

Impact Of Caste System In The Indian Politics

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Abstract

India is having a population of approx. 130 Cr. People. The [Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution](#) lists 22 languages, but on reality India speaks more than 1500 dialects and close to 150 languages. India is a well diverse country which has Urban, Semi Urban, Coastal, Rural, Forest and Hilly tribal population.

Indian Casteism is based on the Varna System. During Rig Veda period the entire population was classified into four major classifications namely Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. The main idea of classifications is basically Economic distribution without any Civil War kind of situation. In many other civilizations across the World, Civil War was the main reasons for self-destruction of the Human Communities. But in India, we have survived all odds and India is the leading example of the Oldest Surviving Civilization in this World.

Four Major Varna's or Classification.

- [Shudras](#) : Mostly consisting of Farmers, laborers and service providers.
- [Brahmins](#) : Mostly consisting of Priests, scholars and teachers.
- [Vaishyas](#) : Mostly consisting of Traders and merchants.
- [Kshatriyas](#) : Mostly consisting of Rulers, warriors and administrators.

There is a dichotomy, Whether Varnas was the decided at the time of 'Birth' or it is decided based on 'Nature of Work'. India's great Epic 'Mahabharat' was written by 'Ved Vyas' who is basically born in Fisherman family, which in today's parlance may be equal to Scheduled Caste. That means by birth 'Ved Vyas' was Shudra and later due to his contribution to work he was considered as Brahmin. So the Varna was not fixed or forced on anybody in those days.

Varna's then further categorized into Caste System and the Invaders like British taken advantage out of this 'Caste System' to divide the Indian people and the some similar process still being continued in today's Indian Politics even after 72 years of Independence.

Objectives

The Objective of this Research is to bring in the 'Impact of Caste System in the Indian Politics'. Also trying to provide leads which initiates for solving the Caste System in the Indian Politics.

Key Words

Caste, Civilization, Politics, Varna, Constitution, Mahabharat, [Shudras](#), [Brahmins](#), [Kshatriyas](#), [Vaishyas](#), Politics, Independence, Rig Veda, Civil War, Tribal, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes.

Introduction

The British Raj or British Rule was on the [Indian subcontinent](#) from 1858 to 1947. The rule is also called Crown rule in India or British direct rule in India. The collapse of the Mughal era saw the rise of powerful men who associated themselves with kings, priests and ascetics, affirming the regal and martial form of the caste ideal, and it also reshaped many apparently casteless social groups into differentiated caste communities. The British Raj furthered this development, making rigid 'Caste Organization' a central mechanism of administration. Between 1860 and 1920, the British segregated Indians by Caste, granting administrative jobs and senior appointments only to [Christians](#) and people belonging to certain castes.

Ambedkar's noble vision of enabling the people in the Lower Socio-Economic condition to move forward was remarkable while he was the Chairman and drafting the Constitution of India. After India achieved independence, the policy of caste-based reservation of jobs was getting formalised with lists of [Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes](#). Since 1950, the country has enacted many laws and social initiatives to protect and improve the socioeconomic conditions of its lower caste population.

It is not only the Hinduism is practicing the Caste System in India, it has been found that 'Christianity and Muslims' also follow the Caste System much stronger in India compared to their peers in other countries.

For instance in Kerala, Syrian Christians feels themselves as superior over other Christian communities. The caste distinction is based on their caste at the time that they or their ancestors converted to Christianity since the 17th century, they typically do not intermarry, and also sit separately during prayers in Church. Recently during the Floods in Kerala two Lower Caste Christians died due to boat owner refused to take them as Syrian Christians were 'On Board'.

Indian Muslims are a mix of [Sunni](#) (majority), [Shia](#) and other sects of Islam. From the earliest days of Islam's arrival in South Asia, the Arab, Persian and Afghan Muslims have been part of the upper, noble caste. Some upper caste Hindus converted to Islam and became part of the governing group of Sultanates and [Mughal Empire](#), who along with Arabs, Persians and Afghans came to be known as Ashrafs (or nobles). Below them are the middle caste Muslims called Ajlafs, and the lowest status is those of the Arzals. Anti-caste activists like Ambedkar called the Arzal caste among Muslims as the equivalent of 'untouchables'.

In India it was 'Varna System' earlier which classified into four major group in Hinduism, based on Establishment of The British empire in India, British segregated Indians by Caste System.

After Independence, in 80's the inclusion of many categorization of Caste by Mandal Commission and the subsequent implementation, which in turn has lead to a 'Caste Based Vote Bank' Politics today.

In the coming chapters we will emulate the impact of Caste System in Indian Politics.

Core Parts of Research

Census Data based on Nation Sample Survey and Round Survey 2005.

Distribution of Population by Religion and Caste Categories.

Religion/Caste	SCs	STs	OBCs	Forward Caste/Others
Hinduism	22.2%	9%	42.8%	26%
Islam	0.8%	0.5%	39.2%	59.5%
Christianity	9.0%	32.8%	24.8%	33.3%
Sikhism	30.7%	0.9%	22.4%	46.1%
Jainism	0.0%	2.6%	3.0%	94.3%
Buddhism	89.5%	7.4%	0.4%	2.7%
Zoroastrianism	0.0%	15.9%	13.7%	70.4%
Others	2.6%	82.5%	6.25	8.7%
Total	19.7%	8.5%	41.1%	30.8%
Present Reservation Quota in Central Govt. Job / Education	15%	7.5%	27%	No Quota

For example People from ‘Reserved Category’ have advantage of getting into the ‘Open Category’ in case if they fail to get into the Open category, they have second option of entry through ‘Reserved Category’.

Stagewise impact of Caste in the Politics.

Since India is a large vast country, we will try to study the impact of Caste System in Politics of the following few Indian states.

1. Rajasthan - Gurjar Caste Politics

The Gurjar agitation in Rajasthan were a series of protests in [Rajasthan](#) state, [India](#), during 2008. Violence erupted in the state of Rajasthan on 23 May 2008 when police fired on protesters belonging to the [Gurjar caste](#) who were demanding a lower [scheduled tribe](#) status, instead of their current OBC (Other Backward Class) status. In retaliation, the protesters lynched a policeman in the [Bharatpur district](#) of Rajasthan. In response, police shot at protesters as they tried to damage railway lines and government property. At least 15 were killed on the spot. Thousands of protesters blocked a rail route between [Delhi](#) and [Mumbai](#). Highways had also been blocked, and state authorities cancelled many buses. Getting almost nothing from the government for their demand of a 5% quota for government jobs, Gurjars again went on to agitate in 2010. They jammed trains on the Jaipur-Delhi and Mumbai-Delhi

routes. Unlike the unrest in 2008, there was no violence in 2010. In May 2015, a similar protest was organized and over thousands of Gujjars blocked railway tracks halting train traffic. Congress MP [Sachin Pilot](#), after being denied permission to visit [Dausa district](#) to meet agitating Gurjar leaders. He demanded, the Rajasthan government led by Vasundhara Raje must quit as it had lost the moral right to rule after the death of 35 people in clashes, saying, "The Vasundhara Raje government has lost its moral right and constitutional authority to continue in power. It has to admit the misgivings and must quit office now. You cannot terrorise a community. The agitation finally ended after Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje agreed on a 5% reservation under a new special category. Still Vasundhara Raje lost the next Assembly Elections.

2. Maharashtra – Maratha Caste Politics

In 2016, Maratha revolt took the form of massive rallies that allowed Marathas to display their kshatriya-hood and their capability for violence. That crime by three drunk Scheduled Caste men in Kopardi village on a 15year old girl, sparked a kranti (revolt) amongst the Maratha community, which has dominated the state's politics for decades. They made three key demands: reservations for Marathas in educational institutions and government jobs, the death sentence for the accused men in the Kopardi case and amendments to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, which, they claim, is being misused. From our History we understand that Maratha Kingdom was one of the strongest and ruled major portion of India for almost 140 years. Still in Maharashtra, Maratha's demanded quota. With the Elections around the corner, Devendra Fadnavis Govt. cleared the Maratha Quota but the same got challenged in High Court. In a massive legal and political victory for the [Devendra Fadnavis](#) government less than four months ahead of the assembly polls in Maharashtra, the Bombay High Court on Thursday upheld a state government law giving quota in education and jobs to the Maratha community. The [HC](#), however, curtailed the quantum of quota from 16% to 12% in education and 13% in jobs. State Govt. State Assembly Elections 2019 came in favour of Consolidating the Hindutva vote but the Alliance partner Shiv Sena moved ahead with other factions to form a New Govt.

3. Karnataka - Lingayat Caste Politics.

Lingayats have given eight chief ministers to Karnataka. Lingayats make about 20% of Karnataka's 6.5Cr. Population. Lingayatism is a [Shaivite](#) Hindu religious tradition in [India](#). According to Ramanujan, "A modern attempt was made to show Lingayats as having a religion separate from Hindu when Lingayats received discrete entry in the Indian constitution of 1950. Individuals and community leaders have made intermittent claims for the legal recognition of either being distinct from Hinduism or a caste within Hinduism.

In 2017, the demands for a separate religious identity gained further momentum on the eve of the 2018 elections in Karnataka. While the Congress party supports the calls for Lingayatism as a separate religion, the BJP regards Lingayats as Veerashaivas and part of Hindus. In August 2017, a rally march supporting Lingayatism as "not Hinduism" attracted almost 200,000 people,¹ while the issue further divides the Lingayat and Veerashaiva communities, and various opinions exist within the Lingayat and Veerashaiva communities. According to

India Today, "Veerashaivas claim that the two communities are one and the same," while orthodox Lingayats claim that they are different. Veerashaivas further "owe allegiance to various religious centres (mutts), [while] the Lingayats mostly follow their own gurus." Lingayatism worship is centred on the [Hindu](#) god [Shiva](#) as the universal god in the iconographic form of Ishtalinga. The Lingayats always wear the Ishtalinga held with a necklace. The Ishtalinga is made up of small blue-black stone coated with fine durable thick black paste of cow dung ashes mixed with some suitable oil to withstand wear and tear. The Ishtalinga is a symbolism for Lord Shiva. It is viewed as a "living, moving" divinity with the Lingayat devotee. Everyday, the devotee removes this personal linga from its box, places it in left palm, offers puja and then meditates about becoming one with the linga, in his or her journey towards the atma-linga.

4. Gujarat - Patidars Caste Politics.

Patidars Caste represents 12.3% of the 6 Cr. population of Gujarat. Patidar community is facing class-differentiation within the community. There was a growing discontent among Patidar youth due to shrinking economic opportunities and among older generation due to their downward social mobility. The agitation took inspiration from the [agitation by the Gujjar community](#) in [Rajasthan](#), which ended in May 2015.

On 11 August 2015 the [Chief Minister of Gujarat, Anandiben Patel](#), formed a seven-member panel to interact with the community and submit a report to the government. On 17th August the panel held talks with community organisations, including SPG. The PAAS did not participate in the talks. On 21 and 23 August the government published a full-length advertisement in leading Gujarati newspapers arguing legal and constitutional limitations. The chief minister expressed her inability to include Patidar in the OBC category, citing constitutional limitations, and urged the agitators to negotiate; they rejected the call. After violence following 25 August rally in Ahmedabad, she expressed regret and ordered an inquiry, and called for peace and order in the state. The panel submitted its report on 9 September, and a second talk was held on 14 September. On 17 September she again urged an end to the agitation to avoid class conflict in the state.

Conclusion

In India it is unfortunate that reservation based on caste system has become a means of empowerment. Politics and Caste System is intertwined. Politicians exactly know the chord and play as per the situation to take mileage out of it. In today's materialistic world, based on Economic superiority automatically the respect and Social status of that person either goes up or down in public's eye. There is no such Social status stigma attached in most cities across India and similar effect is being felt in many other parts of rural India. In deep interior part of India, social status is still having some relevance but it is slowly diminishing. Many Politicians make use of Caste card just at the time of Elections only. To set the pace for 'New India' which is Energetic, fast growing Economy, India needs big time over haul in this Caste Based Reservation System. There are few suggestions which can be worked upon to take further lead on developing policy for course correction in this 'Caste System' in India.

One approach could be to bring in Ambedkar's vision of reaching the real down trodden people and ensure benefits reaches the right lot. But while it is getting implemented it may have some challenges as opposition for any changes in the present system will have some resistance. For example a ST/ SC or OBC one family members gets into Govt. job then automatically the other members from the same family may lose the opportunity of using the quota system. The other family members may apply through the 'Open Quota' only. In that process may be a period of 10-15 years the quota system would have reached to most of the people who never got any chance for getting into Government Job and may get included in the full formal Economic System.

Another Approach could be to give quota to kids born out of Inter Caste Marriages. For example, in case if there is a inter caste marriage between Brahmin and ST/SC community, then the Kids born out of that marriage will be eligible for Quota System. In that scenario may be 15-20 years down the line many kids from Inter Caste System would have occupied many positions and relevance of Caste will slowly die down. These are just suggestions and many other parameters needs to be worked out to take this thought process to the next level.

Once the Caste System started dying down then automatically Politicians will also moveout from Caste appeasement or Minority appeasement Politics. Thus we can unlock Politics from present Caste System.

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