



WWJMRD 2018; 4(1): 1-4
www.wwjmr.com
International Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal
Refereed Journal
Indexed Journal
UGC Approved Journal
Impact Factor MJIF: 4.25
e-ISSN: 2454-6615

Sita Ram Bairwa

Associate Professor in Political
Science, Rajesh Pilot Govt.
P.G. College Lalsot, District-
Dausa, Rajasthan, India

Politics of Castes in Rajasthan Assembly Election 2013: An Analytical Study of Dausa Constituency

Sita Ram Bairwa

Abstract

This paper analyses the role of Castes in Dausa Constituency assembly election 2013. It is analysed Castes and their impacts in Dausa Vidya Sabha Constituency. Politics of Dominant castes is also analysed. Role of Women, Dalits and Other Backward Castes are also highlighted in the paper. This paper is also analyses the urban and rural areas castes of the constituency. Major issues as unemployment, lack of Education, Healthy environment, pure water, Social Discrimination and Constitutional Provisions for Social justice, castes' ego, struggle in castes, Customs, Superstitious in castes and other social evils etc are analysed. Problems and Challenges to the Castes and important suggestions are mentioned in this paper.

Keywords: Castes, Dominant, Constitution, constituency, Dalit, Women, Struggle, Superstitious, Discrimination, Justice, Uneducation, health etc.

Introduction

On 10th April 1991 Dausa district was constituted by transferring four tehsil of Jaipur district namely - Baswa, Lalsot, Dausa and Sikrai. Later on Mahwa tehsil of Sawai Madhopur district was also included in the district on 14th August 1992. This district is situated at the eastern part of state and is located on Jaipur-Agra National Highway about 55 km away from Jaipur. Dausa is situated in a region widely known as Dundhar. The Chauhans & Badgurjars ruled this land in 10th Century A.D. Dausa has privileged to become First capital of the then Dundhar Region. Dausa was an important political place for Dundhar region. The Chauhan Raja Soodh Dev ruled this region during 996 to 1006 AD. Later, from 1006 AD to 1036 AD, Raja Dule Rai ruled this region for 30 years. Dausa has given prominent freedom fighters to the nation. Late Shri Tikaram Paliwal & Late Shri Ram Karan Joshi were amongst the freedom fighters who gave their valuable contribution for fight for independence and for amalgamation of the Princely States to form Rajasthan State. Late Shri Tikaram Paliwal was the First elected Chief Minister of Rajasthan in 1952 after independence. Late Shri Ram Karan Joshi was the First Panchayati Raj Minister of the Rajasthan state who submitted the First Panchayati Raj Bill in Vidhansabha in 1952.

Dausa district is one of the five districts, those comes under Jaipur division. District Collector is head of the district for revenue, Law and order matters. District Collector & District Magistrate is the head of District Administration. For administration and development, the district is divided in Sub- Divisions and tehsils (sub-districts). The District Dausa has 5 sub-divisions. Each of the sub-divisions is headed by a Sub-divisional Officer (SDOs) / Magistrates, the officers are responsible for implementation of law and order matters in their respective sub-divisions. There are 5 Tehsil headquarters in Dausa district and each one has a Tehsildar as an administrative officer who works in accordance with the Land Record System to serve for the rural farmers and land holders and is responsible for maintaining the revenue matters in their respective tehsils. For the purpose of the implementation of rural development projects/ Schemes under Panchayati Raj System, the district is divided in the 5 Panchayat Samitis (Blocks). Block Development Officer or Vikas Adhikari is the Controlling Officer of each of the Panchayat Samiti to serve as extension and developmental executive at block level.¹

Correspondence:

Sita Ram Bairwa

Associate Professor in Political
Science, Rajesh Pilot Govt.
P.G. College Lalsot, District-
Dausa, Rajasthan, India

Population

Dausa district of Rajasthan has total population of 1,634,409 as per the Census 2011. Out of which 857,787 are males while 776,622 are females. In 2011 there were total 292,502 families residing in Dausa district. The Average Sex Ratio of Dausa district is 905. As per Census 2011 out of total population, 12.3% people lives in Urban areas while 87.7% lives in the Rural areas. The average literacy rate in urban areas is 80.7% while that in the rural areas is 66.3%. Also the Sex Ratio of Urban areas in Dausa district is 906 while that of Rural areas is 905. The population of Children of age 0-6 years in Dausa district is 258144 which is 16% of the total population. There are 138400 male children and 119744 female children between the age 0-6 years. Thus as per the Census 2011 the Child Sex Ratio of Dausa is 865 which are less than Average Sex Ratio (905) of Dausa district. The total literacy rate of Dausa district is 68.16%. The male literacy rate is 69.59% and the female literacy rate is 43.92% in Dausa district. To facilitate the administration, Dausa is further divided into 5 rehsils which are administrative divisions denoting sub-district. Tehsil consists of multiple villages and few towns. There are 21.7 percent Scheduled Caste and 26.5 percent Scheduled Tribe in Dausa district.²

Castes in the Assembly Election 2013

Historically, no party in Rajasthan dared to change the structure of caste politics as the Hindu society has been a key factor in elections and inevitable when it comes to plan a winning strategy. But now, a line has been drawn between 'civil society' and 'political society' and it meant that castes other than the Hindus have been playing a huge role in the political arena since elections began in the state. Ever since 1952 when the state for the first time witnessed democracy after having lived in feudal era for centuries, the elections came to the people as a surprising gift. The princes and the feudal lords were stunned by the loss of their kingdoms and fiefdoms. They thought that democracy and Independence were a farce and could regain their lost power through ballots, much to their dismay. In the first-ever elections, the old principalities joined hands together to take Congress by its horns. The Rajputs annexed 51 out of the 160 seats which was the strength of the first Vidhan Sabha. Out of these, three Rajputs won on Congress tickets. This number fell short by just two for a two-third strength of one community. The Congress which fielded candidates of all castes, included the STs and SCs, in the general seats could collectively get 82 members elected. The rest were from the other parties or Independents. Interestingly, it was late chief minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, who contested from Jan Sangh and won. Shekhawat never joined the feudal lord's party Ram Rajya Parishad as he was dubbed "Chhota Thakur" and son of a poor farmer. But the Rajputs found that they were fast losing their clout and in the second elections that took place in 1957, the numbers of Rajput winner's dwindled from 51 to 26 and out of them 15 were from Congress. Thus, by the second Vidhan Sabha poll, while the numbers of Rajputs dwindled, the figure of the Jats increased from 12 in 1952 to 23 in 1957. This was politically significant as the Jats have started wresting power from the Rajputs. Castes draw election battle lines deeper in Rajasthan than anywhere else. Hence, a politician increases his chances of a win significantly if he manages to win caste support to his side. Election tickets are often

distributed in accordance with the spread of caste population in a region and caste as an important factor determining the outcome of poll results has largely remained static since the Emergency.³

This is perhaps why the Jats, the scheduled castes and tribes and a section of Brahmins have traditionally supported the Congress, while the Rajputs backed the Swatantra Party, which had public representatives belonging to former royal families. Names include those of Princes Prithvi Singh, Jai Singh and Maharani Gayatri Devi from Jaipur and Maharaja Hanut Singh from Jodhpur. The leaders of the Swatantra Party, which was started by C Rajgopalachari, India's last Governor-general, were popular among the masses and the OBCs voted for them in hordes. The Bania community has been the mainstay of the BJP vote bank ever since Bhairon Singh Shekhawat took the reins of the Jan Sangh in the state in 1977, forming the first non-Congress government after the Emergency. Shekhawat focused on the OBC communities such as the Nai, Kumawat and Gurjar and gave them representation, while encouraging other leaders from downtrodden communities and strengthening the BJP in the process. His legacy has helped the BJP, though the Malis, one the state's other backward classes, have moved towards the Congress because of the leadership of CM Ashok Gehlot. The Congress can count among its loyalists the Jats, the Jatavs in eastern districts such as Karauli and Bharatpur, as well as Muslims, Dalits and tribals. Jats dominate around 60 assembly seats directly. Eighty four assembly seats have a large numbers of Jat voters. Rajputs are equally influential in major pockets of Sriganganagar, Bikaner, Jhunjhunu and Sikar; Jodhpur, Barmer & Jaisalmer in the west; as well as Chittorgarh in the south. Post the Emergency, some caste churning happened during the Ram temple movement, when a large chunk of Brahmins moved out of the Congress fold. Even then, However, stalwarts such as Naval Kishore Sharma anchored the party among the Brahmins. And when the Congress rewarded senior Brahmin leaders Girija Vyas and CP Joshi with plum posts, support among that community grew. In contrast, the BJP sidelined Brahmin heavyweights Lalit Kishore Chaturvedi and Harishankar Bhabhra. Currently, Ghanshyam Tiwari is the only visible Brahmin face in the BJP. With the BJP declaring Narendra Modi as its prime ministerial candidate for the Lok Sabha polls, the Brahmin vote might again get divided in the upcoming assembly elections.⁴

Caste Equations

Rajput: They are not united under a single banner. The Congress has been wooing them actively — 4 of their MPs are from the community.

Jat: Spread in 12 districts, they influence 60 assembly seats directly. Though traditional voters of the Congress, they are being aggressively wooed by Vasundhara Raje. Jats begrudge Ashok Gehlot as they want a community member to become CM if Congress comes to power.

Gurjar: Traditional voters for the BJP, the community is now rallying behind Kirori Singh Bainsala, who is fighting for ST status for Gurjars. Sachin Pilot is the Gurjar face of the Congress, but his influence in assembly elections is doubtful.

Meena: Kirori Lal Meena, independent Ex Lok Sabha member and MLA from Lalsot (Dausa) is the biggest influence on community votes.

Muslim: The Gopalgarh riots have turned many against the Congress, but with Modi being projected as the BJP's PM candidate, Muslims are unlikely to come into the fold of the Rajasthan BJP led by Vasundhara Raje.⁵ Field survey of the constituency

Caste in Conflict

The violent Gurjar agitation for Scheduled Tribe status can erupt into a serious crisis if rival castes, not willing to share benefits, retaliate. Once again, India's bubbling caste cauldron has spilled over into violence, arson, destruction of public property and loss of life. The statistics say it all: 14 dead, including two policemen, hundreds injured, public property worth lakhs damaged, vehicles and buses set on fire and a strategic highway dug up. The army had to be called out to control the frenzied crowds. While media focused on the role of the police and excessive use of force, at the core of the confrontation lays a battle for political power.

The caste warriors this time were the Gurjars in Rajasthan, traditionally a shepherd community, now engaged in a violent agitation demanding Scheduled Tribe status. Their leader is Kirori Singh Bainsla, a retired army colonel. Settled in Hindon, a nondescript town in Karauli district, he became head of the Gurjar Arakshan Sangharsh Samiti three years ago. Last week, thousands of Gurjars converged around Jaipur and blocked the national highways. Near Dausa, they dug up long stretches using JCB machines. The Gurjars are already listed as Backward Class, but seeing the employment advantages and political power that Scheduled Tribes (ST) like Meenas have earned in Rajasthan, they too have been demanding ST status. The demand was initially rejected by the Congress government in 1981. Even the BJP government has not pushed their case.

Unlike reservation status for Other Backward Classes (OBC) which is done both at state and Central level, a caste can be included in the SC and ST category only through the Centre's recommendation since it calls for a parliamentary amendment in the existing list. The state's role is limited to making a recommendation which is based on reports obtained from district collectors. This is verified by the Centre which may approve or reject a recommendation. In the case of the Gurjars, the Rajasthan Government had started the process and obtained reports from 26 of the 32 district collectors. INDIA TODAY has learnt that most of these reports diluted the community's chances of getting ST status. The Government then sent back reports of six districts, where Gurjars are concentrated, to the collectors for clarifications. The exercise, meant to be completed by July 31, expected the revised input to build up a case for localised ST status. However, following the violence, the state Government is expected to immediately forward to the Centre whatever it has gathered on Gurjars. Bainsla says he won't withdraw unless Government sends its recommendation. "Since every powerful community could grab reservation, we, being poor and deprived, were forced to resort to uncivilised ways to demonstrate our power;" However, he has issued an appeal to Gurjars to put an end to violence.⁵

Of the total population of Rajasthan, 12-15 per cent is Jats, 10 per cent Meenas and six per cent are Gurjars. Jats have traditionally cornered 30-40 seats in the 200-seat Assembly and one-third of the 25 parliamentary seats and garner most of the government jobs under quota. They got OBC status

in 1999. Meenas were added to the ST list in 1954 and gained sizeable clout in key areas like the police and administration. Gurjars have long been deprived of these benefits. For instance, Meenas have 24 MLAs from reserved seats and seven from the general category in the current Assembly while the Gurjars have just eight. Social analysts agree that living in similar regions, Gurjars' socio-economic conditions are worse than Meenas. They have a poor sex ratio resulting in polyandry, their unemployed are mostly vagabonds or smalltime dacoits and very few get into the services or professional courses. Their concentration is mainly in Swai Madhopur, Karauli, Dholpur, Bharatpur and Dausa district, known as the Dang region. Meenas, who live in the same region, have better awareness about their rights. They are progressive and have a better social standing.

In Rajasthan, if a caste feels better off and secure within any reserved category, it opposes inclusion of any other caste that might threaten their monopoly. So if Jats faced resistance from existing OBCs while attempting entry in that category, Gurjars are opposed by Meenas. Off the record, political parties admit to Meenas' political clout and even the need of reservation for Gurjars in certain pockets, but none will admit this in public. A swing in Meena votes away from any party can spell big political trouble. Jats did it to the Congress which opposed their reservation in Rajasthan. Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje, whose daughter-in-law is a Gurjar princess, denies making any promise of ST status for Gurjars, though her rivals say she did so in the last Assembly polls. For Raje, however, the immediate challenge is to ensure that the current agitation does not get out of hand.

She has deputed four ministers for talks with the five persons deputed by the Gurjars. If the talks fail, the Government is ready for curfew as Meenas are mobilising force against Gurjars. One constable killed in Dausa has turned out to be from the Meena community. In fact, last week's violence could well have been avoided. Senior police officers held a series of meetings, apprehending trouble from the Gurjars, but there was no dialogue with leaders like Bainsla. Also, the heavy presence of Meena officers in police and other services is adding to the problem. At both places, where police resorted to firing, there were Meena officers stationed, fuelling rumours that the firing was deliberate. Gurjar leader Roop Singh Gurjar says postmortem reports have confirmed that all the dead had bullets fired on their back. "Firing took place at 7:30 a.m. while our agitation was to start at 11 a.m. It shows it was unprovoked," he says.

The Gurjar agitation proves that it's time to take a fresh look at the reservation policy. "Since every caste and community is demanding reservation, it's time to carry out a census of each caste's population, its economic and social status, grant it points and then work out reservation from villages to national level," says Satya Narain Singh, former member of Rajasthan Backward Classes Commission and an OBC leader. More than a failure of administration, the violence was a failure of the reservation policy, and the politics that rules it. Police battle with Gurja agitators, Rajasthan "When there was willingness to talk on our part, then where the need for violence was?"⁶

The Problems Ahead

It's now feared that Gurjars' violent agitation could invite similar agitations by Meenas and other upper castes in

retaliation. The Meena-Jat-Gurjar rivalry is a serious issue and could have major repercussions if allowed to fester. Discontent has been brewing amongst castes under SC category, which includes as many as 80 sub-castes with varying economic and social status. The dominance of Meenas in the state police force is a cause for worry since excessive use of force against Gurjars has always been a contentious issue.

The Genesis

In Rajasthan's caste-oriented politics, rivalry between Gurjars and Meenas has reached a boiling point.

Jats and Meenas have benefitted from OBC and ST status. Jats corner 30-40 seats in the 200-seat Assembly and one third of the 25 parliamentary seats. They garner most of the government jobs under quota. Meenas have big clout in police and administration. Now Gurjars are demanding ST status.

An official panel is currently collecting data on Gurjars to see if they can be awarded ST status. Reports suggest that they will not qualify. "When there was willingness to talk on our part, then where was the need for violence?"

Conclusions

1. The Caste base politics is increasing day by day.
2. Gurjar, Meena and Rajput are the most dominant caste in Rajasthan and they are powerful to change the government.
3. Dalits are more than 40 percent in the constituency but they are not united. Caste hierarchy is maintained by them.
4. Dalits are strongly related with Congress.
5. Meena and Gurjar are marcelled by nature.
6. There are great discrimination in the Castes in Rajasthan.
7. Dalits, OBC and ST are in the Castes in Rajasthan.
8. Dalit's, OBC and ST are superstitious. Great social evil exists in the castes

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