

Role of Identity Politics in Ensuring Social Justice in India

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Abstract:

Identity Politics has become a prominent subject in the Indian Politics in past few years. Rise of lower castes, gender, religious identities, linguistic groups and ethnic conflicts have contributed to the significance of identity politics in India.

The tendency for individuals who share a specific racial, religious, ethnic, social, or cultural identity to create exclusive political coalitions in order to further their own interests independent of those of a broader political group is known as identity politics. The goal of identity politics is to help marginalized communities regain more political freedom and self-determination by helping them recognize what makes them unique. The charms of caste, ethnicity, religion, language, and gender propel identity politics. Identity politics has in fact transcended all bounds of the political imaginary, challenging all ingrained preconceptions as well as the significance of race, caste, class, and sexual preferences.

Social justice is the fair treatment and equitable status of all individuals and social groups within a state or society. This paper aims to bring about a general understanding of the concept of identity politics and the key identities which are playing a crucial role in Indian politics. Further this paper will also analyze the relation between identity politics and social justice and how identity politics is playing a role in curbing social injustice prevailing within the Indian society.

Keywords: Identity, Politics, Social Justice.

INTRODUCTION:

Identity politics refers to political positions based on the interests and perspectives of social groups with which people identify. It includes the ways in which people's politics may be shaped by aspects of their identity through loosely correlated social organizations. Identity politics is primarily a modern phenomenon because some scholars feel that emphasis on identity based on a central organizing principle of ethnicity, religion, language, gender, sexual preferences, or caste positions, are a sort of "compelling remedy for anonymity" in an otherwise impersonal modern world.

Identity politics is said to "signify a wide range of political activity and theorising founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups." As a political activity it is thus considered to signify a body of political projects that attempts a "recovery from exclusion and denigration" of marginalised groups on the basis of differences based on their "selfhood" determining characteristics like ethnicity, gender, sexual preferences, caste positions etc.. Identity politics thus seeks to assert the very markers that set one social group apart from the others and use them as an assertion of selfhood and identity based on "difference" rather than "equality" in order to achieve empowerment,

representation, and recognition of those groups. Those who support identity politics use mythologies, cultural symbols, and familial ties to establish a sense of community and then politicize these elements to demand acceptance of their unique identities.

IDENTITY POLITICS IN INDIA

In India, communities and collective identities have persisted in their influence and demand acknowledgment even after the country's independence and the adoption of a liberal democratic political system. As per Bikhu Parekh, this procedure has acknowledged a diverse range of self-governing and independent communities. It has made an effort to make peace with itself as a community of communities and an association of persons, acknowledging that each is a right bearer.

Many academics have come to believe that the post-independence state and its institutions and structures have provided a material basis for the establishment of identity claims, most likely because of this claim for and recognition of specific identities by the Indian post-independence state. India's social and political dynamics are therefore extremely complicated. The social divide in India is multifaceted, encompassing caste, race, ethnicity, language, religion, and gender. Following its independence, India had to contend with religion, language, and caste as it built its nation. In more recent times, gender identity has also gained speed and strength.

CASTE AND INDIAN POLITICS

In modern India, it is normal to analyse democratic political processes in terms of communities and caste. Almost all observers, including the general public, professional academic analysts, and popular media psephologists, view caste as a significant factor affecting how the Indian political system functions. Caste communities are portrayed as influencing election results; they also function as pressure groups and have an impact on the local, regional, and national governance agendas of the Indian state. The leaderships and programs of political parties are also often shaped by caste considerations. Despite social mobility, the Shudras and other outcasts have faced oppression from the caste system, which is built on the ideas of pollution and purity, hierarchy and distinction. These groups have lived in extreme poverty, lack of education, and denial of political authority, stigmatized as ritually impure. One may argue that the problem of the state offering oppressed caste groups protection discrimination is where combative identity politics based on caste originated. As a result, the higher caste-dominated BJP, the lower caste-dominated BSP or SP, and left-wing political parties have all tacitly adopted the caste system in order to gain political clout. Caste has grown to be a significant factor in both Indian politics and society. The country's politics have changed due to the introduction of organized politics and the realization of caste affiliations among previously marginalized groups. This has resulted in the emergence of shifting caste-class alliances.

RELIGION AND INDIAN POLITICS

The formation of a community based on a common religious relationship is another example of identity politics in action. Religion-based identity systems have grown to be a significant cause of conflict, both internationally and, since the early 1990s, inside the Indian democratic and secularist communities. Majoritarian assertiveness is seen to have become institutionalized following the formation of a coalition ministry in March 1998 by the BJP and its "Hindu" supporters, who provided political cohesion to a growing Hindu consciousness. To create the feeling that "we are all of the same

kind," the formation of a religious community, like all identification systems, hides internal distinctions within a specific faith. Thus, to build a homogeneous united religious identity, inequalities between caste groups within a homogenous Hindu identity, as well as linguistic and sectional variations within Islam, are shelved.

The methodical rewriting of history that is institutionalizing this religious assertiveness is a process that has the capacity to reformulate India's national identity along communal trajectories.

LANGUAGE IN INDIAN POLITICS

Following India's independence, political movements aimed at establishing new states emerged along linguistic lines of identity. The sixteen northern Telugu-speaking districts of Madras State became the new State of Andhra in 1953, becoming the first state to be created on the basis of language. The movement to create a Telugu-speaking state out of the northern portion of Madras State gained momentum in the years following independence. In Indian politics, "language" ruled the years 1953–1956, respectively. But the fight for distinct states for linguistic collectivities did not cease in 1956, and the Indian leadership is still concerned about it today. As language organizes group identities and creates the parameters for identifying the "in-group" and "out-group," it becomes a crucial assumption.

While most people believe that linguistic states give collectivities in a diverse society freedom and autonomy, some argue that linguistic states 'have reinforced regionalism and has provided a platform for the articulation of a phenomenal number of identity claims in a country that has 1,652'mother tongues' and only fourteen recognized languages around which states have been reorganized.

GENDER AND POLITICS

The status of women in Indian politics is a reflection of both the country's democratic opportunities and limitations. India's thriving civil society is largely dependent on the myriad social movements and nongovernmental organizations that women have played a major role in.

"Gender Identity" refers to an individual's thoughts, beliefs, and feelings about themselves. However, the effort to identify one's presence is implied when gender is discussed in relation to identity politics. Examples of this can be found in the global feminist and LGBT liberation movements. The three main political parties—the Congress Party, the BJP, and the Communist Party (Marxist)—have all taken distinct stances on women's concerns while adhering to their primary ideological beliefs. The BJP, a right-of-center confessional party, has organized women around themes of Hindu nationalism while sprinkling expressions of its secular convictions throughout. The CPM, a secular party with a left slant, has mobilized impoverished women on issues of poverty and redistribution. Congress, a centrist party with socialist and traditionally secular tendencies, has successfully wooed women with its support for secularism and minority rights. Women's opinions on gender inequity are not, however, influenced by the philosophies of these parties.

Identity politics refers to a broad range of political actions as well as theoretical analysis of situations in which particular social groups are subjected to injustice or oppression and their attempts to regain greater political freedom and self-determination so they can engage in society on an equal footing with other members of the community. Therefore, it serves as a vehicle for articulating political claims or advocating for social and political measures in light of the injustice or inequity that these groups must contend with in order to become unique, powerful, and recognized.

IDENTITY POLITICS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN INDIA

Indeed, in India, the politics of social justice and multiculturalism have been fueled by the politics of identity. In the Indian setting, social justice and the state are inextricably linked. Social justice, as a concept and a policy, is now heavily influenced by the state in modern-day India. This is due to the fact that social justice theory is still relatively new in India, despite the fact that philosophical thought has always had the potential to inspire some social groups to organize politically in order to pursue the common good.

Social justice flows from the systemic injustice that permeates society. A state's economic policies and socio-political processes give rise to inequality and injustices. Social inequalities seem to be primarily caused by exclusion in all of its forms. Inherently, exclusion entails unequal access to justice, liberty, and freedom. It used to be connected to both economic discrimination and identity politics.

Social justice claims in the modern era appear to be splitting more and more into two categories. First, there are "redistributive claims," which try to distribute public resources and primary commodities in a way that is more equitable and right. "Policies of recognition" is the second. Furthermore, political philosophers have recently become interested in this kind of claim; some of them are working to create a new conception of justice that centers on the recognition of many identities.

Several laws and policies have been introduced by the nation's leaders and the writers of the Constitution to address the challenges generated by the crisis of identity that various groups of people experience due to factors such as gender, caste, religion, and others. The Constitution's preamble and several Articles in Part IV support social justice, enabling each person to live a meaningful life with human dignity. The Constitution's engrafted notion of social justice is composed of various concepts that are fundamentally for each citizen's orderly personal development. Therefore, social justice is a fundamental component of justice in general. Justice is the genus, and social justice is one of its species. Social justice is a dynamic system designed to lessen the suffering of the underprivileged, weak, Dalit, tribal, and impoverished segments of society and to bring them up to the equality level so they can live with dignity. Stated differently, the goal of social justice is to achieve a significant level of political, economic, and social equality—something that every segment of society has a right to expect.

The Indian Constitution, which recognizes the right to equality as a fundamental component of justice, forbids discriminatory conduct based on gender, caste, religion, or race. The definition of "equality" is the absence of special treatment for any group within society and the availability of equal chances for everyone, free from prejudice. The Preamble guarantees equality of status and opportunity to all Indian citizens. The civic, political, and economic facets of equality are all included in this clause.

Part III of the Indian Constitution contains several fundamental rights, some of which are open to everyone and others of which are exclusive to Indian nationals, in an effort to ensure social justice for all of its residents. Furthermore, the constitution stipulates that the state must focus its policies on achieving these goals in order to achieve social justice. This guidance comes in the form of Directive Principles of State Policy.

The government's efforts to ensure social fairness through equalization or protected discrimination policies have created some conflict in society, despite its well-intentioned dedication. Even these actions, which have nothing to do with social justice, are carried out in the name of social justice. Ensuring the appropriate and equitable execution of policies is crucial in order to transform social justice into a potent tool for advancing social progress. Through legislative initiatives like reservations, identity politics has improved the representation of marginalized groups and socially

excluded classes. Because they would be included in mainstream politics and receive respect for claiming their identities, it also gives marginalized and weaker segments of society the opportunity to become more politically aware.

CONCLUSION

A wide range of political activities have been referred to as "identity politics," and these formations usually seek to protect the political liberties of a particular group that has been marginalized within society as a whole. In order to achieve greater self-determination, members of that constituency either proclaim or reclaim methods of interpreting their difference that go against prevailing oppressive characterizations. Communities and collective identities—based on language, religion, caste, race, or gender identity—have remained strong and continue to demand recognition in India even after the country's liberal democratic democracy was adopted following independence. In Indian politics, democracy and diversity have become the deeply ingrained and institutionalized common sense. In India, the struggle for identity, its identification, and its politicization are significant phenomena that are also a part of the governing process.

Today's justice necessitates both recognition and redistribution. Developing a comprehensive understanding of justice that can support both justifications for social equality and justifications for acknowledging differences is the challenge of moral philosophy. Understanding the intricate relationships between class and status, economy and culture, in social environments that are becoming more postindustrial, transnational, and multicultural, is the goal of social theory. The challenge in political theory is to imagine a system of institutional structures and related policy changes that can address both misrecognition and maldistribution while reducing the likelihood of mutual interferences that occur when the two types of redress are pursued concurrently. It is stated that there is little to no value in defining what identity politics is in this setting. Rather, a thorough examination of specific political interventions including elements of identitarian thought and their degree of effectiveness in establishing long-term social fairness are required.

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