

Caste, Religion and Ethnicity in Indian Politics

India is pigeonholed by more ethnic and religious groups as compared to other countries of the world. Many countries are where people of many different communities and religions live together in harmony. Indian Population consists of various races and cultures. Besides, numerous castes, there are eight "major" religions, 15-odd languages, and a large number of tribes and sects.

Politics is the science of government and that part of ethics which has to do with the regulation and government for safety, peace, and prosperity, the defense of its existence and rights against foreign control or conquest, and the protection of its citizens in their rights, with the preservation and improvement of their morals.

Politics as a notion generally applied to the art or science of running governmental or state affairs, includes all that applies to institutions, fields, and special interest groups such as the corporate, academic, and religious spheres involving authority or power" and to the methods and tactics used to formulate and apply policy. Modern politics is a relationship between people and politics. It is thought of as the way people choose government officials and

All over the world, the political processes have ascended out of social environment. Tribes, clans, castes, classes, and groups. Economy, polity, religion, family and kinship networks have operated under a social structure. Famous philosopher He had in mind the social element. When elaborating the Indian society, it is multi-ethnic as well as multi-religious. The nature is visualized as a manifestation of theology. There is an immense significance of Politics in India. To manage the country with good rules and norms, to look in the internal affairs about the development of the country, to issue different policies for the country.

Caste:

In contemporary Indian scenario, caste mobilisation has become an important factor in determining Indian politics. It is a group of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, divine or human, and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogenous community. Caste is a traditional association based on one's birth in a caste, though at times associated with particular occupations. The role of its members to assert themselves, has presently intervened in both politics and administration mainly through the Raj. Whether it is the factionalism of Indian political parties or the nomination of candidates and the manner of their election explained through caste interests and caste balance.



Ideally, caste and democratic political system signify the Status of an individual in caste-oriented social system. It is sanctioned by various holy texts, reinforced by priestly authority. It has been given certain privileges not only in religious affairs but also in spheres. Customary laws differentiate individuals by birth, caste, and gender, and so on. It is a system of social hierarchy and social control.

The interest and mindfulness of various castes in politics may be studied in terms of four factors: inter-caste political awareness of castes, identification of castes with political parties, and influence of castes on political relationship between caste and politics through evaluating the issue as to what happens to political system. Three factors such as education, government patronage, and slowly expanding franchise have entered the country and come to affect democratic politics in the country. Economic opportunity, administrative patronage, and political support of the new leadership drew castes into politics. This involvement (of castes in politics) resulted in two things: first, the leadership provided the structural and the ideological basis for political mobilisation, and leadership was enforced to cater to the needs of castes for economic and political purposes.

The caste system, which is based on the philosophies of purity and pollution, hierarchy and difference towards the Shudras and the outcastes who suffered the disgrace of ritual impurity and lived in abject poverty, is the basis of confrontational identity politics based on caste. This group identity based on caste that has been reinforced in the form of protective discrimination. This group identity based on caste that has been reinforced by caste identities is institutionalised by the caste-based political parties that acknowledge to uphold and protect the interests of castes. Subsequently, political parties have emerged: the upper caste dominated BJP, the lower caste dominated BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party), including the fact that left parties have implicitly followed the caste pattern to extract distance in politics. This politicisation can be precised by arguing that caste-based identity politics has had a twin role in Indian society: it has reinforced caste-based Indian society but simultaneously destabilised the development of class-based organisations.

When reviewing historical facts, caste politics became noticeable in India in the beginning of 1990s after the then Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh decided to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission (which called for a fixed quota (reservation) of jobs for the OBCs in the public sector).

Historical data indicated that Caste-based discrimination and domination have been a malicious aspect of Indian society. The implications with politics have not only made it possible for previously oppressed caste-groups to be accorded political voice, but also raised consciousness about its potential as a political capital. In fact, Dipankar Gupta has emotionally expressed the differences between Ambedkar and Mandal Commission's view of caste. While the former designed the policy to remove untouchability as an institution from Indian social life and polity, the latter considered caste as an institution that can be regarded as the intellectual inspiration in transforming caste based identity to an asset for the lower castes for political and economic gains. Though it can also be said that the upper castes by virtue of their major position in the political and economic system, and when the Mandal intensified the consciousness of the 'Dalits' by providing them with political voice as an advantage the confrontation ensues.

The initiative of The National Front government was to reserve an additional 27 percent of seats for the OBCs in addition to the reservation supporters, and the government fell. For, there existed 15 percent of quota in the government for Scheduled Castes (Dalit) people, and an additional 7.5 percent for Scheduled Tribes or tribal (aborigine) people. After two decades, in April 2006, the ruling UPA government announced the OBC quota, and once again...

exclusive access to a certain portion of government jobs and slots in public universities, and recommended 27% to 49.5%. L R Naik, the only Dalit member in the Mandal Commission rejected to sign the Mandal report would corner all the benefits of reservation.

In 1990s, several parties like Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the Samajwadi Party and the Janata Dal star castes. Many such parties, relying primarily on Backward Classes' support, often in association with Dalit states. At the same time, many Dalit leaders and intellectuals started realizing that the main Dalit oppressor formed their own parties, such as the Indian Justice Party. The Congress (I) in Maharashtra long relied on the Janata Party has also showcased its Dalit and OBC leaders to prove that it is not an upper-caste party. Babu (2002) was a former Dalit. Uma Bharati, former CM of Madhya Pradesh, who belongs to OBC caste, is a BJP leader for MHRD of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government was alleged to play caste politics when he was in power. In institutions all around. In Tamil Nadu, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party rose to power under the leadership of J. Jayaprakash Narayan. Caste Brahmins have criticized of reverse discrimination, alleging that Tamil Brahmins (Iyers, Iyengars) have been predominant against upper castes in the region.

In political term, caste has a basic role in the decision making process that even the reorganization of state boundaries is group dominated in a particular territory. Although untouchability has been forbidden under the Constitution. But caste is still a safeguard as a positive measure. Government made an attempt to create economic and social impartial politics in an unpleasant manner. Groups declared backward are now not prepared to relinquish the concept of backwardness. Caste has thus become a major hurdle in the establishment of a casteless society and politicians are caught in the network. On the one hand, they would like the differences and preferences based on caste but well aware that these are helpful in securing the vote.

The development role of caste association also play vital role to persuade voting pattern. Even political parties have empowered the lower castes to be politically influential on the basis of numerical preponderance. In selecting candidates, giving consideration to the caste composition of constituencies. Sometimes, several castes are using political alliances to accomplish their goal. Reservation policy is another feature in which caste system also influence Indian politics.

It is well recognized that role of caste in elections has two dimensions. One is of the parties and candidate who seek support of the voters projecting themselves as champions of particular social and economic interests. Favour of one party or candidate whether people vote on caste consideration. Different parties accommodate caste interests. While nominating candidates parties take into consideration caste of the aspirant candidate and numerical strength. Caste leaders also mobilized their followers on caste lines so that they could show their strength. In the past, they maintain their unity and did not formally align with any one party they appealed to their members to vote for their party affiliation. For a very insignificant number of respondents, candidate's caste was the main consideration. For most persons who happened to belong to their caste. But it was not caste voting. They voted for the candidate not because of his party and ability. They, voted because person was the candidate of the party to which the respondent

- Funerary services
- Matrimonial service
- Meditation
- Prayer
- Music
- Art
- Dance
- Public service
- Other aspects of human culture.

Religions may also contain mythology. It can be used to enhance oneself financially or spiritually. It can be used for good or evil ends. It has been used as an effective political and commercial tool as evidenced by the massive influence on political patterns in Indian society. Politicians use religion as their loopholes. They hide trusts. Politicians use religion to gain success in politics.

Researchers have argued since many years to elaborate the notion of religion. Some highlight the idea that religion is a way of God, divinity and the meaning and order of human existence. Others have asserted the way religion serves as a transcendent or other-worldly) forms of space and belief and more mundane, or profane, domains of 'work'. Clifford Geertz (1973), focused on the symbolic power of religion and its ability to influence how people understand meaning to the actions they undertake. Some researchers have indicated that the idea of religion as a distinctively Western worldview and historical tradition. Talal Asad (1993) stated that in other cultural traditions, there is a close relationship between religion and other spheres of life such as politics, culture, society and economics.

There are many explanations for the concept of religion. According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz, religion is "a set of powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz 1956).

Theologian George Lindbeck asserted that religion is "a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or worldview in which the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiments" (Lindbeck 1977).

Marxist authors such as Louis Althusser highlighted in writing that religion functions as a form of 'false consciousness' that masks certain historically and materially contingent relations of social power (Althusser 2001).

In India, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism are major religions practised by the people. The BJP, which stimulates many Hindu loyalist groups like the RSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh) or the Shiv Sena (Shiv Sena Janata Party) or the Hindu Mahasabha to claim that India is a Hindu State. These assertions create homogenising claims which are contradicted by other religious groups who predict the likelihood of losing sovereignty of practice. This homogenising claims. This initiates contestations that have often resulted in communal uprisings.

The BJP, which struggled to become a national party and an alternative to India's one and only major party, in June 1989 to build a temple of Rama in Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh state), which the party claimed as the Ram Janmabhoomi. The BJP and Hindu nationalists asserted that Muslim ruler Babur had demolished a temple of Rama to the ground in the 16th century. In September 1990, BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani undertook a Rath Yatra (procession on a chariot) to Ayodhya in support of the temple. The BJP's stance on Rama.

The Ayodhya issue intensified the political dividends. In July 1992, Advani, the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, told the House, "You must recognise the fact that from two seats in parliament in 1985, we have come to 130 seats today because we took up this issue (Ayodhya)."

In December 1992, supposed activists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a sister organisation of the BJP, destroyed the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. This not only encouraged communal violence in several parts of the country, in which many people died, but also led to the demolition of the mosque. Consequently, the BJP emerged as a major party.

Progressively, the BJP emerged as a dominant party at the national level for the first time in May 1996, but lost power in June 1996. It gained power in March 1998 as the leader of the NDA and ruled the country till March 2004.

In 1998, the BJP began targeting Christians after Sonia Gandhi, an Italy-born Catholic and wife of late former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, was elected the president of the Congress. Presently, BJP is ruling party in India.

The generally acknowledged myths that process the identity divide on religious grounds centre on the 'appeal to a common cultural space' and thus 'anti-Hindu' and thus 'anti-India' approach of the minority religious groups, the 'hegemonic aspiration to a common cultural space' to minority groups. Traditionally, the Hindu revivalist movement of the 19th century is considered to have created two separate cultures on religious basis, the Hindus and the Muslims that developed further because of their distinctiveness. The institutionalised in the form of a communal philosophy has become a major challenge for India's secularism. Communalism for a major part of the last century signified Hindu-Muslim conflict, recently, contestation between the two has crystallised into communal battle.

The rise of Hindu national decisiveness, politics of representational government, persistence of communalism, and economic resources are considered some of the reasons for the generation of communal beliefs and their politicisation. Conflicts on religion have become a major source of skirmish not only in the international background but since the 1990s in the Indian democracy and secularism. The growth of majoritarian assertiveness is considered to have become a major challenge for India's secularism. 'Hindu' constituents gave political cohesiveness to a consolidating Hindu consciousness, formed a coalition government, and schemes the falsifying of a religious community polishes over internal differences within a particular religious identity. Thus differences of caste groups within a homogenous Hindu identity, linguistic and sectional differences are being subsumed under a homogenous unified religious identity.

In post-independence era, India the majoritarian assertion has generated its own antithesis in the form of confrontational politics that weakens the syncretistic dimensions of the civil society in India. The process that

- Shared culture
- Shared traditions

Ethnicity denotes to selected cultural and physical characteristics used to categorize people into groups or from others. In some cases, ethnicity involves merely a loose group identity with little or no cultural traditions. Some are coherent subcultures with a shared language and body of tradition.

Ethnic groups may be either a minority or a majority in a populace. Whether a group is a minority or a majority is from the perspective.

For many people, ethnic categorization implies a connection between biological inheritance and culture. The much of cultural identity. In 1871, English anthropologist Edward Tylor wrote that cultural traits are entirely learned from another culture shortly after birth and can be thoroughly enculturated. Some traits are inherited, such as skin colour, body shape, and other presumed racial features.

Several political scientists consider that political movements centred on ethnic identity. It is a major source of political mobilization. Researchers argue that the world is in the process of an ethnic revitalization that threatens to wrench apart the fabric of society. An increase in ethnicity-based solidarity and political activity is most often attributed to the opportunity presented by economic, and moral authority. There are two ways in which the idea of ethnic identity is used. One, it is used to attribute - language, religion, caste, region. Secondly, it considers the formation of identity on the basis of more than one characteristic such as culture, customs, region. The most common way of development of the ethnic identity. The one ethnic identity is shaped in relation to the other. More than one ethnic identities can be both harmonious and conflictual. Whenever, there is competition among them, it is often expressed in the form of autonomy movements, demand for secession or ethnic uprisings.

To summarize, caste, religion and ethnicity is entrenched into Indian politics. Many theorists asserted that by partaking in the modern political system, caste is now visible to divisive influences and a new form of universalist-particularist relationships. Caste has gained a powerful position in Indian politics. Religion and Politics co-exists in India. Religion can guide a politician but a politician prejudiced in favour of one religion is not representative of the general people of India, and he/she use the spirit of religion to promote an inner revelation, but politics leads to rights of the people. Religion is not opposed to science. Religion binds