

From Identity Politics To Interest Politics : New Agenda For People In 21st Century

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Abstract

This paper analyses the dynamics of Indian politics in recent perspective and explores the need and possibilities of 21st century agenda for people as choice-making is going to move from identity politics to interest politics.

Key Words:

Politics, Administration, globalization, liberalization

Reference to this paper
should be made as
follows:

Dr. Satish Kumar,
“From Identity
Politics To Interest
Politics : New
Agenda For People
In 21st Century”,
RJPSSs 2017, Vol. 43,
No.1, pp. 278-281
[http://anubooks.com/
?page_id=2012](http://anubooks.com/?page_id=2012)
Article No. 37 (RJ1913)

Introduction

State came into being for good life, therefore, it is a foremost duty of state to protect and safeguard the interest of all groups and sections of the society. Pendleton Herring in his book *Public Administration and the public interest* questioned how administrative organization in a democracy could resist the onslaught of particularistic groups and its own conservative propensities and contribute to the general welfare. He points out that the democratic state must somehow deal with the conflict between the capital and the labour. It cannot afford to await the survival of the fittest. The exigencies of the age demand positive State activity in order that democracy itself may continue. He further said, "if the existence of the democratic regime rests upon the assumption that the state exists not for the welfare of any one class but for the benefit of the people as a whole, this great growing bureaucracy must be guarded from domination by economic group of social classes."¹

The modern state is supposed to create equality and fraternity among individuals and also promise the liberty of the individual. The poor people have not been served by their states. An effective and accountable state is essential for the development of each nation. An excellent state can make a huge difference to the quality of life of the people, especially of poor countries.

However, in present scenario the gaps between rich and the poor seems doomed to increase faster because of globalization, globalization at present means great prosperity for the few and continuing inequality and poverty for the many. It is certain that globalization, in its present form, deepens already existing grave inequalities, therefore, it is essential to form better ways to distribute its benefits and the state is required to ensure that globalization will be an effective means of transformation for welfare of the people as a whole; and no doubt, politics is an effective medium for it.

But in recent political scenario, now there is a double-barreled or two-track situation: there is mobilization around the moral issues by Anna Hazare and many others in the country for political reforms and checking corruption of the political class. Then there is a non-Congress, non-BJP space expanding very rapidly all over the country including in the capital.

So, this will create an interesting situation of choice and possibility of change. Generally, when there is no possibility of change, you withdraw from the process. And extreme withdrawal results in situations like Naxalism. But if you have some kind of possibility, change, people do line up. But we must also give credit to the election commission. It has created better technology, better facility and played a

proactive role. The high turnout is going to change the agenda of the political class, It has become so self-possessed and indifferent in the name of popular demand for liberalization, privatization and globalization. It has to come back to basic needs of people – like water, electricity, security, prices, jobs, social justice. These things were totally marginalized in the last 25 years under one pretext or another.

Also, there is an implementation crisis. There is a lack of confidence not only in the political class but also in the bureaucracy. So the political class will have to change, and that is the beauty of democracy. Politicians cannot take people for granted, and people cannot take politicians for granted. The same political parties will be different with cleaner candidates, a better agenda, and no open defiance of expectations against criminalisation of politics.

The ordinary Indian is now very much empowered. They have information power, RTI, political choices. The younger generation is very proactive with social media and even the media. The media and the younger generation are converging together for change. The days of conspiracy of silence or suffering in silence are over. The political class has created such trappings of identity politics, so we have become less interested in the common cause. There is more identity and quota politics that has created a vicious circle of divide and rule.

People of India had to get out of these trappings. There has to be better commitment to social justice in genuine terms. The deepening of democracy is not possible with this kind of politics. They will have to provide much more decentralization and a new consensus of participatory democracy². Parliamentary democracy has run its course and become counter-productive. One-third of parliament or assembly members are those who should be behind the bars. What more are you waiting for? The house is on fire. This kind of political process, election system and party system is not going to deepen democracy. So people of India cannot live with this kind of system anymore. There has to be a systemic change. The political parties are prisoners of a system which is dependent on crony capitalism. Corruption has become the lubricant for functioning of this kind of a system. The stakes have become very high with the corporate system of the game.

We need a different kind of democracy with much more decentralization, which should move from the Centre to the state government and then filtered down to the district administration and further to the village. Caste, region, religion and language are four important organizing principles of our social life. They also determine the chances of power or create situation of powerlessness. So there is going to be continuity of these principles in the choice in the electoral choice making and

mobilization. But the larger questions which unite people of all sections of caste, class, religion and regions have become more significant in the last 25 years. This is because there is a decline in chances of betterment, there is jobless growth, crony capitalism, corruption at high places, and global and national economic depression. There is a need to suggest common solutions for such problems.

Energy, education, employment and environment – may be the core issues that need to be revisited. There is a need for a new national consensus. We have tried all other tricks, from nationalization to liberalization, from reservation to de-reservation. Much of it is not working anymore. So choice-making is going to move from identity politics to interest politics.

Reference:

1. *Edward Pendleton Herring, Public Administration and the Public Interest, New York: McGraw Hill, 1930, PP.383-84.*
2. *Hoshiar singh, Retreating state and Common Man, The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol.LXV, No.3, July-Sept, 2004*