he concluded the argument by saying "[8] It is not politics that gets caste-ridden but it is caste that gets politicized." [9] But which was to be noted was the caste system wide-spread in India and most precisely in the south which had a big story of Non-Brahmin movement [10] and they were already started using the political parties as well as regional organizations representing a bunch of similarly representing Jatis. Which was already indicated by the Rudolph's with regard to Vanniyars in Madras and the Rajput's and Jats in Rajasthan. Kothari has explained this consolidation process of Caste and Politics through the concept of "caste federation" in which he said "grouping together of a number of distinct endogamous groups into a single organization for common objectives." [11] But later in the 1970's the caste association became outdated and replaced due to "cross caste alliances and statewide political machines" and it started evolving into a political party itself. [12] And due to this, the National Congress party started losing its grip on the vote bank and the Anti-Brahmin and Anti-Hindi DMK's victory in 1967 [13] election was evidence for the success of caste politics. And in the same year in UP All India Jat Mahasabha formed by Jat leader Charan Singh defeated the Congress for the first time in the history which was shocking but which was made possible by a coalition of four castes Ahirs, Jats, Gujjars and Rajput's and had been named as AJGAR. [14]

And in addition to the strategies of political parties the implementation of Mandal commissions report of the recommendation of reservations for 400 castes that came under OBC's has made a change in caste equation in Indian politics. The abolition of Untouchability [15] was not the only aim of the Indian government but it also made many provisions favouring the same. For the advancement of the Dalits, [16] who was administratively known as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, many provisions including provisions for the reservations were introduced. While these were considered as necessary to change the centuries of discrimination against Dalits, the constitutional safeguards on the other side gave rise to the "New lease of life to Caste". [17] And so the implementation of the Mandal report brought the Vote Bank politics into play because the OBC's constituted the 52% of India's population in the 1990s and so no major party could publicly disagree with the Mandal Commission's recommendations. Indeed political scientist Yogendra Yadav pointed out that the expression "OBC" had "travelled a long way from a rather careless bureaucratic nomenclature in the document of the Constitution to a vibrant and subjectively experienced political community. [18]

There can be given many examples for the influence of caste in Indian Politics, but only some of them are crystal and important and one such example is 2012 assembly election in India's one of the most important state Uttar Pradesh. And it was when the chief minister and the leader of the BSP Party announced her party candidates list, where instead of naming the individual candidates she chose to disintegrate the party scale in terms of the caste composition, which is: 85 religious minorities, 85 scheduled castes, 113 Backward classes, 117 upper castes of which 74 Brahmins and 33 were Thakur's [19]. The BSP has its origin in 1970 which was formed under Mayawati's mentor Kashi Ram as the first Backward and Minority classes Federation and later the Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangarsh Samiti. The party slate replicating more upper-class people in the 2007 election [20] proved how successful the caste [21] politics in this modern India is.

3. ELECTION COMMISSION'S MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT AND ITS INEFFICACIOUSNESS

The election commission of India took a successive step by introducing the mode of conduct to be followed by the political parties during the time of election [22]. And the first chapter of the Mode of Conduct deals with the General conduct to be followed during the time of the election. The first and third principle of the General code are the two principles related to this research which is caste and communism. The first and third principles as follows:

- (a) No party or candidate shall include in any activity which may aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or cause tension between different castes and communities, religious or linguistic. [23]
- (b) There shall be no appeal to caste or communal feelings for securing votes. Mosques, Churches, Temples or other places of worship shall not be used as a forum for election propaganda. [24]

These principles state that no party or the candidate should involve in activities which trigger the fight or causes tension between the castes or communities and no party or candidate shall use the castes or community feelings during the election campaign for the sake of securing votes. Whenever we discuss the caste influences or communal politics, Uttar Pradesh is the best existing example for both and that's because UP is considered as the important state among the Indian Union. It's UP where many of our Prime ministers of Independent India had come from and is the state which has the largest number of population, it sends the highest number of members to the Parliament. And it is considered as the important and best example for caste and communal politics because of its population, usually the upper caste will dominate the lower but in UP after 1970's the BC's and SC's have managed to effectively challenge their position and that's because of the majority of BC's and SC's which had 40-42% and 22% of the total state's population respectively whereas the upper caste only had 22% of the state's population. And caste-based mobilization and conflict have become the Centre feature of the UP Politics and thus UP is considered as the best example for the same. UP was one of the strongholds for the national congress during the 1960s as all the upper and lower castes and the Muslim had supported the Congress and the Congress was able to hold it because of the 'vote banks' or caste coalitions that upper caste Congress leaders forged in the rural areas on the basis of patron-client relationships. [25] and the only opposition to the Congress during that period were Middle classes and in mid-60 to '70s Congress lost its foundation and the Janata Party came to rule by its coalition with the other castes. However, Congress managed to come to power in 1970 after a brief period of Janata rule and it was because of the populist

policies of Indira Gandhi. But after her death in 1984, Congress was not able to capture power in UP and had seen a steady decline. [26] and the decline of Congress and the emergence of BJP in 1990s resulted in the paradigm shift of Communal riots. The communal riots in last two decades have been resulted due to political parties manipulating people with religious sentiments for their political gain and the political parties urge to gain power was not to serve the country but for the castes to gain power. And there were many religious riots [27] taken place for gaining the momentum in elections and among them BJP's Ayodhya protest for gaining the support of Hindu's were the biggest riot that has been taken-forwarded by the political parties and as expected BJP was able to gain momentum and became a third biggest opposition against the INC gaining 11% of the total votes in general election and BJP with coalition with the Janata Dal party which was the second biggest party after INC formed the government under Prime minister under V.P. Singh. However, it did last for long as V.P. Singh efforts to stop Babri-Masjid agitation resulted in BJP's Withdrawal from the support to the Janata Dal. And later BJP's Babri-masjid protest slowly gained the support of Hindus and finally, when Babri-Masjid was destroyed it led to the winning of election by BJP in 1996. [28] And in the 2012 elections the BSP party has announced its party candidates with the party scale divided into castes rather than announcing their individual names, which was clearly influencing and in 2017 Uttar Pradesh assembly election all the major parties like BJP and Congress tried to gain the votes of Dalits by their election campaigns and it was called as "Castocracy" by THE HINDU Journal because all the major parties were trying to form alliance with the small caste-based political parties and the BJP also had an idea of focusing on the non-Dalits and Non-Yadav voters and BJP openly made speeches about their agendas of building Ramar temple in Ayodhya.[29] This is evident that the political parties are violating the model code of conduct often, the first principle of code of conduct has been violated but the Election Commission has done nothing regarding the violation, the above examples clearly show that the parties are using the caste as their vote banks and all the communal riots taken placed has been clearly triggered by the political parties for their political gains and they are using caste as agendas and manipulating the caste feelings of the people and the Election Commission has done nothing this regards. The rules framed are sufficient but the Enforcement of such rules must be reframed and should effectively take part. And this caste-based politics should be completely eradicated from the system at least during the time of the Election.

4. CONCLUSION

Initially in the post-independence period the government which was under Nehru rule thought of eradicating the caste completely and consign it to the Dustbin of History but as unexpected in mid-1960s after death of Nehru the emergence of other caste-based political party has made caste based politics to grow stronger and it leads to the period of the dominance of politics by caste association and later the caste association lost its momentum due to the unexpected turn of coalition of the caste-based parties into a bigger one. But here the question was "Whether it is the politics which influences the caste to gain power or it is the caste which uses politics to gain importance? This was a question of many Scholars in different kind of eras but the question remained unchanged and unanswered. To the answer the question through the series of events which took place in the history of India we can say that it is the politics which infiltrate the minds and feelings of the people by manipulating their caste feelings and by triggering the riots between the castes. These politicians had divided united India with the name of the caste. Initially pre- Independence it was the caste influencing the Politics which resulted in the Partition of Pakistan from India and the post-Independence period has changed opposite as the politicians to remain in power has started to use the caste as its trump card it was the Babri-Masjid Agitation which helped BJP to achieve power in 1996 election and the BJP is still manipulating the caste feelings of the people with the same agenda of building a Ramar Temple in Ayodhya. The Election commission has established a model code of conduct to be followed by the Parties and Candidates but nowhere it is being followed and the Election has series of several complaints regarding the same but no actions have been taken and the parties are still doing the same. The main reason behind me saying the rationale of that its Parties influencing the Castes because the political parties urge to capture power is not to serve the people instead of its "Money motive for some and familiarity motive for some" and the caste is just a Vote Bank for the Political parties. The Model Code of Conduct of the Election commission says that no political parties or candidates shall use the name of caste for the sake of acquiring votes and no one influence the castes but here the caste-based parties are existing which itself destroys the code and they influence caste feeling for acquiring votes. And even the candidates are selected on the basis of castes. Moreover, the reservation policies of the government itself promote the castes although they are for the good and welfare of the downtrodden people it, itself becomes the fruit for a political campaign. So, it is evident that we cannot grace the caste and community feel of the people because it's part of the Indian Blood but at least the caste feeling manipulation can be destroyed and the Election Commission is the sole authority that can do so.

5. REFERENCES

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