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POLITICAL ELITE IN WESTERN MAHARASHTRA



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Short Profile

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ABSTRACT:

In modern democratic system, there became a great change in the structure of the elites. In a democratic system the legislator constitute the key elite of the society. 'It is a small minority who plays an exceptionally important role in the political and socio-economic affairs of the state. Caste is one of the important factors in Indian politics. Normally the elites represent the high class or progressive group. Politics is related to the process of power partnership. So it becomes necessary to study the elite class. The theory of elites is important for understanding political structure and political process in any system.

Who are the elites and how do they become elites, these are some of the important issues. Caste plays an important role in providing integrity to the elites in Western Maharashtra. So the study of elites on the basis of Castes is unavoidable. In the formation of elites, elections play an important part, so the study is based on elections.

KEYWORDS

Political Elite , democratic system , legislator constitute

INTRODUCTION :

In an adult voting system, the Castes which have majority of voters get importance. In the state assembly of Maharashtra, Maratha Community naturally gets more representation. 'It is approximately 125-140. The Maratha class which has 31% of population has control over more than 50% seats of state Assembly' (Vora; 2004: 15), and 70 % in Western Maharashtra. However, at local level various other Castes are also influential. It is important to study, how members of other Castes get and sustain the representation depending on these Castes.

Contemporary politics, more so- seems to be revolving Caste and region. Of the two, Caste is more famous and has for long recognized as a factor in explaining politics in India. Language, culture, economy etc. provide a base to territoriality in order to sustain in politics. It may be argued that Caste is not only yet another base, but one, which potentially combines other factors –particularly economy –in providing a base to region to operate as a factor in politics. Thus, we can imagine a complex relationship between Caste and region. A relationship of interdependence. Caste expresses through region (as territoriality), region becomes politically sustainable on the basis of Caste; Caste is bound up by territoriality and in constituting the social space, Caste takes the form of a region. Though Caste system is class-oriented social system; in a specific locality the place of a Caste is determined by the fact that which Caste is considered superior in that particular locality. Majority of the Castes not only cover single states but in some cases only some part of the state is covered. In a village or tehsil a Caste which has majority, progresses towards power. In Maharashtra there are 50 constituencies from where only Maratha candidate got elected since 1978 (Palshikar; 2002: 15). From Solapur and Kolhapur Lingayat candidates get elected. From Kolhapur and Sangli Jain Candidate get elected, Dhangar Candidate get elected from Solapur and Sangli , Padmashali Candidate elected from Solapur, Mahadev Koli Candidate get elected from Ahmednagar, Brahmin Candidate elected from Pune, The minority Castes interfere in the election process according to their numbers.

We find distinct 'pockets' of various Castes. Most Castes are not only specific to a certain state but also specific to a particular area. This means that a Caste, which has a concentrated existence in one area, many also constitute numerically large or significant group in that area. In a study of Western Maharashtra has shown how Caste concentration takes place at village and district level. He shows that more than forty percent of Western Maharashtra population is Maratha and Kunabi have separate pockets in Western Maharashtra. The same applies to About Lingayat Community, Total Lingayat Population in Maharashtra Seventy percent live in Western Maharashtra. Lingayat have separate Pockets in Western Maharashtra, also Dhangar have separate Pockets in Western Maharashtra etc. Matang and Mahar/ Nav Buddha Community spread in Maharashtra, that's why they get elected but not seen separate Pocket. Other Dalit Castes Like Chambhar and Dhor are rarely seen Western Maharashtra. This study gives an indication of the strong link between Caste and localities or sub regions. In the case of peasant Castes, the regional base is considerably expansive while non-peasant Castes are often confined to smaller pockets.

The Maratha of Western Maharashtra are concentrated in the Satara, Kolhapur District Constituting around 90% of the State. Lingayat are concentrated in Solapur and Kolhapur district, Dhangar in Solapur and Sangli district, Jain in Sangli and Kolhapur district. Iravati Karve and Dandekar have given a detailed sketch of the residential pockets of different Castes of Maharashtra (Karve-Dandekar; 1951: 19-42). M.N. Srinivas observed in 1957 "this kind of relationship between a Caste and

a region is widespread in India ..." (Srinivas; 1962: 72). This association of many Castes with specific territorial 'Pockets' has produced two political results. One is the rise of 'Locally Dominant' Castes. Srinivas, early use the term 'Dominant Caste' was specifically with reference to a small locality or village or group of villages: In his 1955 essay 'the social system of a Mysore Village' Srinivas mentions that " The concept of the dominant Caste is important for understanding interacts relations in any Local area" (Srinivas; 1987: 77). Elaborating on the concept in 1957, he uses the phrase 'locally' dominant and then adds, "Occasionally a Caste is dominant in a group of neighboring villages if not over a district or two, and in such cases, local dominance is linked with regional dominance" (Srinivas; 1987: 96). As far as 'local dominance' is concerned, there seems to be a direct link between dominant and numerical preponderance. Large size of population, though, has one other implication. Often, a Caste has numerical advantage when it also has a high degree of control over resources- at the village level, land. Thus, economic power and size combine to produce patterns of local domination.

The other, more commonly noted political result of Caste pockets relates to electoral politics. Localized pockets of Castes have come to mean that candidates of a particular Caste will always get elected from certain areas. My study of Western Maharashtra gives ample evidence of this: The Maratha-Kunbi Caste cluster, which is spread almost over the Western Maharashtra, manages to send largest number of MLAs to State legislature irrespective of political upheavals. In 51 constituencies, the elected candidate has always been a Maratha, consecutively for six elections since 1990. In other 19 constituencies also, a candidate of the same Caste has been elected since 1990 (these exclude SC constituencies). Thus, in one-fourth constituencies, the Caste of the MLA has been the same since 1990. More specifically, Lingayat always get elected from Solapur district (Thite; 1996: 45), Dhangar from Solapur and Sangli district, Jain from Sangli and, etc. It is clear that there exists a tendency among parties to match Caste by Caste in selection of candidates. But the case of Maharashtra suggests that local pockets of Castes have an important implication for the phenomenon of regionally dominant Castes. It is only through such localized pockets that smaller and non-dominant Castes get an opportunity to stake their claims to power. If smaller, non-dominant Castes are not concentrated in one area, they are not likely to get any representation on their own strength. In other words, localized concentration facilitates a space for contesting the domination of State-level dominant Caste. Lingayat and Dhangar have formed their separate parties, Jan Surajy Party and Rashtriya Samaj Party respectively and it has been observed that in 1999. This clearly shows that the Lingayat and Dhangar can draw upon their localized demographic 'resource' to at least protest against the domination of Maratha. Maratha domination in Maharashtra can be contested through localized pockets of other non-Maratha Castes (Palshikar; 2004: 106).

The Lingayat community from western Maharashtra understand how the minority Castes sustain their existence in the majority Castes; on the basis of number how minority elites emerge and what are the resources being used to preserve that status. The Lingayat community resides in some part of western Maharashtra i.e. Solapur (6.99%), Kolhapur (7.83%) and at the villages located on the border of Maharashtra and Karnataka state (Census of India: 1931).

Caste and Year wise break-up of MLA in Western Maharashtra 2014:

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	1990	1995	1999	2004	2009	2014	Total	Percentage
Maratha	49	52	47	51	47	47	293	66.59
Lingayat	5	4	7	4	6	4	30	6.81
Dhangar	3	2	3	1	3	3	15	3.4
Mali	1	1	2	2	1	3	10	2.27
Matang	4	2	5	4	3	2	20	4.54
Chambhar	1	3	2	3	3	3	15	3.4
Mahar/ Nav Buddha	1	2			2	3	8	1.81
Brahmin	3	2	2	2	2	2	13	2.95
M. Koli	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1.36
Rajput	1	1	1	1	1	-	5	1.13
Padmashli	2	2		1		-	5	1.13
Jain	2	2	2	3		-	9	2.04
Marwadi	1					-	1	0.22
Nahavi	1	1				-	2	0.45
Wanjari			1			-	1	0.22
Sonar						1	1	0.22
Muslim			2	2	1	1	6	1.36
Total	75	75	75	75	70	70	440	100

Sources: Political Survey of Western Maharashtra

In the 1990-2014 elections, Maratha Community secured 293 seats out of 440 in the Western Maharashtra Assembly Constituency, out of which 49 in 1990, 52 in 1995, 47 from in 1999, 51 in 2004, 47 in 2009 and 47 is in 2014. Maratha Community Secured 70% of seats. Lingayat Community secured 30 seats out of which 5 seats in 1990, 4 Seats in 1995, 7 Seats in 1999, 4 Seats in 2004, 6 seats in 2009, 4 seats in 2014. Lingayat Community Secured 7 % of seats. Based on these figures, it is clear that the Maratha and Lingayat Community is Largest Social Group Dominant in Western Maharashtra Assembly Constituency and the Maratha Dominates in Solapur, Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, Pune and Ahmednagar District. We find in all Districts of western Maharashtra, Maratha is Dominant. Table given a picture of Lingayat Community is Second Largest Dominant in Western Maharashtra Assembly Constituency. Padmshali Community is Local Dominant Caste in Solapur City. Jain Community is Local Domint Caste in Sangli District. 80% of Lingayat and Dhangar Community elected from Solapur, Sangli and Kolhapur District. It is clear that Solapur, Kolapur and Sangli is separate Pockets Lingayat Community in Western

Maharashtra, also Solapur and Sangli is separate Pockets of Dhangar Community in Western Maharashtra. Sangli is Separate Pocket of Jain Community. We find specific locality the place of a Specific Caste is elected. Padmashali Community is elected from Solapur District, Brahmin community is elected from Pune District, Mahadev Koli and Wanjari Community is elected from Ahmednagar District in 2012.

Caste and Region wise break-up of Municipal Corporation in Western Maharashtra 2012:

	Solapur	Kolhapur	Sangli	Pune	Pimpri Chinchawad	Ahmednagar	Total	Percentage
Maratha	11	39	18	65	64	22	219	37.5%
Kunabi		3	3	18	10	08	42	7.10
Lingayat	13	2	6	-	1	1	23	3.89
Dhangar	7	-	8	1	1	1	18	3.4
Mali	-	-	-	12	7	6	25	7.1
Matang	1	6	1	8	1	3	20	3.38
Muslim	13	3	10	2	4	7	39	6.5
Mahar/ Nav Buddha	7	4	8	11	13	3	46	7.78
Brahmin	3	-	2	6	2	1	14	2.36
Padmashali	18	-	-	-	-	3	21	3.55
Jain	-	3	7	1	-	2	13	2.1
Wadhar	2		2	7	3	1	15	2.5
Other Castes	27	6	11	21	22	10	97	16.41
Total	102	66	76	152	128	68	591	100

Sources: Election Dept. Elected members Information of Municipal Corporation 2012 in Western Maharashtra

In the 2012 elections, Maratha Community secured 219 seats out of 591 in the Western Maharashtra Municipal Corporation, out of which 11 from Solapur, 39 from Kolhapur, 18 from Sangli, 65 from Pune, 64 from Pimpri Chinchawad and 22 from Ahmednagar. Maratha Community Secured 40% of seats. Kunabi Community secured 42 seats out of which 3 seats each From Kolhapur and Sangli, 18 Seats from Pune, 10 Seats from Pimpri Chinchawad and 8 Seats from Ahmadnagar. Based on these figures, it is clear that the Maratha and Kunabi Community is Largest Social Group Dominant in Western Maharashtra Municipal Corporation and the Maratha Dominates in Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, Pune and Pimpri Chinchawad Municipal corporation local bodies. Table given a picture of Mahar/ Nav Buddha

and Muslim Community is Second Largest Dominant in Western Maharashtra Municipal Corporation. Lingayat and Padmshali is Local Dominant Caste in Solapur city. Lingayat Community elected from Solapur, Sangli and Kolhapur. In other Marginalized Castes Takari, Kudmude Joshi, Nilakanteshwar, Bhawsar, Lodhi, Kaikadi, Pardi, Dhor and Laman Community is elected in Solapur Municipal Corporation. Lonari, Bhangi, Parit, Gosavi, Kachi, Osawal, Bhandari, Tambat, Marwadi, Teli and Mehater Community is elected in Pune Municipal Corporation. Kolahati, Wanjari, and Pardeshi Community is elected in Ahamadnager Municipal Corporation. Gondhali and Sonar Community is elected in Sangli Municipal Corporation.

Caste and Region wise break-up of Zilla Parishad in Western Maharashtra 2012:

	Solapur	Kolhapur	Satara	Sangli	Pune	Ahmednagar	Total	Percentage
Maratha	30	35	39	32	40	31	207	49.75
Kunabi	1	4		1	5	21	32	7.69
Lingayat	8	6	2	8			24	5.76
Dhangar	11	1	6	7	3		28	6.73
Mali	5		3		8	1	17	4.08
Mahar/ Nav Buddha	5	6	2	3		5	21	5.04
Matang	3	2	2	1	1		9	2.1
Chambhar		1	2	2	1	3	9	2.1
Jain		4		2			6	1.44
Wanjari			2	1	1	3	7	1.6
M. Koli	1		1	2	2	3	7	1.6
Bhilla						6	6	1.44
Thakar					5		5	1.20
Other Castes	9	10	8	3	9	2	41	9.85
Total	68	69	67	62	75	75	416	100

Sources: Samanya Parashasan Dept. Elected members Information 2012 of ZP Western Maharashtra

In the 2012 elections, Maratha Community secured 207 seats out of 416 in the Western Maharashtra Zilla Parishad, out of which 30 from Solapur, 35 from Kolhapur, 39 from Satara, 32 from Sangli, 40 from Pune and 31 from Ahmednagar. Maratha Community Secured 50% of seats. Kunabi Community secured 32 seats out of which 1 seats each from Solapur and Sangli , 5 Seats from Pune, 4

Seats from Kolhapur and 21 Seats from Ahmadnagar. Based on these figures, it is clear that the Marataha and Kunabi Community is Largest Social Group Dominant in Western Maharashtra Zilla Parishad and the Maratha Dominates in Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, Pune and Ahmednagar local bodies. Table given a picture of Dhangar and Lingayat Community is Second Largest Dominant in Western Maharashtra Zilla Parishad. Lingayat and Dhangar is Local Dominant Caste in Solapur and Sangli District. 80% of Lingayat and Dhangar Community elected from Solapur, Sangli and Kolhapur District. It is clear that Solapur, Kolapur and Sangli is separate Pockets Lingayat Community in Western Maharashtra, also Solapur and Sangli is separate Pockets of Dhangar Community in Western Maharashtra. Sangli is Separate Pocket of Jain Community. We find specific locality the place of a Specific Caste is elected. Bhilla and Mahadev Koli is elected from Ahamadnagr District, Thakar community is elected from Pune District, Lonari, Ramoshi, Gosavi, Sutar Shimpi, Parit Community is elected from Satara District in 2012. Laman Community is elected from Solapur District. Wanjari Community is elected from Ahmednagar and Satara District.

CONCLUSIONS:

- 1) Marataha and Lingayat Community is the Largest Social Dominant Group in Western Maharashtra Assembly Constituency
- 2) Lingayat have separate Pockets in Western Maharashtra, also Dhangar have separate Pockets in Western Maharashtra etc.
- 3) Matang and Mahar/ Nav Buddha Community spread in Maharashtra, that's why they get elected but not seen separate Pocket. Other Dalit Castes like Chambhar and Dhor are rarely seen Western Maharashtra.
- 4) This study gives an indication of the strong link between Caste and localities or sub regions. In the case of peasant Castes, the regional base is considerably expansive while non-peasant Castes are often confined to smaller pockets.
- 5) In other Marginalized Castes Takari, Kudmude Joshi, Nilakanteshwar, Bhawsar, Lodhi, Kaikadi, Pardi, Dhor and Laman Community is elected in Solapur Muncipal Corporation.
- 6) Lonari, Bhangi, Parit, Gosavi, Kachi, osawal, Bhandari, Tambat, Marwadi, Teli and Mehater Community is elected in Pune Municipal Corporation.
- 7) Kolahati, Wanjari, and Pardeshi Community is elected in Ahmednagar Municipal Corporation. Gondhali and Sonar Community is elected in Sangli Municipal Corporation
- 8) Bhilla and Mahadev Koli is elected from Ahmednagar District, Thakar community is elected from Pune District, Lonari, Ramoshi, Gosavi, Sutar Shimpi, Parit Community is elected from Satara District in 2012. Laman Community is elected from Solapur District. Wanjari Community is elected from Ahmednagar and Satara District.

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