CHAPTER - 7

IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORK ON SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In this chapter, the impact of social network on the social structure is discussed i.e. how the social network is affecting the existing social structure of the society. When we are using the term social structure, we mean to say any recurring pattern of social behaviour, or, more specifically, to the ordered interrelationship between the different elements of a social system or society". Thus, for example, the different kinship, religious, economic, political, and other institutions of a society may be said to comprise its social structure, as might be such components as its norms, values, and social roles. Thus for example, Raymond Firth (1951) arrives merely at the truism that social structure is 'an analytical tool, designed to serve us in understanding how men behave in their social life. The essence of this concept is those social relations which seem to be of crucial importance for the behaviour of members of the society so that if such relations are not in operation, the society could not be said to exist in that form. The cases of two constituencies are presented here.

7.1. Sardhana Constituency

Sardhana constituency is an important assembly seat, among all the five constituencies of Meerut district. The total number of voters, in Sardhana constituency, according to 2002 election, is 2,53,818, and the total number of villages, is 107 and 258 polling booth. The total polling, in 2002 election, was 1,40,600 votes. It is also an important Tehsil of Meerut district. It consists of two blocks, namely Sardhana and Daurala.
In this section the impact of social network on social structure is described on the basis of the interviews of the four main candidates.

7.1.1 Candidate- 1

BJP candidate was nominated in the 2002 assembly election and got victory with 51,282 votes. He says that the impact of social network on social structure may be understood by studying the changes in the ideology of the people. He said that before a few decades the social structure was strictly followed by the caste. That means the people of higher caste never interact with the people of lower castes directly. There was always a definite distance among all the castes. The educational level in the lower castes was very poor. Because of their illiteracy, the decision of which candidate would be supported was made by the people of higher castes and was followed by the people of lower castes. The feeling of untouchability was on the peak, even the people of higher caste didn't want to meet or talk to the people of lower castes. But now a days, the education has been spreading among all the castes, and every one uses his own consciousness to choose the proper candidate and after that they vote in his/her favour. In the present circumstances, this appears for every one to break the caste boundaries and hence when a candidate makes his/her social network, he/she tries to select the people of all the castes in his/her social network so that he can interact with the people of various castes. In this way the social network helps in breaking the boundaries of caste which is a feature of social structure.

He said that in his social network, he had the people of all the castes and by virtue of which he had good relations with the people of all the castes. He tries his best to participate in various functions organized by the people of all castes of his constituency. He has no hesitation in participating with the people of any caste. According to him this is the major fact that's why he got victory,
continuously, for the third time in the election.

7.1.2. Candidate-2

BSP candidate was nominated in 2002 election and acquired second place with 41,737 votes. He said that the castes are important variables and are dynamic in Indian politics. "The relations between caste and politics are not static but change continuously over time". Caste alliances are made to secure political objectives. Even these alliances are not permanent, counter alliances are made to overcome the strength of other caste alliances.

He said that he had frequent interaction with the people of all the castes and participates in the various functions, organized by the people of every caste. The people of all castes are included in his social network. He does not keep distance with the people of any caste. He also has a great influence in his caste. He also said that every one had to break the boundaries of caste if one wants to get success in any field whether it be politics or any other field. In the impact of social network on the social structure, he seems to agree with BJP candidate. He says that the social network helped a lot in breaking the caste boundaries and now no one feels any kind of uncofort with the people of lower castes.

7.1.3. Candidate-3

SP candidate was nominated in the 2002 assembly election and acquired third place with 23,329 votes. He said that the entire politics strategy had been changed. Now no one can get victory by strictly following the caste factor. Since, the education has been spread among all the castes, every one uses his own consciousness to choose the proper candidate and after they vote in his/her favour. Thus in the present circumstances, this is common for every one to break the caste boundaries and hence when a candidate makes his/her social network, he/she tries to select the people of all the castes in his/her social network so that he
can interact with the people of various castes by inviting as well as by participating in various occasions organized by the people of various castes. So, if one wants to get success he must have familiar relations with the people of all castes and must have wide thinking about the castes.

He said that, although, he had the people of every caste in his social network but among them some did not have sound influence in their respective castes and that's why the interaction with the people was not perfect and reliable.

7.1.4. Candidate- 4

Congress candidate was nominated in the 2002 assembly election and acquired fourth place with 17,182 votes. He said that sometimes the members of various castes might join political parties but this was much more due to their particularistic interests than out of conviction in the party's ideology or action-programs. Interest group may be based on economic, ethnic, linguistic, religious, regional or other considerations. Sometimes they would convert themselves into political parties or win over some members of the government (ruling party) and pressurise the government to concede to their demands. The relations between caste and politics are not static but change continuously over time and caste alliances are made to secure political objectives. Even these alliances are not permanent. Counter alliances are made to overcome the strength of other caste alliances.

He says that the main reason of his defeat was the absence of devoted people at every level of the social network. That's why he could not have proper interaction with various people of other religion and other castes.

7.2. Hastinapur Constituency

Hastinapur constituency is also an important constituency seat, among all the five constituencies of Meerut district. It is a reserved constituency seat for SC
candidate. The total number of voters in Hastinapur constituency, according to 2002 election, is 2,23,471, and the total number of villages is 110 with 250 polling booths. The total polling, in 2002 election, was 1,13,701. There are two blocks, namely Hastinapur and Mawana, in this constituency. There are three Nagar Panchayats in this constituency, namely Hastinapur, Mawana and Bahsuma. The following seven candidates were nominated, in 2002 election, from Hastinapur constituency for the assembly election.

In this section we describe the impact of social network of the candidates, on the social structure on the basis of the interviews of the four main candidates.

7.2.1. Candidate-1

SP candidate was nominated in 2002 assembly election from Hastinapur and got victory with 30,178 votes. He says that the kinship plays a very crucial role in the socio-political and economic organisation of simple societies like of this area. Its functions are extensive and overlapping with functions of the political and economic institutions. It takes up the task of maintaining order and balance in society. The principal of fission or conflict and fusion or cohesion work with in the simple societies along with the kinship and territorial lines.

He also says that this is essential for every one to break the caste boundaries and hence when a candidate makes his/her social network, he/she should to select the people of all the castes in his/her social network

Since Hastinapur is a reserved constituency, the people of higher castes supported him and as he belonged to SC family, he got the support of lower castes too, That's why he got victory in the election.

The candidate, Prabhudayal, accepts that the caste boundaries are going to be broken down and the social network during elections is playing a very important
role in doing this.

**7.2.2. Candidate-2**

BJP candidate was nominated in 2002 assembly election from Hastinapur constituency and acquired second place with 27,151 votes.

She says that she has regular interaction with the people of all the castes and participates in the various occasions organized by the people of every caste. The people of all castes were present in her social network. She does not keep distance with the people of any caste. She also has a great influence in her caste. She also said that every one had to break the boundaries of caste if one wants to get success in any field whether it be politics or any other field. In defining the impact of social network on the social structure, she seems to be agreeing with BJP candidate. She says that the social network helped a lot in breaking the caste boundaries and now no one feels any kind of uncoforness with the people of lower castes.

**7.2.3. Candidate-3**

Indian National Lokdal candidate was nominated in 2002 assembly election from Hastinapur constituency and secured third place with 25,034 votes.

He said the entire political strategy had been changed. Now no one can get victory by strictly following the caste factor. Since, the education has been spread among all the castes, each and every one uses his/her own consciousness to choose the proper candidate and after they vote in his/her favour. He says that now a days caste alliances are made to secure political objectives. Even these alliances are not permanent. Counter alliances are made to overcome the strength of other caste alliances.

He says that he has sound relations with the people of all the castes. The
people of different castes are present in his social network. He does not keep distance with the people of any caste. He also has a great influence in his caste. He also says that every one has to break the boundaries of caste, if one wants to get success in any field whether it may be the politics or any other field.

7.2.4. Candidate-4

BSP candidate was nominated in 2002 assembly election from Hastinapur constituency and acquired fourth place with 23,990 votes.

He said that he had a great interaction with the people of all the castes. The people of all castes were present in his social network but the majority belonged to lower castes. He does not keep distance with the people of any caste. He also has a great influence in his caste. He, also, says that every one has to break the boundaries of caste if one wants to get success. He said that the social network helped a lot in breaking the caste boundaries and now no one feels any kind of uncof ortness with the people of lower caste.

During the data collection process, we observed a few interesting facts, in both the constituencies, as narrated below:

7.3. Sardhana Constituency Some Important and Interesting Facts

In Sardhana constituency, we observed the following the facts:

(i) The winning candidate has even representation of all the important castes in his primary, as-well-as in secondary, chain of social network. Although he has done so because of political compulsions and just to ensure his victory yet this is slightly increasing the interaction between the higher and the lower castes. The change in food habits is clearly observable. Now the candidate of higher caste doesn't show any
hesitation in taking meals with the people of lower castes. The feeling of untouchability is also decreasing because the people of lower castes are now an important part of social network and this interaction is needed for seeking their support.

(ii) The interaction of the candidate, after victory, with the people of lower castes is limited just with those who are known as elite.

(iii) The candidate, who is capable of solving the problems related to the police department as well as in other administrative offices, of the people of the village, is recognized as a good leader because the majority of problems belong to this category.

7.4. Hastinapur Constituency: Some Important and Interesting Facts

(i) In Hastinapur constituency, we have observed the following facts: -i. The interaction of the people of higher castes is increased with the people of lower castes because Hastinapur constituency is a reserved constituency and hence they don't have any other options except to support the candidate of lower castes. This is moving the caste boundaries slightly.

(ii) The interaction between the candidate and the people of higher castes is found to be reduced, after the election, because the people of higher caste find themselves capable in solving their problems related to administration as well as in other spheres.

(iii) The candidate gives priority to the developmental work in his community. From the above observations we find that although there is slight movement in the caste boundaries yet caste is still a dominating factor. In unreserved constituency, we find that the candidate, who interacts with the people of lower castes in a very familiar manner during the election
process, after that limits his interaction just to people who are elites.

The interaction between the people of high and low castes, in reserved constituency is also found to be reduced because the people of higher castes find themselves capable in solving their problems at their own level.

The one observable difference between the two constituencies is found that unreserved candidate, who is of higher caste, limits his interaction with the people of lower castes while in reserved constituency the people of higher castes limit their interaction with the candidate, who is of lower caste.

Thus we may conclude that social structure is undergoing adoptive changes. Its traditional basic features, i.e. connubial (matrimonial), communal (eating together) and ritual, still prevail in rural area.

The core characteristics of social networks, which affect the social relationships, are still operative. The status quo of the intermediate and low castes have changed due to acquiring political and economic power. Thus we can say that there is a slight movement in the social structure, on the basis of caste, but the caste still remains a core factor in day to day social life.