Chapter Three

The Political Routes of OBC Politics: The Party System

Part I: Maharashtra

The political party system in the post-colonial Maharashtra till the early 1990s was that of single party dominance system. In this, the Congress party was the only party having support base amongst most of the sections of society. The other parties were small, having support base only in some limited pockets across the state. Thus, the Peasants and Workers’ Party (PWP) had some base only in one or two districts, the Communist Parties enjoyed support of the industrial workers and the tribals in some parts of the state and the Socialist Party and Jan Sangh had limited social base only in the cities (Vora-Palshikar, 1996: 2). Thus, the Congress party was able to secure 51.2%, 47%, and 56.3% votes in the 1962, 1967, and 1972 assembly elections respectively in the state (CSDS Data Unit, 2003: 365). Incidentally, these were the first three state assembly elections after creation of the Marathi speaking state of Maharashtra.

Establishment and Tribulations of Congress Dominance

Preponderance of the Congress party was based on the Maratha dominance in the state. However, cohesion within the Congress party in the state remained intact only for a decade after creation of the Marathi speaking state. Even then, this cohesion and consolidation of the Congress party was based on the factionalised fights within the Congress parties at the village and district level. These fights used to be fought for the power structures such as the local self-governing bodies and the rural cooperatives (Lele, 1982). The winners in these factional fights were usually rewarded by some political posts, from Congress ticket for the assembly to the ministerial post in the state government.

At the village level, this Congress domination was in fact domination of Marathas over the rest of the village population. This Maratha domination was established, in the words of Lele, by the means of patriarchal and patrimonial strategies (Lele, ibid: 18-19). These terms were adapted by Lele from Weber. Thus, for Lele, Patriarchalism was used by the elite Marathas in the villages to socially and politically control the
poor Marathas. The elite Marathas were able to do so by using kinship ties that they had with the poor Marathas. The Patrimonialism was adopted by these elite Marathas to garner the support of the service castes. The latter in this relationship were usually economically dependent on the former. However, the elite Marathas made use of cultural symbols such as festivals, rituals, village deities to cover this economic dependence and give it a shape of acceptable interaction to both the parties. In other words, the elite Marathas established their hegemony over the rural poor by those rulership techniques.

The various cooperative institutions in Maharashtra provided the Congress leaders with an institutional apparatus to consolidate their political position in the countryside. These cooperative institutions were hugely financed by the central and state governments and used to cater to a number of economic needs of the farmers in villages (Rosenthal, 1982: 11-12). These institutions had an elaborate chain from the villages to the state level (ibid). This served as patronage and political opportunity structures for the Congress party machine at the village, district, and state level.

From late 1960s and early 1970s, Indira Gandhi started to work on the strategy of creating her political base in the country. She felt necessity for this probably due to the fact that in 1969, the state level leaders of the Congress organisation staged a revolt against her. This revolt and the fact that the Congress party at the state level was governed by the state level elite made her national level leadership dependent on those state leaders. In order to establish her independent source of socio-political support base, Indira Gandhi started the populist politics (Lele, ibid: xiii). As a part of this strategy, Indira Gandhi as a Prime Minister made a number of pro-poor, radical policy announcements such as abolition of privy purses and bank nationalisation. The aim here was to create a constituency for Indira Gandhi that would be directly accessible to her. This involved circumventing the state level and the local level leaders and organisations for votes of people and making people vote directly for the personality of Indira Gandhi. Mrs. Gandhi’s being the daughter of Nehru and her own charismatic leadership helped in furthering this strategy.

According to Lele, difference in the relationship between the elite Marathas and other lower castes in various regions of Maharashtra made the interface between the politics and society in these regions different from each other (1982: xv-xviii). The impact of the Satyashodhak and non-Brahman movement in the western Maharashtra meant that
here the socio-political differentiation between the traditional state level Maratha rulers and village level Maratha elites was narrowed down. Hence, it was possible for the state level ruling Marathas to incorporate village level rulers into their factions. This process used to generate the local socio-political support base for the state level Maratha leaders from western Maharashtra. In Vidarbha and Marathwada on the other hand, the social gap between the regional and local Maratha leaders was wider. This created difficulties for the state level Maratha leaders to create their own social and political support bases down till the village level. Hence, the socio-political alliances of the Maratha leaders from Vidarbha and Marathwada were unstable in nature than the ones their counterparts in the western Maharashtra had built. These forces made it easier for Indira Gandhi’s populism to succeed in Vidarbha and Marathwada than in western Maharashtra.

Since the 1970s, Indira Gandhi’s interventions into the state politics and divisions between the Maratha leadership in the state Congress had made politics in the state unstable. Thus, before 1975, when Shankarrao Chavan became CM of the state, V. P. Naik was the Chief Minister (CM) for 11 years continuously. However, from 1975 to 1988—the next 14 year period—the CM was changed 8 times in the state (Vora-Palshikar, 1996: 10).

Thus, since the early 1970s Mrs. Gandhi started attacking the politics of Maratha dominance structured in the factional chain of Maratha leaders right from the village level. Mrs. Gandhi used populist ideology to destabilise this factional politics. This attack seemed to have destabilised the Maratha politics explicitly since late 1970s. This challenge to Maratha politics in the state originated in Central government and national Congress organisation. This place of origin was external to Maharashtra. The Maratha hegemony was, moreover, attacked from the internal source. This happened when in 1978, the state government led by Sharad Pawar decided to rename the Marathwada University after Dr. Ambedkar. This incited violent attacks on the dalits in the villages of Marathwada. The Maratha leadership opposed this renaming of the university and desisted from taking initiative in stopping violent attacks on dalits (ibid: 7). This stand taken by the Maratha leadership put a question mark before the credibility of the Bahujanist ideology adopted by the Maratha leadership since the creation of Maharashtra (ibid). This also indicated that ideological capacity of the Marathas to carry various social groups under their leadership was starting to get
exhausted. In other words, the hegemony of the Maratha leadership of the state got challenged and henceforth, it had to rest itself on dominance.

Political and Social Mobilisation of the OBCs

After independence till the 1990s the OBCs in the state used to vote for the Congress party. However, during this period, the PWP had been involved in mobilising some of the OBC castes in various pockets of the state. Thus, it was Narayan Naguji Patil of the PWP who took initiative in organising the Agaris and Kolis in Raigad district behind the party since independence. In fact, Patil was involved in mobilising Agaris of this area even before independence by taking many agrarian issues hitting the Agari farmers then. These issues were mainly related with the exploitation of Agari tenants and labourers at the hands of the Khot landlords (Patil, 2003: 86-87). During one of the very significant struggles of Agari peasants at Chari village in Alibaug, Patil invited Dr. Ambedkar to address the Farmers’ Conference, in which Dr. Ambedkar was reportedly given a huge ovation (ibid: 88). Patil, himself belonging to the Agari community, also began giving entry to the untouchables in his home, which irked many Agari farmers then (ibid). Along with Agaris, the PWP mobilised a large section of Kolis, another OBC caste, living in the Raygad district on the basis of many economic issues of the Koli fishermen (Ghotale, 2007: 128). Both these castes are found in large numbers in the district of Raigad. However, Patil and later on, his next two generations mobilised the Agaris and Kolis of this district not on the issues of their caste identity, but on the basis of agrarian struggles and the problems of the Koli fishermen initially and later on by establishing control over local governments and starting and running various cooperative and educational institutes in the district (ibid). Sangola Taluka of Solapur district seems to be another pocket where an OBC caste, Dhanger supported a PWP leader Ganpatrao Deshmukh consistently since the early 1960s (ibid: 126). Deshmukh himself belonged to the same community (ibid). Again, Deshmukh had not mobilised those Dhangars, who comprise nearly 45% of the Taluka’s population, on the basis of their caste, but on the basis of his hold over the local self government and various cooperatives in the area and by addressing the various civic problems of the people in his constituency (ibid). A number of leaders in the PWP like D. B. Patil of Raigad district supported and worked for implementation of Mandal commission report. However, a section amongst the party opposed Mandal commission report (ibid: 131). The fact that the party’s leadership at the district level
had been dominated by the Marathas (ibid) may be one of the important causes behind this.

The other set of leaders belonging to the Agari community seemed to have taken initiative in organising the OBCs in the state. Thus, it was Adv. Janardan Patil, Comrade Ganpat Patil and Ganesh Patil, who took initiative to establish Maharashtra State OBC Federation in 1971 (Satavedhi, 2002: 6, Vivek, 2003: 136). Incidentally, the decision to establish this Federation was taken in the third session of the Agari Social Conference, a caste organisation of Agaris (Mhatre, 2003: 126). In the year 1974, the Federation organised a huge march on the state government secretariat to demand 35% reservation and free education for the OBCs in the state (Patil and Wagah, 1990: 17). In this march a cross-section of OBC castes such as the Agaris, the Kolis, the Kunbis, the Bhandaris, the Dhangars, the Vanjars, the Malis etc participated (ibid). Moreover, during the 1970s, Agari caste organisations demanded implementation of the Kaleskar Commission report (Interview with Suryavanshi Rajaram dated 26-2-10).

Since the late 1970s, Shetkari Sanghatana seems to have included many OBCs in its fold. During this period, central and state governments adopted a number of favourable policies towards agriculture. This led to emergence of a section amongst the farmers who had a marketable surplus. However, the government was not able to fulfil all the economic expectations of this group. Hence, there was a severe discontent amongst these farmers against the state government. This discontent gave rise to the Shetkari Sanghatana to which many farmers lent their support. This organisation arranged protest movements on the issue of prices of the onion, sugarcane, and cotton. The Shetkari Sanghatana recruited many agricultural OBC castes into its leadership and organisation (Vora and Palshikar, ibid: 20). Nevertheless, the Shetkari Sanghatana did not mobilise the OBC farmers on the issue of their being sidelined as OBCs or on the basis of their identity as OBCs. This mobilisation was on the agrarian issues, on the slogan of “India vs. Bharat”; based on their identity of being farmers (ibid: 21).

The constituency mobilised by the Shetkari Sanghatana was basically against the established power holders in the Maharashtrian countryside. However, this organisation was not participating in the elections. So, during elections, these anti-establishment voters were voting mainly Sharad Pawar’s party, which was able to
carve out a base in the rural Maharashtra during the first half of 1980s. In fact, during 1980s, the Congress Socialist party of Sharad Pawar was the main opposition party to the ruling Congress (Palshikar, 2003: 30). Thus this party was able to secure 20% and 17% of votes and 47 and 54 seats in the 1980 and 1985 state assembly elections respectively (ibid). However, on both the occasions, the Congress (S) was a part of Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) coalition with a little difference in the coalition partners on these occasions. Thus, during 1980 elections the PDF consisted of the Congress (S), the Janata Party, the PWP and the Republican Party of India (RPI) (Palshikar et al., 2010: 10). For 1985 elections, this coalition, supported by Sharad Joshi’s Shetkari Sanghatana, was having the same constituents except for the addition of BJP into and deletion of the RPI from it (ibid: 11). During this period itself, many of the activists of Sharad Pawar’s party had started to work for the Shiv Sena (Vora and Palshikar, ibid: 28). Nevertheless, the entry of Sharad Pawar in Congress (I) meant that these anti-establishment voters were devoid of any political vehicle. Soon, they made use of Shiv Sena as the medium through which they could make their political claims (ibid: 21).

**Challenges to Congress Dominance**

During 1980s, the Shiv Sena decided to spread its tentacles out of Mumbai into the rural Maharashtra. Apart from its Hindutva ideology, Shiv Sena was helped by many other forces in being able to expand its influence in the rural areas, especially in Marathwada. The young Marathas in the rural Marathwada were experiencing ‘blockages’ in their political mobility through the usual Congress structure due to the Congress being monopolised by the old leaders in every power structure. These young Maratha politicians got attracted towards Shiv Sena. Also, the OBC leaders, due to publication of Mandal commission report, were becoming increasingly conscious about their own political empowerment. They realised that most of the political opportunities at the state level had been monopolised by the Marathas and they had been sidelined by Congress politics in the state. So the OBCs were searching for an alternative political vehicle. This they found in Shiv Sena and BJP which made it a point to represent OBC leaders in their party structures at the state level.

Since the 1990s, the cooperative sector in the villages of Maharashtra had been undergoing a crisis. In 2003, it was reported that out of 110 working sugar cooperative factories in the state, 52 had been sick units; in Ahmdnagar district, out
of 2000 cooperative credit societies, 200 had gone bankrupt (Baviskar, 2003: 82-83). Thus, downfall of the cooperative sector meant that a significant institutional structure which used to hold together all the castes under the Maratha leadership at the local level in rural Maharashtra had been destroyed. No alternative institutional structure having such a capability of interest aggregation at the local level had emerged in its place. This institutional void at the local level must have given an impetus to the identity politics in the state and mobilisation of the OBCs must be seen as a part of this process.

During 1980s itself, the Shiv Sena adopted the ideology of Hindutva, downplaying its earlier ideology of ‘sons of soil’. All through this period, Bal Thackerey, the supreme leader of the Shiv Sena, was trying to organise all the Hindutva forces under one roof (Vora amd Palshikar, ibid: 28). He even attempted to establish Hindu Mahasangha in 1986, but this attempt failed. During this phase, Bal Thackerey used to take pot-shots at the activists of BJP and RSS by calling them timid (ibid). On the other hand, a section amongst the RSS was not sure about the credibility of Shiv Sena due to the latter’s record of wavering for and against the Congress and its closeness to Sharad Pawar (ibid). However, the increasing tide of Hindutva movement made the main leaders of both the parties to stitch an electoral alliance in the state for the first time in the Lok Sabha elections of 1989.

It was in the 1990 state assembly elections that the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance created a stiff challenge before the Congress dominance in the state. In this election, the alliance secured 27% of votes and the votes secured by the Congress party or parties in the state decimated below 40% for the first time since 1962 (ibid: 39). In 1978 assembly elections, the two Congress parties got 43% of votes, which was more than what Congress got in 1990 (ibid). The Hindutva alliance could secure good support from the voters in Mumbai, Konkan, Vidarbha and Marathwada. Especially Shiv Sena was able to create a social base amongst the villagers of Marathwada (ibid: 38).

After coming to power in 1989 elections, the Congress (I) government led by Sharad Pawar decided to implement Mandal reservations in the state. This was expected to take the wind out of Janata Dal’s political sail. This is to say that this decision was made to deprive the Janata Dal in the state from reaping any political benefits from its decision to implement Mandal reservations at the national level. This Congress government extended these reservations to the Muslim OBCs also in the due course of
time. In the year 1991, eleven Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from Vidarbha and Marathwada belonging to the Shiv Sena left the organisation under Chhagan Bhujbal’s leadership and entered the Congress party (ibid: 49). According to the scholars, conflict between Bhujbal and a Brahman leader in Shiv Sena, Manohar Joshi contributed to this division in the party (Palshikar-Deshpande, 2003: 103). In fact, a number of grassroots cadres in the Shiv Sena were of the opinion that Bhujbal was being sidelined for Joshi by the party leadership (Mandale Kaka, Interview, dated 7-6-2010). Most of the MLAs deserting Shiv Sena with Bhujbal belonged to the OBC community (Vora and Palshikar, ibid). Given that Bhujbal was one of the important OBC leaders of the Sena, with his own mass following, this was a severe shock for the organisation.

The BJP, whose political stature had enhanced due to significant performance in 1990 state assembly elections, started to initiate a number of significant political moves. The party took care to coalesce the Ram Mandir issue at the national level with the specific state level issues in Maharashtra. The BJP not only supported Mandal reservations, it also backed the renaming of Marathwada University after Dr. Ambedkar. Moreover, the BJP stood firmly behind the Govari leaders who led a protest march against state Congress government who lathi charged the march where about 126 Govaris were killed (ibid: 48). BJP actively supported the anti-corruption movement against the incumbent Congress government under the leadership of Anna Hazare and G. R. Khairnar. The party also mobilised the peasants, agriculture workers and the famine stricken people in the villages on their various livelihood issues.

The intense factionalism within the Congress party in the state had already made the party weak. Furthermore, the Marathas, especially in Marathwada, were against the renaming of Marathwada University after Dr. Ambedkar. Congress government’s initiation in this matter made the Marathas drift further away from the Congress. The Shiv Sena, on the other hand, adopted a stand against the renaming. This endeared Shiv Sena to many Marathas in the state. This, along with the appeal of Hindutva ideology, made a number of Marathas to vote for the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance in the elections.

Since the 1980s, the industrial and service sectors started to have an upper hand over the agricultural sector in the state. This gave rise to a group of “upstart capitalists and urban rich” (Palshikar and Deshpande, 2003: 102) in the state. Sharad Pawar, as the
CM of the Congress party attempted to implement the policy of privatisation and liberalisation with great vigour. These policies were more in favour of the entrenched interests in urban areas. However, the Congress party did not have any organisational base in urban Maharashtra. This prevented the party from reaping the political benefits of its policy shifts in favour of urban areas. In rural areas, these policies were considered to be going against the interests of agriculture sector. Hence, Congress had to face discontent there. In order to reign in desertion from its support base, the Congress started to project the leaders from the newly assertive OBC caste groups such as Dhangars and Malis; and the party created new patronage structures in the rural areas like Development Boards for economic upliftment of underdeveloped Marathwada and Vidarbha regions and one for the rest of the Maharashtra (ibid: 103). Congress also had to enter into an electoral alliance with one of the groups of Republican Party of India (RPI).

Though Shiv Sena-BJP alliance was able to capture the power of state government in Maharashtra in 1995, it was right since the 1990 state assembly elections that the alliance had created a political challenge before the Congress. Thus, in 1990 state assembly elections, the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance was able to secure 94 seats and 26.64% votes (Vora, 1996: 171). The only instance when the opposition party was able to fare so well in Maharashtra assembly elections was in 1978 elections when the Janata Party was able to get nearly 28% of votes and 99 seats (ibid). In the assembly elections of 1995, the Congress and the alliance bagged 80 and 138 seats respectively; while the actual votes secured by both were 30.37% and 29.27% respectively (ibid). This means that even if the Congress party was actually able to get slightly more than one percentage point votes than the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance, it ended up securing 58 seats less than the latter. To add more spice to this story, the Shiv Sena actually got a little less than half percentage of votes when compared to the votes the party got in 1990 assembly elections. Nevertheless, the party was able to move up from 52 seats in the 1990 assembly elections to 73 seats in the 1995 assembly elections (ibid). One of the important reasons behind this discrepancy in elections results was unprecedented crop of rebel Congress candidates. This happened during this election mainly because the institutional apparatus of Congress party was not able to contain factionalism within the party. Thus, a number of Congress leaders in the state, who were opposed to Pawar camp held Pawar responsible for defeat of many Congress candidates (Vora
and Palshikar, 1996: 69). The Congress rebels managed to win election at 35 constituencies and in another 24 seats the Congress candidates had to bite the dust due to division of votes between themselves and the rebel candidates—thus the Congress was defeated in 59 constituencies owing to rebellion within the party (ibid: 70). According to the findings of the election survey conducted by the CSDS and Politics Department of the Pune University, amongst those who had voted for the rebel Congress candidates in 1995 elections, 67% respondents had reported to have voted for the Congress candidates in 1991 Lok Sabha elections (ibid). According to the findings of the same survey, those who had voted for the rebel candidates during 1995 assembly elections, 25% of them have reported that the Congress is their favourite party (ibid). Out of the 35 constituencies won by the rebel Congress candidates, at 29 places the official Congress candidates were on second place, and out of the 80 constituencies won by the official Congress candidates, the rebel Congress candidates were on second place in 34 constituencies (ibid). This means that in as many as 63 constituencies the main contenders were the official and the rebellious Congress candidates. This makes the damage done to the Congress by the rebel candidates even clearer. This picture, according to some scholars, "confirms the breakdown of the Congress system in the state." (Palshikar and Deshpande, ibid: 105).

Another important feature of the 1995 assembly elections in Maharashtra was emergence of urban areas as the distinct and dominant political sphere for the first time since the creation of the state. Thus in 1993-94, the industrial activity contributed 25.6% of the state income and the farming sector contributed 20% of it (Vora, 1996: 172). During 1950s, the farming sector was sharing nearly 33% of the state income, which came down to 20% by 1993 (ibid). In 1995 assembly elections, there were 91 urban and semi-urban constituencies, out of which the Congress was able to secure 11 and the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance pocketed 63, making it 70% strike rate for the alliance in urban constituencies (ibid). The Shiv Sena and BJP have been able to create a socio-economic base in the urban areas. Thus, the BJP had control over the urban cooperative banks, educational societies, libraries and other cultural institutions in the urban areas; along with the support the party traditionally enjoyed amongst the urban social groups such as educated middle classes, professionals, traders and upper castes (ibid). The Shiv Sena since its inception has been a party based in Mumbai. During the 1980s and 1990s, it diluted its sons of soil ideology and started to propagate the
Hindutva ideology vigorously through its mouthpiece Saamna which was established in 1989 (ibid: 173; Akolkar, 1998: 175). Thackerey and Shiv Sena made use of acerbic language in this mouthpiece to spread Hindu nationalist message amongst the middle classes and to attack the adversaries of this ideology. The Shiv Sena traditionally had a presence amongst the trade unions in many industries of Mumbai and it was also able to get the backing of industrialists due to its conciliatory postures towards them on most of the occasions (Vora, 1996: ibid). The BJP-Sena alliance government also indicated a shift from the erstwhile rural based Congress governments to the urban-based government. This was reflected in an urban slant in the structure of political power holders in this government.

After the creation of Maharashtra, a compromise was reached between the numerically dominant rural interests (read Maratha interests) and materially dominant capitalist interests in urban areas under the leadership of Y.B. Chavan. However, as the service sector started to expand in the state, it made its presence felt in the rural areas too. This necessitated re-formation in the relationship between the rural and urban dominant interests in the sphere of politics of the state. Since the numerical domination of the rural, agrarian interests got challenged by the urban-industrial and service sector interests, the urban interests took “decisive control over the political apparatus” of the state (Palshikar-Deshpande, ibid: 117-118). This urban tilt was continued even later in the policy-making by the Congress-NCP coalition government (ibid: 118).

**Instability in the State Polities**

Initially, it seemed that the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance would be controlling the urban politics in the state. However, by the beginning of 21st century, it became clear that the Congress and especially the newly formed Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) would be challenging the urban dominance of Shiv Sena-BJP alliance. Thus, during the urban local body elections of 2001-02, the Congress and NCP put up a good show in a number of small towns. Moreover, in the Lok Sabha elections of 2004 in Maharashtra, the Congress’ votes from the urban areas actually exceeded the party’s share of the votes from rural areas by a hefty 15 percentage points (Palshikar-Birmal, 2004: 5470). The National Election Studies (NES) data compiled by the CSDS suggested that the Congress and BJP were the chief contestants for the urban votes in the state and the NCP and Shiv Sena were the major rivals for the rural votes in the
state. This indicates that the Shiv Sena has been entering into the rural areas, thus dispelling the erstwhile image of the party as mainly urban based. This instability was reflected in the challenges to the regional supremacy of the parties too. Thus, the Congress has been challenging the Shiv Sena and BJP in the urbanized Konkan and Mumbai and the latter two parties have been making their presence felt in the rural Marathwada and Vidarbha regions of the state. Further, in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, the leads of the four main parties was less than 5000 votes in nearly 25% of the assembly segments in the state (Palshikar, 2004a: 4399). This further indicated the instability of political competition in the state. This instability and insecurity got further accentuated by the situation where the district became the main theatre of state politics and latter became immune from the state level issues (ibid: 4400). This implied two things (ibid). One, the limitations of the state level political parties to raise state level issues was laid bare. Second, it gave rise to the caste based and district based political parties such as Sarva Samaj Party of Dhangars (an OBC caste) and the Jana Surajya party having influence in a district or two in the southern Maharashtra.

**Fragmentation and Instability in OBCs’ Political Mobilisation**

Another feature of the decline of Congress party in the state during 1990s is disintegration of caste blocs in politics. As mentioned above, the Congress was able to build a larger support of Maratha-Kunbis and other lower castes behind it by using the strategies of “patriarchy” and “patrimony” (Lele, ibid: 18-19). These methods, along with the Congress’ ideology of rule of and for the Bahujan Samaj enabled the Maratha leadership in the state to establish its hegemony over the other sections of Maharashtrian society. This hegemony implied that the rule of Marathas was considered as the rule for the welfare of the Maharshtrians by not only the Maratha leadership, but also by the non-Maratha sections. This was sought to be achieved by conceding cultural space in the hands of Brahmans, coopting the various OBC castes into the governments at the local level, where they were found numerous; and offering dalits a share, even though smaller and nominal, in the spoils of ministerial offices.

This Maratha hegemony was challenged in the politics of Maharashtra due to the failure of Congress party to be able to sustain it and the postures and positions taken by the other parties, from time to time, which attracted the various sections of population towards them. So, the anti-Namantar position adopted by the Shiv Sena
drew the Maratha-Kunbis towards the party. Also, the militant Hindutva ideology of the Shiv Sena in the state fuelled into the Khatriya sentiment of the community. The OBCs in the state were given better representation in the leadership of the BJP which was able to attract a sizable number of OBCs towards it. In addition, the Shiv Sena was made an attractive option for the OBCs when the former publicly attacked the Maratha dominance on the Congress and the state politics. This coalesced with the new found awareness amongst the OBCs of their political rights in the background of the publication of Mandal commission report. Moreover, the Shiv Sena, from the start, had a sizable number of supporters and activists in Mumbai coming from various artisan OBC castes and these activists mobilised their castes in the rural areas for the Shiv Sena (Palshikar-Birmal, 2004: 5470). This was exemplified in many rural campaigns made by the then OBC face of the Shiv Sena—Chhagan Bhujbal. This made OBCs vote for Shiv Sena in large numbers. However, the Shiv Sena never mobilised OBCs on the basis of OBC identity. It politicised OBCs with the ideological tool of militant Hindutva ideology, encouraging Hindutva consciousness amongst many OBCs in the state.

In this process, Congress was shorn of the two of its solid support bases that is the Maratha-Kunbis and the OBCs. By 2004 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress could sustain its position in the state politics only on the basis of the support it could secure from the dalits, adivasis and the Muslims (ibid: 5471). The formation of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) further complicated political competition in the state. In fact, this party was merely a formalisation of one of the dominant faction within the Congress under Sharad Pawar’s leadership (Palshikar-Birmal, 2003: 213). This may be witnessed by the fact that when the NCP was formed in 1999, out of 80 Congress MLAs in the last assembly, 45 went into the NCP (ibid). Moreover, more than half the leaders of cooperative institutions in the state backed Pawar’s new party and in every district the erstwhile Congress organisation was torn in the middle—one side continuing with the Congress party and another going with Pawar’s NCP (ibid). Soon, the NCP emerged as the party of Marathas in the state. However, this did not make Marathas desert the Shiv Sena completely and a section of them continued to support the latter. However, this hampered the promise made by the NCP leadership initially that it would be enjoying power along with the OBCs in the state. This promise by the NCP was articulated in giving an important position to Bhujbal in the
party apparatus. Nevertheless, Bhujbal had to struggle to continue to enjoy significant portfolio in the state government. This created a tension between the Maratha and OBC support bases of the party, often tossing the party towards its Maratha constituency rather than the OBCs (ibid: 228).

The drift of the OBC vote from the Congress party towards the Shiv Sena and BJP would be clear if one analyses the NES data regarding the community’s support to the various parties in the elections during 1990s. Thus, in the state assembly elections of 1995, the Congress bagged most of the OBC votes getting 33.3% of support amongst them (Vora-Palshikar, 1996: 105). This picture of the Congress’ domination of the OBC vote continues during the 1996 Lok Sabha election too (Palshikar-Deshpande, 2003: 120-Table 7). However, in 1999 Lok Sabha election, the Congress loses its dominance in getting the OBC vote, when the Shiv Sena becomes the highest vote catcher of the OBCs in the state by getting 24.3% of OBC’s votes (ibid). In the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, however, the BJP takes away this preponderance of Shiv Sena in having the OBC votes by getting 26% of their votes (Palshikar-Birmal, 2004: 5471-Table 9). The Shiv Sena, in this election was able to get only 19% of the votes of OBCs, the NCP claiming greater proportion of OBC votes then Shiv Sena that is 21% (ibid). The Congress, by getting only 18% of the OBC votes in this election (ibid) seems to be real loser though in this process.

Thus, the political participation of the OBCs had been fragmented and unstable in post-Mandal Maharashtra. In order to understand this nature one must comprehend a peculiar nature of relationship between the Marathas, Kunbis and OBCs and turbulences between many OBC sections.

**Marathas, Kunbis and OBCs**

The relationship between the Marathas, Kunbis and the OBCs has been complex in nature. Though the Marathas were considered to be Kshatriyas and Kunbis were supposed to be Shudras, there has been a complicated process of ritual-social differentiation and socio-political fusion between the two communities (Deshpande, 2004: 1148). Then there is a sub-regional difference in their relations. Largely, in western Maharashtra and Marathwada regions, one finds that many erstwhile Kunbis have got Maratha status while in Vidarbha and Konkan regions, a large number of Kunbis still exist (ibid). In the official OBC list of the state, the Kunbis find a mention
while Marathas have not been included generally due to the higher and lower ritual and social status respectively of the Marathas and Kunbis. While for the better part of the 20th century, the Kunbis and other middle and backward castes in the state were claiming Kshatriya and Maratha status to indicate their upward social mobility, since the last decade of the century the Marathas started demanding that they be included in the OBC list. For this, the Marathas argued that they share the shudra social status with the Kunbis. According to the observers, the Marathas, who continue to consider the Kunbis as belonging to lower social status (ibid) had publically aspired for the OBC status. This happened partly due to the fact that the Marathas had to share the political power at the local level with the OBCs as the latter got reservations in the rural self-government structures and economic hardships experienced by the Marathas due to crisis in agriculture which remains the main occupation of the Marathas (Kumar, 2009: 11). Apart from the complication between the Marathas and Kunbis, the 1990s also witnessed the contradiction between the rich and the poor Marathas getting sharper. Thus, a feeling of discontent amongst the poor Marathas for their exclusion from the social, political, economic, and cultural power of the rich and ruling Marathas was observed (Guru, 1995: 734).

Despite the fact that the Kunbis are locally influential, none of the OBC castes opposed the inclusion of the former in the OBC list. This happened due to two reasons (Deshpande, ibid). Firstly, it was thought by the OBC political parties and leadership that the localised numerical existence of the OBC castes meant that the inclusion of Kunbis, who reportedly constitute for 10% of the state’s population, into this category would give this imagined community a semblance of political majority. Secondly, the OBC politicians wanted to wedge a division between the Kunbi-Maratha caste cluster.

It was thought that this vivisection would strengthen the OBC political space. However, while talking to the activists and ideologues of the various OBCs’ social and caste organisations, especially in Vidarbha, we constantly heard that for the OBCs the Kunbis have been one of the main ‘others’.

The Maratha-Kunbis comprise of a little more than 31% of the state population according to the 1931 census. The OBCs, minus Kunbis, contribute 27% to the total population of the state (Vora, 2009: 217). The OBCs in the state are made up of peasant castes and craftsperson castes. The peasant castes like Dhangars, Malis, Vanjaris are numerous in some of the districts in the state, while excepting the Telis,
who are numerically strong in some of the districts in Vidarbha, most of the OBC castes who have been traditionally involved in crafts are found to be in minority in all parts of the state (ibid). The numerically strong castes have been perceived to be the ones who have cornered all the benefits available for the OBCs, and have betrayed the numerically small castes amongst the OBCs (Dr. Salunke Satish, Interview dated 14-6-2010). In Vidarbha area, the Kunbis have been alleged to have benefited at the cost of the small OBC castes. Moreover, the economic differentiation within the every OBC caste, especially after the globalisation processes meant that the life experience of the middle class amongst the OBCs and those OBCs living in the slums or those who are small and marginal farmers are vastly different. Thus, a survey conducted by the CSDS in 1996 on the social composition of middle class in India showed that while the percentage of the middle class amongst the OBCs was much less compared to the latter’s proportion in the total sample, a significant proportion of the OBCs tended to identify themselves as the middle class (Sheth, 2005: 226, 229). Even though this had been an all India survey, the findings may be indicative of the position of middle class formation amongst the OBCs in Maharashtra. The single caste organisations amongst the OBC castes have been led by the middle class emerging within those castes. This middle class leadership fears that they would lose the leadership of their caste organisations if they subsume those into the OBC organisations. All these processes contribute in the political fragmentation of the OBC castes in the state. Also at the local level at least in some places in the state two OBC castes have been seen to be locked in political conflict with each other (Birmal, 2007: 60).

Maharashtra witnessed one party dominance system till 1990. Although this one-party dominance started getting cracks from within since the early 1970s, the Congress party was able to keep those cracks within the party and continued to enjoy state power, except for the tumultuous period between 1978 and 1980. Since the late 1980s, however, the Congress party was presented with the real challenge in the form of Shiv Sena-BJP alliance and the political competition in the state seem to be between the two political poles. The creation of NCP in 1999 further complicated the political party system in the state. From this time on, the politics in the state was occupied by four main parties-the Congress, NCP, Shiv-Sena and the BJP. Since 2004 assembly elections, these four parties are found to be fighting assembly and the Lok Sabha
elections by forming themselves into two coalitions. Nevertheless, the coalition partners in each coalition cannot sustain their cooperation at all levels of political competition in the state. Thus, either during the elections for the local self-government bodies or for the state council seats these alliance partners are seen ditching each other and working in favour of the opposite camp. Thus, this two-cornered political competition is replete with the tensions internal to each alliance.

The issue of the OBC reservation in the state was taken up by the Janata Dal and the Bharatiya Republican Party-Bahujan Mahasangha coalition during 1990s. However, these political formations soon became ineffective in state politics. Hence, the BJP-Shiv Sena became the political vehicles of the newly assertive OBCs in the state politics. These parties mobilised the OBCs on the basis of raising the issue of the Maratha domination over the state politics or by accommodating OBCs into their political parties and in power. These parties did not raise the issue of reservation for OBCs in an explicit manner. Their ideological apparatus was Hindutva. All the same, in the course of time, all the major political parties in Maharashtra seemed to have developed a consensus on giving representation to the OBCs in the parties and power (Palshikar, 2007: 20). This has blunted the edge of OBC political mobilisation in the state.

The decade of 1990s was a turbulent decade in the state politics of Maharashtra. During this time, the stability in the politics and political party system that Maharashtra was experiencing earlier gave way to increasing instability and uncertainty in the politics of the state. The shortening of gap between the urban-rural differentiations in the economy reflected itself in politics by making political competition in both these spaces complex and competitive in nature. The emergence of the district as a new unit where the actual politics started to take shape made competition between political parties local in nature. The disintegration within the caste groups of Maratha-Kunbi and OBCs further contributed to the instability in the state politics—initiating entry of BJP-Shiv Sena in the state politics but at the same time limiting them in the latter. Moreover, this multi party competition created a mirage of increase in political choices for the electorate as all these major political players were having complete consensus on implementing the economic policies of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation in the state. Hence, the scholars have
called this political party system as providing illusory political options and having convergence on the economic policy issues (ibid).

Part II: Tamil Nadu

After independence, the torchbearer of the non-Brahman movement in the state, the Justice Party was replaced by the Dravida Kazhagharm (DK) under Periyars’s leadership. This organisation got divided and another organisation, besides DK emerged as a result, called Dravida Munnetra Kazhagharm (DMK). The DMK involved itself in the elections during the post colonial period and since 1960s, the politics of Tamil Nadu (TN) came to be dominated by the Dravidian parties of various hues. This domination of Dravidian parties also meant domination of the OBCs in the state’s public sphere, though not in opposition to the Brahmans but in alliance with them. This Dravidian domination was challenged by several of its own social constituents during 1990s. This section tries to explore in detail this process in state politics from Dravidian domination to the challenges to it.

The Congress Mobilisation

The Congress party was dominant in TN for more than a decade after independence. The percentage of votes gained by the Congress went up from 35% in 1952 to 45.3% in 1957 to 46.1% in 1962 (Subramanian, 1999: 33). However, the Congress party, despite failing to get majority of votes in the state was ruling the state. This was so mainly because the parties opposing the Congress were fragmented. This made it sure that the state had one party dominance system during this period.

The core Congress voters during this period consisted of the upper caste landowners and the SCs (ibid: 169). The former social group was attached to the Congress due to the control of the state power being in the hands of Congress during the last ten years of the British rule. Both the upper caste landowners and SCs were following Congress also due to the aura that the party got by leading the freedom struggle. The Pannaiyal agricultural system was made use of by the Congress to garner the votes of the so-called untouchables in the countryside (Barnett, 1976: 98). This system involved master-servant relationship between the big landholders and the landless labourers in rural areas. The socio-economic obligation inherent in this system helped those
landlords deliver the votes of the landless labourers to the Congress party, which was led by the same landlords at the local level. These landlords, more often than not belonged to the non-Brahman castes and the landless labourers were members of the ex-untouchable castes.

Congress also managed to gain some ground among the backward castes (BCs) in the state. This was mainly so because the Congress recruited many BC leaders in its organisation from 1930 onwards, which was exemplified by Kamaraj, belonging to a Nadar caste, being elected the President of the state Congress in 1939 (Subramanian, ibid: 149). Kamaraj, later went on to become a Chief Minister of the state during 1950s. Though Kamaraj “was not committed to non-Brahminism, but played the non-Brahman card when it suited him”. (ibid: 150, foot note no. 61). Due to the increasing weight of Kamaraj and his faction in the party, the Congress government in the state brought in 25% reservations for backward castes in the education sector and employment in the state government. The Congress government under Kamaraj’s leadership used the economic development of state to distribute patronage to the industrialists in the state. These industrialists, in turn, helped Congress get votes in the elections (ibid: 150). This patronage flowing from the Congress rule and the benefits to the BCs made some parties depending on single caste and independent candidates to tie up with the Congress (ibid: 151). This reflected in the vote share of the caste parties and independents coming down from 57% in 1952 to 6.7% in 1962 (ibid).

The OBC Tamils’ backing of the the Congress party must have been enhanced due to the support initiated by Periyar to the Congress government under Kamaraj. Periyar did this mainly due to three reasons (ibid: 151-152). One, he wanted to cement the government that had initiated a policy of reservations for the backward castes. Two, his support to the first Tamil backward caste chief minister, Kamaraj, made him support Kamraj ministry. And the last reason was his urge to counter the growing influence of the DMK in the state and to strengthen the feeble non Brahman slant in Kamaraj. However, though Periyar claimed that he supported Kamraj, the former ended up publicly supporting all Congress nominees, some of whom were Brahmans (ibid: 152). This meant that the Dravida Kazhagham’s (DK’s) militant opposition to the Congress lost meaning for many of its activists. This factor and their urge to take up political posts made few DK workers to drift towards the DMK. Sensing this
happening in his organisations, Periyar recommended his activists to join the Congress, which contributed in decaying the DK even further.

In spite of this, the Congress’ strength in TN could not cut deep roots because of two reasons (ibid: 133). Firstly, during the colonial period, the Congress faction which was related with the government formation and the local bigwigs, was stronger than the one which was involved actively in the freedom struggle. This became clear when K. Kamaraj, primarily a Congress organisation man got the better of Rajaji, who played an important role as the leader of Gandhian agitation in the colonial period. The second reason deals with the image of the party. While a good amount of patronage was flowing from the Congress party that held the state power after independence, this patronage was not unambiguously shown to be flowing from the party. This made the party bosses strong without making the Congress party correspondingly strong in the state.

Though the Congress rule under Nehru’s national leadership was aiming at creating a nation-state through economic development, the gains of economic development and the dream of Nehruvian Indian nation seemed too “distant to many of the Tamil middling and lower strata”. (ibid: 134). The DMK focussed on the distantness of Indian state which worked from the capital of the country and which was in touch only with the elites in the state who were influential in the state Congress. The DMK also created its own image related with the “more proximate cultural symbols”, which made it more popular among the general Tamil population (ibid).

Even though the Congress government worked to integrate Tamil language in the government administration and education, this government did not care much about the “mytho-history” of Tamils, about which the Tamil population was more concerned than the use of its language in government administration and education (ibid: 165-66).

Though the Congress government in TN ushered in a “generally one of substantial and visible economic development” in the state, this development failed to reach the intermediate and lower sections of the population as substantially as it did in case of the upper section of society (Barnett, 1976: 153-54). This triggered a sense of relative deprivation amongst these middling and lower strata in society against the incumbent Congress government (ibid: 154).
Dravidian Populist Mobilization

The DMK was able to highlight the Dravidian themes through its Three Corner Agitation. This agitation was based upon three grievances against the Congress government. The first related with the scheme for universalising primary education in the state. This scheme suggested that the children take education through the formal system for half part of their day and the rest in taking training in the crafts that their parents may be traditionally following. The official purpose of the scheme was to spread education to the maximum children with the meagre resources that the state had. However, the DMK and DK took this scheme to mean to encourage and strengthen the caste system through back door. The second campaign in this three-corner agitation was against the name of the town in Trichy district. The name of this town was Dalmiapuram, after a cement producer from north India. The DMK insisted on reverting to the "original" Tamil name of the town- Kallakudi (Barnett, ibid: 79). Incidentally, the name Kallakudi also had unspoken reference to the Kallar caste, one of components of the Mukkulathor caste group (Subramanian, ibid: 157, foot note no. 89). This was meant to suggest DMK's siding with the BCs (ibid). The third of this agitation was against Nehru's remarks that the DMK's demand to give more stress on the history of Tamil culture in the school syllabus was "nonsense" (ibid). DMK's strategy of linking these three protests with each other aimed to highlight Congress' partiality towards the upper castes and North Indian culture (ibid: 157). Moreover, the protests during these agitations led to government action against it which resulted in more than hundred getting injured and at least nine protesters being killed (Barnett, ibid: 80).

The DMK was established in 1949. This organisation was carrying a legacy of being a part of radical non-Brahman movement under Periyar's leadership. It did not contest elections until 1957. Its decision to contest elections coincided with the dilution in its ideology from the one wanting to transform the basic principles behind the Hindu social system and carving out a sovereign Dravida Nadu to a programme of reforming existing socio-political and cultural system from within (ibid: 89). This implied that the DMK programme for abolishing caste system and destroying Hindutva was replaced by an agenda of encouraging "rationality" in existing rituals, which gave rise to slogans such as "one God, one caste", abolition of superstition and improving the conditions of the backward castes (ibid). This change in DMK's ideology and strategy
was related to the fact that it started to fight for votes of people. The party, during this time started to develop a base amongst non-Brahman lower castes (ibid: 90). The mutations in the organisation and ideology of the DMK, taking place at that time were “related to the constraints of the party’s expanded support base.” (ibid). During this period, some members of the DMK were wary of converting it into a political party mainly due to their fear of losing radicalism in ideology. However, a strong faction in the party under Annadurai’s leadership believed that a genuine possibility of democratic politics had emerged with Indian independence. In addition, it was believed that the electoral support of non-Brahmans and lower castes could enable the DMK to achieve “radical social reform”. (ibid).

The inroads that the DMK made in its initial electoral battles were at the cost of the political clout of Communists and independent candidates in the state (ibid: 97). Moreover, the votes of the Vanniyaars in the South and North Arcot secured by the DMK indicated that the Vanniyaars were weaned away from the caste-based mobilisation to Dravidian mobilisation of the DMK. During 1960s and 1970s, the DMK was able to attract many lower and middling BCs as well as SCs away from the Congress. This was done by the DMK by challenging the Congress mobilisation based on the patron-client relationship at the local level. In the DMK, the local level leadership was held by the BCs belonging to the lower and middle economic section and SCs coming from the poorer economic background. These sections were likely to secure power directly in the DMK rather than through their socio-economic superiors as in the case of Congress organisation in the state (Subramanian, ibid: 172-74).

DMK’s emphasis on Tamil nationalism meant further mutation in the non Brahman ideology. So, the party’s emphasis on Brahman vs. non-Brahman social conflict was replaced by the Tamil language vs. Hindi language, south Indians vs. north Indians. This further implied that the Tamil Brahmans became members of the camp upholding Tamil nationalism and hence friends of the DMK rather than its foes (ibid: 198). During 1960s, the DMK articulated the Tamil nationalist ideology in terms of autonomy and increase in the powers of the state government against the central control (Wyatt, 2010: 37). With respect to this, the DMK demanded that the national government recognise regional cultures and give the status of official language to fourteen regional languages including Tamil.
M. G. Ramachandran, also known as MGR, a famous Tamil superstar, was responsible for extending the appeal of the DMK beyond the constituencies of non-Brahminism and Tamil nationalism. MGR’s political appeal lied in his cultivated on-screen and off-screen image as the saviour of the oppressed. This image did not contain any reference to the Tamil nationalism and/or backward casteism. His popularity amongst the SCs, other lower sections, and women helped DMK extend its popularity amongst these sections lying outside its ideological appeal (ibid: 200-01).

The DMK came to power by defeating the Congress in the state on the basis of mobilisation done by the party on the issue of imposition of Hindi as a national language, steep price rise and scarcity of necessities during the Congress government. After coming to power post- 1967 assembly elections, the DMK government took several decisions to consolidate its support amongst the BCs. These steps included establishing a Backward Classes Welfare ministry and a state level Backward Classes Commission. Moreover, this government expanded the reservations for BCs from 25% to 31% based upon the state BC commission report (ibid: 207). In addition, this government included many economically rich caste groups among the middle castes in the official list of BC, which increased the official estimation of BCs in the population from 41% to 51% (ibid: 208).

Although organised castes were important base of political mobilisation for DMK, it shunned from recognizing specific caste clusters formally (ibid: 212). This may have been so mainly because the DMK indulged in a mobilisation that intended to subsume separate caste identity under regional Dravidian identity. Nevertheless, the DMK leaders kept close contacts with the caste organisations to garner votes from them although both the DMK and those caste organisations maintained their separate existence and identity (ibid).

The DMK government’s emphasis on the rich BCs became clear when it included many of those castes into the official list of BCs. Moreover, this government spent the Central government’s funds allocated for the welfare of the SCs in the direction of welfare of both the SCs and BCs in the state, thereby depriving the SCs of their rightful share of those funds (ibid: 218). The police response to the grievances regarding the perpetration of untouchability became lukewarm during this government rule. All these factors caused resentment amongst the lower sections of Tamil society (ibid).
MGR was expelled from the DMK in 1972 due to his public stand against corruption involving the party and government. MGR did this, as he was deprived of ministerial birth in the DMK government led by Karunanidhi who attempted to undercut former’s popularity. MGR founded a new political party called Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagham (ADMK), which highlighted the DMK government’s compromises in various “paternalist” policies that were responsible for the latter’s electoral success. These failures were in dumping the plan to provide inexpensive rice, prohibition legislations and rising corruption in government (ibid: 220). MGR’s campaign contributed to a lot of attrition in the social base of the DMK (ibid: 221).

In the meantime, the factional fights in Congress held it from building any concerted contestation against the DMK rule. However, the vivisection of the Congress at the national level made these factions in the state to function as different parties. Even though the Congress (O) under Kamraj’s leadership was organisationally sound in the state, it could not free itself from influence of the local elite. In the changed political scenario, where the middling and lower sections of society found themselves represented directly through the DMK the Congress (O) option of elite patronage was not attractive any more to the Tamils (ibid: 240).

The new dynamics of the centre-state relations developed during the 1970s and 1980s meant that the decline of the Congress party continued unabated during this period. According to Andrew Wyatt, the following forces interacted in giving rise to this decline. One, the Congress organisation at the national level gave importance to gaining power of the central government at the cost of weakening the Congress organisation at the state level given the antithetical relationship between the state level and central level Congress leadership and organisations especially during 1970s. This made the Congress at the national level to enter into electoral arrangements with Dravidian parties that would serve the interest of the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections and the interests of the Dravidian parties in the state assembly elections. Second, these arrangements worked well with the Dravidian parties for the increasing tendency of the central governments during 1970s and 1980s was to use emergency powers against the state governments run by the opposition parties or groups. The above-mentioned electoral arrangements neutralized this threat of the central Congress governments against the state governments run by the Dravidian parties. Three, as a result of threat perceived by the central Congress leadership from their
counterparts in the state after Kamraj’s death in 1975, the Congress organisation in the state went into a continuous decline (Wyatt, 2010: 61, 63-64).

For more than two decades after independence, the Congress party in the state was able to attract substantial support from lower strata of society, although this support was based on the power and influence of traditional and bureaucratic elite at the local level over these lower sections (Subramanian, ibid: 263). The Congress party fell into disarray during 1970s due to the factional fights in the party and lost two consecutive elections owing to them. This meant that a space was available within the lower sections of society to base the appeal of ADMK (ibid). However, in the legislative assembly elections between 1984 and 1991, the Congress managed to get between 15% and 20% of votes. This “half party” status of the Congress in the state kept the smaller parties away from playing a significant role in the state politics (Wyatt, ibid: 64).

After the ADMK broke away from the DMK, most of the district level leaders remained with the mother party only (Subramanian, ibid: 269). Even then, the ADMK could secure significant electoral support in the subsequent period mainly due to the charismatic appeal of MGR primarily amongst the lower strata and women in the state. Though ADMK declared that it believed in the ideology of Annadurai (after whom the party was named), it made many mutations in the ideology of DMK. Thus, MGR declared that he was not only against “anti-Brahminism” but that he also opposed every kind of “ethnic exclusion” based either on religion, caste or language (ibid: 265). Moreover, he also opposed independent homeland for Tamils and demand for more powers to the state government. He maintained that the language in which the education should be imparted must be decided by the educationists and academicians, thus disassociating the medium of education from Tamil nationalist position (ibid). Further, when there were rumours that “regional parties" were to be banned during national emergency in mid-1970s, MGR converted the name of his party to the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagham (AIADMK) to indicate that his party had accepted all-India nationalism (ibid: 265-66).

If MGR’s charisma was one pillar on which the politics of ADMK was based upon, its other pillar was various populist policies adopted by the party when it came to power. Most important amongst those populist policies were about dry laws and free lunches (ibid: 283). The ADMK government imposed and strictly implemented the
dry laws soon after it came to power (ibid: 283-84). However, the ADMK government had to water down the dry law due to fiscal tension it faced owing to this law (ibid: 284). This dilution created resentment amongst the women and poor people, amongst whom the dry laws were very popular. In order to neutralize this antipathy, the ADMK government introduced another welfare programme for poor in the form of giving free lunches (ibid: 285). Initially made only for school going children, in the course of time this programme went on to include many weaker sections as its beneficiaries (ibid). The fact that the food used to be served to the people belonging to all castes together made for recognizing equality amongst the people belonging to the lower and the intermediate castes (ibid). Further, the state government made it a point to publicize this scheme in a way that MGR’s on-screen image as the saviour of poor would be reinforced. Thus, MGR’s film footage in which the film’s hero, i.e. MGR, gives food to those who are hungry was interspersed into the documentaries showing kids consuming the free food in this scheme (ibid).

The view held by the ADMK and MGR that the upwardly mobile BCs have benefited disproportionately more than those of the poorer BCs made them to introduce income criterion into the reservation for BCs (ibid: 290). This shift in the policy of caste-based reservations, which had been there for years, invited a huge protest—well oiled with the funds from the caste associations of the rich BCs— against the government. In these protests, the DMK and DK were actively involved with the hope of undermining the support base of the ADMK (ibid). The thrashing of the ADMK led alliance in the 1980 Lok Sabha elections, soon after the revision in the policy for the BC reservation was made, made MGR believe that the people in the state have disapproved of the government’s revision of the BC reservations (ibid: 291). Hence, his government not only reverted income criterion in the BC reservations, but also expanded the reservation for the BCs to 50% from the earlier limit of 31% (ibid). These election results also made quotas based on caste sacrosanct. This was so much so that later when some caste groups amongst the BCs demanded sub quota for them they did so on the basis of caste and not income (ibid).

**Fragmentary Mobilizations**: Post-1990 Scenario

After independence, till 1989, the party system in TN went under three long spells when there was government of one party for at least a decade. So, from 1952 to 1967, it was a Congress government; from 1967 to 1977 it had a DMK government;
between 1977 and 1989 it had an AIADMK government. Except the period between 1952 and 1962, when Congress was a dominant party, these were also phases when there were two party systems in the state. Thus from 1962 till the middle of 1970, the state had two party system consisting of the various Congress parties during various phases and the DMK; from the middle of 1975, it was DMK and AIADMK. This situation changed after 1989. After 1989, no government could come to power for two consecutive terms. This means that the peoples’ resentment against the incumbent party did not give rise to any stable social coalition. This got reflected in two party system in the state being replaced by the two alliance system where the component parties of these two alliances used to be quite fluid.

The transformation in the party system in the state after 1990 was, to a large extent, a result of breakdown of the Dravidian consensus. This led to fragmentation of the social alliance put together by the Dravidian parties in the state. This fragmentation happened mainly from three sides. Firstly, the OBC core of the DMK’s politics started to get challenges from the so called Most Backward Classes (MBCs), exemplified by the Vanniyar agitation for sub quota within the OBC reservations in the state. Secondly, the dalits started to assert themselves and tried to create their autonomous political sphere. This led to dalits breaking away from the Dravidian social alliance initially under DMK, then under the ADMK and MGR. Thirdly, a more militant Tamil nationalist group broke away from the DMK challenging the dilution of the Tamil nationalism by the DMK. This group was also against family centric party organisation of the DMK, which was going against the central place that the party accorded to the activists in the party organisation.

The DMK government tried to cater to the upwardly mobile OBCs in the state. In doing this, it expanded the OBC reservations to include many rich OBC castes into that category. This led to a feeling of relative deprivation amongst some of the OBC castes. This became clear when the Vanniyars started agitating for separate quota within the OBC quota. The Vanniyar caste organisation organised a fierce agitation around this demand during late 1980s. As a result, of this stir the Vanniyars got a separate quota in the form of the sub quota for the Most Backward Classes (MBCs) within the OBC quota. After this agitation, the Vanniyar Sangam organised itself into a political party called Paattaali Makkal Katchi (PMK). The creation of this party signified a break in the OBC social alliance stitched by DMK under the banner of
Dravidianism. During 1930s, Vanniyaars participated with the non-Brahman sections who felt marginalised against the forward non-Brahmans and demanded “special measures for the Backward Classes” (Wyatt, 2010: 97). After independence, in the decade of 1950s Vanniyaars got organised into their caste parties. In the course of time, those parties went into oblivion when they either merged with the Congress or the Swatantra party. Since then, the Vanniyar voters started to vote for the DMK in large numbers (Subramanian, 2003: 64). After that there had been a general decline of the caste based parties, which, however, have started to regain their influence again since late 1980s (ibid). One of the important differences between the single caste parties in the 1950s and those in the 1990s is that the former political formations were mainly based upon the mobilisation of those castes by the local elites but the latter were based on organisation of the masses and militant position adopted by a plurality of the party’s followers (ibid: 70). The Vanniyar consisted of “the Naicker, Padayachi, Vanniyar and some Gounder caste groups” (Wyatt, ibid: 102). The 1931 census says that the Vanniyaars share 12% in the population of the state (ibid). The Vanniyaars have been found clustered in the northern districts of the state which were earlier known as North Arcot, South Arcot, Salem and Chingleput. This makes their single caste politics particularly effective. The establishment and success of the PMK has led to “demonstration effect” in that after the establishment of PMK, a number of single caste political parties have emerged. Thus, the DMK fought 2001 assembly elections by allying with 16 parties most of which were based on specific group of castes (ibid: 111).

The Dravidian coalition was cracked also when the dalits challenged it by questioning the non-Brahman solidarity on one hand and trying to carve out political space separate from the Dravidian parties for the dalits on the other. This happened when some dalit writers discursively pointed out contradiction that had allegedly been always underlying the relationship between non-Brahmans and dalits in the state. According to this perspective, today’s dalits in TN were originally Buddhists and Jains in the state and in order to destroy these two communities the Brahmans and non-Brahmans have always united since the ancient period (Ravikumar, 2007: xii-xxiii). Further, it points out that the Dravidian governments were in the saddle when some gruesome violent acts against dalits in the state took place and the police
machinery of these governments not only did not stop these offences but they also encouraged them (ibid: xxvi).

Violence against dalits in TN seems to have started right from 1950s. Nevertheless, of late, the changing educational and economic positions of dalits meant that they would resist this violence. Thus, increasing participation of at least some dalit communities in the education and government services along with money sent back by some dalits employed in Middle East countries made these dalits enter into middle classes (Manikumar, 1997: 2242). This amounted to dalits, who were earlier landless labourers, move from this class to the educated middle and upper middle classes. This change in the class position of dalits made them counter violence perpetrated against them rather than submitting to it silently. Thus according to Manikumar, the difference between the earlier and recent attacks on dalits is that recently, they have tried “to defend themselves and even counter-attack” (ibid). The emergence of political party of dalits in southern TN and economic differentiation and caste consolidation amongst the Thevers in this part of the state have further exacerbated this social conflict (ibid). The fact that the image of Dr. Ambedkar started to become popular amongst the dalit castes in the state (Wyatt, 2004: 245) also contributed to a feeling of consciousness of being dalit amongst the erstwhile untouchables who were earlier organizing, if at all, under the identity of landless labourers under Communist party banner.9

Another expression of this new-found dalit assertion in TN was the emergence of political parties representing dalits. Thus, in the southern part of the state, the Puthiya Tamizhagham (PT) was popular amongst the members of Pallar caste, who were most populous dalit caste in this part of the state. On the other hand, Dalit Panthers had strong support base amongst the Paraiyars, who were dalits mostly concentrated in the northern and central parts of the state (Subramanian, 2003: 70). These dalit parties mobilised only a specific caste amongst the dalits in specific parts of the state. This was so mainly because certain dalit castes were found to be concentrated in particular parts of the state. Further, these dalit castes in those parts had conflicting relationship with the major OBC castes there. Thus, the Pallars and the Thevars in the southern TN and the Paraiyars and Vanniyars in the northern part of the state were having contradictory social relationship (ibid: 71). This meant that even though these dalit mobilisations were made with consciousness of dalit identity, on the ground they
failed to unite all dalits under their banner. Hence they remained, at an important level, single caste political mobilisations. Also, this mobilisation was taking place against the dominant OBC castes in parts of the state. Moreover, there had been a feeling amongst the dalits that they have been excluded in the distribution of the fruits of Dravidian movement. Thus, according to the leader of PT, Dr. Krishnaswami, the Dravidian movement benefited only the OBCs and dalits were marginalized by the movement (Wyatt, 2010: 145). This opened up chinks in the Dravidian vision of mobilising the non-Brahman castes as such.10

DMK leader Karunanidhi’s efforts to prop up his son Stalin as the future leader of party invited opposition and dissent from Via. Gopalswami also known as Viko, who created a separate party called Marumalarchchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK). Moreover, this was symptomatic of a larger process in the DMK where the activists coming from humble backgrounds were not likely to get space in the leadership position of the party as was possible for them earlier and the party becoming more or less a fiefdom of Karunanidhi family (Subramanian, ibid: 66). Though MDMK could not garner much support in the state, it provided political vehicle to those DMK voters and activists who were disgruntled with the party due to dilution in its Tamil nationalist ideology reflected in sobering of DMK’s position on the issue of Tamils in Sri Lanka (ibid: 67).

The fact that the upward political mobility of the activists and leaders have been chocked in the erstwhile cadre based parties like the DMK and significance that the small, niche parties got in the central government in the coalition era of 1990s gave further impetus to the formation of single caste parties like PMK and to some extent the dalit parties (Wyatt, 2010: 67-68, 108, 127-128). The PMK, especially has been successful in banking upon the feeling amongst the Vanniyar leaders that they have been sidelined in the DMK.

The alienation of lower OBCs from the DMK, conversion of the party into Karunanidhi fiefdom, dilution of the party position on Tamil nationalism meant that many committed DMK voters, mainly from the intermediate social strata, left the party (Subramanian, ibid). However, some richer and deprived social groups turned towards the party. Nevertheless, this later support to the party was more often than not a floating vote accrued to the party out of disagreement of these voters with the
AIADMK or any of its allies (ibid). Hence, this could not stop from making party’s base unstable in nature.

Following MGR’s death, Jayalalitha became the undisputed leader of AIADMK after a brief spell of conflict within the party over the issue of leadership. Nevertheless, it seemed that Jayalalitha could not quite establish a bond with the poorer and lower sections of society neither did she start any new and important public welfare policy when she was in power between 1991 and 1996, that would have made the poor support her and her party (ibid: 68). This implied that Jayalalitha would not be seen as a messiah of lower and repressed population as MGR was. The main pillar on which the support to AIADMK was based was charisma of leaders’ personality and populist policies which were seen by the poor to be largesse from the leader. However, Jayalalitha’s performance as leader on both the counts was wanting. Her party suffered electoral setbacks during 1990s mainly due to its withdrawal from “paternalist populism” (ibid: 69). Thus, these policy shifts cost the party with loss of support of the rural poor and dalits (ibid).

In TN, no mega caste accounts for more than 15% of population across the state (ibid: 70) and most of these mega castes are concentrated in adjoining districts in the state. This demographic structure puts a limit beyond which no single caste party in the state can stretch its electoral wings. It was observed that the caste-based parties could garner 1.7% to 8.2% of votes in various state and national elections in the state during 1990s (ibid). The 1990s also saw elections being fought between two alliances under the leadership of two Dravidian parties in the state. The difference between the votes polled by both the alliances was slender, which enhanced the significance of small but sure electoral support of those single caste parties (ibid). Also the fact that some of those major single castes constitute 20%-40% of residents in some of the constituencies increased the value of those single caste parties in the electoral calculations at the level of at least some of the constituencies (ibid). So, even though a party like PMK has been getting only around 5% votes since the late 1990s, concentration of its electoral strength in the northern part of the state was handy for either of the alliance to be one-upping over the other at the hustings. Hence, since the late 1990s, elections in the state started to be won or lost not on the basis of peoples’ perception about the incumbent government but on the basis of voting by those castes.
to their parties, joined through electoral alliance stitched by the main Dravidian parties (Yadav, 2001).

The Dravidian parties stopped being the main mobilizing forces in the state. Despite this, these parties were able to get substantial electoral support of the people in the state. However, the nature of this support changed during 1990s. Previously, they used to enjoy support of some social alliance, which used to be committed to them. But during 1990s, they had to mainly depend upon the floating vote that accrued to them primarily as the chief option to the incumbent Dravidian party. Hence, according to Subramanian, the Dravidian parties ceased to be “important mobilizing forces with rather distinctive profiles” and became “parties that try to catch all and manage to catch many” (Subramanian, ibid: 74).

This declining partisanship amongst the voters of the state is clear from the findings of various sample surveys. Thus, the surveys conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) came out with observation that after the 1996, 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha elections, fewer than 25% of the electors “felt close to particular parties” and fewer than 20% of the electors were “definitely opposed to voting for any party” (ibid: 80). This was a far cry from the partisanship as visible in the surveys conducted by the Statistics Department of Madras Christian College between first half of 1970 to the first half of 1990s. These surveys indicate that nearly 55% to 70% of those surveyed were committed supporters of either of the two main Dravidian parties (ibid). Same percentages of respondents were committed against either the DMK or the AIADMK and the main leaders of one of these parties (ibid).

The decline of Congress’ support base also contributed to the instability in the party competition in state. After 1967 till the late 1980s, the Congress was holding on to nearly 20% of votes in the state (Wyatt, 2002: 240). With both the Dravidian parties holding on to nearly 70% of votes during this period, the Congress was playing a role of balancing third party in the two party competition after late 1970s (ibid). During the middle of 1995, the split in the Congress party in the state deteriorated the support base of both the Congress parties in the state. Thus the political vacuum created by the downfall of Congress support base was filled in by a number of political actors (ibid: 241) who happened to be the caste based and niche parties in the state. Thus, it can also be said that fragmentation in the political sphere of TN was not only symptomatic of a challenge to the Dravidian vision; it has also been a challenge to the so called
national outlook represented by the Congress, at least to some extent. This was more so because most of these niche parties happened to espouse the Tamil nationalist ideology, partly in order to get over their limited support base in the form of single caste or some regions of the state.

The ideology propagated by the caste-based parties like PMK and DPI is not much different from the Tamil nationalist ideology of the Dravidian parties. Nevertheless, these caste parties are, of late, facing a dilemma in propagating militant Tamil nationalism. If they do so, it amounts to severing their core voters belonging to a single caste or caste group who have been mobilised by these parties on the basis of their specific demands. However, if they do not propagate Tamil nationalism fiercely enough they do not go beyond their caste’s support and can never dream of flexing their political muscle beyond a limit (Pandian, 2006: 2182).

The Justice party, during 1910s asserted separate existence of non-Brahman political formation from the so-called nationalist politics of the Congress. Then, the Justice Party argued that the nationalist politics was nothing but a camouflage for furthering Brahman interests in the name of so-called nationalist cause. Though Pandian argued with reference to dalit identity, (2007: 236), the same non-Brahman argument was presented by those single caste political formations against the Dravidian politics. Thus, according to those single caste parties, the Dravidian politics has become a tool in the hands of the dominant sections amongst the OBCs to the detriment of the MBCs. The dalit parties went ahead to even call the non-Brahman political outfits as ploy against the dalits. In a way, thus, the political stance taken by the ancestors of the main Dravidian parties during the colonial period came to haunt them during 1990s. However, in the process this made politics of the state unstable. Thus, even though the electoral prominence of the Dravidian parties was apparently sustained during 1990s, it got several challenges to its legitimacy and stability. These challenges were mainly from the MBCs and dalits, which also meant that these were challenges to the wider Dravidian social alliance which had been sustaining Dravidian politics in the state.

**Part III: Uttar Pradesh**

The party system in Uttar Pradesh has been divided into three phases. The first phase was from independence to 1967; the second between 1967 and 1989 and third was
during the post 1989 (Verma, 2003: 252). During the first phase, Congress party dominated the political scene in the state.

**Ascendancy of the Congress**

The Congress dominance gets exemplified by the clear majority that it was able to achieve in the first three state assembly elections after independence. However, the weakness of the opposition parties and their support base being limited to some pockets in the state helped Congress’ cause in establishing its preponderance in the state. This gave rise to a paradoxical situation. The vote share and seats of the Congress in the state assembly elections continued to decline during the first three post-independence elections even though the party was able to hold on to its majority in the state assembly. The Congress vote was 47.9%, 42.4% and 34.9%; and its seats in the state assembly were 390, 286, and 249 in the first three elections (Brass, 1968: 72). During this period, no opposition party or coalition could go beyond 17.8% of votes (ibid). Through this time, the functioning of the Congress party was characterised by politics based on faction and patronage. The factional nature of Congress organisation meant that the district organisation of the Congress was led by the leaders of the factions at the district level. These district faction leaders then got aligned with a particular Congress leader at the state level on the basis of personal loyalty of the former to the latter (Brass, 1984: 146-47). In 1948, the Socialist group within the Congress left the party and in 1951, the Hindu commounalist faction within the Congress lost to the moderate, non-ideological socialist position of Nehru (ibid: 142). This left the Congress organisation in the state bereft of any ideological issue, which meant that the politics within the Congress would be based on the politics of factions. This factional nature of Congress in the state also ensured, apart from other things, that the party was always in contact with its activists and the electorates on the ground. It also enabled the party to respond to the various changes taking place in the society. This ensured that despite losing votes during the 1950s, the Congress remained in power in the state.

Zoya Hasan, however, contends that during this period factionalism in the Congress party was based on ideological affiliations and policy choices (1989: 171-73). Initially, this conflict within Congress was on the question of whether to utilise the party’s rule as a means to change the prevailing social order or to use it to sustain the existing socio-economic structure. Hasan calls the former group as being
“conservative” and the latter as being “radical”. The other issues of contention were, largely speaking, land reforms and secularism. By early 1950s, the conservative group was able to establish its preponderance in the party and state politics. Despite this, the radical group remained in the party due to the “sympathies” it got from Nehru. Moreover, in spite of the control of the state politics by the conservative group, the geographical vastness and social complexities in the state meant this group was not able to establish its control over the grassroots Congress organisation. The local units of the Congress did not need the support of the state Congress authority for their existence and development. During 1960s, the factional conflict within the state Congress party was centred on the subject of whether to give priority to agriculture or industry in ushering in economic development in the state.

The people leading the Congress organisation in the state belonged mainly to the upper castes. These upper castes were the traders, the business people and those involved in the professions in the urban area and the rich farmers belonging to the Brahmin and Rajput castes in the rural areas (Brass, 1968: 75). The support base of the Congress however, comprised of the upper castes, Scheduled Castes and the Muslims (ibid). During the first two state assembly elections, the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) emerged as the main opposition party in the state, during the next two, it was Jan Sangh. The PSP and the Socialist Party in the state were composed of the leaders who deserted the Congress Socialist Party of the colonial period and those of the Congress leaders who were defeated in the factional struggle in the districts (ibid: 80-81). Even though some of the Socialist parties were able to create their base in few pockets of the state, the continuous internal conflicts within them ensured that they would not grow beyond a certain limit. Moreover, the Congress party adopting Socialist policy as the official position of the party organisation meant that for various important Socialist leaders like Ashok Mehta, Congress became an attractive option to achieve their socio-political goals. Before independence, the Socialists in the state emphasised mainly the economic demands of the peasants and took lead in organising the peasants through the Kisan Sabha movement. However, during the 1950s and 1960s, along with those economic demands, the Socialist party also demanded replacement of English with Hindi as the official language of state and that 60% of the places should be reserved for the backward castes in the state administration and state legislature (ibid: 86). Moreover, the party reserved certain posts in some of its
district units for the backward castes and gave important positions in the party organisation to the members of the middle castes (ibid). Also during its campaign for 1962 elections, the Socialist party directly appealed to the members of the backward castes like Ahirs and Kurmis in some parts of the state (ibid). The Jan Sangh, on the other hand, developed a support base amongst the former landlords; and rich and middle farmers in the rural areas and the social sections involved in business and trading in the urban areas of the state (Brass, 1985: 126-27, Brass, 1968: 93). Particularly, the social base of the party was deeper in the Oudh region of the state (ibid, 1985: 126). Here the party was able to develop its social base not only amongst the former Taluqdars but also amongst the newly emerging class of peasant proprietors especially those coming from the backward castes of Yadavs and Kurmis (ibid: 168). The Jan Sangh’s support to the “conservative” position in economic policymaking and the ex-landlords’ resentment against the Land Ceiling Act of 1960 helped the party to cement its position amongst the former zamindars in state (Brass. 1968: 93). Apart from that, most of the important positions in the party were manned by the former landlords. Moreover, many RSS and Jan Sangh leaders and activists had penetrated into the educational institutions in the state (ibid: 92-93). This process ensured that the Jan Sangh turned from a pale political party to the party of substantial strength in the state politics during this period. In the first assembly election after independence in 1952, the Jan Sangh managed to gain 2 seats and 6.4% of votes (ibid: 90). The party continued to add up to its votes and number of seats during the next three elections which enabled it to gain an admirable tally of 21.53% of votes and 97 seats in 1967 elections (ibid: 118). This also meant that the party replaced the PSP as the main opposition party after the 1962 assembly elections.

Mobilisation of Middle Peasants and Challenges to Congress Supremacy

It was after 1967 assembly elections that the self-reliant middle peasants in the state started having their own independent politics. This happened after Charan Singh’s severance from the Congress and formation of a coalition ministry under his own leadership soon after. Till this time, Charan Singh had established a reputation for himself as a leading spokesman of the interests of new classes of agriculturalists in rural areas. This phase has been considered different from the first phase of the party system in the state as during this phase Charan Singh established a number of his political formations which were able to get around 20% of votes in the assembly.
elections consistently. Moreover, during the three assembly elections between 1967 and 1974, the Jan Sangh was able to retain between 17% and 21% of votes in the state. Most importantly, Charan Singh was able to cobble alliances of the non-Congress parties which were able to form governments in the state a number of times, culminating in the formation of the first non Congress Janata government at the national level in 1977.

Starting from the late 1960s, Charan Singh was able to build social alliance comprising of particular classes and castes in the countryside for his various political formations. These sections were made up of middle peasants and the members of the middle castes especially those of Jats and Yadavs (Brass, 1985: 8-9, 131). Actually, these middle peasants comprised of those farmers who were tenants before independence. These tenants became landowners after independence because of the land reforms. Land reforms made these new landowners free from economic control of their erstwhile landlords (Hasan, ibid: 179). During 1960s, the government’s policy to encourage agriculture empowered these landowners economically. According to Zoya Hasan, during this period, these middle and rich farmers’ agricultural production increased by two times, and their economic returns, in a number of instances, by 70% (ibid). The price at which the government was purchasing wheat from these farmers was so high that the government’s stock of the food grain rose significantly. This put considerable pressure on government’s economic capacities. This compelled the government to lower the prices at which it bought food grains. Further, in order to insulate the consumer from increasing prices of food grains, the government decided to import them. These two steps by the government, amongst others, angered the middle and rich farmers, who started to get mobilised against the Congress party. Thus, the green revolution policies of the Congress government made these middle farmers economically strong. Further, these neo rich farmers contested the government policy that went against them. These emerging capitalist farmers did not get a respectable place either in the ideological stance or in the power structure of the Congress party organisation in the state. The Congress party in UP was led by the combination of the upper caste rich land holders who were big and small landlords before independence and the professional classes, again composed of the upper castes in the urban areas. Thus, during the first three elections for the state assembly in 1952, 1957 and 1962, out of the total MLAs of the Congress party, 58%, 56%, 61% of them
respectively belonged to the various upper castes; and merely 7%, 6% and 6% respectively belonged to the Backward Castes (Zerinini, 2009: 35-Table 1.3).

The Congress policy of stressing industrialisation for the nascent republic of India meant agriculture sector would get step-motherly treatment vis-a-vis industrial sector in the country. The resentment against this Congress policy was always there amongst the groups of the middle peasants and backward castes. The electoral expression of this discontent had been dispersed and fragmented during the first two decades after independence. Thus, these sections used to vote for independent contestants in western UP, for the contestants of the Socialist parties in eastern parts of the state, and for those standing on Jan Sangh ticket in the Oudh (ibid: 15). However 1970s onwards the political parties led by Charan Singh became the political abode of these middle peasants and backward castes. Thus, Charan Singh, on one hand propagated the ideology of giving preference to the agricultural sector in economic policy-making and on the other gave a significant portion of the key positions in his party to the members of the backward castes and middle castes. Charan Singh nominated many activists belonging to the backward castes as the chiefs of his party branches in many districts and gave election tickets of his party to a sizable amount of contestants from amongst those sections (Hasan, 1989: 183). Thus, in 1974 assembly elections, 35.20% of the BKD MLAs belonged to the OBCs who constituted for 21.32% and 8.01% of MLAs of the Jan Sangh and Congress party respectively (Zerinini, 2009: 38 Table 1.5). As against this, the proportion of the MLAs belonging to the upper castes was 14.82%, 44.25%, and 47.63% respectively in BKD, Jan Sangh, and Congress (ibid).

This trend continued for the Lok Dal, BJP, and the Congress in 1985 assembly elections only with the minor modification that this time the upper caste MLAs belonging to the BJP were more in proportion than those of the Congress (ibid). Thus, without publicly raising the issue of caste, Charan Singh gave the political mobilisation of the backward castes a measure of strength in the state politics.

When Charan Singh contested his first assembly election under the aegis of his own political party, the BKD in 1969, his support base was confined to the western UP alone (Brass, 1985: 102). Later when a main faction remaining from the Socialist political tradition allied with the BKD in 1974 elections, the support base of this political formation became geographically balanced in the state, benefitting from the social base of the Socialists amongst the backward castes and poor peasants in the
eastern UP (ibid: 142, 171). During his period, the Congress organisation in the state started to crumble. This happened mainly because of the interference of central Congress leadership in party affairs of the state. This implied that the factional battles within the state Congress organisation lost their impact as a deciding factor in the struggle for the post of the Chief Minister of state. Henceforward, the Congress organisation in the state started to be entrusted to a particular person on the basis of the political compulsions of the central Congress leadership (Stone, 1988: 1019). This ensured that the leaders who had a certain political and social support base in their district and region started to get sidelined when it came to deciding the Congress leadership in state. Moreover, those who would work according to the dictates of the central leadership and were not having much of an independent support base started to get nominated as the Chief Minister in the state. In fact this was a part of nationwide restructuring of the Congress organisation which had one of its important sources in the political insecurity that Indira Gandhi felt from the state leadership based “syndicate” group in the Congress. In UP, this resulted in political factions becoming exclusive of the major caste and religious groups, rather than being inclusive of all the these groups as they were during 1950s and 1960s (ibid). This happened, as there was no incentive for the state leadership to expand their factions beyond a limit. Hence the groups within the state Congress party started to get formed not for flexing political muscles of the leaders but for representing the narrow interests of particular caste or religious groups (ibid: 1019-20). This transformation within the Congress in the state did not get much reflected in the number of votes the party got during elections. However, this definitely destabilized the Congress organisation in the state as the party started to rely mostly on influence of the national leader and a national issue to win election during the two decades of 1970s and 1980s. Apparently, the Congress enjoyed power in the state for nearly a decade and a half during these two decades but the Congress organisation at the ground level started to degenerate. This organisational degeneration of the party came back to roost during the 1990s when Congress party completely lost its grip on the state politics.

The success of the Congress party in winning the two assembly and Lok Sabha elections of 1980 and 1984 in the state was based on its successful mobilisation of the upper caste landlords, rich farmers, and the rural poor belonging to the erstwhile untouchable castes. In fact, both the groups were traditional supporters of the
Congress. However, a section from amongst the latter group slipped into the hands of Janata coalition during 1977 elections. This group of rural poor and dalits was lured back into the Congress by many poverty alleviation programmes proposed and undertaken by the Congress and more importantly, by relating the Lok Dal (party led by Charan Singh) with the atrocities being perpetrated against the untouchables at the hands of the members of the backward and middle peasant castes in the countryside (Brass, 1985: 329-30). This made Paul Brass to conclude that during this period the Congress had applied a plan of “squeezing” the politics of middle peasants amid the social forces of erstwhile zamindars and rich farmers at one end and the poor from the countryside at the other (ibid: 329).

The issues regarding OBCs’ share in political power were raised during this period of party system in the state. However, the OBCs got politically mobilised on the issue of the peasants’ interests. Charan Singh, who was instrumental in the OBC mobilisation, challenged the Congress dominance in the state not only by creating a stable social support for his various political formations but also by replacing the Congress government in the state with various non-Congress governments a number of times, especially during late 1960s and 1970s. Further, even though the Congress was in power throughout the 1980s, the party’s organisational apparatus was in shambles during this period. Moreover, the various political formations of Charan Singh were able to hold on to their vote base of around 20% during this period. This political struggle in the state happened on the background of dual social and political conflict playing out in the villages of UP. The first of these was between the rich farmers and the middle peasants; and the other was between the owners of the agricultural land and the landless labourers belonging to the lower castes (ibid: 330). Both these struggles had social and economic connotations. The first social conflict was largely between the upper castes on the one hand and middle and backward castes on the other. The second social conflict comprised mainly of the middle and backward castes at the one end and the dalit castes at the other. Amongst these social groups, the Congress was backed by the upper castes and the dalits; and the BKD / BLD / LD were supported by the middle peasant and backward castes. Due to this double support base, broadly speaking, the Congress had an advantage in this political competition (ibid).
After mid 1980s, the internal divisions within the Congress party and its loss of credibility in public mind gave renewed fillip to the polarisation of the non-Congress parties at the national level. This ultimately led to the formation of Janata Dal. In UP, the Janata Dal comprised of the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), some Socialist factions, and Jan Morcha (Pai, 1993: 98). According to some scholars, this political formation in the state was a significant political coalition of the forces struggling for peasants’ issues. This coalition included the BLD, the Socialists and was having social support from Mahendra Singh Tikait led Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) (ibid: 97-98). This alliance was instrumental in catapulting Mulayam Singh Yadav, a leader belonging to the Yadav caste, to the post of CM for the first time in 1989. Furthermore, this 1989 assembly election proved to be the last nail in the coffin of the Congress dominance in this state. One has to say this retrospectively as many issues emerged in the state after 1990 ensuring that the Congress would not get power in this state for more than at least 20 years after this.

**Post-Mandal Phase**

The strategy of Congress party to organise voters had been based on caste-community calculations at the local level. However, this cast-community mobilisation by the Congress was “differentiated” throughout the state and region, mostly encompassing many groups based on traditional identity at the local level and keeping the divisions between these groups flexible which avoided the solidification of caste-community group identity at the state and regional level (Chandra, 1999: 61). Moreover, within the Congress party, the members of upper castes used to mobilise the support of lower castes who were involved in dependent land relations with the members of the upper castes (Zerinini, 2009: 29). This prevented creation of independent political identity on the part of those subordinate social groups voting for the Congress (Chandra, ibid).

After 1990, the political mobilisation based on social cleavage based identities where the lower castes were organised by members of their own castes replaced this Congress type of mobilisation. Thus, the Samajwadi Party started to mobilise the Backward castes and Muslims with reference to othering of the higher castes and Hindus; the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) was mobilising the ‘Bahujans’ by alienating the upper castes; and the BJP started mobilising the Hindus by ousting the Muslims. At another plane, this was a process through which those groups sidelined from the Congress structure of power started to assert themselves and stake their claims to
political power. In addition, those social groups such as the upper castes, who were enjoying power within the Congress, responded to this assertion by taking recourse to the ideology of Hinduva, which claimed to mobilise all the Hindus under one political party that is the BJP. In the background of this process, one needs to analyse the relationship between the OBC politics and political party system in the post-Mandal Uttar Pradesh.

Realignment of Forces

By the time the decision to implement the Mandal reservations was declared by the national government in 1990, at least some of the OBC communities in UP were already politically organised. As discussed above, Charan Singh’s politics and Socialist parties took initiative in doing so. Charan Singh had built up an alliance between the middle and backward castes, namely the Jats and the Yadavs. However, after 1985 the Lok Dal, a party carrying forward Charan Singh’s politics started to disintegrate due to the political battle for leadership between Mulayam Singh Yadav and Ajit Singh (Duncan, 1997 ibid: 261). Mulayam Singh Yadav gave greater emphasis on his Lohiyaite legacy when he tried to build an alliance between the backward castes and dalits in UP. The fact that the Jats were not included in the list of the Mandal reservations meant that the former would be alienated from the political alliance involving the backward castes. The BKU, a peasant organisation of Jat farmers in western UP supported the anti-Mandal stir of 1990 (Hasan, 1994: 184). This agitation played a major part in dislodging the Janata Dal government in UP and at the centre, and later on led to the communal conflict involving Hindus and Muslims (ibid). Moreover, the Jats voted for the BJP during the 1991 and 1993 elections in large numbers (Duncan, ibid: 263). Later when Mulayam Singh Yadav was Chief Minister of the state, he declared several measures to placate the Jats by catering to the needs of the western UP, where the Jats were found to be numerically dominant. However, in the process of Mandal and Mandir becoming key issues in state politics in early 1990s, Mulayam Singh Yadav aligned his Yadav constituency with the OBC consolidation, and Muslims. Further, the Jat’s siding with the Hinduva meant a death knell, at least for the time being for their alliance with Mulayam Singh Yadav. Thus, the post-Mandal OBC politics saw a realignment of social forces carrying OBC politics in the state. The post-Mandal OBC politics in the state was based on political identity of caste and issue of social justice; while the pre-Mandal OBC assertion was
based on identity of peasants and the issues of urban v/s rural dichotomy. Another difference between the two, according to Paul Brass, had been that Charan Singh’s mobilisation depended on significant support of Jats and “extensive” backing of the backward castes in general, while Mulayam Singh Yadav’s OBC mobilisation had based itself on “solid support” of Yadavs and depended on Muslims’ backing more significantly than in the case of Charan Singh’s politics (Brass, 1997: 2405).

**Main Political Players**

The three main political parties in post-Mandal UP had adopted distinct strategies and ideologies to attract the OBCs towards them. Ideologically, the SP and BSP had been giving eminence to caste issue while mobilising the OBCs. Thus, Mulayam Singh Yadav was said to have drawn inspiration from Lohia’s tradition of backward caste politics. Not only that, Mulayam Singh Yadav had agitated on a number of occasions to demand implementation of the Mandal reservations by Congress government in the state during the 1980s (Singh and Yadav, 1998: 65, 72). Later, during 1990s, the SP led an agitation against the Governor’s order, which allegedly diluted the Mandal reservations for the OBCs, in its attempt to accommodate the claims of the people of Uttarakhand region (ibid: 165). In fact, during 1980s, Mulayam Singh Yadav, who was an important leader of the Lok Dal in UP mainly articulated the agrarian demands. However, since late 1980s, he gradually shifted from the agrarian politics to the Mandal politics of reservations (Jaffrelot, 2005: 370-71). The SP did not intend to mobilise the various OBC castes as having common consciousness but aimed to stitch various single OBC castes together into OBC political community to achieve power (Chandra, ibid: 78). Though during the late 1990s, the SP had tried to attend to the special concerns of the Most Backward Classes (MBCs) (ibid: 79), the party opposed the BJP government’s move in 2001 to allot sub quotas to the MBCs within the OBC category (Verma, 2007: 180). According to the observers, the SP might have adopted this stand in the fear that this may be a strategy to fracture the OBC political constituency (ibid). This underscored a dilemma before the Yadav dominated OBC politics of the SP. This fix was that due to Yadav domination within the SP and economic differentiation within the OBCs, different small and poor OBC castes tended to go away from the SP. The party, which claimed to represent the OBCs in the state, had to be sensitive to the problems faced by the weaker OBC castes. But on the other hand, the party could not afford to go too far in identifying this crack in the
OBC category as it would risk its OBC politics being torn asunder. While talking to the OBC leaders of the SP we heard contrasting views on this issue. One of them was of the opinion that the MBCs should be provided with sub-quota within the OBC quota (Savita Ram Prasad, Interview dated 7-1-2009) and the other opined that to give sub-quota within the OBCs is a conspiracy hatched against the OBCs, whose whole quota is hardly filled in (Yadav Balram, Interview dated 5-1-2009).

During the second half of 1990s, the SP highlighted the main social contradiction to be between the SCs v/s rest of the communities. In doing this, the party argued that the backward castes must be allotted similar development schemes as available for the SCs, and Mulayam Singh Yadav, in one of his election public meetings charged the SCs of using the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act to disgrace the people belonging to other castes (Chandra, ibid: 80). In this election meeting, Mulayam Singh also exhorted Muslims, upper castes and backward castes to unitedly trounce the SCs. The ploy here was to isolate SCs from the political constituency of the SP. This was so as largely the SCs were supposed to have been strongly aligned with the BSP in the state.

The BSP has been another major party in UP which claims to protect the interests and manages to get the votes of the OBCs. However, founder of the party, Kanshi Ram started off during 1980s with identifying the BSP as a party of Bahujan samaj, in which apart from OBCs, the SCs, STs and Minorities were to be other constituent social groups (Jaffrelot, 2005: 391). According to Kanshi Ram, this Bahujan samaj had been locked in the social contradiction with all the upper castes or “Savarnas”, to whom he also called “Manuwadis” (ibid). Kanshi Ram contrasted the situation of the OBCs with that of the dalits and tribals and said that the latter have been more in numbers in the state administration than the former as they have been endowed with reservations in government service (ibid: 398). However, the method adopted by the BSP for mobilising OBCs had been again based on single caste. Thus, OBC leader and activist are expected to organise the members of their own castes and then pool these members to be the voters of the BSP (Chandra, ibid: 72). Hence, BSP too did not intend to mobilise the OBCs on the basis of their consciousness of being a part of OBC community, but uses the caste consciousness that is available amongst the members of the OBC castes. The BSP consistently distributed election tickets to a large number of OBC candidates throughout 1990s (Jaffrelot, ibid: 402). The party
also incorporated significant number of OBCs into its organisational apparatus (ibid: 404). According to Jaffrelot, however the party was able to get only an insignificant amount of votes from the OBCs (ibid: 408). However, since 2002 especially in assembly elections, the BSP seems to have expanded its vote share amongst the MBCs substantially. In 2002 assembly elections, amongst all the main political parties the BSP got highest share of the votes of MBCs which it continued to do during the assembly elections of 2007 (Verma, 2007a: 2041, Table no 5). The economic differentiation underway amongst the OBCs meant that the MBCs felt relatively deprived vis-a-vis the dominant and the organised OBCs in the state (Pai, 2002: 185). Also the BSP allotted a number of respectable positions to these MBCs in its party organisation (ibid: 183). This was accompanied by MBCs getting assertive in socio political sphere and hence feeling the pinch of the Yadav domination in the SP. These forces have impelled the MBCs to vote for the BSP substantially (ibid: 185). However, the highly fragmented nature of MBC votes meant that the BSP had to rely heavily on the votes of the dalits in order to win elections in the state.

Since the start of 1990s itself, competition for the votes of backward castes ensued between the SP and the BJP. While, Mulayam Singh Yadav’s political ascendance symbolised empowerment for the Yadavs and OBCs of the state, the BJP started to recruit some of the non Yadav castes amongst the OBCs like Lodhs and Kurmis in order to get their support. However, the BJP was also getting support from the upper castes who had gravitated towards BJP in response to the Ram Janmabhoomi issue and more importantly to contest the reservations granted to the OBCs and Mulayam Singh Yadav’s prominent position in the state politics (Brass, 1997: 2417). The BJP had to face an imminent conflict between its two constituencies of the upper castes and OBCs. This struggle has been analysed by us in detail in the chapter on Hindutva. Moreover, the BJP was organisationally divided over the issue of inclusion of the members of dalits and backward castes into the party. K.N. Govindacharya, then General Secretary of the party, was of the opinion that more members of low castes had to be recruited in the party. He termed this strategy as “social engineering”. However, this strategy came to be opposed by some leaders of the BJP and RSS. These elites were opposing this policy as according to them it would cause man made disturbance in the “social equilibrium” and they were reluctant to provide significance to the castes due to influence of the Mandal (Jaffrelot, 2001: 31). This organisational
difference became sharper as BJP in the state witnessed a contestation between the leaders of OBC communities and upper castes in the years to come. Even though the BJP gave substantial representation to the OBCs in its governments in the state, the OBCs' numerical position was still marginal when it came to their representation in the decision making bodies of the party (Zerinini, ibid: 61-62, Table 1.15). Given the highly socially fragmented nature of the polity of UP, the contradictions between mobilisation based on caste and Hindu religious nationalism attempted by the BJP seemed to have weakened the party considerably by the first decade of 21st century.\(^\text{13}\)

This picture of the social composition of various political parties becomes clearer when one looks at the social background of their MLAs during 1990s. Jasmine Zerinini (2009) has analyzed the social base of the MLAs belonging to the main political parties of the state for the assemblies between 1989 and 1996 (2009: 45-47). In those assemblies, the Congress and BJP sent between 46% to 55% members of the upper castes out of its total kitty of the MLAs, excepting 1996 assembly when the proportion of the upper caste members of the Congress rose to a little less than 64%. During this period, the main political vehicles of the OBCs were Janata Dal for 1989, 1991 elections and SP for 1993 and 1996 elections. The upper caste members elected on the JD ticket were 28.43% and nearly 20% in those two elections, while the SP sent only 9.17% and 15.60% upper caste MLAs during the latter two elections. As far as the MLAs belonging to the OBC caste group are concerned, the above picture is nearly inverted. The Congress sent between 14% and 20% of the MLAs belonging to the OBC castes, the BJP MLAs belonging to the OBCs had been marginally higher that is between 19% and just above 20%. As against this, the JD sent nearly 29% and nearly 32% OBC MLAs out of its total MLAs in 1989 and 1991 state assembly elections. The SP, in the next two assembly elections sent as high as a little above 54% and 31% MLAs belonging to the OBC castes. The real surprise comes from the BSP. The proportion of OBC MLAs sent by this party seems to be higher than the proportion of the SC MLAs of the party in 1993 and 1996 elections. In 1993, this comparative rise in proportion of OBC MLAs is only slight but in 1996, it rose to as high as nearly 8%.

**Social and Political Alliances**

During the early phase of 1990s, the SP and BSP cobbled up an alliance to stop the influence of Hindutva politics in the form of BJP. This alliance was seen as a secular
political front against the communal politics of Hindutva. In addition to this, upper caste backlash against the Mandal reservations created a background for the SP and the BSP to join their pro-Mandal forces together to face the upper caste dominated BJP in the state (Jaffrelot, 2005: 409). It is believed that an alliance between the SP and BSP was instrumental in polarising the votes of the dalits and Bahujans together against the upper castes dominated BJP. Nevertheless, the evidence does suggest that this alliance did not polarise the votes of OBCs in its favour. Thus, even though the SP-BSP were the highest vote getters of the OBCs with 33% of the OBCs voting for them, 28% of OBCs, especially the Lodhis and Kurmis, voted for the BJP (Pai, ibid: 163). Anyway, this alliance could not sustain for long. The social contradiction between the core constituencies of these parties made the partnership between them difficult. Apart from this factor, the competition for political space between these two coalition partners was responsible for the downfall of this alliance. Thus in the contests for control of rural local self governments held in 1995, the SP, BJP and Congress secured power in 45%, 20% and 10% of village Panchayats respectively. On the other hand, the BSP got control of only 10% of village panchayats (Pai, ibid: 167). In the by-polls for the assembly, the SP increased its votes amongst the dalits and OBCs (ibid). All these forces indicated that the SP was improving its political strength in the state, but the BSP was in shambles. Also the fact that SP was increasing its votes amongst the SCs and OBCs meant that the increasing political strength of the former would come at the cost of the BSP’s politics. Both the parties were speaking the language of social justice and empowerment of the lower castes. Thus, Kanshi Ram once remarked that as both the Janata Dal and SP had been holding the same ideology as the BSP does, it became necessary for the BSP to eliminate the former two parties otherwise those parties were likely to poach into the social base of the BSP (Chandra-Parmar, 1997: 217). This political competition between the SP and BSP meant that the alliance between them was to end sooner or later.

After the fall of Mulayam Singh Yadav led SP-BSP alliance government in 1995, the BSP leader Mayawati led a government with the outside support of the BJP. This was seen as coalition of dalits and upper castes in order to counter the political influence of the OBCs. Thus, Kanshi Ram, the head of the BSP went on record to say that upper castes would be more favourable for the social change than the middle castes (Jaffrelot, ibid: 413). Moreover, according to Sudha Pai, the fact that the upper castes
in UP had migrated to the cities in search for the professional jobs blunted the social contradiction between the dalits and the upper castes (Pai, ibid: 170). Instead, land reforms made the OBCs the owners of the land on which dalits used to work. This land relation and increasing dalit assertion was a recipe for conflicts between the dalits and OBCs. Moreover, this alliance between the BSP and the BJP was considered to be good by both the parties for different reasons. For the BSP, this equation meant that it would get to stay in power, through which it wanted to mobilise dalits in support of the party. BJP considered this as an opportunity to dispel its image as an upper caste party and become acceptable to the dalits and other political parties as a prospective electoral partner. However, this alliance was seen as an attempt to cut the OBC group under Kalyan Singh’s leadership in BJP to size (Zerinini-Brotel, 2001: 86). The social base of this OBC leadership in BJP was seen to be sharing the same socio-economic contradiction between the OBCs and dalits that doomed the alliance between the SP and BSP (Pandey, 1997: 2068).

**Transformation in the Nature of Political Mobilisation?**

Even thought the three main political parties were vying for the votes of OBCs in the state, they were visualising OBCs as a part of their own distinct social coalitions. Thus for the SP, OBCs were the main pillars of the backward castes in the fight against the forward castes. In addition to that, the SP was seeing the OBCs as an integral part of the secular political force in the state, which actually meant that the party wanted to align the OBCs with the Muslims. For the BSP, the OBCs were a part of the Bahujan social coalition whose interests were opposed to the upper castes and who had been exploited by the upper castes. The BJP on the other hand, was seeing the OBCs as an integral part of the Hindutva political front which was supposed to be up against the Muslims. The party was wont to perceive the OBCs as ‘Hindus’ rather than the ‘OBCs’. The SP and BSP made use of single castes amongst the OBCs to mobilize the latter. The BJP, on the other hand, was trying to mobilise the OBCs on the basis of both the caste and Hindu religious identity.

The adoption of the social cleavage based politics ensured that the SP, the BSP and the BJP would become important political players in the state. However, each of these political parties failed in organising the entire political constituency it wanted to. Thus, till 2004, the SP was able to organise Yadavs and Muslims; the BSP succeeded in mobilising dalits and a section of OBCs, the BJP was able to generate loyalty of the
upper castes and some of the OBC castes, like Kurmis and Lodhs. This enabled the BJP to secure about 30% of votes and the SP and BSP to achieve about 20% of votes through 1990s in the state assembly elections. However, these votes were not enough for any of these parties to achieve power on their own in the state from 1993 to 2007. So during this period, these parties started off with experimenting pre or post poll alliances with each other. However, this was seen to be fraught with the political instability and uncertainty in the state. This compelled these parties to try to go beyond their core ethnic constituency and appeal to the voters belonging to their ethnic ‘others’. This process dated at least since 1996 assembly elections. During the campaign for this election these political parties blunted the edges of their social ‘othering’ ideologies. Thus, the BSP was trying to woo the dalits, backward castes and Muslims, but not by antagonising the upper castes, the BJP was trying to get the Hindu votes but not by demonising the Muslims and the SP was proposing to include economically weaker section of the upper castes into the reservations (Chandra-Parmar, ibid: 204). The fact that the SP and BSP could not form coalition after 1995 meant that these two parties had to fight against each other, apart from the BJP. This implied that they must have an agenda that would differentiate them from each other as from the BJP. The agenda based on caste cleavage would have failed to differentiate these two parties from each other in the eyes of the voters. This factor also contributed in making these two parties to dilute their social justice ideology (ibid: 219). For BJP, it was necessary to be an acceptable party for prospective coalition partners at the national and the state level. The party had experienced not long ago that its militant Hindutva image can become a liability when it comes to attract the political parties to form an alliance at the national level. Moreover, the already existing caste based mobilisation amongst the electorate made it difficult for the party to mobilise the voters on the basis of Hindutva identity (ibid: 217).

In order to surmount the plateau in their support base the SP and BSP attempted to mobilise the social and political adversaries in their ideology. Thus, both these parties started conscious efforts to woo the voters belonging to the upper castes. These parties did this by distributing a significant number of election nominations to the members of the upper castes. Thus in the assembly elections of 1996 and Lok Sabha elections of 1998, the BSP allotted 17% of its election tickets to the upper castes (Chandra, ibid: 71). In the same pair of elections the SP nominated 21% and 25% of its
candidates from the upper castes (ibid: 80). During the election campaign in 1998, both the parties publicly appealed the upper castes to vote for them (ibid: 71, 80). Even though BJP had diluted its Hindutva ideology it had not been able to accommodate its ideological rival, that is Muslims in its mobilisation. Kanchan Chandra argued that this happened mainly due to difference between the organisational pattern of the SP and BSP on the one hand and the BJP on the other. Thus, the fact that the BSP had been a party run by the centralised authority of Kanshi Ram and Mayawati made this transition easier for it, where as the BJP being a party based on ideological and organisational influence of the RSS made this transformation difficult (ibid: 74, 76). The concentration of organisation in the hands of Mulayam Singh Yadav and his family in the SP (Verma, 2004: 1512-13) meant that the transformation in the ideological and social focus of the party would invite least disturbance from within the party. However, given the fact that the organisation of the BJP above the district level has been controlled by a coterie belonging to the RSS and BJP (Chandra, 2004: 273-74), this transformation should have been easy for the BJP had the decision been taken by the high-level functionaries in RSS and BJP.

Does this inclusion of the ethnic ‘others’ into the political appeal of these parties mean that they have converted themselves from social cleavage based parties to the catch all parties? Does that also mean that the format of political mobilisation by these parties had ceased to be based on ethnic othering? The answer to both the questions may be given in the positive with regard to the SP and the BSP as they had started mobilising all the sections of society, by de-emphasising contradictions between those groups. However, the BJP even though has given up militant Hindutva based mobilisation it has not included its ethnic “other”, the Muslims in large numbers into its party structure (Chandra, ibid: 65). But at the same time this transformation does not mean that these political parties had adopted the Congress like mobilisation pattern. This is so mainly because the Congress party was involved in mobilising several ethnic categories throughout the state in implicit manner. Also, the Congress mobilisation was done by the elite castes. On the other hand, the mobilisation that had been done by these post Mandal parties even after accepting their ethnic “others” had been based on explicit use of ethnic categories. Thus, the leaders belonging to the upper castes have to organise only the members of their own castes in BSP (ibid: 72). In SP and BSP the lower caste groups have been mobilised by the leaders belonging
to their own caste groups. The classic catch-all parties tend to draw a significant amount of support from almost all the sections of society. In the case of SP and BSP, both the parties have still been drawing disproportionately high support from their core constituencies namely the Yadavs and the Jatavs respectively.

The post-Mandal political period in UP witnessed deepening of the political empowerment amongst the OBC castes. Thus, many small castes amongst the OBCs got conscious about their share in political power. The OBC politics during this period started to be based on the issue of caste. This made a number of parties aware about the existence of more than 40% of population called OBCs to whom these parties started mobilising in their own ways. The fact that the political force having legacy of OBC mobilisation in the state got dominated by a single caste called Yadav made other OBC castes to look for alternative political means. This, along with the positive overtures of the BSP and BJP, made a number of OBC castes to vote for these parties.

In these parties, these castes had to face competition from the dalit and upper caste leadership respectively. Some of these OBC castes did not feel satisfied with their representation in any of the main political parties. These castes expressed their resentment through single caste parties like Apna Dal. However, these kinds of parties remained largely ineffective and ephemeral in the state politics. This process gave rise to the fragmentation of OBCs in various political parties of the state. Though various parties claimed to mobilise the OBCs, none of them was able to polarise the OBCs behind it. This contributed to these parties facing political deadlock in the state. In order to come out of this deadlock these parties attempted to go beyond the caste and religion based mobilisation. However, this mobilisation, in its own particular way was based on the ethnic category of castes and religion. This mobilisation was more based on caste ‘difference’ rather than ‘inequality’. This means that those castes who were involved in the conflicting social relationship of yore would share power with each other amicably. The emergence of middle class from amongst the lower castes may have contributed to this process. Nevertheless, a large number of lower castes still belonged to the poorer sections of society. Whether these socio-economic contradictions would come to haunt this kind of social coalition remains to be seen.
Notes

1. This was observed by the members of the organisations of various numerically small OBC castes in our meeting with them at Nagpur dated 23-3-2010.

2. Speaking in a quite different context, Kadu Jaimin, one of the important ideologue of the BAMCEF in the state, pointed out to us that a lot of differentiation takes place in the the psychology of the OBCs who received sixth pay commission salary and the OBCs who did not receive it (Interview, dated 22-3-10).

3. View expressed by the representatives of the organisations of the various numerically small OBC castes in a meeting with them.

4. This term is used by Wyatt, 2004: 237.

5. This term seemed to have been used first by Wyatt, 2004: 237

6. Mr. Elongavan T.K.S., the Organisation Secretary of the DMK listed out two reasons for the emergence of single caste parties in the state. The first reason is the relative deprivation felt by the majority OBC caste group in a particular area as a minority OBC caste group achieves social and economic advancement. The second reason being the special government schemes for the SCs, which make the OBC castes feel deprived vis-à-vis the SCs in a particular area (Interview, dated 7-2-2009).

7. Mr. Balu K., President, Legal Wing of the PMK opined that every caste group must be given reservation according to its share in the population (Interview, dated 5-2-2009).

8. According to Ramadoss M., the then PMK MP from Paducchery, the members of the same caste feel that they all are related to each other like a big family. In order to mobilise a social section this caste affinity is easy to exploit than the affinity based on class, he maintained (Interview, dated 13-2-2009).

9. Rajan Varada W. R., the then member of the state committee and state party secretariat of the CPI(M), observed that when the CPI(M) used to organise the exploited masses on their economic demands, those masses used to support the party. However, when it came to voting, the caste identity amongst those masses used to prevail. Taking this into consideration, opined Mr. Rajan, the
party had decided to mobilise the people on the basis of social issues like caste and women. As a part of this, the party established an organisation called Untouchability Eradication Front in the year 2007. This organisation had mobilised the Arunthathiyars, a most oppressed dalit caste in the state and involved traditionally in scavenging occupation. Despite this, Mr. Rajan maintained that caste feeling is a hindrance in creating inclusive society and caste based mobilisation is an attempt to compartmentalise the society (Interview dated 21-7-2008).

10. Dr. Gandhi Christodas, a retired dalit IAS officer in the state told us that no officer belonging to the SC category had been posted on any of the influential positions during the last 40 years of Dravidian parties rule in the state (Personal Interview dated 7-2-2009). While this claim may or may not be factually correct, the point it brings home is the bitterness about the Dravidian parties rule amongst at least some of the dalit bureaucrats in the state.

11. In one of the meetings of the SP Backward Classes cell attended by us, it was decided the leaders of various OBC castes should visit the areas where their castes are numerically prominent and organise conferences of their castes in order to mobilise these castes in the coming Lok Sabha elections (Field notes, dated 7-1-2009).

12. In the meeting of the backward Classes cell of the SP attended by us, a constant complaint of the MBCs being sidetracked in the party was made by the members. Also, a couple of times, references were made to the respectable positions being given to the MBCs in the BSP. The lack of influence in the hands of the MBCs in SP was, it was alleged, proving a handicap for the MBC leaders in mobilising the MBCs for the party (field notes, dated, 7-1-2009).

13. We have discussed this process in the chapter on Hindutva in this dissertation.

14. Incidentally, the chief of Apna Dal, Dr. Patel Sonelal demanded that the leader of every caste must be made Chief Minister of the state for some time. This according to him would contribute in increasing self-respect ("Aatmasamman Badhega" were his words in Hindi) of these castes (Interview dated 16-1-2009).

***

140