

Contextualizing the Emergence of Electoral Politics in Rajasthan **Harsh Meena**

Rajasthan is one of the major state in the Hindi-heartland and has a deep and parament impact on the national politics, not just the national political parties holding good ground in the state politics but because of its large geographical size it also has very significant role in the Lok Sabha election form many decades. The current Research Paper will discuss the not just the significance of Rajasthan politics in the national politics but will also tries to examine the formation of Political Parties and the early party system in Rajasthan.

Objective of Study :

Understanding the formation of 'Politics' and Political Party System in the early decade of Rajasthan.

Key words: *Caste, Tribes, Rajasthan, Elections, Representation,*

Geographical and Socio-Economic Profile of Rajasthan :

Rajasthan is the second largest state of India with an area of 132,152 square miles , it is sharing its 750 miles of International border with Pakistan in the west , and it is sharing its national borders with Punjab and Haryana in the north and north-east part . the eastern to south and south-eastern border of Rajasthan is shared with Uttar-Pradesh and Madhya-Pradesh. While the south and south-western of Rajasthan is attached with Gujarat . Rajasthan is located in between 23°N to 30.12°N and Longitudes 69°30'E and 78°17'E. main reason for the social diversity of Rajasthan is its Geographical diversity, the Aravalli Ranges run through the state and divide into two major parts of social and geographical distinctiveness. For instance the north-western part of Rajasthan is Sandy whereas the southern part of Rajasthan have excellent ground-water because of good amount of rivers available , the southern range is also have the extensive hill range with great soil fertility and dense forest . so as compare to the north-western part of Rajasthan the southern part is more productive for the agricultural practices , because the north-western part is more or less desert and it is not very rice in water and big sand dunes are the regular site in that region .

Topographically Rajasthan can be divided into four major following parts :

- a) Eastern Part: the eastern part of Rajasthan is mainly the plain region and which as the 30,363 square mile of the area covered under it .
- b) Rajasthan Hill Zone which has covered mostly the southern part of the state and has 12,048 square mile under it.
- c) Rajasthan Dry Zone is mostly the deserted area and it covered the 75,309 square miles.
- d) Rajasthan Plateau Zone, it is covering the 12,466 square miles.

State Formation of Rajasthan:

This geographical and topographical details of Rajasthan were important because Rajasthan was never a single state it has been reorganized in the various phases and that reorganization not only affected the states socio-economic aspects but has affected the political of Rajasthan. Initially in 1949 with the merger of 19 princely states Rajasthan state was constituted, its further consolidation was happened in 1956 with the merger of Ajmer .

In the first phase the Matsya Union, states such as Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli formed a union on 17th march 1948. In its second phase of state formation the Banswara, Bundi, Dungarpur, Jhalawar, Kishangarh, Pratapgarh, Shahapura, Tonk and Kota joined the Rajasthan state on 25th March 1948. In the Third Phase the Maharana of Udaipur has agreed to join the State . on 18th April 1948 Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru has inaugurated the Union State of Rajasthan . In the Fourth Phase state of Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Jaipur and Jodhpur has joined the United State of Rajasthan . the merger of Matsya union with the Greater Rajasthan on 15th May 1949 was part of fifth phase of political reorganization of Rajasthan. On sixth Phase Sirohi has joined the Rajasthan in 26th Jan 1950. The seventh phase was the final phase because finally with the State Re-Organization Act of 1956 , the integration and formal formation of the Rajasthan state was completed . the ‘C’ state of Ajmer, Abu Road Taluka, Sirohi and Sunel Tappa region of former Madhya Bharat has joined the Rajasthan , a portion of Sironj subdistrict of Jhalawar has been transferred to Madhya Pradesh . Hence on 1 Nov. 1956 the final political territories of the state has been defined and the Mohan Lal Sukhadia became the first Chief Minister of State and Gurumukh Nihal Singh has been appointed as the Governor of state .

Nature of Initial Party System in Rajasthan :

Since the state formation in Rajasthan has completed in various phases and the merging of various ex- princely states has a deep impact on the politics of Rajasthan . Just like any other Hindi-Heartland state, Rajasthan also has the Caste, Religion, and class as the core element of the State Party System . the State has majority population of Hindus(75%), and has the other religious community in the minority. For instance the Muslims (9%), Jains(2.5%), Sikhs and the Christians (1%) of the total population , where in terms of the Constitutional social categories the Scheduled Tribes and Schedule Caste constitute almost the 30 % of the State population. The Tribes in Rajasthan are predominantly living in the Southern and the North-Eastern part of the state. The districts such as Alwar, Sawai-Madhopur, Bharatpur, Jaipur, Udaipur, Dungarpur, and Banswara has the majority of the Tribal Population.

For tribal and non- Tribal population agriculture is the main profession , hence the Economy of the state is dependent on the agriculture produce and the Tourism in the State. The earliest popular name of the Rajasthan was the ‘Rajputana’ or ‘Rajwan’ which means the ‘Abode of Rajputs’¹. The earliest form of the state in the Rajasthan was the princely states and these states were autocratic in their nature. Their rule was personal and absolute. These Princely states has the ‘powerful Jagirdars’, these Jagirdars were the backbone of princely state’s administration, because they not only control the land revenue system in the state but they also provide the army and the resources during the inter-state wars. They controlled almost the 60.7% the rural administration of the early Rajasthan. ‘Historically , the land tenure system in Rajasthan has remained unchanged without any serious modification during a period of nearly seven hundred years’²

Hence the Rajput were the social elites control the wealth and power in the state . the initiation of constitutional reforms by East India Company’s administration have very little effect on the Jagirdari system in Rajasthan. The growth of Praja Mandal and the congress support to Praja Mandal at the time of Government of India Act 1935 are initial steps in the development of constitutional party system in Rajasthan. One of the core element of the growth of politics of Rajasthan was the regional caste based lines .

In the very first General Election of the Rajasthan, the feudal group of Rajasthan were not very happy with the adaptation of the democratic parliamentary administration in the state. Most of them worried about the loss of their administration power , their prestige in the

¹ Iqbal Narain , State Politics in India , Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut: India, 1976

² Damodarlal Vyas, ‘Land Reforms in Rajasthan: A silent revolution’ , Congress Smarika, Jaipur, 1963, pp-83.

society and glamour they had being the ruler . the congress party played a significant role in not only recruiting the political elites but also in mobilizing the new social groups in the main stream political process.³ The recruitment in Congress also provide the political education or the awareness about the new institutionalism to the old feudal or political elites. The Indian National Congress has controlled the and designed the electoral politics of Rajasthan in 1950s to 60s. it had controlled the allocation of party tickets and also served as an ‘arbiter of State-Level conflicts within the congress system’⁴ . which means that the Congress Party at the center is controlling conflict of interest within the political elites of Rajasthan. Apart from being just the balancer of the interests of political elites the Congress Party also represented itself as the true representative of the minority and the disadvantages groups specially the Tribes and Dalits of the state . the feudal origin of party system in Rajasthan was dependent on the land revenue system of Rajasthan, the land was divided into two parts the *Khalsa land* and the *Jagir land* . in traditional princely state the power is diffused between the ruler and an da very week state administration. The property was also differentiated as the property rights and chief’s rights.

The brahmins were the most influential political community, they provide the moral and religious sanction to the Rajput rulers. The Rajput’s provide the honors an property to the Brahmins. in this hegemonized system of authority between the Rajput and the Brahmins. The major tribes of Rajasthan: the Minas and Bhils were looking for the alternative to these powers and representation who can preserve their community interest . Mina share the power relation in feudal and social hierarchy. Earlier they had supported the Rajput by their Tribal Militaries but later with the conflict regarding the land ownership the bhils and Minas conflicted with the Rajputs these landed communities and their international differences were important for they provide the actual base for the socio-economic structure of Rajasthan .

Later on in the early 20th century the Praja Mandal was established in the state of Rajputana . and being supported by the Indian National Congress. What is more significant that after independence the with the merger of Rajputana into the government of India , all of the existing Rajputana bodies and the Rajputana Regional Councils of the state people’s conference was just transferred into the regional repressive units of the all Indian Congress Committee. The Gokul Bhai Bhat was nominated as the first President of Provincial Congress Committee. The problem that the congress has faced is that it did not had the base

³ Richard Sisson, ‘the Congress Party in Rajasthan: Political Integration and Institution-Building in an Indian State, University of California Press,1972, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London,pp-12.

⁴ Ibid.

in the Rajputana Rajasthan and the only reference it had enjoyed is that it was the great party who fought the national movement. The another great hurdle for the congress was the disbalance between the landed aristocracy and exploited rural population, this rural population was further divide into two major caste group Rajputs and Jats . Association with Jats has helped the congress to get its rural reachability by a caste which was holding the rural socio-political affairs . Administratively the Rajasthan Congress at the apex is being handled by the RPCC (Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee)

This institutional setup of the congress had provided some basic structure of the institutional functioning hence in the first general election of Rajasthan . the congress not just the grand old party in Rajasthan , it had emerged from the Praja Mandals. The leadership in congress was also selected on the basis of their hold in their local caste and feudal politics, the Hindu Mahasabha , the socialist , the Jan Sangh and the socialist and communist parties in Rajasthan did not have much of the hold on the local politics. However the Jana Sangh was the exceptional in that regard because late the Jana Sangh has converted into the Ram Rajya Parishad to challenge the congress . This political party was emerged as another strong caste base of Jaipur and Jodhpur states .

Tables(Table 1, Table 2) :The electoral position of major political parties in Rajasthan from 1952 to 1991.

| | Total no. of seats | Congress | | Jana Sangh/BJP | |
|------|--------------------|----------|------------|----------------|------------|
| | | Seat won | Percentage | Seat won | Percentage |
| 1952 | 190 | 102 | 39.70 | 11 | 6.3 |
| 1957 | 176 | 119 | 48.10 | 6 | 5.5 |
| 1962 | 176 | 88 | 40.20 | 15 | 9.1 |
| 1967 | 184 | 89 | 41.40 | 22 | 11.7 |
| 1971 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 1972 | 184 | 145 | 51.10 | 8 | 12.7 |
| 1977 | 200 | 41 | 31.40 | - | - |
| 1980 | 200 | 134 | 43.00 | 32 | 8.6 |
| 1984 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 1985 | 200 | 113 | 45.80 | 38 | 21.1 |
| 1989 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 1990 | 50 | 50 | 33.34 | 85 | 35.43 |
| 1991 | - | - | - | - | - |

Table 1, Source: Election Office, Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

| | TOTAL seat | Socialist | | Swatantra | | Janata party | | Lok dal | | Janata Dal | |
|------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|--------------|------------|----------|------------|------------|------------|
| | | Seat Won | percentage | Seat won | percentage | Seat Won | percentage | Seat won | percentage | Seat won | percentage |
| 1952 | 196 | 2 | 2.3 | | | | | | | | |
| 1957 | 176 | 2 | 5.5 | | | | | | | | |
| 1962 | 176 | 4 | 3.9 | 36 | 17.1 | | | | | | |
| 1967 | 184 | 8 | 4.0 | 47 | 22.5 | | | | | | |
| 1971 | - | - | - | - | - | | | | | | |
| 1972 | 200 | 8 | 3.0 | 11 | 12.3 | | | | | | |
| 1977 | 200 | | | | | 150 | 50.4 | | | | |
| 1980 | 200 | | | | | 8 | 7.3 | | | | |
| 1984 | - | | | | | - | | - | | | |
| 1985 | 200 | | | | | 10 | 5.9 | 27 | 12.0 | | |
| 1989 | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1990 | 200 | | | | | | | | | 54 | 21.46 |
| 1991 | - | | | | | | | | | | Cd44 |

Table 2, Source: Source: Election Office, Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur. (the blank columns are left intentionally to represent either the political party has not emerged or declined in that particular year of election)

| Caste | 1946-1948 | 1948-1950 | 1954-1956 | 1956-1958 | 1958-1960 | 1963-1965 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Brahman | 46 | 49 | 34 | 35 | 40 | 39 |
| Mahajan | 33 | 33 | 26 | 27 | 24 | 19 |
| Peasant | 9 | 9 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 18 |
| Rajputs | 1 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 7 |
| Other Clean Caste | 6 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 6 | 8 |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| SCs/STs | 3 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 5 |
| Muslim | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| N= | 126 | 138 | 129 | 144 | 151 | 165 |

Table 3: Caste Composition of the Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee 1946-1965(in Percentage)

Source: Richard Sisson, 'the Congress Party in Rajasthan: Political Integration and Institution-Building in an Indian State, University of California Press,1972, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London

| Year | Scheduled Caste | Scheduled Tribe | Total | Percent of Total PCC |
|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|----------------------|
| 1946-48 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| 1948-50 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| 1954-56 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 1956-58 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 6 |
| 1958-60 | 6 | 4 | 10 | 7 |
| 1963-65 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 5 |

Table 4: Representation of Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes in Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee from 1946-1965.

Source: Richard Sisson, 'the Congress Party in Rajasthan: Political Integration and Institution-Building in an Indian State, University of California Press,1972, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London

Implications of the above statics:

From the above it is evident that the early Party System of Rajasthan was highly dependent on the feudal caste system. The higher caste and class of the society has domination in the mainstream politics, they have not only hegemonies the 'Congress System' but even in the opposition the caste and older feudal order has dominated the entire political system . Table-1 shows that the Congress has dominated then Rajasthan Politics from 1952-1985 election , the Rajasthan Bi-Party system, means the BJP as the core opposition party in Rajasthan only emerged after the 1985 election , the onwards the BJP give clear and strong competition to congress. In 1990 only the gap between Congress and BJP has reduced with congress has 33.34% of vote share on state assembly election whereas the BJP has 35.43% of vote share which is superseded congress vote share. Whereas the table-2 shows that the rise and decline of various political parties and their representation in the Rajasthan state assembly, Interestingly in 1977 Janata Party has secured the 50.4% seats in state legislative assembly, and congress just had secured the 31.40% seats , it was clear indication of the fact that the

Rajasthan party system is highly influenced by the Centre politics, the Janata Party in 1977 not only has won the elections in Rajasthan but it had also secured the power at the Centre and defeated the Indira Gandhi's Congress in 1977, the Janata Party experiment and its anti-corruption campaign has also succeeded in Rajasthan as well. Table-3 has depicted that the caste composition has dominated the Rajasthan politics in the early decades of it. In Pradesh Congress Committee which was the major party organization in the early Congress regime has the domination of higher caste, the SCs and STs were not more than 5%-7% in these core party institutions from 1946-1965.

Specifically the Table-4 shows that the schedule Tribe is even less represented than the representation of the schedule caste, as per the table in Pradesh Congress Committee from 1946-1965 the Schedule Tribe representation is hardly able to exceed the representation of Schedule Caste.

Conclusion :

The Institutional politics is always reflection of the social fabrication of a particular society. The emergence of electoral politics in Rajasthan is no exception in that regard, Rajasthan state formed after the merging of various princely state, the feudal-social order of the older system has completely readjusted in the new Institutional formation after the Independence. The caste and class hierarchy remain constant and it continued to rule the politics of Rajasthan, Hence the early Congress regime of Rajasthan has given enough space to the older system of social hierarchy to re-established itself in the new Party Politics of the modern nation. More the regional aspiration and the aspirations of the backward section was never in the Centre of the electoral politics of Rajasthan. So there was no significant presence of 'Rajasthan State' aspiration in the early politics of Rajasthan. The politics of Centre had clear domination over the state politics of Rajasthan. and because of these factors in Rajasthan still the two national parties are ruling alternatively in the state politics and there is no significant scope of the emergence of any regional party in the State politics.