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POLITICAL COMPETENCY AMONG BACKWARD CLASSES IN RURAL AREA- A CASE OF HARYANA

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Abstract:

The present study was carried out to know the Political Competency among Backward Classes in rural Haryana. On the basis of literacy rate, 267 respondents from four villages namely, Kardhan, Gokalgarh, Dhanauri village and Chautala village were selected with the help of Stratified Random sampling. The study reveals that majority of the respondents know the name of the Chief Minister and MLA/ MP of their constituency. Maximum respondents knew the meaning of democracy, equality of right, adult franchise, midterm election and lok sabha/vidhan sabha etc. It is also found that majority of the respondents (63.3%) agreed that sometimes politician seem so complicated but disagreed (81.65%) on the point that most political parties care only winning the elections. The study highlighted that caste plays a major role in creating hurdles in decision making process in political sphere. The study shows that majority of the people cast their vote on the basis caste. Regarding the involvement in a political party, only 17.6 % respondents were found having worked for political parties but reluctant on joining an organisation for the OBC's. The study highlights that maximum of the backward classes people were consulted in decision making process at village level but cast their vote on the basis of caste irrespective of their educational advancement.

KEY WORDS:

Backward Caste; Sanskritisation; Political Competence; Gram Panchayat; Caste Associations

INTRODUCTION

The political system consists of political institutions (e.g. government associations, political parties) and political organizations existing in a society performing various kinds of functions based on the set norms and goals as per the constitutional and political philosophy of the State (Almond and James, 1960). The traditional rural political system was based on the zamindari system, the caste system and the village Panchayat. After independence, the power holders in rural areas are classified on the basis of the ownership and control of land; their caste; their numerical strength and on the basis of the position they hold (Ahuja, Ram, 1999). At present, the term 'backward classes' denotes three different categories of castes such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and OBCs/SEBCs (Other Backward Classes / Socially and Educationally Backward Classes). Andre Beteille (1992) defines "OBCs are residual category, there is highly ambiguous; and it is impossible to give an exact statement of their number". As per K.L. Sharma (1997) the OBCs are those, which are not as backward as the SCs and STs; OBCs comprises the non-untouchable and intermediate castes that were traditionally engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry and functional services. The position of OBCs is far better than the SCs & STs. OBCs/SEBCs in Haryana. The term 'Backward Classes' in its narrow sense is that it does not include SCs and STs. But in common and popular use it is termed as 'Backward Classes' (Prasad, Anirudh 1997).

Political competence is the skill, perspectives, and values needed for effective political

movement. It is the ability to understand what you can and cannot control when to take action, anticipate who is going to resist your agenda and determine who you need on your side to push your agenda forward. Political competence knows how to work through coalitions. (An interview of Professor Samuel B. Bacharach by Daniel Gherghe-2005). Easton and Dennis viewed political competence involving three basic dimensions: (1) a general belief that government is responsive to citizen influence; (2) skills necessary for effective political behaviour; and (3) a psychological disposition or feeling of confidence in one's personal ability to influence salient government decisions. Almond and Verba (1963) defined political or citizen competence as an ability to exert influence in the decision-making process. The willingness to participate concerns the extent of citizen engagement in public affairs as a pure quantitative measure, the ability to do so refers to the competence of citizens to further their interests in a purposeful manner (Milner 2002)

The available literature on the Other Backward Classes or SEBCs in India reflects the particular aspect of backwardness. In a study by Rose William (1968) on Noniya community, a sudra caste found in M.P., U.P. and Bihar which now acclaim the status of a well known warrior clan, the Chauhan Rajput. Verma (1979) in his study on the Kurmi Sabha in North India found the process of social transformation amongst Kurmi people who had a manifest goal of acquiring a higher ritual rank by accepting kashatriya model of sanskritization and the latent goal of legitimising the access to higher strategic resources of power since from the pre independence era. The latent goal has now become manifest. The aim of the Sabha has shifted from sacred to secular goals. Lucia Michelutti's (2004) work carried out in Mathura town on Yadavas and found that Yadavas, who were a low to the middle ranked peasant class, have become a significant political force in U.P. & Bihar by demonstrating their political activism which was partly linked to their descent view of caste, folk theories of religious descent, factionalism. Sudha Pai and Jagpal Singh (1997) examined an ongoing process of politicization and resulting conflict between Dalits (SCs) and the Most Backward Castes (a section of OBCs.) in four villages of Meerut district in western Uttar Pradesh after and before the Lok Sabha Elections of 1996. The study indicated that MBCs have begun confrontation with the OBCs and the Dalits. E. Venkatesu (2005) analysed the trends and limitations of Caste Associations or Federations of Caste Associations in the Backward Castes mobilization. Only three caste associations such as Munnurukapu, Gouds (toddy-tappers), and Padmashali, were chosen for analysis. These associations were found helpful to protect their economic rights and to prepare its peoples to participate in the newly emerged democratic political system by organizing, mobilizing, articulating their interests and to participate in the political process. B.B. Mohanty (2003), based on his study concludes that in Maharashtra the members of backward classes and women take part in the decision making process in the Gram Sabha. In Haryana state, D.C. Miglani found that the voters their favourable choice as middle-aged persons (31-40 years). Satyakam Joshi (2003) in a study conducted in 1999 concludes that with regular elections, the position of upper castes has been challenged by the middle and OBCs as they have begun to assert their rights. S.S. Sharma in his study of western UP re-confirmed the significance of caste in local politics. The study also highlight that landlords and cultivators were dominating the panchayat and ex-lambardars were found to be losing position. M. Sam Roy in his study found that the caste, numerical strength and ward system play relatively more significant role in comparison to other social, economic and political variables in ensuring representation at local levels. D. S. Choudhry (1981) revealed that that even after democratization, the monopoly in politics of rich and well to do families continues at the grass-root level irrespective of caste, education and age and family.

In the present context, the problem has taken serious shape due to political motives in our society. In fact, they are used as a vote-bank in the field of power and politics. So now-a-days it has become a fertile area for sociologists to study such phenomenon (i.e. OBCs). Keeping these views in mind, we have decided to conduct a study on Political Competency among Other Backward Classes in rural Haryana.

METHODOLOGY, SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The present study was carried out in rural Haryana on the basis of literacy rate. Four villages namely, Kardhan village in Ambala district, Gokalgarh village in Rewari district were selected from high literacy rate and Dhanauri village in Jind district, Chautala village in Sirsa district were selected from the low literacy rate. Stratified Random sampling was used in the present study and 267 respondents were selected from the universe i.e. 20% from each caste. All the heads of the household have been interviewed with the help of interview-schedule to get information. In the secondary sources - Village Panchayat record, village health worker survey register, report of backward classes commission, census report and other concerned literature have been used in the present study. Realizing the importance of political competency, the study tries to know the political competency among Backward Classes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No. 1

Sr. No	Description of items	Responses of Respondents		
		Yes	No	Total
1	Do you know the name of the M.L.A & M.P. of your constituency?	245(91.8)	22(8.2)	267(100.00)
2	Do you know the name of the Chief Minister?	251(94.00)	16(6.00)	267(100.00)
3	Should Adult take part in active politics?	201(75.3)	66(24.7)	267(100.00)
4	Should uneducated have right to vote?	242(90.6)	25(9.4)	267(100.00)
5	Should women take part in politics?	80(30.00)	187(70.00)	267(100.00)
6	Should students take part in politics?	233(87.3)	34(12.7)	267(100.00)

Note: Figures given in brackets represent percentage

Table No. 1 reveals that majority of the respondents i.e. above 91% know the name of the Chief Minister and MLA/ MP of their constituency. Maximum respondents i.e. above 75% argued that adult and students should take part in politics. Majority of respondents (90.6%) acquainted with the fact that uneducated person have right to vote but a large number of respondents (70.0%) did not support that women should take part in politics.

Table No. 2

Sr. No	Description of items	Responses of Respondents			
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
1	Knowledge of democracy	154(57.7)	30(11.2)	83(31.1)	276(100.0)
2	Knowledge of adult franchise	149(55.8)	18(6.7)	100(37.5)	276(100.0)
3	Knowledge about Lok sabha / vidhan sabha	245(91.8)	4(1.5)	18(6.7)	276(100.0)
4	Knowledge about Mid term election	119(44.6)	7(2.6)	141(52.8)	276(100.0)
5	Knowledge about Equality of right	119(44.6)	21(7.9)	127(52.8)	276(100.0)

Note: Figures given in brackets represent percentage

It is observed from the study that 57.7, 91.8, 44.6, 55.8 and 44.6% respondents know the meaning of democracy, equality of right, adult franchise and midterm election. It is interested to know that majority of the respondents i.e. 91.8% know the meaning of lok sabha/vidhan sabha.

Table No.3

Sr. No	Description of items	Responses of Respondents		
		Yes	No	Total
1	Some time politician seem so complicated	169(63.3)	98(36.7)	276(100.0)
2	Most political parties care only winning elections	49(18.4)	218(81.6)	276(100.0)

Note: Figures given in brackets represent percentage

Table No. 3 reveals that majority of the respondents (63.3%) agree that sometimes politician seem so complicated but maximum of them (81.65) disagree on the point that most political parties care only winning elections.

Table No. 4

Barriers in decisions making					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Caste	167	62.5	62.5	62.5
	Religion	12	4.5	4.5	67.0
	Language	2	.7	.7	67.8
	region	17	6.4	6.4	74.2
	1+2	10	3.7	3.7	77.9
	1+2+4	6	2.2	2.2	80.1
	miscellaneous	39	14.6	14.6	94.8
	Don't know	14	5.2	5.2	100.0
	Total	267	100.0	100.0	

Table No. 4 explain the responses of the respondents regarding to create hurdle in the decision making process in political system. The responses of the respondents were classified into eight categories i.e. caste (62.5 %), religion (4.5 %), language (.7 %), region (6.4 %), caste and religion (3.7 %), caste, religion and region (2.2 %), miscellaneous (14.6 %) and do not know (5.2 %). Thus on the basis of above table it can be concluded that the role of caste the major cause to create a hurdle in decision making process in political system in the opinion of the respondents.

Table No. 5

Affected electorate					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Caste	168	62.9	62.9	62.9
	Religion	11	4.1	4.1	67.0
	Personality of the candidate	13	4.9	4.9	71.9
	Prestige of party	25	9.4	9.4	81.3
	Miscellaneous	41	15.4	15.4	96.6
	Don't know	9	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	267	100.0	100.0	

Now-a-days elections have become more complex due to different reasons. After the entry of money and muscle power in election, the atmosphere of election becomes tense. Every voter has a reasonable cause for voting a particular candidate. In Table No. 5 these reasons classified in six categories i.e. Caste (62.9%), Religion (4.1%), Personality of candidate (4.9%), Prestige of party (9.4%), Miscellaneous (15.4%), and do not know (3.4%). Thus study shows that caste played a determinant role in deciding the candidature in rural area.

Table No. 6

Source of Political information					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	T.V.	44	16.5	16.5	16.5
	Peer group	7	2.6	2.6	19.1
	Newspapers +T.V.	29	10.9	10.9	30.0
	Radio + T.V.	136	50.9	50.9	80.9
	Newspapers +T.V. +Radio	42	15.7	15.7	96.6
	Any others	9	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	267	100.0	100.0	

The table 6 depicts that only 2.6% respondents used peer group for source of political information, followed by T.V. (16.5%), Newspapers +T.V. (10.9 %), Radio + T.V. (50.9%) as sources of political information while 3.4 % respondents stated that they are using others sources of information. Thus maximum people of backward classes used mass media as a source of political information.

Table No. 7

Worked for political party					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Office bearer	4	1.5	1.5	1.5
	Ordinary person	38	14.2	14.2	15.7
	Any other	5	1.9	1.9	17.6
	Not worked	220	82.4	82.4	100.0
	Total	267	100.0	100.0	

Table No. 7 explains the views of the respondents regarding whether they are work/worked for a political party or individual candidates during the election. In response to this the study highlight that only 17.6 % worked for political party out of which 1.5 %, 14.2% and 1.9% respondents worked as office-bearer, as ordinary person and 1.9 % work with any other (indifferent position) respectively, but the majority them did not work for any political party. Thus their active participation is not satisfactory.

Table No. 8

Organization of OBCs					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	13	4.9	4.9	4.9
	No	45	16.9	16.9	21.7
	Don't know	209	78.3	78.3	100.0
	Total	267	100.0	100.0	

Part-A

Are you member of any organization of OBCs, why					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	For the welfare of the community	2	.7	.7	.7
	Status & prestige	1	.4	.4	1.1
	For personal benefit	3	1.1	1.1	2.2
	Miscellaneous	7	2.6	2.6	4.9
	No membership	254	95.1	95.1	100.0
	Total	267	100.0	100.0	

Table no 8 showed that majority of the respondents i.e. near about 95.1 % respondents did not take any membership for any organization which was meant for OBCs welfare. Only 4.9 % respondents associated with OBCs organization. Those who associated with organization they gave different arguments which is classified in four categories namely for the welfare of the community (.7%), status and prestige to attached it (.4%), for personal benefit (1.1%) and miscellaneous basis(2.6%). Thus majority of the respondents did not join any caste-based organization.

Table No. 9

Are you free to participate in village politics					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Contest the election	102	38.2	38.2	38.2
	Freedom of voting	120	44.9	44.9	83.1
	Freedom to establish origination	1	.4	.4	83.5
	Miscellaneous	18	6.7	6.7	90.3
	No freedom	26	9.7	9.7	100.0
	Total	267	100.0	100.0	

The participation in village politics is an index of political involvement and activism on the part of the people. Table No. 9 shows that majority of the respondents i.e. 38.2% and 44.9% contest the election and freedom of voting respectively. Only 9.7% respondents did not free to participate in village politics.

Table No. 10

Are the backward classes people consulted in decision					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	212	79.4	79.4	79.4
	No	55	20.6	20.6	100.0
	Total	267	100.0	100.0	

Table No. 10 shows that majority of the respondents i.e. 79.4% people were consulted in decision making process at village level. Only 20.6% respondents were neglected in this process. Thus majority of the Backward Classes people consulted at village level decision.

Table No. 11

Annual Income of the Respondents & their views on Disputes Settlement Mechanism					
Annual Income (in Rs.)	By whom do you get your disputes settled				Total
	Vill. Panchayat	By politician	By court	Caste Panchayat	
25000-50000	79	0	22	15	116
	68.1%	.0%	19.0%	12.9%	100.0%
50000-75000	53	0	16	5	74
	71.6%	.0%	21.6%	6.8%	100.0%
75000-100000	26	1	6	2	35
	74.3%	2.9%	17.1%	5.7%	100.0%
10000-125000	11	0	4	2	17
	79.7%	.0%	13.5%	6.8%	100.0%
125000-150000	9	0	1	0	10
	90.0%	.0%	10.0%	.0%	100.0%
150000-175000	7	0	2	0	9
	87.8%	.0%	12.2%	.0%	100.0%
above 175000	5	0	1	0	6
	88.3%	.0%	11.7%	.0%	100.0%
Total	190	1	52	24	267
	71.2%	.4%	19.5%	9.0%	100.0%

Table No.11 shows that majority of the respondents in the entire income group i.e. above 68.1% respondents settled their disputes at village panchayat level. But new fact found in the study that as the level of income increased, it decreased the faith in the caste panchayat.

Table No. 12

Educational Standard and Views on Factors Affecting Electorate								
Affecting Factors	Affected electorate							Total
	caste	religion	personality of the candidate	prestige of party	miscell	don't know		
Illiterate	69	7	8	6	16	7	113	
	61.1%	6.2%	7.1%	5.3%	14.2%	6.2%	100.0%	
1-4 Standard	36	0	3	3	6	2	50	
	72.0%	.0%	6.0%	6.0%	12.0%	4.0%	100.0%	
5-8 Standard	43	2	1	10	7	0	63	
	68.3%	3.2%	1.6%	15.9%	11.1%	.0%	100.0%	
9-12 Standard	16	1	1	4	9	0	31	
	51.6%	3.2%	3.2%	12.9%	29.0%	.0%	100.0%	
College	3	1	0	0	1	0	5	
	60.0%	20.0%	.0%	.0%	20.0%	.0%	100.0%	
Others	1	0	0	2	2	0	5	
	20.0%	.0%	.0%	40.0%	40.0%	.0%	100.0%	
Total	168	11	13	25	41	9	267	
	62.9%	4.1%	4.9%	9.4%	15.4%	3.4%	100.0%	

Table no. 12 revealed that maximum respondents cast their vote on the basis of caste irrespective of their educationally advanced. But it is interesting that level of education increased the caste decreased as the basis of cast a vote.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that majority of the respondents know the name of the Chief Minister and MLA/MP of their constituency. Maximum people favoured that adult and students should take part in politics, but they were against the women's participation. Maximum respondents knew the meaning of democracy, equality of right, adult franchise, midterm election and lok sabha/vidhan sabha etc. It is also found that majority of the respondents (63.3%) agreed that sometimes politician seem so complicated but disagreed (81.65%) on the point that most political parties care only winning the elections. The study highlighted that caste plays a major role in creating hurdles in decision making process in political sphere.

Now-a-days elections have become more complex due to different reasons due to entry of money and muscle power in elections. Every voter has a reasonable cause for voting a particular candidate. The study shows that majority of the people cast their vote on the basis caste. The study indicates that maximum people of backward classes used mass media as a major source of their political information. Regarding the involvement in a political party, only 17.6 % respondents were found having worked for political parties. On the issue of joining an organisation for the OBC's, majority of the respondents were found reluctant. The study highlights that a meager percentage of the respondents i.e. 9.7%, did not freely involve in village politics, but maximum of them (79.4%) were consulted in decision making process at village level. It was also analysed that majority of the respondents in the entire income group i.e. above 68.1% respondents, settle their disputes at village panchayat level. Further, it was also traced out that maximum respondents cast their vote on the basis of caste irrespective of their educational advancement.

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