



Indian Social and Political Scenario in 21st Century

Niranjan Kumar Mistri

Ph.D. Scholar, Centre for African Studies School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Article Info

Volume 5, Issue 1
Page Number : 63-68

Publication Issue :

January-February-2022

Article History

Accepted : 01 Feb 2022
Published : 10 Feb 2022

Abstract - India is one of the largest countries of the world, such large that it imbibes the character of continent popularly known as subcontinent. The landmass provides life, liberty, property and security to the billions (1.35 billion). India is appreciated by the world for its multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society where all people from different class, caste, gender and religion lives harmoniously for centuries. After the independence of India from draconian colonial rule, she became the exemplar of secularism and democracy despite having so much social cleavages. Hindus in majority and six other minority religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, Christianity, Zoroastrian, Jews represents the India's religious fabric is to make this country liveable for all.

India is one of the largest and procedurally successful democracies. Indian State is characterised by welfare State. The gradually India has achieved the status of one fastest emerging mighty State of 21st century. It is not only emerging economies but entered in the most elite league of countries in the field of science and technology. India's might in science and technology move it towards digitalisation of transactions in any form. Indian governments are making relentless effort take out the millions of people from poverty and hunger by focussing on good governance, which is focussed on reducing entrenched corruption and price rise of commodities. India's development demands uninterrupted energy for which India is reducing reliance on petroleum and converging renewable energy sector to fulfil the demands. Urbanisation in India is about making cities smart but Indian Government is concentrating on making its villages smart by decentralising the development make it not vertically but horizontally. My paper is about enquiry to the relations between development of politics and politics of development. There is trend, which has been observed that India's political society is swerving from civil society. This paper is trying to enquire about this divergence.

Keywords : Multicultural, Multi-ethnic, Secular, Democracy, Welfare, Urbanization

India is one of the largest democratic countries of the world. This country provides life, liberty, property and security to the billions (1.35 billion). India is a diverse country. She is appreciated by the world for its multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society where all people from different class, caste, gender and religion lives harmoniously for centuries. After the independence of India from draconian colonial rule, she became the exemplar of secularism and democracy despite having so much social cleavages. Hindus (more than 80 per cent) in majority and other minority religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, Christianity, Zoroastrian, Jews represents the India's religious fabric is to make this country liveable for all. New kind of politics developed in 21st century due to assertion of marginalized sections of India like women, SCs, STs, OBCs and EWSs. Women are empowering after getting modern education in 21st century. They are contributing in the entire field. Someone is becoming player, actress, politician, professor, social activist, Indian Administer, Minister, pilot, police, engineer, doctors or lots of successful person in the society but if we look at the entire Indian society, it is realize that majority of this section is still in the dark or living with either with so much torture or humiliation in every area. To eliminate the exploitation, humiliation and provide accurate representation to women, the central and state government provides reservation in several fields. So that women can empower more.

In contemporary India, dalits, backward classes and economically weaker sections of our society assert in Indian society. This assertion led to the prolonged struggle to the attainment of cultural autonomy, dignity and self-respect. They have already staked their claim for political power. In several states, it is observed that they play a dominant role in politics of several states. In national politics, their participation has led to the constitution of power structure.

The untouchables of India are generally referred to as Dalits, and the constitution classify them as Schedules Castes. The category includes a large number of lower castes in Indian society. They are mostly employed in menial works like leather work, scavenging and agricultural labour. Even the land reforms could not do much to their gains. The various welfare programmes run by the government have a differential impact on them. But needless to say a mild improvement is witnessed in their condition.

There has developed a very articulate group in Dalits due to reservation in educational and political institutions. This group is now playing a vanguard role in articulating the issues of Dalits. It gives them an upward mobility; however this transition had not been uniform throughout the country. In major part of the country, Dalits continue to face humiliations. Despite constitutional safeguards, the fight against Dalit discrimination continues. Till this date Dalit continue to suffer. There has not been any obligation from the

corporate and private sector to do any social justice to Dalits. There is now a demand for the implementation of reservation of Dalits in the private sector.

The Other Backward Classes are another marginalized section of the Indian society, they are backward castes. Even constitution recognizes these social groups as Other Backward Classes, who are socially and educationally backward. However, there are groups in the Other Backward Classes which are politically and economically sound. This is the reason that a large number of Backward Castes in India are very strong in Indian politics, especially, in the states whose economy is driven by agriculture. There is also a differentiation in OBC's like Dalits. In North India, there are large number of landowning backward castes like Lodhs, Kurmies, Gujars, Jats and Yadavas. In Maharashtra there are Marathas and Patels and Lingayats, Kammias, Reddies in South India. These castes are most assertive in the category of OBC's. They are the one who have been benefited strongly due to land reforms and green revolution.

In rural society maximum resources are owned by OBC's. Some of them have even taken to the non-agriculture based economy. They have become equally strong in the towns and villages. They are important player in the market economy based on agriculture. However, most of the people belonging to OBCs and MBCs (Most Backward Classes). The latter category still struggle for a share in power.

The groups which are stronger in Northern India are actually members of upper backward castes i.e Lodhs, Kurmies, Gujars, Yadavas and Jats in Haryana, Rajasthan and Bihar. The most backward castes are also lower backward castes. The artisan classes have not shown the kind of assertion which intermediary castes have shown. However, Karpuri Thakur, who became the Chief Minister of Bihar twice, belonged to the Barber caste. Though he belonged to the service castes, he represented the lower backward castes. The representation of backwards castes, following two decades of independence was much less significant than the following years. Since 1970s there is an upsurge of caste politics in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. They became legislators and ministers in states, and played a crucial role in the formation of governments at the centre. Mulayam Singh Yadav, Charan Singh, Karpoori Thakur, Laloo Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar played an important role in mobilizing the Backward Castes.

Even Ram Manohar Lohia played an important role in mobilizing the backward castes. It was for the same reason that this combination of Ahirs, Gujars, Jats and Rajputs in the north India came to be known as AJGAR. Similarly, KHAM in Gujrat was the coalition of Harijans, Adivasis, Khartiyas and Muslims. The merger of Sanyukta Socialist Party and Bhartiya Kranti Dal in 1974 brought Gandhian and socialist ideologies together. This provided an ideological base to the backward class mobilization and assertion in North India.

In Janata Party, Backward class formed an important section. In 1977-80, the issues related to agriculture along-with backward class issues became the main focus of Janata Party government. The pressure exerted by these groups led to the formation of Mandal Commission for recognizing the backward classes. The interest of backward class found assertion in the form of implementation Mandal Commission Report by V.P. Singh. However, the implementation led to the anti--Mandal agitation.

All these developments speak for the rise of the backward classes. There is a slow and gradual inflow of backward castes in different political parties. Parties like Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh, Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar identified themselves with the interest of Backward Castes. The assertion of Backward Castes in Maharashtra, Karnatka and Tamil Nadu began much earlier than the North India. The roots of which are to be found in the Self-respect Movement led by E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker , who popularly came to be known as Periyar in the 1920s and 1930s. His effort led to the several other leaders following the path of social reform, like CM Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi. The ideology and aspiration of the backward classes were expressed through the political parties Anna Dravida, Munnetra Kagham (ADMK), DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kagham) and Justice Party and AIDMK. There are numerous other parties which work for the interest of the backward classes in South India.

In the south India, the assertion of the backward classes had been completely different, it was driven by the inclusion of artisan and service castes. Different political parties constitute different proportion of the backward castes. They have played a dominant role in economy and politics of the southern states. This has to an extent undermined the effect of upper castes. Therefore, unlike north India, south India never opposed implementation of Mandal Commission Report.

Post-independence, there was an emergence of different backward castes associations. There was an observation by Gallenter that there were more than 88 backward caste organizations which have expressed the interest of the backward castes. A majority of them existed in north India. The leading among them are Bihar State Backward Class Federation, Uttar Pradesh Backward Class Federation, both of which combined to form All India Backward Class Federation (AIBCF) by the efforts of Punjab Rao Deshmukh. Later, there was split in AIBCF, one of them struck to the ideology of the Congress while other to the Lohiaite socialism. The former was headed by Punjab Rao Deshmukh while the latter was led by R. L. Chandpuri. Under the leadership of R. L. Chandpuri, Indian National Backward Class Federation was formed on November 10, 1957. This organization empowered OBC's, who gained much more strength with the implementation of the land reforms. Though, AIBCF had become non-functional by 1970s, but capable backward class leaders have already risen on the scene, who asserted themselves under the Janata Party Regime (1977-80).

Under this leadership of OBC's, a second commission of backward castes was formed, known as backward class commission, under the leadership of B. P. Mandal. When Mandal Commission Report was submitted in 1989, there was a clear proposal of the implementation of 27 per cent reservation for OBC's in the government jobs. It changed the dynamics of the Indian Politics. Some backward caste movements are considered akin to freedom movement of the country. All this resulted in the appointment of Kalelkar Commission on January 29, 1953 headed by Kaka Kalelkar. The commission was to fix the criteria of identifying educationally and socially backward, so that he can formulate policies for their improvement. There were some differences in regard to the identifying the criteria of identifying the backward class community, there was a section which mentioned caste as the criteria and other mentioned it as a class. When Kalelkar report was presented to the government, it refused the implementation. However, Kalelkar proved to be one of the milestones in the assertion of the backward class interest. There was a demand for the appointment of another commission known as Mandal Commission. Under its effect, Government of India recognized National Commission of Backward Classes (NCBCs).

The current paper makes an analysis as to how OBC's have become politically dominant force in 21st century. In recent times they have become much more assertive, but the process of their gaining strength started much earlier. Their becoming conscious of the ideologies of Lohiaism, Ambedkarism can be one of the reasons of their becoming an assertive force. But, the irony is that their assertiveness has become pervasive across the country. But, there is no denying the fact that OBC's have become much stronger force in 21st century.

In the 21st century India has occupied an important position with the indigenous development of science and technology, medical science, service sector and growth in service sector. World is expecting India to play a leadership role in Asia. Nation across the globe is interested in developing friendly relation with India. Even India is seeking to develop a healthy relation with other countries of the world.

India is struggling to contain the price of all the essential commodities, at the same time there is rampant corruption in all the sectors. However, there is a great chance that India would make a rapid progress in agriculture and industry. India is expected to play a leadership role in Asia, and will be self-reliant in coming days, and is expected to leave Japan behind. India is also making progress in space technology, and is bound to launch many rockets from its own launching complex. India is developing renewable energy and searching for alternative fuel energy. India is also bound to make a great progress in cultural field. It is reflected in patronisation of dance, music, painting and sculpture. Indian artists are known everywhere.

In the 21st century India will be ahead in education. Indian youth will witness a lot of integration of vocational and technical training in their curriculum. It is least likely that there will be educated unemployed in the country. There is a going to be change in the educational policy. The country will not witness illiteracy. India wants to be reform customs in the 21st century, and society will be more tolerant to the needs of women. The crimes like throwing acid on her body would end. India will realize its entire goal, and Indians will be proud citizen in the 21st century.

Reference

1. Frankel, R. Francine, and Hasan Zoya (eds.) (2000), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy*, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi).
2. Gopal, Niraja Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (eds.) (2010), *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*, (Oxford Press University, New Delhi).
3. IGNOU Study Material, MPSE: 008, *State Politics in India*.
4. Manor, James, "Parties and the Party System" in Atul Kohli., (ed.) (1990), *India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State Society Relations*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton).
5. Narain, Iqpal (ed.) (1976), *State Politics in India*, (Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut).
6. Thorner, Daniel (1980), *The Shaping of Modern India*, (Allied, New Delhi).
7. Web Sources.
8. <http://www.indiabroadband.net/general-offtopic-discussions/15848-condition-indian-women-21st-century.html/10/02/2020>.
9. <http://www.shareyouressays.com/essays/475-words-article-on-india-in-the-21st-century/850/16/10/02/2020>
10. (<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/rajya-sabha-passes-bill-to-grant-constitutional-status-to-obc-commission-1896230/15/02/2020>).