**Question:** **Explain the role of Caste as a determinant in Indian political process**.

**Answer**

**Introduction**

The role as determinant of caste as voting behavior is explained as follows

1. **Recruitment of Leadership:** Caste influences the process of leadership recruitment. This is particularly true of highly ‘caste conscious’ people of some states like Haryana, Bihar, UP, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. In Haryana, the leadership comes either from the Jats or from the Bishnois or Brahmins. In Andhra Pradesh, the Reddys, Kammas and Valamas provide state leaders.
2. **Caste and Party Politics:** Caste factor is a constituent of the Indian party system. Some political parties have a direct caste basis while others indirectly bank upon particular caste groups. In particular, the regional political parties stand predominantly influenced by the caste factor. The DMK and AIADMK are non-Brahmin rather anti-Brahmin political parties of Tamil Nadu.  
   In Punjab, Akali Dal has a community identity but stands influenced by the issue of Jats vs. non-Jats. All political parties in India use caste as a means for securing votes in elections.  
   While the BSP banks upon the support of the Scheduled Castes, the BJP largely banks upon its popularity among the high caste Hindus and the trading community. In fact, while formulating its policies and decisions each political party of India in India almost always keeps in vision the ‘Caste Angle’.
3. **Caste and Elections:** The caste factor is an important factor of electoral politics in India. All political parties give great weightage to the caste factor in selecting their candidates, in allocating constituencies to their candidates and in canvassing support for their nominees in the election.  
   In constituencies predominated by Muslims, Muslim candidates are fielded and in areas predominated by Jats, Jat candidates are fielded. Even avowedly secularist parties like the Congress, the Janata Dal, the CPI and the CPM take into consideration the caste factor in selecting their candidates.In the election campaigns, votes are demanded in the name of caste. Caste groups are tapped for committed support. No one can disagree with N.D. Palmer when he observes that “Caste considerations are given great weight in the selection of candidates and in the appeals to voters during election campaigns.” In elections, caste acts as the most important political party.
4. **Caste and the Exercise of Power by a Political party**:Since caste is a major feature of the Indian society and acts as an important factor in various processes of politics, it also plays a big role in the decision-making process. Even the issue of re-organisation of states is handled with an eye upon the prevention of undue predominance of a caste group in a particular territory.  
     
   Caste factor influences the policies and decisions of the state governments. The party in power always tries to use its decision-making power to win the favour of major caste groups. The Congress has always tried to nurture people belonging to the Scheduled Castes as its vote bank.  
     
   Regional political parties, whenever they get the chance to rule their respective states, always use political power for furthering the interests of the caste groups which support or can support their regimes.  
     
   Recruitment to political offices is mostly done with due consideration to the caste of the persons. Caste factor influences the process of ministry making and the allocation of portfolios. Each big caste group always tries to secure ministerial berths for such elected representatives as belong to their caste.
5. **Caste Factor and the Local Government:** The role of caste in the working of the Panchayati Raj and other institutions of local self-government has been a recognised reality. We can go to the extent of recording that caste based factionalism in the rural areas of India has been one of the biggest hindering factors in the organisation and effective working of the Panchayati Raj.  
   In the Indian rural context, caste has been a plank of mobilisation, a channel of communication, representation and leadership and a linkage between the electorate and the political process.
6. **Caste and Indian Constitution:** Though the spirit of secularism stands clearly affirmed in the Constitution, yet in a limited and indirect way, it recognises the caste system in the form of providing for caste based reservations. Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Union Parliament and the state legislative assemblies (Art. [330](tel:330) and [332](tel:332)) as well as in public services reflects this feature.
7. **Caste Violence**:Caste based violence very often finds its way into politics. The traditional differences between the higher and lower castes have acquired a new vigour and have turned, at times, into a violent and fierce struggle for power in society. The growing terrorisation of the lower castes by the higher or even intermediary castes has been becoming a sad part of India’s political reality. In states like Maharashtra, Bihar, and Gujarat and UP, caste violence has raised its head even in some urban areas. Existence of caste sena’s in Bihar has been an unfortunate reality of state politics. Caste violence has been a source of big strain on social and political life of Bihar.
8. **Caste and Political Leadership:** Caste has been emerging as a factor in the process of leadership recruitment. The leadership of Sh. Kanshi Ram and Ms. Mayawati is caste based. So was the leadership of Ch. Charan Singh in UP, Karpoori Thakur in Bihar and Dev Raj Urs in Karanataka. The leadership of Sh. Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar is again an example of caste based leadership.

**Question:** **Explain the role of Caste as a determinant of voting behavior in Indian election system**.

**Answer**

**Introduction**

Caste is one of the main determinants of voting behaviour in India. It has a decisive role in political matters, particularly voting. Voting provides an oppor­tunity to castes to assert their influence. Just as in Britain, voting is class determinant, in United States, it is race determinant. Many scholars like D. Millar , Key , Colin Campbell , Rajni Kothari and Norman Palmer and many others have written extensively on the relationship between caste and politics in India. Several empirical field studies of elections conducted by sociologists and political scientists have revealed that caste not only exerts influence during voting but also acts as an important factor. They utilize caste identities and solidarities to cast votes on caste lines in every democratic institution from village panchayats to state assemblies and even parliament. Renowned sociol­ogist, Andre Beteille once said that loyalties of caste are exploited in voting. Bhikhu Parekh, Professor at the London School of Economics (India Today, December 26, 2005) observed, ‘it is hardly surprising that according to the 2004 national election survey, nearly 40 per cent of the people voted for their castes’.

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3. **Caste and Elections:** The caste factor is an important factor of electoral politics in India. All political parties give great weightage to the caste factor in selecting their candidates, in allocating constituencies to their candidates and in canvassing support for their nominees in the election.  
   In constituencies predominated by Muslims, Muslim candidates are fielded and in areas predominated by Jats, Jat candidates are fielded. Even avowedly secularist parties like the Congress, the Janata Dal, the CPI and the CPM take into consideration the caste factor in selecting their candidates.In the election campaigns, votes are demanded in the name of caste. Caste groups are tapped for committed support. No one can disagree with N.D. Palmer when he observes that “Caste considerations are given great weight in the selection of candidates and in the appeals to voters during election campaigns.” In elections, caste acts as the most important political party.Caste is the most convenient means of political mobilization. Elections are always fought utilizing the resources of caste loyalties.

The following caste considerations are taken into account political parties at the time of elections

1. The selection of candidates for a constituency is made on the basis of caste, who have a significant voice and can muster good number of votes in the constituency. Every party takes utmost care to see that its candidate in a particular constituency belongs to the caste which has a majority in the area.
2. People of a caste vote en bloc for a candidate of the same or different caste either in pursuance of the decision of Caste Panchayat or their leaders. They prefer a candidate of their own caste irrespective of the merits or demerits of the candidate.
3. When a single caste is not likely to be effective, alliances are made and that too on caste basis.
4. Even the office bearers of a political party are appointed on the basis of caste.

**Conclusion**

Commenting on the role of caste in democratic elections, S.C. Dube remarked, ‘although nearly every political party in its platform slogans paid lip service to the ideal of a casteless and classless society, in actual selection of candidates due thought was given to the caste composition of the electoral districts’. What Dube said still holds true today in 2013. These conditions are giving way to the process of partisan dealignment and class dealignment—a move away from consistent party identification.