Globalization and Rise of Class and Caste Violence in India

*Dr. Sudhir Chander Hindwan

Over the years economic progress has not been sufficiently dynamic among the scheduled castes and the lower strata of intermediary castes, leaving both states in a state of backwardness. The figures of the scheduled castes indicate that they are still very poor and most of the agricultural labour comes from these castes. As a result the scheduled castes and the lower strata among the intermediary (backward) castes still remain without sufficient means to make progress towards higher level of socio economic life. Consequently, the traditional norm that upper castes exploit most of resources first, followed by the intermediary castes has not changed even today and this pattern would tend to continue for years to come unless there is any significant organized attempt made by the central and state governments to change the old equations of caste and class in rural areas.

The policies should have the ability to adapt in response to recent changes and efficiency that can potentially be used for implementation of various programmes particularly at the grass root level. The struggle between landowners and poor peasants some of them landless labourers has turned into class struggle between various castes particularly between the dominant castes and the scheduled castes. Though this kind of class turned into caste conflict remained a reality throughout India but it has been more pronounced in northern India particularly in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar... During the last few decades or so, there have been a number of changes in the old system with the arrival of capitalist pattern of society. The class relationship became more prominent under colonial regime and a process of separation between class and caste began. This led to the formation of a complex caste and class system. Even today there has been a very close relationship between the caste and class system.

On the other hand, the caste and politics relationship is characterized by vertical, horizontal and differential patterns. The “vertical mobilization is the for political support. The horizontal mobilization involves marshalling of popular political support by class or community leaders and their specialized organizations. Differential mobilization involves marshalling of direct and indirect political support by political parties (and other integrative structures) from viable, but internally differentiated communities through parallel appeals to ideology, sentiment and

* Author is Chandigarh Based Political Scientist (Professor of Political Science ) and an Expert on Strategic Affairs
interest". This shows a clear relationship between the upper castes and political power, but over the years, this relationship was undergone a change. The post independence period particularly after 1967 witnessed (a) a shifting pattern in the traditional economic (land) power structure and now the political power is shifting from one group of castes to another i.e. from the upper castes to the intermediary (backward) castes in Bihar and U.P (b) the political power is now fragmented into different political institutions. Similarly, a pattern of changing caste loyalties from one political group to another group has become a common affair. For example, the majority of scheduled caste votes which once formed the electoral base of the congress have now shifted in favour of Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP) in U.P. and Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar. This has happened due to the recent awareness created about the numerical strength of the scheduled and the intermediary castes through education, media and the Mandal commission report. Thus, the traditional rigid caste tendencies which were gradually getting eroded particularly in urban areas have again began to surface rapidly in political areas. The situation is further weakened by the powerful syndicates in each caste who use caste as a powerful means for fulfillment of their personal interest. Similarly, in case of educational and occupational facilities the system is directly or indirectly related with the hierarchical pattern i.e. the upper castes hold better educational and occupational facilities. But this relationship has undergone major changes after independence, with the reservation of seats in educational institutions and various occupations. The commission for the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes has shown the existing weakness in the implementation of various programmes taken by the government from time to time. It has been recommended by the commission in its various reports that the actual handing over of the physical possession and surplus land to the allottee must be ensured even if it entail an amendment of the existing law. This should be made more effective in far flung rural areas.

The government should formulate such polices which provide peaceful ventilation of a caste group’s perceived grievances, and their possible solution. The people involved in any act of violence against the scheduled castes should be immediately prosecuted and in this regard the legal machinery and police procedures should be made effective.

On the other hand, the existing weaknesses of local administration and police set up should be promptly improved. This can be made possible by avoiding political interference in their work and removal of corruption in their ranks, proper training of handling such crisis and availability of required resources.

Effective and timely action from administration to control disturbed law and order situations, within a minimal period of time could be of immense use in this regard. Similarly, the balanced imaginative and clear responses by the police and administrative machinery to the grievances of the various castes and classes could help in preventing the aggravation of the problem. Thus, for careful handling of caste and class violence against scheduled castes, effective and timely implementation of the all identified policy measures are important.
In this regard the following measures could prove useful:

a) Sustained implementation of continually expanding measures for the development of the rural poor.

b) Facilitating the access of the poor to credit, and its increasing availability to them in their needs.

c) Growing benefits to the poor from rural development programmes.

d) Progressive involvement in the socio-economic condition of the poor.\(^{ii}\)

The rise of naxal movement in Bihar and few districts of Uttar Pradesh districts is mainly due to erratic land distribution system. Such activities are increasing mainly because of economic and social grievances of the lower classes and castes. Thus, the prime focus of government policy should be mainly on the prompt restoration of the public land.

The emergence of new economic relations during 1970s made the agricultural labourers and poor peasants aware of their economic plight and they started breaking away from the domination of powerful caste organizations like the agricultural labourers organizations, the Dalit organizations and sometimes under caste-influenced class forms. Thus, new channels of commercialisation and agricultural ties have shaped the myriad areas of caste and class conflict in rural areas. Caste clashes bound to occur so long the unequal socio-political and economic order is not changed and the scheduled castes remain undefended. Despite a number of constitutional safeguards the condition of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes continues to be pathetic. This is an indicative of unequal efforts and inadequate mechanism. The age-old upper caste hegemony over the scheduled castes still exist. In most of the villages their position is further deteriorated by the powerful land owning upper castes who exploit their educational and economic backwardness. Therefore, the state and the central government should ensure the proper and speedy implementation of various preventive measures carefully throughout in various meetings and committees. The long term structural changes such as gradual industrialization and rural employment could also prove useful. In this regard, the center and state governments must ensure that the financial resources allocated for the development of rural areas are properly utilised.

End Notes:
