

"In a fightback, only a deep fostering of intra-subaltern solidarity using culture can help."

India has witnessed the rise of the Hindu Right as not just a political but also a cultural force like never before. This has been made possible by a series of tactical moves which has allowed for a consolidation of power with the traditional castes and classes.

The Right has managed to do this by exploiting and magnifying micro-level social conflicts that lie dormant in order to create a meta-level hierarchy and reinforce the hold of traditional power. It has led to a weakening of the resistance of lower end social groups by fragmenting them and allowing intra-caste, intra-religious and intra-regional differences to articulate themselves in order to de-legitimise the resistance and mobility of vulnerable social groups that have so far benefited and accrued some social power. The Right negates the power of such groups in the name of justice and power to those even weaker and further neglected.

In terms of caste, it is now well known that the Right has made significant advances in terms of breaking up Dalit sub-castes and fully exploiting intra-sub caste tensions and mutual prejudices.

Everyday prejudices

Similarly, it is making advances in mobilising lesser mobilised Other Backward Classes (OBC) groups against dominant OBC groups such as Yadavs and Kurmis. It is further sharpening the conflict between OBCs and Dalits. Added to all this is allowing the dominant Rajput caste to vent its angst against the mobility Dalits have accrued so far: by allowing street violence and mob lynching of Dalits. It is reinforcing social power of dominant castes at one end and fragmenting this through a mobilisation of lesser mobilised sub-castes of subaltern castes. It is sharpening dormant prejudices that have existed for a long time between subaltern castes, caste and religion, and religion and region.

Similarly, the relation between Dalits and OBCs has been fraught with mutual suspicion and dislike, in spite of four decades of 'Bahujan' identity having been mobilised, mostly in the north. In fact, B.R. Ambedkar himself identified the OBCs as 'savarnas' and sometimes equates them with Aryans. This again collates in complex ways with regional dynamics between the north and the south. What the location of the OBCs is in this complex

matrix is not very clear historically; politically the kind of mobility they have got after the implementation of the Mandal Commission has only sharpened the differences. Violent attacks against Dalits by the OBCs are a continuous, if less discussed aspect of Indian politics. The Khairlanji incident was the most recent attack against Dalits by the Kunbis who are listed as OBCs in Maharashtra.

Within the minority religion too, which includes Muslims, there are castes, sects and other differentiations. For instance, in Kashmir, there are differences between Sunnis and Shias, between Sunnis of the Valley and those in the border areas of Poonch and Rajouri, and those living in Ladakh. They neither inter-marry nor do they enjoy amicable relations. Class and regional prejudices overlap with that of sect and caste.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-led hegemony is not a top-down machination even if there is fear, intimidation, control of media and destabilisation of institutions. The current dispensation is bringing into the open all the cultural contradictions that existed historically. While the Congress's inclusive nationalism attempted to accommodate social groups politically without overcoming social prejudices, the BJP's muscular nationalism lies in including them politically but dividing them socially. The divisions existed; the Right is only widening them.

A new multitude

The fight against the Right is only focusing on critiquing its strategies and exposing it without offering a positive fight to construct an intra-subaltern solidarity. There needs to be a robust cultural programme of fighting prejudices, encouraging inter-dining and inter-marriages. Not mere tolerance but positive celebration of cultural differences is required. Whether or not the Right can be made to retreat depends on this deep cultural programme. We are not clear how one should go about it. This may have to happen as more of a cultural than a political fight. It has to be about humanity, not power; it has to be more about everyday realities than about a programmatic idea of justice.

Every move towards solidarity is also perceived as lowering the status of groups that are higher-up in the ladder-like structure even if they are simultaneously victimised by dominant groups. Sub-division of Dalits is viewed as a pulling down of the relatively well-to-do castes within Dalits; a sub-division of OBCs is seen as a mode of allowing for the domination of traditional caste Hindus. Gandhi attempted 'change without conflict'; he failed to usher in faster change but offered a semblance of burying conflict. Today, we are witnessing conflict and change itself is suspended between mobility and reinforcing traditional hierarchies. Mere critiquing and electoral defeat of the Right is not going to work.

Castes, religious groups and regional identities should fight it upfront by overcoming the prejudice within. To truly fight the Right, relatively dominant social groups must be prepared to lose a bit of social power they wield, however small it may be. It would also mean being critical of one's own social location, however oppressed it may be. Is this realistic at the current historical juncture? The Right compulsively requires fear, anxiety and insecurity to block the process. What are the cultural resources on the other side of the political divide?

GS World Team...

Right Wing and left Wing

- **Right Wing:** - This ideology is exactly opposite to the left which believes in religion, in the nation and in the customs associated with its religion.
- It is an ideology that considers social stratification or social inequality as inevitable, natural, normal or necessary.
- Their specialty is that they try to enhance the tradition of society, their language, ethnicity, economy and religious identity.
- The right-wing is of the view that nature should not be played with rules and that society should carry along its old customs in addition to modernity.
- **Left Wing:** - The real Meaning of this ideology is to bring backward people in the society on par. This ideology does not consider religion, caste, community, nation and boundary; Its real task is to bring the backward people together on one platform.
- This ideology is sympathetic to those people who, due to some reason, have fallen behind in the society, have become powerless or are a victim of neglect, in this case, this leftist ideology fights the battle of all those backward people and keeps demanding the same rights to them. .
- Religious secularism is also one of its main points.

The background

- In 1779 the National Assembly of France was divided into two factions, one demanding a democratic system and the other in support of the monarchy.

- When this demand began to take the form of movement, the then Emperor Louis-16 called a meeting of the National Assembly in which representatives of every section of the society attended.
- At this meeting, the emperor's supporters were asked to sit on the emperor's right and the revolution's supporters on the left.
- In politics, the first formal partition on the basis of ideology is considered to be from this meeting system.
- Monarchist supporters were then called right-wing (rightist or right-wing) and anti-leftist (leftist or left-wing).

Main point

- In the French National Assembly, the people on the right were from the elite, business and religious sections, while most of the people sitting on the left were ordinary citizens.
- Here the people of the southern sect, sitting to the right of the emperor, were advocates of the monarchy as well as the established socio-economic traditions.
- On the whole, they wanted to maintain their wealth and influence, while the people on the left side of the emperor, the left wing, were demanding social equality and civil rights.
- This is also one of the reasons why rightists are considered capitalists and leftists are considered socialists. Since the right wing was opposed to the changes, these conservatives and the supporters of the change were later called the leftist progressives.

Expected Questions (Prelims Exams)

1. Consider the following statements-

1. Rightwing thinking believes in religion, nation and tradition of its religions.
2. Leftist thinking doesn't believe in religion, caste, race, community, nation and boundary, its main objective is to bring backward people on a platform together.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Expected Questions (Mains Exams)

- Q. What is meant by rightwing thinking? Discuss the conditions of development of rightwing thinking in India. (250 Words)

Note: Answer of Prelims Expected Question given on 12 Aug. is 1 (c)

