

POLITICS IN NORTH INDIA VERSUS SOUTH INDIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Cash for votes, Personality cult, opportunism, and nepotism and caste system has very much rooted in the political structure of the Southern as well as northern part of India. All these factors determine the political scenario in the southern and northern states at the time of elections. There are many similarities in both the parts and there are many differences which makes them distinct from each other. This paper is an effort to understand the differences and similarities in the politics of the southern and northern states of India.

KEYWORDS: Politics, Vote Bank, Caste, Personality Cult, Nepotism, Opportunism, Election, Political Parties,

INTRODUCTION

The Northern India and the Southern India have a multi party system, where there are numbers of regional parties who play an important role during the elections. In North India, the regional parties like Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Shiromani Akali Dal, Indian National Lokdal, Haryana Janhit Congress and several others had played and is still playing an important role in the state politics as well as in the national politics. Whereas in the South India, parties like Telgu Desham Party, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIDMK) Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), The United Democratic Front (UDF) led by the Indian National Congress and the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by the Communist Party of India are in the mainstream politics. There are many similarities and differences in the politics of the South and the North India. Caste is a common factor in both the Northern and the southern states. Some political parties have a direct caste basis while the others indirectly bank upon a particular caste group. All the political parties use caste as a mean for securing votes in elections. "Aaya Ram Gaya Ram" factor is very popular in the North India. Frequent party changing is also very common, however, this phenomenon is a threat to the democracy. Once a person or a political leader becomes a part of a personality cult, he gets a virtuous position, who cannot be criticised and questioned. This practice especially happens in the North India, however it does not exist in the Southern part of India. The Indian electorate has always been synonymous with the personality cults. It is true that factors like religion and caste more often does not determine the electoral outcome in India, but it is also true that in Indian elections personality cults emerges larger than thoughts.

STATE POLITICS IN INDIA

State politics has undergone significant changes in the post-independence period. Since the 1990s, the states have become partners in the coalition governments at the centre. Earlier they occupied a secondary position in relation to the centre in India's politics. Now they are in a position to not only set the agenda for the politics in India, but have become partners in the formulation of the state policies. The states participate in the national politics by becoming members of one or the other coalition partners. They represent different regional and social issues. State politics in the first two decades after independence grew under the influence of the centre, which focused on the nation-state building in India. During this period the single party dominance of the Congress signified the politics in India. State politics was mainly a replica of the national politics. But within a few years of independence the demand for reorganization of the states was raised in south India. Even the parties with different ideological persuasions from that of the Congress, played a significant role during this period in the politics of the states. The socialists and the Left together in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal, Jana Sangha in north Indian States and the Akali Dal in Punjab mobilised the people on different issues against the Congress. These developments had set a pitch for state politics. The cow protection, movement of the Jana Sangha, RSS and their affiliates in north India; socialist movements for the spread of Hindi language and opposition to the imposition of Hindi language in Tamil Nadu and demand for separation of Tamil Nadu from India were the earlier examples of the ethnic dimension to the patterns of the state politics. Changes in the patterns of state politics during the 1960s-1970s took place in the backdrop of the demise of Jawaharlal Nehru – the decline of the Congress system and the rise of Indira Gandhi who personalized the Congress and its institutions of governance. One of the most significant feature of the state politics that arose between the late 1960s and the 1970s had been the rise of the rural groups especially in the areas which had witnessed the Green Revolution. The most relevant examples are those of the Jats in UP, Haryana and Punjab; Yadavs and Kurmies in Bihar and eastern UP; Reddies and Kammas in Andhra Pradesh; Vokkaligas and Lingayats in Karnataka, etc. Charan Singh formed the Bharatiya Kranti Dal. He provided leadership to a strong section in the state politics in north India for two decades i.e from 1967 to 1987. He, along with the state level leaders in Bihar and Haryana, dominated the politics of northern India during this period. The leaders and parties focused on the regional issues and demanded restoring the centre-state relations. The state level leaders and political parties challenged not only the leadership and organisation of the Congress, but also wanted a stronger place for the states in the centre. Conclaves of the opposition leaders, in Tamil Nadu the resolution of the Left Front in West Bengal and the J P movement challenged the leadership of Indira Gandhi. The post-emergency era saw the elevation of the regional leaders like Charan Singh to the national politics. Along with this, the state level leaders like Karpoori Thakur in Bihar, Devi Lal in Haryana, Ram Naresh Yadav and later Mulayam Singh Yadav in UP and in several south Indian states started approaching the central politics.ⁱ

POLITICS IN NORTH INDIA

In North India the Politics of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir remains in the limelight. Politics in these states have their own characteristics. Politics of Uttar Pradesh is dominated by the regional party, i.e the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party with the National Level parties like, BJP and Congress. The current government in Uttar Pradesh is that of BJP's. Uttar Pradesh and Caste Politics are the two undividable things, since 1990s, when the regional parties and the BJP rose through caste-based and religious mobilizations. These parties built for support bases by mixing identity politics and caste-base preference. In Uttar Pradesh, the Dalits or Lower Caste supports thoroughly the Bahujan Samaj Party, upper Castes of the UP Stands with the BJP, Yadavs and Muslims are for Samajwadi Party and nothing particular for the Congress.ⁱⁱ

Politics in Uttarakhand is dominated by the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janta Party. Ever since the creation of the state, these parties have ruled the state in turns. Uttarakhand saw hung mandate in the Uttarakhand Assembly elections in 2012, the Indian National Congress, having the maximum number of seats, formed a coalition government headed by Harish Rawat that collapsed on the March 27, 2016. Nine MLAs of the Congress rebelled against the party and supported the opposition party-BJP, causing Harish Rawat's government to lose the majority in the assembly. Later in the 2017 Assembly election, on the March 18, 2017 Trivendra Singh Rawat sworn as the 8th Chief Minister of Uttarakhand of the Fourth Assembly.ⁱⁱⁱ

The regional parties came into existence in the Haryana when Rao Birender Singh of the Vishal Haryana Party became the state's second Chief Minister in 1967, for less than a year. It was the state's first regional party that was shaped within six months of development of Haryana state. It though merged with the Indian National Congress in 1978 and the Indian National Lok Dal in 1987 was another powerful regional party in Haryana. The party founder was Devi Lal, who had served as the Chief Minister in two brief tenures first as a Janata Party leader since 1977 to 1979 and thereafter as a Janata Dal leader from 1987 to 1989. Devi Lal's regional influence made National Lok Dal still remains a principal party in the hands of his son, the four-time Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala, who at present is in jail for his connection with a teachers' recruitment scam.

Indian National Lok Dal lost its golden days when it lost general elections in 2004 and 2009 and could win only two seats in the 2014 general elections. In the assembly election also, it lost its power in the year 2005 and 2009. In 2005 it could win only nine of the 90 assembly seats. In 2009, though the Indian National Lok Dal staged a comeback by winning 32 seats, the Indian National Lok Dal won 31 and its ally the Shiromani Akali Dal won a seat and registered its alarming presence in the state politics. But it was not a winner.

Politics in Punjab is dominated by mainly two parties: the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Indian National Congress. The other prominent party is the BSP especially in Doaba region. In 1992, the BSP won 9 seats in the assembly election. Also BSP won 3 Lok Sabha seats from Punjab in 1996 general elections and only Garshanker seat in 1997 assembly election. Communist parties too have some influence in the Malwa area. In the 2014 general elections, the first-time contesting Aam Aadmi Party got 4 out of 13 seats in Punjab by winning 34 of the total 117 assembly seats, coming second in 7, third in 73 and fourth in the rest 3. The support of the Aam Aadmi Party is rapidly increasing in Punjab. The current Government was elected in the 2017 Assembly election as the Indian National Congress won 77 out of 117 Assembly seats and Captain Amrinder Singh is the current Chief Minister. The AAP, fighting its first assembly election in the state, won 20 seats. The incumbent BJP-SAD alliance came third with 18 seats.^{iv}

POLITICS IN SOUTH INDIA

The Indian National Congress ruled the Andhra Pradesh for 30 years, but this changed in the 1980s due to the establishment of a regional party named Telugu Desam Party by Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao. They won the 1983 Assembly election by a landslide; NTR became the first non-Congress Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Since then, both the TDP and the Congress have dominated Andhra politics. The main issue which has dominated Andhra politics is the Telangana movement aimed at the formation of a separate Telangana state consisting of the northern districts of Andhra Pradesh. Politics is dominated by major castes like the Reddys, the Kammas and the Kapus. There is also the problem of Naxalism in the state, especially in the Rayalaseema and Telangana regions. Like Tamil Nadu, the film industry in the state has influenced Andhra politics. Besides NTR, film stars like Chiranjeevi, Vijayashanti and Dasari Narayana Rao among others have successfully made their mark in the politics of the state. Andhra Pradesh state leaders have contributed at the national level with the former President Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy and P. V. Narasimha Rao, become the Prime Minister of India respectively and NTR involved in the formation of the National Front which ruled India between 1989 and 1991.^v

The Congress has been far more successful in Karnataka than it has been in national politics. National political parties such as the BJP have experienced more comparative success in Karnataka than they have in other states of South India. Karnataka's political environment is dominated by two rival caste groups- the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats Kuruba Gowdas but Dalits and Muslims are major voters and deciding factor of the ruling party in Karnataka. Ramakrishna Hegde played a vital role in the rise of the Janata Dal into the national venture in the late 1980s. However, it was his political rival H.D. Deve Gowda, the then Chief Minister of Karnataka, who later went on to become the Prime Minister of India. Caste has figured prominently in Karnataka politics. Anti-Hindi and anti-Tamil movements were prominent in the Karnataka politics in the 1960s and 1970s. Language activism is high in the state, with organisations like the Karnataka

Rakshana Vedike and the Kannada Chaluvali Vatal Paksha often launching agitations for protecting the interests of Kannada and Kannadigas. The Kaveri water dispute with hold an important place in the politics of the state. Siddaramahia is the chief minister of Karnataka from Kuruba Gowda community^{vi}

Politics in Kerala comprises of two major political alliances: the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by the Indian National Congress and the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) alternating in power. Kerala has a significant number of Muslim and Christian populations which traditionally form the base of UDF, whereas Ezhavas, a backward class community form the core of the LDF. K. R. Narayanan, former president and A. K. Gopalan of CPM, first Leader of opposition in Lok Sabha were from Kerala. Kerala created history by democratically electing communists to power in 1957, being first in the world to do so.^{vii}

Indian National Congress dominated the political scene in the initial years post independence with leaders like C. Rajagopalachari and K. Kamaraj. The political influence shifted towards Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in the late 1960s. The shift in political power in Tamil Nadu was due to the rise of Dravidan Nationalism forefront by leaders such as Periyar Ramasami and C. N. Annadurai, who celebrated the achievements of Tamilians in ways that the common man could relate to. The main aspects of state politics in Tamil Nadu included language, the distinction between Tamilian and non-Tamilian speakers was an important tool used by the DMK in the 1960s and caste such as the Self-respect Movement. The frustration of Hindi on non-Hindi speaking areas of India has often been a contentious issue in Tamil Nadu. In January–February 1965, large scale Anti-Hindi agitations, a cause supported by the DMK took place in Tamil Nadu. In 1972, a divide in the DMK resulted in the formation of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam led by MG Ramachandran. Since then, the two major Dravidian parties the DMK headed by Karunanidhi and the ADMK led by Jayalailtha alternate to power.^{viii}

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCE IN SOUTH AND NORTH INDIAN POLITICS

CASTE FACTOR

Caste factor is very common in both southern and northern states of India. All political parties use caste as a mean for securing votes in elections.^{ix} In particular, the regional political parties stand predominantly influenced by the caste factor. Earlier in the Southern part of India when the state of Andhra and Tamil Nadu was in the Madras state, there was political domination of Brahmins at the higher level with faces like Tanguturi Prakasam panthulu, V.V.Giri etc.. This dominance was mainly due to the mutual help of Tamil Brahmin leaders, they were able to manage the higher level positions. But with the creation of a separate state of Andhra Pradesh in 1953 and with the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956, Brahmins became

politically irrelevant in Andhra as they lost the support from Madras state leaders, and also they did not had much command in the villages.^x

At the same time, Reddy's, a land owning community became politically dominant mainly due to their Economic well being and political activeness in the villages as Village heads and their huge number in both Rayalaseema, Telangana and parts of Andhra. They choose Congress party and it is one of the reasons for them being successful in politics. During this time Kammas, another land owning community from Andhra (Especially Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam district's) also tried to be active, but majorly choose Communist Party of India (CPI) with some exceptions like N.G.Ranga. From 1956 to 1983, 27 years of Congress rule in the state of Andhra Pradesh 18 years were ruled by leaders of Reddy Community, while other chief ministers being Dalit, Brahmin and Velama leaders.^{xi}

This dominance of Politics by Reddy leaders has changed with the entry of the Telugu Actor Superstar N.T.Ramarao, a Kamma himself, who launched Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in 1982 and came to power within 9 months of inception of the party. When he contested his 1st elections in 1983, leaders of all castes who are frustrated with Congress rule owned the newly launched party. But with the stupendous win of TDP, it was made sure that it was dominated by the leaders from Kamma caste with the help of backward castes as numbers were less on the side of Kammas.

At around the same time, another land owning community Kapu being the most populous caste in the state tried to be active in politics, but they couldn't find a leader who could lead them effectively. Vangaveeti Ranga, Actor Chiranjeevi tried but failed to be effective leaders.

In north the BJP largely banks upon its popularity among the high caste Hindus and the trading communities. Farmers and lower class communities mostly believe in the Congress Party. And in Punjab, Akali Dal stands influenced by the issue of Jats vs. non-Jats. The Bahujan Samaj Party in UP banks upon the support of the Scheduled Castes. Bihar occupies the top position where caste basis predominates over its politics. Here the Rajputs, Brahmins, Kayasthas and Adivasis constitute the four major caste segments of Bihar Politics. The Rajputs and Brahmins, by the asset of their superior economic position and social status, have been, till date, dominating the political scenario in Bihar. The Jats, Ahirs and Brahmins constitute the three active caste groups of Haryana. The Jats tend to dominate Haryana politics for many years. In Rajasthan as well, the caste factor has been an active factor of state politics. The strong differences between the Jats and the Rajputs have enabled the Brahmins to control power for many terms in Rajasthan. Gurjar Movement for securing reservations clearly reflects the role of caste politics in Rajasthan.

In fact, while formulating its policies and decisions each political party in India almost every time keeps in visions the 'Caste Angle'. All political parties calculate caste support at the time of distribution of tickets.

People also prefer to vote for a candidate of their own caste.^{xii} And it is not in the electoral politics alone that the influence of caste is visible. Even when a ministry is formed in a State or at the Centre, caste considerations are always kept in mind. Every chief minister tries to ensure that all dominant castes in the State are adequately represented in his council of ministers. The impact of caste is not uniform at all levels of politics. It is most widely spread at local levels. In villages and small towns illiteracy is widespread, caste prejudices are deep-seated and the common viewpoint of the people is very narrow. So they try to manage more than one caste vote bank.

AAYA RAM GAYA RAM FACTOR

The word “Aaya Ram Gaya Ram” in the politics of India came from Haryana and become so popular when Gaya Lal changed party thrice in a fortnight, first from the Indian National Congress to United Front, back to Indian National Congress and then within nine hours to United Front again. On this Rao Birender Singh said Gaya Ram is now Aya Ram. Later it became the idiom. In 1985 the Constitution was amended to stop such defections.

Northern state of Haryana has many such examples, the defection by five members of legislative assembly of Haryana Janhit Congress, has remained in the news. In 2009 five members of legislative assembly of Haryana Janhit Congress- joined the Indian National Congress party. Although the Punjab and Haryana High Court held that the merger of five Haryana Janhit Congress members of Legislative assembly into the Indian National Congress in 2009 was unlawful. While pronouncing the decision, Justice K. Kannan, also debarred all these five members of legislative assembly from the membership of the Haryana state assembly. Actually in 2009 assembly election, Haryana Janhit Congress had won 6 seats. And five members of legislative assembly ‘merged’ the party with Congress, send-off Kuldeep Bishnoi alone in Haryana Janhit Congress.

On the other side this term is also becoming popular in south Indian politics. The Aaya Ram Gaya Ram phenomenon continued to trouble the Tamil Nadu Government led by Edappadi Palaniswami in 2017. While the Government was short of seven MLAs to cross the magic figure of 117 in the 233 strong House, rebel leader TTV Dinakaran accompanied by three MLAs and seven MPs called on Governor C. Vidyasagar Rao and requested him to ask the Chief Minister to call for a trust vote.

Interestingly, Karunaas, an MLA who had declared support to the Chief Minister earlier, jumped fence and announced that he was with the Dinakaran camp. On the other side, the Palaniswami faction got a shot in the arm when Jackaiyan, MLA, who was with Dinakaran till last night crossed over to Palaniswami’s camp by next morning.^{xiii}

IMPACT OF FILM STARS IN POLITICS

Relatively than the politics of North India, the South Indian Politics is more influenced by the south film stars. There are many south film stars who become big politicians. They have equal popularity both in films and politics. The superhero of Tamil films, Rajinikanth, announced entry into politics on December 31, 2017 and confirmed that his newly formed party will contest in assembly elections in 2021 from all 234 constituencies in Tamil Nadu state. He would resign if his party will unable to fulfill its election promises within three years of coming into power. According to Rajinikanth he was not interested in politics, and thus was only committed to working in films. Nobody could have forced him to enter politics, just as no one could stop him from entering it.^{xiv}

Another is Chiranjeevi, who is an Indian Film actor and politician. He was the Minister of State with independent charge for the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Prior to politics, Chiranjeevi has attended the Madras Film Institute, and had worked primarily in Telugu cinema, in addition to Tamil, Kannada and Hindi films. He made his acting debut in 1978, with the film Punadhirallu. From 2007 to 2017, he did not star in any films. During this time, he embarked on his political career. In 2008, he started the Praja Rajyam party in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Currently, he's an MP of Rajya Sabha for Andhra Pradesh.^{xv}

Jayaram Jayalalithaa, the late-chief minister of Tamil Nadu also turned to politics after establishing herself as a successful actor in the industry with 140 films during the period of 1961 and 1980. She received honors for her versatility as an actress and also for her dancing skills. In 1982, Jayalalithaa joined AIADMK, the party founded by M. G. Ramachandran, who was also her frequent co-star. In 1991, she became the chief minister of Tamil Nadu, being the youngest to be in the position. On 5th December 2016, Jayalalithaa died due to cardiac arrest, after 75 days of hospitalization.^{xvi}

Popularly known as M.G.R., Ramachandran was a popular Indian actor, a filmmaker who turned politician as per the will. He served as the chief minister of Tamil Nadu for 10 years from 1977 to 1987. He was a cultural icon in Tamil Nadu and was also considered to be one of the most influential actors in Tamil film industry. He was so popular among the folks of Tamil Nadu that he was referred to as Makkal Thilagam, which means People's King.^{xvii}

Late Nandamuri Taraka Rama aka NTR as he was popularly known, was one of the largest figures of Telugu cinema. He meteorically rose to power upon forming his Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in 1982 and thereafter served three terms as the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh between 1983 to 1995.

Konidela Kalyan Babu, lovingly known as Pawan Kalyan is an Indian actor, director, writer and politician. He is the younger brother of famous actor-turned-politician Chiranjeevi. Kalyan acted in the

movie titled “Tholi Prema”, which bagged the prestigious National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Telugu in 1998. He was ranked 26th in the Forbes India list of top 100 celebrities of 2013. In 2014, he made his debut in politics, by establishing the Jana Sena Party. According to Google, during this period, he was the most searched Indian celebrity politician on Google search.^{xviii}

Vijayakanth is an Indian actor-turned-politician. He was the leader of the opposition of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly from 2011 to 2016. He founded the centre-left party Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam in 2005 and was also a Member of Legislative Assembly representing Rishivandiyam constituency. During an election speech in 2016, he criticised Rajinikanth for which he faced a massive backlash from his fans.^{xix}

Divya Spandana, who is known by her stage name Ramya acts in Kannada films and also made an appearance in Tamil and Telugu films. In 2003, she began her film career with Kannada film Abhi. She is also a two-time winner of the Filmfare Award for Best Actress-Kannada. In 2013, she won a by-election to become an INC Member of Parliament for Mandya constituency in Karnataka. Later, she was defeated in a general election.^{xx}

CONCLUSION

Both North and South India States have their own characteristics. But if point came to politics, then many factors seem similar in both the part. Both are in different geographical situations. Language and culture are totally different, but the relationships of caste and politics have similar meanings in both the parts. Another is personality cult which is more common in south than in northern states. This is the factor through which a person becomes cult and decides the election scenario. Popularity of film stars in politics is the best example of personality cult.

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