TRADING COMMUNITIES ROLE IN POLITICS: 
A STUDY OF MAHESHWARI COMMUNITY

Prin. Dr. Bal Kamble
Rayat Shikshan Sanstha's Dada Patil College, 
Karjat, Dist.Ahmednagar

Bhong Shrinivas
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science, 
Sangamner College, Sangamner, Dist.Ahmednagar

Introduction

Caste plays important role in Indian politics. Study of the caste, caste organizations & the role of caste organizations in politics, is necessary to grasp post independence political process of India. In the colonial period, the influential chunk of the political leadership was in the hands of Upper castes. In the Post Independent period the democratic process has widened the scope of politics. Politics became more comprehensive in the social sense. Center of the Politics has shifted from Elites to middle and lower layer of society. However trading communities have continued their role in the political process. It is necessary to study the pattern of the political participation of the trading communities. Maheshwari community is the one of the trading communities in Maharashtra which is migrated from Rajasthan 200 years ago. The community is playing important role in the trading sector of the Ahmednagar District. Through this paper the role of Maheshwari community in the politics will be studied.

A study of role of Maheshwari community in the politics of Ahmednagar District will be useful to understand the political process of the district. As well as the study will add an element in the study of Political Economy and Sociology of the district.

The population of Trading communities like Maheshwari -Marwari is not very huge, however the influence of these communities on society & economy, founds much larger in comparison to their population.

Well known Journalist Kumar Ketkar has mentioned such opinion. Ketkar writes in the Preface of the Marathi book 'Eka Marwadaychi Goshta' (A Story of One Marwari) that though much has been written on Marwari Community, yet there is need to be written.

Review of Literature

Pandit Mahadevshastri Joshi, Bhartiya Sanskruti Kosha

The entry 'Maheshwari community' in the Bhartiya Sanskruti Kosha gives information about the following points.

1. Original place of Maheshwaris.
2. Language of the community.
3. The origin of the word Maheshwari.
4. The Gotha, ritual in the community.
5. Efforts for the social reforms in the community.
6. The beginning of the Maheshwari Mahant Sabha.

Gazetteer of India – Ahmednagar District:

The Gazetteer gives following information about the Maheshwari community.

1. The Maheshwari community is also known as Meshri Marwaris or Brahmanic Vanis from Marwar.
2. Settling of the community in the district.
3. Similarities between the Maheshwaris and other Marwaris.

Area of Study: Ahmednagar District is selected as area of study.

Data Collection

For this study Primary & Secondary Sources are used. Primary sources include Interview & Questionnaire technique. In the secondary sources government Gazetteer, Books, Periodicals, Newspaper, Research Reports are used.
About the Maheshwari community

1. Maheshwari community originates from Rajasthan. The word Maheshwari is originated from 'God Mahesh'. Maheshwari people pray lord Shiva & Balaji. Important festivals of the community include Badi Tij, Raksha Bandhan and Mahesh Navmi.
2. The community has migrated with the purpose of trade. Marwari is the language of Maheshwari community. However, community members have good command over local language Marathi.
3. In the Ahmednagar District the Maheshwari community is mostly settled at Ahmednagar city, Sangamner, Shirirampur, Korpurao, Rahata, Wambori, Belapur and Pathardi.
4. The community is playing vital role in the Trading and Industrial sector of the district. The community members are active in economic as well as social – cultural fields.
5. The community members are active in the Party politics, Local self government and Urban Co-operative banking sector.

Highest organization of Maheshwari community: Maheshwari Maha Sabha

Akhil Bhartiwarshiya Maheshwari Mahasabha is the highest organization of Maheshwari community. Maheshwari Mahasabha was established at Ajmer in the year 1891. Mahasabha’s work is not only spread all over India, but Nepal, Bangladesh, Australia and America too. Organization aims the advancement of the Maheshwari community - with the advancement of whole society. Organization always tries making changes in the community, according to changing time. It makes continuous efforts to make Maheshwari Community progressive part of the nation.

About Ahmednagar District:

Ahmednagar is the largest district in the State. It is birthplace of the cooperative movement & home of 19 sugar factories. Sugar, milk and bank cooperatives have flourished in the district. In the district a role model of water conservation work can be seen at Ralegan-Siddhi, which is also called the Ideal Village.

Maheshwari Community & Economy of the District

As Maheshwari is trading community, it is leading in the trading sector of the district. According changing times, community has entered in the field of industry. Community members are engaged in the working of Co-operative Banks, Co-operative Credit Societies, APMC and Traders Association.

Contribution of Maheshwari community in the freedom movement

The Maheshwari community members participated in the freedom movement through the Congress organization & the major important movement organized by the same.

Role of Maheshwari Community in the politics of Ahmednagar District

Role of Maheshwari Community in the politics of Ahmednagar District can be understand with the help of following points

1. Politics of Local Self Government
2. Political Parties
3. Assembly Elections

Role of Maheshwari Community in the politics of Local Self Government

Sangamner Municipal Council was established in the year 1860. From the last 130 years the Maheshwari community is contributing in the functioning of the Sangamner Municipal council. In the year 1882, Maheshwari community got the representation in the Sangamner Municipal Council through elected member Mr. Parasram Nawandar and legacy is continued.

Kabra family from Maheshwari community has played important role in the Ahmednagar Municipal Council.

Presidents & Vice Presidents from the Maheshwari Community in the Municipal Councils of Ahmednagar District:

Presidents:

In the history of Municipal Council of the district following Maheshwari community members got the honor to become President of the Municipal Councils in the district.
Vice Presidents:

In the history of Municipal Council of the district, following Maheshwari community members got the honor to become Vice President of the respected Council.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mr. Sarda Zumbarial</td>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>Ahmednagar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mr. Pofale Shankaral Chaturbhuj</td>
<td>1928-1930</td>
<td>Sangamner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mr. Zanwar Chandulal Mulchand</td>
<td>1943-1945</td>
<td>Sangamner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mr. Malpani Omkarnath Damodar</td>
<td>1962-1965</td>
<td>Sangamner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mr. Kasat Radhawallabh Laximinarayan</td>
<td>1987-1989</td>
<td>Sangamner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maheshwari community’s role in the Political Parties:

Maheshwari community members are not only primary members of the different political parties but also hold important position in same. Community members has made their place in major political parties like Indian National Congress, Nationalist Congress Party, Bhartiya Janta Party, Shiv Sena

Assembly Elections & Maheshwari Community

Maheshwari community members has contested assembly elections for 4 times from Ahmednagar (South), Shirampur & Sangamner Constituencies in Ahmednagar district. In these elections Maheshwari community members has fought as Indian National Congress & Bhartiya Jana Sangh candidate for one time each & as Independent candidate for two times.

Findings of the study

1. Maheshwari community has contributed in the freedom movement.
2. Maheshwari community members has participated in Assembly Elections.
3. Maheshwari Community members are actively engaged in the politics of Local Self Government
4. Maheshwari community members participate in the political process as a party member
5. Maheshwari community's have their own role in the Political Parties

References

4. Hardgove Anne, Community & Public Culture: The Marwaris in Calcutta, Oxford University Press
5. Rush M. & Altcoff P., An Introduction to Political Sociology, Fletcher & Son Ltd., Great Britain University Press
7. Timberg Thomas, Three Types of the Marwari Firm, ier.sage.pub.com, 1973
Websites

1. www.parliamentofindia.org
2. www.maheshwarimahasabha.org
3. www.eci.gov.in

****