



The Role of Caste in Indian Politics

Dr. Surender Singh

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science, Babu Shobha Ram Govt. Arts College, Alwar, Rajasthan.

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ABSTRACT

In India, a caste is a (usually endogamous) social group where membership is decided by birth.[1] Broadly, Indian castes are divided into the Forward Castes, Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes. Sometimes Indian Christians and Indian Muslims may also function as castes (a full list of castes can be found at the end of this article). With castes separating individuals into different social groups, it follows that each group will have conflicting interests; oftentimes putting those with lower social standing in less favorable positions. An attempt to address this inequality has been the reservation system, which essentially acts as affirmative action to provide representation to caste groups that have been systematically disadvantaged. There have also been other cases where political parties, like the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), was formed to challenge the power of the upper castes.

The role that castes play in India's political system was institutionalised by the British colonist where upper-caste dominance within government was perpetuated and reinforced. Although there were efforts to address this discrepancy through measures like the Communal Award and educational empowerment (see 'Sanskritization'), this remained the status quo until the 1990s when an economic liberalisation in India diminished state control and fueled the rise of caste-centric parties focused on empowering lower castes. However, these parties were often rife with corruption as it was seen as a way to level the playing field.

KEYWORDS-caste, politics, Indian, role, scheduled, corruption

1. INTRODUCTION

Caste factor in political socialization and leadership recruitment: Different caste groups their loyalties behind political parties and their ideologies. Right from his birth an Indian citizen inherits a caste and grows up as a member of particular caste group. 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 their socialization and consequently their political thinking, conscience, and participation. He

bets on caste solidarity to occupy and play a leadership recruiting role. Caste Influences Leadership Recruitment Process. This is particularly true of caste conscious people of States like Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh.[1,2,3] In Andhra Pradesh Reddys, Karmas and Valamas, provide state leaders. Caste based political parties: Caste factor is a component of the Indian party system. In India, there are so many caste-based political parties which try to promote and protect the interest of a particular caste. The regional political parties, in particular, stand predominantly influenced by the caste factor. DMK and AIADMK are

non-Brahmin and nonBrahmin political parties from Tamil Nadu. In Punjab, Akali Dal has a community identity. It stands influenced by the issue of jats vs. nonjats. All political parties in India use caste as a means for securing votes in elections. BSP banks upon the support of Scheduled Castes while the BJP largely banks upon its popularity among caste Hindu and the trading community. Caste based pressure groups: There are so many caste based pressure groups in India which try to promote and protect the interest of particular caste and for this purpose they keep putting pressure on governments the pressure groups like scheduled caste federation, Arya Samaj Sabha, Sanatan Dharam Sabha etc, are such pressure groups Who work for the protection of the interests of a particular community. Caste and nomination of candidates: The caste factor is an important determinant of electoral politics in India. While nominating their candidates from different constituencies the political parties keep in mind the cast of candidate and cast of the voters in that particular constituency. As a result of this candidate is sure to get the votes of voters of his caste. In electoral constituencies dominated by Muslims, Muslim candidates are deployed and in areas dominated by Jats, Jat candidates are deployed. Even secularist parties like Congress, Janata Dal, CPI, and CPM take into consideration caste fact in selecting their candidates. Caste and voting behaviour: In the election campaigns,[4,5,6] votes are demanded in the names of caste. Caste groups are tapped for committed support N.D. Palmer has rightly observed that Caste considerations are given great weight in the selection of candidates and in the appeals to voters during election campaigns. In elections, caste is the most important political party. The Candidates asked for votes in the name of caste and they raise the caste-based slogan like "jat ki beti jat ko, jat ki vote jat ko". Such slogans do have an effect on voters and they cast their vote in favour of the candidate belonging to their caste. Caste as divisive and cohesive force in Indian Politics: Caste acts as a dividing and cohesive force in Indian politics It provides a basis for the emergence of several interest groups in the Indian Political System each of which competes with all other groups in the struggle for power. At times it leads to an unhealthy struggle for power and acts as a divisive force however, it is a source of unity among the members of groups and acts as a cohesive force. In rural India, where the social

universe of the rural power is limited to an area of 15 to 20 km, caste acts as unifying forces. It is the only social group they understand. Existence of caste groups also leads to factionalism. Caste as such is a factor in Indian politics and it acts as cohesive as well as a divisive factor. Caste and organization of government: As caste is an important characteristic of Indian society and acts as a dominant factor in various political processes, it also plays a key role in decision making. Even the issue of reorganization of State was handled with an eye upon the prevention of undue predominance of a caste group in a particular territory. The caste factor affects state government policies and decisions. The ruling party 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 as its vote banks. Regional political power for furthering the interests of the caste groups which support or can support their regimes. The constitution of India provides for a single unified electorate and advocates the spirit of caste free politics and administration. However, the caste factor always acts as a determinant of people's voting behaviour, their political participation, the party structure and even of the governmental decision-making. Caste factor and local governments: The role of caste in the working of Panchayati Raj and other institutions of local selfgovernment has been recognized reality. Castebased factionalism in rural areas of India has been the most major hindering factor in the organization and effective working of Panchayati Raj. In the rural Indian context, the caste was a mobilization of the communication channel, representation, and leadership and a link between the electoral process and the political process Caste violence: Caste-based violence often finds its way into politics. The traditional differences between higher and lower castes become vigorous and have turned into a violent and fierce struggle for power in society. The growing terrorization of the lower castes by the higher or even intermediary castes has been becoming a part of rural India's political reality. In states like Maharashtra, Bihar, Gujarat and U.P caste violence has raised its head even in some urban areas. However, until today most of the castebased violence continues to characterize rural politics. The demand for reservation by other communities: The provisions of the reservation made in the constitution have proved counterproductive also as the

non-scheduled castes, have also started putting pressure on the government to make provisions of reservation for them. Social and political tensions: The provisions made for the protection of interests of scheduled castes have also disturbed the social harmony in the Indian society and have created so many social and political tensions. The society has got divided into lower caste and higher caste. Caste and civil administration: The bureaucracy also gets influenced by the caste as mostly, the postings, transfers, and appointments of public officials get influenced by the caste considerations. In these days the interest of a particular caste are kept in mind while running the administration. Caste and formation of a council of ministers: While constituting the council of ministers prime minister and chief minister have to give representation to the members belonging to different castes in their state and in case they do not do so, the supporters of particular caste put pressure on the prime minister and chief minister to give representation to their caste[7,8,9]

2. DISCUSSION

The caste system is a predominant aspect of the social and political structure in India. Caste is that the most ancient feature of Indian system and it's a significant factor to consider the structures and functions of the Indian form of government. The word 'caste' comes from the Spanish word 'caste' which suggests race. People born in particular race have their separate caste. It defines all social, economic and political relationships for the individual. Caste may be a notable foundation of stratification in India. Indian politics is caste-ridden politics. Caste determines the character, organization, and dealing of political parties, interest groups, and every political structures and their functions. Indian society has been highly segmented along the lines of castes, religion, class, etc, it eventually prevents actual working of Parliamentary democracy. The essential objective of this paper is to analyse the role caste in Indian politics and the way it becomes a significant reason behind serious concern and become an obstacle to the national integration. For majority of the scholars of politics, namely Myron Weiner India is probably the foremost important of all the newer countries of the so-called "third world". It's fairly often to see that the lower caste groups, who are supposed to hate the caste system, also use their caste identity to gain benefits

within the corridors of power and politics and, at the identical time, they require to place a stop to the caste oppression imposed upon them by the upper castes.

Role of caste in Indian politics

1. Caste factor in political socialization and leadership recruitment

The child inherits the caste by his/her birth and after that become a member of that particular caste group. He naturally comes under the influence of caste groups and casteism while picking up his political orientation, attitude, and beliefs. Elements which influence person's thinking, conscience, and participation in politics are caste values and caste interest. We can say caste influences leadership recruitment process. Example: In Andhra Pradesh Reddys, Karmas and Valamas, provide state leaders. In India political parties attempt to protect and promote the interest of a specific caste and also a number of regional parties stands predominantly influenced by the caste factor (DMK and AIADMK are non-brahmin parties of Tamil Nadu , In Punjab Akali Dal stands by the issue of jats vs. non-jats). To secure votes in election every party uses caste as its means(BSP's voting bank relay on schedule castes, BJP's voting bank relay on its popularity among Hindus and trading community).[10,11,12]

2. Discrimination based on caste

In the job sector (government and private) the postings, transfers, and appointments are influenced by the person's caste. Also when constituting the council of ministers have to represent the candidate of different caste in different states to gather the support of that particular caste.

3. Caste based pressure groups

Pressure groups which are based on the caste tries to protect and promote the interest of that particular caste and build pressure on the government.

Example. Scheduled caste federation, Arya SamajSabha, SanatanDharma Sabha, etc.

4. Caste and nomination of candidates

The main thing which political parties keep in mind while nominating the candidate is caste of the voters and candidate of that particular constituency. By this party ensures the vote of the caste will come in there favour.

Some secular parties (Congress, Janta Dal, etc) also take this under consideration for selecting there candidates.

5. Caste Violence

The difference between higher and lower caste become vigorous and have turned into a violent and fierce struggle for power in society. Most of the caste violence cases are raised in U.P. , Bihar , Maharashtra , and Gujrat. In todays world most of the caste based violence continues to characterize rural politics.

6. The demand for reservation by other communities

Firstly the provision of the reservation which was added in the constitution of India in article 15(4). The bill was presented by Dr B.R. Ambedkar in the parliament for the upliftment of the backward castes. In todays time non-reserved castes also started putting pressure on the government to make provision for them too.

Analysis

1. Acts & Constitutional Provisions for a Casteless Society

Constitution of India is one of one the best constitutions in the world, but never fully implemented. Provision listed below are some sincere efforts by great Indians:

- Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1976
- Prevention of atrocities against SC & ST's Act, 1989

2. Fundamental Rights – First Right is the Right to Equality

There are some articles written in the constitution of India for maintaining equality among its people:

- Article-14 (Equality before law)
- Article-15 (prohibition of discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, race, gender, and colour)
- Article-16 (equal opportunities in public employment)[13,14]
- Article-17 (abolition of untouchability)
- Article-18 (abolition of titles)

3. Fundamental Duty

Article 51A – (e) says to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood among all irrespective of religion, linguistic, and regional or sectional diversities and to renounce practices of defamatory to the dignity of women.

4. Directive Principles of State Policy

- Article 38 - To promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political and to minimize the inequalities.
- Article 46 - Promotion of educational and economical interest of SC, ST, and OBC.
- Article 330 - Reservation of the seats in the house of people for SC & ST's.
- Article 332 - Reservation of the seats in legislative assembly of every state for SC & ST's.

5. Points listed below need to be looked for neutralizing the role of caste in Politics

- Violence based on caste should be eliminated.
- On the secular lines education system should be remodelled.
- A neutral role should be played by the media.
- Reservation should be given to those who are economically weak not on the bases of caste, by this all the section will be benefitted.
- Caste based politics should come to end by the politicians.
- Community living must be encouraged by all the schools by organizing community meals and should include all students.[15,16]

Caste and politics shares a close relationship and influence each other. Caste is a major component of the social system in India. In Indian democracy casteism is the biggest challenge these both are totally opposite things. India has adopted liberal form of democratic system that is based on freedom, equality and justice. Whereas caste is for inequality based on birth Indian political parties are also divided on the bases of caste loyalties and ethnic factors. During the election campaigns violence is mainly caste-based. Now a days the bases of politics is nothing more than caste-ridden and due to that caste got politicized. For securing the benefits caste group use the politics. People want that their voices to be listened and development should take place. American political experts (I. Rudolf & S.H. Rudolf) once wrote in there book "Modernity of tradition" Politicians have to democratize themselves to be the best for fulfilling the basic needs of a common man. There must be reduction in divergence among the caste for changing the mentality of the people. All the

education system must teach the values of equality and a bond of brotherhood for all the people, this is necessary for nation-building. System(government) and political party should ensure to treat all the groups and communities equally.[17]

3. RESULTS

Caste is a social category set out in a hierarchical order; it has derived its legitimacy from classical Hindu scriptures. Caste originated initially as 'varna', which divided the society into four occupational categories. Caste is the epitome of traditional society, a closed system where generation after generation of individuals did the same work and lived the same life.

Caste as an institution is embedded in Indian society, it has changed and moulded itself to fit in the modern democratic politics. Caste and casteism that accompanied caste have never disappeared in India. As Rajni Kothari has effectively pointed out the politicization of caste in India has shaped the nature of Indian politics to a great extent. He proved that the politicization of caste is a two-way process. Caste needs politics as much as politics need caste.

Role of Caste in Society

Caste plays a very important role in shaping the nature of Indian politics. Caste and politics have become inextricable elements of Indian politics. Theoretically, caste and democratic politics represent opposite value systems, as caste is hierarchical while democracy thrives on equality and freedom of the individual. Despite the contradictory nature of their value systems caste has laid its imprint on the Indian political system.

Politics is a part of society; it cannot function in a vacuum. It is influenced by a myriad of social forces, caste is one of them. Caste influences the political attitude in the following ways:

- Caste as a social stratification system has influenced the socio-economic and political scenario of the society.
- Political socialization: Caste values and caste interest have determined and altered the political thinking, awareness, and participation of the masses to a great extent.
- Nomination of candidates: Owing to the process of political socialization caste has influenced the nomination of the candidates and increased caste consciousness among the people.

- Influence of caste on political propaganda of the parties: The political parties keep the caste affiliations of the candidates in mind while nominating them from particular constituencies, the propaganda of the parties is also greatly determined along caste lines.

- Caste and Voting behaviour: Votes are demanded along caste lines. Caste determines and shapes the nature of election campaigns and voter turnout.

Caste, as we see, is an indispensable component of Indian politics, its influence on politics and society, in general, has its positive and negative impacts on the nature of the Indian federation.

Positive effects of Caste on Politics

- Caste Solidarity: In the last hundred years there has been an increase in the feeling of caste solidarity. The educated leaders have collected funds to help the poorer members of the caste, organized caste conferences, built caste hostels, hospitals, cooperative societies. GS Ghurye had argued as early as 1932 that the attack on caste hierarchy is not the end of caste in India it has, in turn, generated a new sentiment of 'caste solidarity' which can be described as caste patriotism.

- Caste Groups and Alliances: The British government gave a considerable concession to the people of backward classes in India under their rule. To take advantage of these opportunities, the traditional caste groups made alliances with each other thus forming bigger entities. This laid the foundation of caste groups and alliances which continue to mobilize and consolidate people of the same caste even today.

- Caste and Empowerment of the Disadvantaged: It has given people of the disadvantaged community to demand their fair share of power. Caste politics has given people from Dalit and Backward Castes to gain better access to decision-making. Caste solidarity has turned into their safety net guaranteeing them better representation.

- Caste as a Cohesive force in Indian Politics: it is a source of unity among the members of the group and acts as a cohesive force.

- The prevalence of caste politics in India has led to the enactment of legislation to protect the rights of the disadvantaged and marginalized. For instance: Protection of Civil Rights Act 1976.

- The caste-based political parties are also solving the problems of the people belonging to the lower castes

thereby mobilizing them and making them politically aware.

- Caste associations have also played a role in spreading the culture of democratic politics in areas that were previously governed by tradition.
- The caste associations also act as pressure groups that reinforce the views of the people belonging to the lower caste thereby giving them their due representation in the political arena.

Negative effects of Caste on Politics

- Caste as divisive in Indian Politics: caste has often led to an unhealthy struggle for power and has fragmented the society into various caste groups.
- Increase in social and political tension: the provisions guaranteed for the protection of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes have led to dissatisfaction of the other sections of the society leading to an increase in the social and political tension.
- Regional political parties are also supporting dominant caste groups and mobilizing people along caste lines thereby hampering the spirit of harmony and solidarity of the Indian society.
- The caste factor has also affected the policies and decisions of the government. They tend to favour the dominant caste groups and make policies favouring these groups, thereby leading to the alienation of the vast majority.
- Caste politics also goes against the ideals of democracy which profess equality, and solidarity. Caste politics can also divert the attention of the government from pressing issues like poverty, development, and corruption to caste violence and tension.

Caste is constantly evolving and constantly changing its dynamism concerning Indian politics. As Sudipta Kaviraj says that there is a continuous process of churning of caste phenomenon in India. Its basis and modality of functioning are constantly changing through electoral politics, economic development, and cultural change. The Indian Constitution has taken several steps to promote equality and pursue concrete measures such as Reservation for Scheduled Castes and other welfare measures for the minority section, these measures have no doubt made some dent but the institution of caste is far from gone.

Scope of caste and politics covers various issues concerning different castes and institutions that mobilize

them. These institutions include caste organizations and political parties. Main issues covered in caste politics are relations of subordination and dominance between castes, caste-based violence, reservation in public institutions for jobs, social welfare schemes, social and cultural recognition, self-respect, human rights, social justice, etc. At the centre of conflicts and competition among castes is a quest for getting share in power structure. The competition among castes virtually becomes competition among political parties and political conflicts and competition among castes to get power. The political parties devise strategies to mobilize castes to win elections. The share in power through representation in institutions and policies can result in empowerment of castes. This share can be achieved by representation of castes in political institutions, especially Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha or Local institutions, and in educational and administrative structures. It is also possible through policies meant for the welfare of communities. Thus, relationship between caste and politics is about share of castes. Broadly, the scope of caste and politics includes mobilization of castes by different political parties in electoral and non-electoral politics. Since India has a federal political structure, relationship between caste and politics can be viewed at different levels of this structure: the institutions of local governance (PRIs and urban governance), the Vidhan Sabha elections at state levels and the Lok Sabha at national level.

In India, caste groups which form the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Castes (OBCs) have been entitled for reservation in public institutions: SCs for jobs, admission to educational institutions, legislative bodies, and institutions of local governance; and OBCs for jobs in public institutions, admission to educational institutions, and in the institutions of local governance such as panchayats and municipalities. The issue of reservation is embedded with caste politics. Different castes are involved in politics of reservation. Castes which are excluded from reservation either demand reservation to them, abolition of castebased reservation or exclusion of certain castes from the category entitled for reservation. The castes entitled for reservation want to retain the provisions for reservation to them. Since the categories such as SCs and OBCs consist of various castes, which have different levels of social, educational, and economic achievement, some castes among them

feel that they have not benefitted from reservation policies. They argue that benefits of reservation mostly go to the better off sections among the reserved categories of castes. For example, the Most Backward Classes in Uttar Pradesh demand that the reservation quota for the OBCs should be sub-divided so that advantage of reservation is given to them, and it does not disproportionately go to the dominant castes among the OBCs. In this context, the MBCs in some Hindi states demand sub-division of quota on the lines of Karpoori Thakur Formula. As you will read in unit 13, this formula is named after chief minister of Bihar who had sub-divided OBC quota so that extremely backward classes could benefit from reservation policy. Even the farming communities such as Jats in Rajasthan in 1999 and in Haryana in 2009, Marathas in Maharashtra in 2016 and Patels in Gujarat in 2015 launched agitations for their inclusion in the OBC category. Because of the Jats' agitation in Rajasthan, the BJP government in Delhi and UP, and the Congress government in Rajasthan included Jats in OBC list in their respective states. Both groups, supporters and opponents of reservation provide arguments in support of their positions. The opponents of reservation argue that basis of reservation should be economy and merit, caste-based reservation adversely affect merit and efficiency of governance, and some castes which are included in the OBC list are economically and politically dominant. The supporters of reservation argue that caste discrimination still exists, merit is determined by social inequalities; and in the case of the OBCs, especially those belonging to economically and politically dominant OBCs, it is argued that the constitution guarantees reservation to the socially and educationally backward communities. Improvement in their social and economic conditions does not make them socially and educationally forward. Hence, constitutionally they are entitled to reservation as OBCs. Differences among the supporters and opponents of reservation have on several occasions led to agitations and counter-agitations. These agitations have often turned violent marked by clashes between castes supporting and opposing or destruction of public property. The agitation against the implementation of Mandal Commission report in 1990 which suggested reservation to the OBCs in jobs in the central government institutions; anti-reservation agitations in Gujarat in 1981 and 1985, and in Bihar in the 1970s are some of the

examples in which reservation became a contentious issue in caste politics. The agitation against Mandal Commission report affected several states in north India, especially Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Bihar. In this agitation one student of Delhi University named Rajeev Goswami self-immolated himself. Zoya Hasan in *Quest for Power: Oppositional Agitations and Post-Congress Politics in Uttar Pradesh*, explains how in UP different castes agitated to support or oppose the implementation of Mandal Commission Report. Studies of Ghanshyam Shah (1987) and Nikita Sud (2012) discuss two agitations on reservation that took place in 1981 and 1985. During 1981 and 1985, in Gujarat, reservation became a source of conflict between the castes which were expected to benefit from reservation and the castes that were excluded from it. The politics of reservation in Gujarat had political background. In 1972, the government in Gujarat headed by Indira Gandhi-led Congress appointed Socially and Educationally Backward Class (SEBC) Commission under the chairmanship of Justice Baxi to identify backward classes in the state for the purpose giving them reservation in public institutions. The appointment of the Baxi Commission was a move to fulfil the promise which the Congress had made to recognize the Kshatriya as "backward". The Kshatriyas formed a group of different castes such as Rajputs, highest in hierarchy, Bhils, semi tribals, Varias, and Koli caste (Kothari 1970). Indeed, in the 1960s, the Congress had faced challenge from the opposition parties. In 1967 and 1969 elections, many Kshatriyas who were traditionally Congress supporters had supported the opposition Swatara Party. The Indira Gandhi-led Congress sought to win over the support of Kshatriyas by recognizing them as "backward". Recognition as backward class was an old demand of the Kshatriyas which they had made in 1954-55 before the first Backward Class Commission. The Baxi Commission submitted its report in 1976, and its recommendations were accepted in 1978 by the Janata Party government which had replaced the Congress government. The Baxi Commission identified 82 castes as 'backward', 62 of these castes belonged to different sub-groups of Kolis. Among the major recommendation of commission were included the following: 10 percent reservation of seats for 82 backward communities (OBCs) in medical and engineering colleges; and for state services, it recommended that 10 per cent seats should be reserved

in class III and class IV, and 5 per cent of seats in class I and II types of jobs. As most of castes identified as backward by the Baxi Commission were different sub-groups of Kolis, they would be the principal beneficiaries of reservation, the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha (GKS) and high castes had opposed the Baxi Commission recommendations. Some castes which were not recognized as backward by the Baxi Commission demanded that they should be considered backward because of their poor economic conditions and low social status. In response, the Congress (I) government headed by Madhav Singh Solanki in 1981 appointed Rane Commission under the chairmanship of Justice C V Rane to consider if any socially and educationally backward caste was left out of the OBC category. Rane Commission submitted its Report in 1983. It rejected caste as criterion of identifying backwardness and adopted economic criterion or occupation to determine backwardness. Meanwhile, conflict between two Congress (I) leaders – Madhav Singh Solanki and Jinabhai Daraji intensified to strengthen their hold on the Congress and get support of backward castes. To counter Daraji, Madhav Singh Solanki raised OBC quota from 10 to 28 per cent in 1985, while rejecting the economic criterion suggested by Rane Commission. He did so just two months before the assembly elections which were to be held in March 1985. In such political context, the medical students in the BJ Medical College in Ahmedabad launched an agitation against the seats reserved for SC students in the Pathology Department. Some students of this college had filed an affidavit in Gujarat High Court in November 1979 against the carry-forward, roster system, and interchangeability system of reserved seats. The student lost the case. It was followed by agitation of students demanding abolition of reservation in in different cities such as Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Jamnagar, and Surat. The Dalit Panther responded that it would also launch a counter agitation, if the demand to abolish reservation was accepted. However, the state government decided to abolish the “carry forward” system in reservation of seats for SCs and STs in post-graduate studies in medicine, and chief minister said that merit would not be totally ignored in professions like medicine and teaching. In some villages in Kheda, Ahmedabad and Mehsana districts, Dalit Bastis were set on fire. In 1985, another anti-reservation agitation took place in Gujarat. The Madhav Singh

Solanki government raised reservation for the OBCs in 1985 from 10 to 28 per cent, rejecting economic criterion of Rane Commission. Like the earlier anti-reservation agitation, this agitation also started from a medical college, Morbi College in Saurashtra. The students resorted to strike and boycotted classes. In Ahmedabad, students formed All Gujarat Educational Reform Education Committee (AGERAC), which gave a call for Gujarat Bandh. The Gujarat High Court passed an order staying the increase in OBC quota, and the government appointed a committee to suggest whether quota should be increased or not and declared that it would not increase quota till the committee submitted its report. Finally, the demand of the anti-reservation was accepted. According to Shah, reservation politics in Gujarat reflected conflict within the middle class – between upper and middle caste members and new low caste entrants into the middle class. The reservations were introduced by political elite for getting votes and defusing the aspirations of the marginalized groups. The upper and high castes felt deprived because of decline in traditional social status and insecure due to the entry of low castes into middle class. The anti-reservationists were backed by capitalists and had supporters in administration and media. Similarly, in Bihar, implementation of Mungeri Lal Commission report by Karpoori Thakur government in 1978 resulted in agitations against and for reservation. The Karpoori Thakur Formula gave reservations to various castes within extremely backward caste and backward caste.[18,19]

4. CONCLUSION

Violence involving caste and politics is generally related to caste-based discrimination that includes exploitation of women, economic exploitation, access to water, celebration of Ambedkar Jayanti (birthday), elections, etc. There are examples from different states in India where the low castes become victim because of unequal social status and economic inequalities. Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany in *The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India* (1998), and Dag-Erik Berg in *Dynamics of Caste and Law: Dalits, Oppression and Constitutional Democracy* (2020) discuss some cases about caste violence in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. In Bihar, caste-based organizations of several castes Senas (caste armies) emerged during the

late 1970s and 1980s. These were involved in caste disputes which often turned violent. Such violence often emerged from dispute on ownership of land among other issues between Dalits and OBCs such as Kurmis or Yadav or between Dalits and high castes such as Bhumihars. One of such disputes which caught national attention occurred in Pipra village of Punpun Division of Patna district in February 1980. In the dispute over the ownership of land between Dalits and Kurmis, members of two Dalit families were shot dead and bodies of the dead and houses of Dalits were burnt. Prior to the Pipra incident took place, two Kurmi landlords were murdered in neighbouring villages, one in December 1979 and another in January 1980. There are other examples from Bihar where Dalits were killed in caste violence arising out of dispute over land or some social issue, i.e., in Belchi in 1977, in Bishrampur in 1978, and in Arwal in Jehanabad district in 1986 (Mendelsohn and Vicziani, 1998: pp. 62-64). In Andhra Pradesh, castebased violence on Dalits including deaths occurred in three cases: in Kanchikacherla village of Krishna district in 1968, in Karmachedu village of Krishna district on 17 July 1985, and Tsunder village of Guntur district in 1991. Caste and Politics The Dalits had been victims of the landowning locally dominant caste. Giving example of Karmachedu massacre, Berg (2020) argues that it had occurred because of two reasons – provocation caused due to upward mobility of Dalits, and control on political power of landowning dominant peasant caste, Kamma. The Karmachedu massacre has its roots in dispute: on 17 July 1985 a Dalit (Madiga) boy rebuked a Kamma boy for washing his buffalo in the water tank from where Madiga drew water. In retaliation, the Kamma boy beat up the Dalit boy and an Madiga elderly woman who was present intervened. This led to retaliation from the Kammas, resulting to attack on residents of Madigawada. In the attack, houses of Dalits were set on fire, and six of them died. The Karmachedu massacre impacted the course of Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh. And as an immediate response to the massacre the Dalit Mahasabha was formed in Andhra Pradesh. The incident also had significance for political parties in Andhra Pradesh. The opposition Congress underlined that the some Kamma families of the village had relations with the chief minister, the Telugu Desam Party Chief, N.T. Rama Rao.

Caste Symbols – caste icons, historical figures, mythologies are important tools of caste mobilization. Recognition of such symbolism gives a sense of self confidence to the castes associated with such symbols. Four Political regimes, led by Mayawati chief in Uttar Pradesh at different times between 1995 and 2012 that underlined importance of caste symbols, and mobilization on such symbols by her party, the BSP, are important examples of use of caste symbols in politics. The Mayawati governments identified several villages as Ambedkar villages in UP. These villages have substantial Dalit population. She introduced several policies for the welfare of Dalits in these villages, as well as for development of such villages. Her government also constructed Ambedkar Park in Lucknow and several monuments to honour symbols and icons relating to low castes and social emancipation. Her government also created several new districts in the names of such icons and renamed old several districts[20]

Conflict of interest statement

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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