Chapter Four
Mediating with Political Hindutva

Part I: Maharashtra

The OBCs in Maharashtra got organised under non-Brahman identity during pre-independence period. During this phase, initially at least, this identity was projected to be against Congress, partly to counter the Brahman domination in Congress organisation then. During this phase itself, some voices against Maratha domination in the non-Brahman movement were raised by the representatives of non-Maratha non-Brahman castes (Phadke, 1991: 241-42). However, largely, one witnesses a social coalition of all the non-Brahman castes during this period. During 1930s, the non-Brahman movement started to get merged into Congress organisation in the state. However, Lele (1990:158-163) argued that it was British rulers’ capacity to distribute the spoils at the local level that made the non-Brahman movement to become the camp followers of the British. The non-Brahman movement under Maratha leadership articulated the movement as representing monolithic farmers’ interests against the city based middle class interests represented by the Congress. The Maratha leadership of the non-Brahman movement was astute enough to realize various limitations under which the British rule started to administer itself since the mid 1920s due to the economic depression and war torn British economy. Thus, more stringent tax policy and no expansion in employment opportunities during this period started to pinch the neo-middle class amongst the non-Brahmans. This made the limits of British rule clear to the non-Brahman ruling classes at the local level. Therefore it was inevitable for the Maratha leaders to go into the Congress as the local level leaders of the non-Brahman movement were increasingly becoming hostile to the British imperialism and friendly towards the Congress and nationalist movement. In addition, the emergence of left oriented Brahman leadership in the Congress party and simultaneous rise of the Hindu conservative Brahman leadership from Hindu Mahasabha and RSS meant that for the ‘radical’ Satyashodhaks, the Congress leadership was preferable in meeting the peasants’ interests.
In the course of the non-Brahman movement, according to Hansen (2005), the ideology of the movement gradually got "condensed in a single signifier, the Maratha" (Hansen, 2005: 34). In this Brahman-Maratha contradiction, "Maratha denoted martiality, the legacy of Shivaji, true Hindus, rural virtues, cooperative strength, regional identity, non-Brahmanism and Bhakti tradition; whereas Brahmans stood for effeminacy, legacy of the Peshwas, urban culture, learning (and arrogance), pan-Indian solidarity and so on". (ibid). During the post-colonial phase, this ideological and political contradiction in the state, "... made it possible to generalize and simplify a large number of dispersed cultural differences and localized practices into opposed cultural systems and cosmologies." (ibid: 35). This also made political hegemony of Marathas possible in the politics of post-independence Maharashtra. This meant that all the non-Brahman castes, with some exception of dalits belonging to Mahar caste, could come together under the Congress party and leadership of the Marathas in the state.

The post-independence period saw a near complete assimilation of the non-Brahman political force into the Congress organisation of the state. Due to their hold over agriculture and their numerical preponderance, Marathas started to dominate the Congress ranks in the state right since independence. This was a social transformation of power in Congress party of the state as the reins of power went away from the hands of Brahmans into the hands of the Marathas. The fact that the Kunbi-Maratha caste group forms a substantial proportion of Maharashtra’s population, under Shau’s leadership the Maratha-Kunbi consolidation took place in the state, the Marathas have been amongst the rich peasants in the state and the adoption of patrimonial and patriarchal ideology by the Maratha rulers towards the other castes and communities in the state - all these forces helped Marathas rule this highly socially and economically differentiated state. Till 1970s, this Maratha domination rested on the two ideological bases, propagated by the first CM of the Samyukta (United) Maharashtra state, Y. B. Chavan. First was an assurance that the state would not be governed by the Marathas but by the Marathis, meaning the Marathi speaking people. Secondly, it was stated that the state would be the reign of the Bahujan Samaj, implying "non-elite, oppressed, non Brahman castes". (Palshikar, 1994: 271). This rhetoric of Chavan acted as glue joining all the non-Maratha castes, including the OBCs, to the Maratha dominated Congress. So, during the phase of Congress
dominance in the state, the OBCs were devoid of any separate political and social identity. They were merged into the ideological identity of Bahujan Samaj and political domination of Marathas. This Maratha and Congress domination in the state also rested upon political economy of cooperative institutions and network of rural self governing institutions managed and led by Maratha leaders in the countryside.²

**Chinks in the Bahujan Coalition**

The process of interaction between the OBCs and Hindutva politics in the state is a story of fragmentation of Bahujan social coalition stitched by the Congress and a challenge thrown at the Bahujan ideology of the Congress by the Hindutva ideology.

The Maratha domination in the politics of the state started to face challenges from 1970s. This happened, largely due to the conflicts amongst Maratha factions and role of Central leadership of the Congress to destabilise Maratha leadership in the state. During the first decade after creation of Maharashtra on linguistic basis, the politics of the state was relatively stable under the leadership of Y. B. Chavan. Since 1970s, however, Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s search for alternative political structures at the state level started. In Maharashtra, this initiated a process whereby Indira Gandhi started to look for a leadership through which she could carry her own politics at the state level.

In this, Mrs. Gandhi wavered between S. B. Chavan and V. P. Naik. Naik was a follower of Y. B. Chavan initially when the former was nominated as the CM of the state and S. B. Chavan himself was Maratha leader from Marathwada, albeit with no factional support behind him. Seen in the background of these forces, Mrs. Gandhi’s intervention in the state Congress politics can be termed as the first explicit split in the Maratha dominated state politics. This split, broadly stated, was between the leaders who were having factional support behind them at the local level and those who were elevated at the state level politics largely due to the largesse of Central Congress leadership. The former group was led by Y. B. Chavan and the latter by Mrs. Gandhi at the state level. The second split in Maharashtra politics happened within the faction led by Y. B. Chavan. This was a group composed of Maratha leaders. This split happened primarily on the issue of the stand needed on Indira Gandhi’s political force in the state. Even though, the Indira group and Y. B. Chavan group fought 1978 assembly election in the state against each other, they had to form a coalition ministry after the election. This gave impetus to the talk of merging of the Chavan’s party into Indira Gandhi’s party in the state (Lele, 1982: xvii-xviii). In due course of time this
led to vivisection of Y. B. Chavan’s group into two groups, one led by Vasantdada Patil and another by Sharad Pawar. The former merged with the Indira Congress very shortly. However, the latter group sustained its independent existence for a longer time, even though it ultimately merged with Congress in 1986. However, during the early 1980s, Indira Gandhi humiliated Vasantdada’s group by appointing her own nominees as the CMs of state.

During this period, the Maratha leadership feared that the Maratha-Kunbi socio-political force would be fragmented due to Mandal forces in the state. The Maratha Mahasangha was established in the villages of Maharashtra during 1980s. It was launched by Mr. Annasaheb Patil, who was MLC belonging to the Congress (S) party and a powerful trade union leader of the Mathadi workers in Bombay. This organisation was strongly opposed to the recommendations of the Mandal commission report. This happened in the background of the Mandal recommendation to include the Kunbi caste and to exclude Maratha caste from the list of OBCs in Maharashtra. This, according to Ashok Chausalkar, caused a fear in the Maratha Mahasangh that the Maratha Kunbi caste cluster would disintegrate, whose socio-political cohesion was achieved over a long period of time in Maharashtra (Chausalkar, 1989: 85). Seen in the background of the close connections of this organisation with the Congress (S) of Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena during 1980s (Hansen, 2005: 82), both these parties attracting young Marathas during this time, one may safely conclude that the fears of fracture in the Maratha-Kunbi caste cluster was shared generally by the Maratha leadership in the state.

After the Mandal Commission submitted its report in 1980, the social and political leaders of the OBCs started pressurising the government to implement it. Thus in 1981 Rashtriya Pichhada Varga Mahasangha (National Backward Classes Federation-NBCF) was established (Patil and Wagh, 1990: 23). At least for the first two Conferences of the Federation a significant bunch of activists from the state participated—after the second Conference of the Federation, many regional conferences were organised at a number of places in Maharashtra (ibid: 24). S. M. Joshi in Pune, Nagesh Chaudhari in Vidarbha and D. B. Patil, MP of the PWP in Mumbai took lead in organizing those conferences (ibid). During this movement, in 1985-86, OBC Mahasangha was established in Maharashtra. This organisation focused on organising various marches, processions, public meetings for the demand
of Mandal implementation. It also organised many workshops to instruct and enlighten the activists working in OBC movement.

Chhagan Bhujbal, an OBC leader of Shiv Sena left the party due to the latter’s stand against Mandal reservation and established Mahatma Phule Samata Parishad in 1992 to organise the followers of Mahatma Phule across the country (Wankhede, n. d.: 4). This he did only after he got himself admitted in the Congress party. The Samata Parishad took initiative in renovating the place where Mahatma Phule lived in Pune. After this renovation this home was “presented to the nation as a Heritage spot and memorial centre of national importance.” Reportedly, Bhujbal became interested in Phule only after he left Shiv Sena. This interest started to emerge in him when a noted Marathi journalist Narayan Athavale asked Bhujbal his opinion on Phule’s thoughts. On learning about Phle, Bhujbal reportedly was deeply impressed by “our very own Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule”.

In 1961, government of Maharashtra established a committee under the chairmanship of B. D. Deshmukh to investigate, amongst other things, the proportion of representation of the backward classes in the state government services (Yadav, 1994: 160-161). This committee, in its report submitted in 1964, recommended that 10% seats should be reserved for the OBCs in state government services and educational institutions (ibid: 161). The state government did not take any action on this recommendation for the next ten years after which it accepted the recommendation (ibid: 161-62). In the meanwhile when in 1967 Maharashtra government declared a list of 182 OBC castes in the state, the Maratha lobby in the government opposed its publication and granting concessions in education institutes and reservation to the OBC castes (Patil and Wagh, ibid: 17). After declaring 10% reservations to the OBCs in 1979, the Maharashtra government declared 46% reservations to the poor amongst the upper castes (Yadav, ibid: 162). This provision was subsequently abrogated by the High Court. However, this move by the government showed the pressure of upper castes including Marathas on it and government’s readiness to yield to this pressure by Marathas. When during late 1980s, Sharad Pawar became the CM of Maharashtra, he was presented with the demand to implement Mandal Commission report by the MLAs in state legislature. The state government stated in reply that the Central government had prohibited the state government from implementing Mandal reservations in order to avert Gujarat like anti-reservation violence in Maharashtra.
(Patil and Wagh, ibid: 26). In 1985, the then Congress government in Maharashtra led by Vasantdada Patil, a very important leader of the Marathas, was asked by the centre to convey its opinion on the Mandal recommendations. The Patil government hesitated to take any position on the issue for a long time. On this background, it became more and more evident that the Mandal recommendations were likely to challenge Maratha political domination in the state, which made a section of Maratha leadership oppose their implementation (Vora and Palshikar, 1996: 20).

A number of socio-economic and political forces put a wedge between the Marathas, OBCs and dalits—the main constituents of the Bahujan social coalition in the state. For the Maratha Mahasangh, the Marathas were Kshatriyas and hence were a better community than the other non-Brahman castes (Vora and Palshikar, 1990: 220-22). Thus, the Maratha Mahasangh propagated that the Marathas and various Brahman castes have contributed in the various capacities to the historical development of Maharashtrian society. The other castes and communities, including the OBCs, dalits and Muslims have played no part in this development.

The increase in input cost of agricultural activity, lack of proportionate returns on investment in agriculture and most importantly the rise in the socio-economic aspirations of the “middle peasants” had led to the emergence of Shetkari Sanghatana movement in Maharashtra (Lenneberg, 1988). This movement was an expression of farmers’ economic discontent directed against the Congress government. During 1980s, the Shetkari Sanghatana, outside the fold of Congress organisation, mobilised the OBCs. The Sanghatana’s attempts to gloss over the differentiation between the rich and the poor farmers and its propagation of India vs Bharat dichotomy ensured that various sections of the farmers would come together on its platform (Palshikar, ibid: 278). Thus, during this time, young Mali and Vanjari leaders started to get recruited as the leaders of the Shetkari Sanghatana (Palshikar, ibid and Vora, 2009: 232).

After the government of Maharashtra accepted a longstanding demand of dalits in the state to rename Marathwada University after Dr. Ambedkar in 1978, the caste Hindus started attacking dalits violently in the villages of Marathwada. The attacks on dalits were not merely an expression of anti-dalit caste feelings amongst the caste Hindus. It was due to social and economic assertion made by dalits in the feudal settings of Marathwada that ignited the riots. The attacks were centred on the Mahar community who had refused to do the traditional “defiling” work that they were supposed to do in
the village set up (Gupta, 1979: 7). Punalekar reported that a member of a Savarna caste in Marathwada said that the Mangs (another untouchable caste) were “obedient and submissive”, “restrained” and “…are not defiant like the Mahars” (Mendelsohn and Visziany, 2007: 74). The newly acquired socio-political consciousness and reservations in the government jobs and educational institutions helped the Mahars claim scarce educational and professional opportunities in the cities. This made Savarna Hindus economically insecure (Gupta, ibid: 9). Moreover, the various attempts of Mahars in the region to claim the public land (gairan) for cultivation invited wrath of the landed castes (Jondhale, 2001: 295-96). This violence intimidated dalits from celebrating Ambedkar Jayanti- another expression of their assertion- in the villages (ibid: 296). In addition, cultivation of the gairans by dalits meant that for the landowning castes of Marathas and OBCs it would be hard to get labour—which was predominantly available from the dalits due to their landlessness—to work on their land, and this would make the wages rise (Eckert, 2003: 218). It was reported that the OBCs were at the forefront in attacking the dalits in the aftermath of the renaming of Marathwada University (Guru, 1994: 470). The complex socio-economic processes mentioned earlier were behind these attacks. Moreover, in Aurangabad district during late 1980s, the Shiv Sena started a campaign to evict the dalits from lands allotted to the latter by government, calling them as “encroachments” on the common village lands (S. L. and W. S., 1986). This must have resonated with the resentment the OBCs had against the dalit assertion in many parts of Marathwada. Hansen reported that in Aurangabad district of Marathwada, during 1986 to 1987, many young Maratha and OBC activists from many villages asked for permission from Shiv Sena to start its branches (Shakhas) in their villages and invited Shiv Sena district presidents to inaugurate those shakhas (Hansen, ibid: 190).

**Proliferation of Hindutva**

The Mandal Commission recommendations that were submitted to the government in 1980, the rising dalit assertion on the background of the namantar movement and Indira Gandhi’s strategies to counter the Maratha leadership in the Maharashtra Congress, initiated a process of creation of communal organisations in the Maharashtrian countryside (Chausalkar, 1989: 76). Most of these organisations had the support of young Marathas in the villages. However, organisations like Hindu
Ekata Andolan had the backing of young OBCs in its strongholds in southern Maharashtra (ibid: 77).

These organisations were based on Savarkarite thought which wanted to wipe away the caste system amongst the Hindus in order to fight cohesively against the Muslims. Vora and Palshikar (1990) analyzed the ideologies and activities of the various Hindutva organisations that emerged during this period. Both the Hindu Ekta Andolan (HEA) and Maratha Mahasangh were against reservations for OBCs owing to amongst other reasons, their fear that this would break the Hindu society on the basis of caste. The Maratha Mahasangh made use of Shivaji’s icon to show that he was “a national leader and a protector of Hinduism”. (Vora and Palshikar, 1990: 221). The Shiv Sena, which decided to expand its political reach from Mumbai to the rest of Maharashtra state and ideology from sons of soil to the Hindutva, started getting the support of the OBC castes, such as Bhandaris, Malis, Agars and Koshis from various parts of Maharashtra. In Marathwada region, the young Marathas started to support Shiv Sena. A number of RSS cadres supported the activities of Hindu Ekta Andolan, which was involved in many militant and violent actions against the Muslims and so called “anti-national elements” then. This was so because the “disciplined character” of the RSS would stop these cadres from being involved in such violent activities under RSS banner.

Integration of the Hindus for fighting cohesively against the Muslims, demonising the Muslims as being anti-nationals, adoption of violence against the erring Muslims and lower castes, opposition to the reservation policy for it divided the Hindu society, and reaching to the villages and amongst the non-Brahman castes there, were some of the features of the Hindutva organisations which emerged during the 1980s.

The increasing influence of Hindu nationalism amongst the OBCs was witnessed in other social spheres too. Many amongst the major OBC castes in Maharashtra belong to the Varkari cult. According to a report prepared by the Unique Features, the middle peasant castes in Maharashtra have been participating in the Varkari Sampradaya (cult) since many years and they were doing so even during the 1990s (Unique Features, 1991). This report, on the basis of interviews conducted with many Varkaris, stated that about 90 percent of those interviewed felt that the destruction of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was a right thing and Ram Mandir must be built in its place (ibid). Thus, it can be safely said that the Hindutva organisations had been successful
in creating a communal sentiment amongst the OBCs in Maharashtra, at least during the Ram Mandir agitation.

**OBC Mobilisation by the Hindutva Political Forces**

From the start, the general acceptance of non-Brahman movement in the minds of masses meant that the RSS, which was considered to be a Brahmans’ organisation, (Hansen, 2001: 123) would be socially and politically marginalized. The RSS’s attitude towards the non Brahman masses in Maharashtra was described by Hansen as “condescending paternalism”, which was wont to seeing the masses as culturally backward and in need of the “higher caste cultural idioms” (ibid: 124). Given the long tradition of non-Brahman movement the state had, this kind of cultural patronizing was bound to fail. Arvind Lele, ex-BJP MLA from Pune said that all the state presidents of the Bharatiya Jan Sangha (BJS) and BJP belonged to the “Bahujan Samaj”, yet the BJS/BJP was seen “as a Brahman Party” (ibid: 126). The image of the BJP had been that of a party that belonged to the “middle class and upper caste” (ibid: 130). The connection of the BJP with the RSS must have been one of the significant factors behind this.

Shiv Sena, on the other hand was having an image that was very close to the heart of the masses. Shiv Sena “was able to tap the anti-Brahman traditions” and was thus able to take Hindutva out of its Brahminist trope (Eckert, 2003: 217). Shiv Sena was able to do this by building its image as a party based on being effective in “getting things done”, giving stress on action-as against the thoughts and analysis, its use of physical violence against its adversaries-contending that violence is expression of its activists’ emotions and Bal Thakerey’s glorification of “Maratha nature” (ibid: 134-140).

Even though a number of RSS activists were active in the communal carnage in Mumbai after the Babri Masjid demolition, the BJP publicly disowned the responsibility for it. On the other hand, Shiv Sena was very eager to publicize itself as an active organisation in the demolition. Thus, the BJP wanted “… to profile itself as a relatively sane and moderate party, promoting a ‘respectable Hindutva’, while at the same time reaping the electoral benefits of the radical rhetoric and ‘reputation’ for action of the Shiv Sena” (Hansen, ibid: 142).

During 1980s itself, the Shiv Sena and BJP decided to give their organisations some OBC face. This was also a period when Shiv Sena decided to expand its political
presence from Mumbai to the villages of Maharashtra. Under this scheme, the Shiv Sena projected Chhagan Bhujbal, a leader belonging to gardner community (Mali) as its rural mascot. BJP too realised during this period that in order to establish its foothold in Maharashtra, it was inevitable that it projected its leaders as representing OBCs and not merely Hindutva. The Shiv Sena did not mobilise OBCs on the basis of the issue of their reservation or their contradictory interests with the upper castes. When the central government decided to implement the Mandal commission report, Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackerey publicly opposed this move on the ground of its being “castist and divisive”, which according to Hansen, had the potential of disturbing the OBC support base of the Shiv Sena (Hansen, 2001: 134). However, in the light of our fieldwork, this seemed to have been untenable at least in the initial phase of 1990s. This was so because most of the activists working in the OBC movement, interviewed by us said that in the initial period after the government decided to implement Mandal, the OBCs in Maharashtra were believing Mandal recommendations to be one more scheme of reservations for dalits and as such were opposed to the Mandal recommendations. Moreover, Shiv Sena made use of resentment amongst the OBCs against dalit assertion to gain support of the OBCs. This became evident when the Shiv Sena took a stand against the renaming of Marathwada University after Dr. Ambedkar, the most popular dalit icon. Shiv Sena also strongly opposed publication of ‘Riddles in Hinduism’ by the government of Maharashtra. Shiv Sena projected its OBC leadership clearly on the side of militant political Hinduism when its most prominent leader Chhagan Bhujbal “purified” the memorial for the hutammas (martyrs) of the Samyukta Maharashtra at Flora Fountain Square in Mumbai, which was allegedly desecrated by young dalit activists, in response to the public burning of ‘Riddles in Hinduism’ by the Shiv Sena activists (Hansen, 2005: 84).

In addition to this, Shiv Sena attracted young Marathas and OBC in the villages of Marathwada by raising a spectre of “Muslim Congress”, making Hindu festivals more pronounced and grand; and occupying the public space with aggressive expression of militant Hinduism (Hansen, 1996: 197). According to Hansen, the newly educated OBC and Maratha youth in the small towns of Maharashtra found themselves unable to find place in the patronage structures related with the politico-administrative arrangements. These small towns and villages witnessed emergence of young small
shop owners and petty contractors. These young entrepreneurs often found themselves in opposite communal camps, consisting of young OBCs and Marathas on one hand and the young Muslims carrying forward the latters’ traditional business in retail trade, on the other. These political, economic, and communal antagonisms against the “system” made young OBCs and Marathas to act as recruits, local leaders and activists of the Shiv Sena (Hansen, 2005: 83).

The BJP unit in Maharashtra, on the other hand supported the central government’s decision to implement the Mandal commission recommendation of reservations for the OBCs. This move of the state BJP becomes interesting in the background of the cautious approach taken by its central unit and clear opposition shown to Mandal recommendation by its organisations in the states of MP, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh (Hansen, 2001: 134). In doing this, the BJP in Maharashtra was trying to do two things. One, it was trying to dispel its Bramanical image in the post-colonial Maharashtra. And two, it saw in this move an opportunity to break the OBC’s from the Bahujan coalition built under the leadership of Marathas under the aegis of Congress party and make those OBCs available as BJP’s supporters in the state (ibid: 135). Moreover, BJP projected some of its OBC leaders as its state level leaders. However, those OBC leaders of the BJP tried to mobilise the OBCs on Hindutva issue. Hence, one of its main OBC leaders, Gopinath Mundhe argued that the real issue before the BJP was not whether to accept Mandal reservations or not but whether those reservations would be applicable to Muslim OBCs also or only to the Hindu OBCs (ibid: 135).

Anna Dange, a state level leader of the BJP until late 1990s, claimed to have initiated the idea of MaDhaVa mobilisation within the party (Dange, 2006: 187-190). This was done mainly to dispel the image of party as being urban and white collar based. The MaDhaVa refers to the castes of Mali, Dhangars and Vanjari. In BJP, the leaders belonging to these three important OBC castes were projected as the state level leaders. These three leaders were N. S. Pharande, Anna Dange, and Gopinath Mundhe. Dange stated that he, along with Mundhe started to mobilise the members of their own castes by establishing their Caste associations. Thus, Mundhe founded Bhagvan Sena and Dange established Dhangar Samaj Mahasangh in order to abolish the sub caste differences within their castes and mobilise them behind the BJP. About his own Dhangar community, Dange claimed that his efforts led to divert behind BJP
a substantial section of Dhangars who used to vote to the Congress nearly en masse earlier.

**Experiment of the Bahujan Politics**

During the early 1990s, along with this Hindutvisation of the OBC politics, another political experiment was being done in Maharashtra’s OBC mobilisation. This experiment was an attempt to create ‘Bahujan’ constituency in the state. It was tried under the aegis of Bahujan Mahasangha (BMS). The BMS wanted to create a Bahujan identity and ideology in the politics of Maharashtra. This, according to BMS would be different from the Bahujan ideology of Yashwantrao Chavan, which implied domination of Marathas over all the toiling masses. According to BMS’s Bahujan ideology, all those who are exploited by the class, caste and gender are included into the Bahujan identity. Thus, this Bahujan ideology included not only dalits, adivasis, OBCs, women, poor Marathas, poor Brahmans but also the religious minorities like Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and Muslims as its constituency. The BMS placed itself in the tradition of Phule and Dr. Ambedkar and tried to include the socio-religious and cultural symbols of all those “exploited” communities into its ideology. One of the important aims behind the Bahujanism of the BMS was to wean away the OBC youth from going towards Hindutva ideology and stop any further OBC exodus in the direction of the Hindutva political parties in the state.

The BMS considered Hindutva ideology as exploitative because according to the former, the latter consisted of homogenizing the rich cultural diversity of the Bahujans, which was “comprehensive, multilayered, multi-faceted and popular” in nature (Guru, 1993: 2500). It also saw Brahminical domination under the guise of homogenisation project of Hindutva. According to the BMS, Vedic Hindu religion was basically contradictory with non-Vedic religion of the Bahujans. In order to expose the real dominating character of the Hindutva forces, which had started to accommodate some Bahujans in their political organisations, the BMS demanded that out of four Shankaracharyas in Hindu religion two must be given over to the dalit and OBC.

The Congress, according to the BMS was equally dangerous for the Bahujans. According to the BMS, the Congress had been able to retain power for such a long time only due to the OBC Bahujans’ support for it. However, according to the BMS,
the Congress had always left those OBC bahujans in the lurch. The political, economic, social and educational power in the Congress was always concentrated in the hands of few rich Maratha families. Further, the BMS demanded that the OBCs must be given 52% of reservation, extending their present 27%, by making an amendment to the constitution.

In its initial phase of development, the BMS seemed to make some headway in electoral politics of the state by capturing considerable number of seats in the Akola Zilla Parishad (District Board) in Vidarbha and winning a by-election for assembly constituency of Kinwat in Marathwada. Moreover, the BMS seemed to have attracted large number of OBC masses in its public meetings in parts of Vidarbha and Marathwada. This rising political performance of the BMS was so significant amongst the OBCs that according to Gopal Guru, it made the then CM of the state to take some urgent efforts to drive OBCs back to the Congress. These efforts included implementation of Mandal Commission report in the state, and to implement reservations for OBCs in the fields like cooperative sugar factories, credit societies, banks etc. (Guru, 1993).

Between 1993 and 1996, the BMS and Prakash Ambedkar led Bharatiya Republican Party (BRP) were having common organisation with distinct officials for each party (Pawar, 2007: 184). After 1996 however, the two organisations merged and a single political party namely BRP-BMS continued thereafter. This party also decided to allot 60% of the posts in the party to neo Buddhist Mahars and rest 40% of the posts to the non-neo Buddhists, which usually went to the OBCs. This BRP-BMS coalition decided to carve out a “third force” in the politics of Maharashtra by coordinating all the non-Congress, non BJP-Shiv Sena political forces in the state. However, it failed in this, at least in the Assembly elections of 1995. This failure to consolidate the third force in the state, the political disintegration of this third force at the national level and many other factors made it difficult for this “third alternative” to succeed in the state politics of Maharashtra. Hence, soon this Bahujan experiment of BMS-BRP had to make electoral coalition with the Congress to counter the Hindu communal forces in the state. This process ensured that in the due course of time the BMS experiment ran out of steam in the state politics.
Differential Mobilisation of the OBCs

The emergence of OBC politics in the state was in many ways a symptom of destruction of ideological consensus arrived at under the leadership of Y. B. Chavan. This consensus was based on twin ideological bases of welfare of the Marathi speaking people and rule by Bahujan samaj. The OBC politics signified a challenge to the Maratha domination that was being carried out under this ideological garb. However, there seems to be a differentiation in the pattern of mobilisation of OBCs in the politics of Maharashtra after 1990. Attempts were made to mobilise the OBCs in the state on the ideological basis of Hindutva and social justice. The mobilisation on the Hindutva plank succeeded to a significant extent, while the mobilisation made on the basis of social justice came a complete cropper. The OBCs in the state got attracted towards Hindu nationalist parties like BJP and Shiv Sena. This was partly due to the anti-dalit and anti-reservationist ideological posture adopted by Shiv Sana and the projection of some OBC leaders amongst the BJP as its state level leaders. At the level of ideology and mobilisation of the OBCs, the Bahujanist political experiment was also made in the state. This experiment involved organizing the OBCs on the basis of their exploitation by the upper castes and Marathas in the state. The OBCs were seen to be sharing this exploitation and identity of being Bahujans with other toiling masses of the state. As stated earlier, after showing some vigour in some pockets of the state, the BMS experiment failed to take roots in state politics. Along with other reasons, two reasons seem to have contributed to it. First, the OBCs in the state had not yet developed a mentality to share power with the dalits (Thakur Rekha; Interview: 27-2-2010). Two, the party tried to project only the dominant OBCs in the state, consisting of the Mali, Dhangar and Vanjari castes. In this process, the small, microscopic OBC castes in the state felt left behind in the structures of power of the BMS. 10

Issues in Mobilisation of OBCs

The most important issue before OBC politics in Maharashtra seems to be the creation of an OBC identity. Amongst the OBCs in Maharashtra, the identity to be belonging to particular caste seems to be much stronger than belonging to the social coalition and administrative category of the OBC. This becomes clear when one witnesses emergence of several single caste organisations of the castes coming under the administrative category of OBC. Many leaders of the single OBC caste organisations
opined that the people belonging to their castes do not come together under the organisation of OBCs, but could easily come together when organised under the banner of their own castes. The other side of this phenomenon is that, according to these leaders, in the past there used to be sharp differences at the levels of sub castes of these castes. However, due to the work done by their organisations, these sub caste differences are vanishing away and the castes are consolidating as a united social force (Waghmare Madhukar; Interview: 21-3-2010 and Wadgaonkar Pralhad; Interview: 1-6-2010). Also the organisations claiming to represent the OBCs in the state are proliferating. Nevertheless, these organisations are seen to be dominated by the single, in most cases strong, OBC castes only. The Samata Parishad, which is seen to be dominated by Malis in the state, is a good case in point.

During the early 1990s, it seemed that the OBCs in the state would make use of Shiv Sena-BJP coalition as their political vehicle in the state. However, by the late 1990s, it became clear that the OBC politics in the state has started to get fragmented, and hence cannot get accommodated into the Hindutva political forces alone. This happened due to many reasons. Firstly, the Congress and later the NCP in the state started to project some OBC leaders at the state level. Thus, Chhagan Bhujbal of the Mali caste and Shivajirao Shendage of the Dhangar caste were given prominent positions in organisations and ministries of initially the Congress and later the NCP. In addition to this, these two leaders were also projected as the leaders of their own castes and OBCs in general. In this process, though their parties did not openly support them, the former did not explicitly oppose them either. Secondly, the official central list of OBCs has been divided into as many as four categories when it comes to the state list of reservations in Maharashtra. In this, the numerically and materially dominant OBC castes in Maharashtra have been categorised into different lists. Thus, the Malis, Dhangars and the Vanjaris are categorised into the lists of OBC, NT-C and NT-D respectively (Devgaonkar, 2009: 439, 442). Some organisations of the Dhangars and Vanjaris had themselves demanded this sub categorisation during 1990s on the basis of the relative deprivation, felt or real, in the reservations from the OBC list. Of late, many caste organisations of these castes, like Dhangars have been demanding that they be included into the Scheduled Tribe category in the national as well as state list of reservations. Third factor is the peculiar socio-political and economic position of the Kunbi Maratha caste cluster in the state. This caste cluster is
composed of economically layered social sections. However, due to many historical and social forces, this community has become a socially and politically cohesive group. The most conservative estimates suggest this group to be 20 to 25% of the state's population. A section amongst this group holds political and economic power in the Maharashtrian countryside. The social cohesion and economic hold of this group makes it almost inevitable for any political party to court this group if it wants to achieve political preponderance in the state. The same has been happening with the Shiv Sena and BJP who made several overtures towards this social section, and Shiv Sena especially started getting positive signals from a substantial section of this group during the late 1990s. However, this resulted in narrowing down the space for OBCs in Shiv Sena. This perhaps made the OBCs to search for alternative political options in the state and to some extent; they found this out in the form of NCP, where the OBCs had to fight the same war with Marathas for political space. This process fragmented both the Kunbi-Marathas and the OBCs in politics of the state.

There is a significant socio-political overlap between the Marathas and Kunbis and a feeling of being overpowered by the Maratha-Kunbis amongst the non Kunbi OBCs in the state politics. Considering this process, it would be interesting to assess the comparative presence of MLAs belonging to these three sections of population that is Marathas, Kunbis and non-Kunbi OBCs through the major parties of the state. Rajendra Vora (2009) has analysed these trends. The Marathas always far surpassed the proportion of the Congress members in the assembly than the Congress members belonging to the OBC castes, except for 1999 assembly elections (Vora, 2009: 239-Table no. 7.5). Moreover, amongst the OBC MLAs of the party, the non Kunbis were always more in proportion than the Kunbi members of the assembly save the 1967 assembly when both these sections had equal proportion of MLAs, and 1999 assembly when the proportion of the members belonging to the Kunbi caste group was more than the proportion of the members belonging to the non Kunbi OBC castes.

As far as the BJP is concerned, only from 1980 assembly elections the party has started to send MLAs in double-digit numbers. Also the data differentiating the Kunbi and non-Kunbi OBC MLAs is not available in the case of BJP. For the two elections during 1980s, the upper castes MLAs of the party were forming the highest proportion amongst the OBC, Maratha and the upper caste sections. In the 1990 assembly
elections, when the number of BJP MLAs doubled its assembly members in the previous election, the proportion of OBC MLAs topped the percentage of the party MLAs, followed by the Marathas and “Other Minorities” MLAs (ibid: 241-Table no. 7.6). This was also the first assembly election that the BJP and Shiv Sena fought together. The proportion of the upper caste MLAs of the party became quite insignificant in the rest of the assemblies. However, for the next two assemblies the proportion of Maratha MLAs was more than the proportion of OBC members of the assembly, only in the 2004 assembly elections, the percentage of OBC MLAs became more than Marathas very marginally. During the 1990s, it seems that the BJP was transformed into a party of Marathas and OBCs from being an upper caste party earlier.

The Shiv Sena since 1990 and NCP since 1999 assembly election show exactly the same pattern as Congress’ about the comparative proportion of the party MLAs belonging to the Maratha; Kunbi and non Kunbi OBC castes. However, the trend of the share of Kunbi MLAs had been on the increase and that of the non Kunbi MLAs has been on the decrease as far as Shiv Sena MLAs were concerned (ibid: 242-Table no. 7.7). This trend seems to have got broken only marginally when there was a very small decrease in the proportion of the Kunbi MLAs of the party in 2004 assembly as compared to 1999 assembly. The foregoing analysis suggests that the Maratha MLAs dominate in all the major parties in the state. In Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena, the proportion of MLAs belonging to the non Kunbi OBCs had been consistently higher than the proportion of the Kunbi MLAs. This may have to do with the fact that there have been some agricultural non Kunbi OBC castes in the state who are concentrated in some pockets and sections amongst them have been rich economically. In addition, the boundaries between the Maratha and Kunbi caste groups have been quite blurred, especially in western Maharashtra region. The picture of fragmentation of the social blocs in politics of Maharashtra during 1990s (Palshikar and Birmal, 2004) gets confirmed by our analysis of the social background of the MLAs of the four main parties in the state. Thus, all these political parties save the BJP have Maratha MLAs in commanding position. In addition, these parties have proportion of OBC MLAs comparable with each other. However, the efforts to form single caste OBC parties (ibid) suggest that at least some of the OBC castes have not been able to fulfill their political aspirations through any of the mainstream parties.
After 1990, the OBCs in Maharashtra contributed substantially in strengthening the politics of Hindutva. This was an ideological challenge before the Bahujan Samaj ideology of the Congress. Since the late 1980s, this Bahujan Samaj ideology had to share some of its space in the state politics with the Hindutva ideology. However, by the end of the twentieth century, the OBC politics in the state seemed to be facing a paradoxical situation. On one hand, the OBC leaders are being projected as important political players and the leaders of OBCs in nearly all the major parties of the state. On the other hand, no political party of any significant strength is seen to be taking the issues concerning the OBCs in the direct and/or in confrontational manner with the any other section of society, nor the OBCs in the state have come together in any one political party. This makes the OBC politics in the state mobilisationally dispersed and ideologically diffused. Even then, this out of shape and fractured political upsurge of OBCs gave substantial political strength to the Hindutva political forces in the state. This has made sure that the politics in the state would never be the same again.

**Part II: Tamil Nadu**

During 1990s, unlike in many northern and western states in India, the political Hindutva could never become a significant force in its own right in TN. However, the ideology of Hindu nationalism influenced the politics of state in its own way, wherein the Dravidian parties themselves compromised with the Hindu revivalism and Hindu nationalism in the state. The social organisations carrying Hindu nationalist ideology were able to penetrate deeper into Tamil society during this decade. Thus, even though Hindutva was apparently ineffective in the state politics, the ideology of Hindutva was able to put itself in the socio-political undercurrents of the state. These forces had their repercussions on the OBC politics in the state.

**Dravidian Parties’ Hindutva Postures**

In 2004 Lok Sabha elections, the DMK led alliance in the state got considerable lead over AIADMK alliance as far as voting by various OBC caste groups was concerned (Prasad, 2004: 5490 Table 2). The only exception to this trend were Thevars whose votes to the DMK led alliance were only 2 percentage points higher than those to the AIADMK led alliance. However, the AIADMK led alliance got at least 30% or more
votes from all the OBC communities touching 47% in the case of Thevars. In 2006 assembly elections, the DMK led alliance again took lead over its rival AIADMK alliance in winning the votes of most of the OBC communities (Racine, 2009: 477-Table 16.10). However, this time the AIADMK alliance succeeded in securing a greater share of votes from Naidus and Thevars than the the DMK alliance. While this lead was just two percentage points in the case of Naidus, it was as large as ten percentage points in the case of Thevars. In case of Nadars, and “Other OBC” communities too, the lead taken by the DMK alliance was quite marginal. However, in this election too, both the alliances got more than 36% of votes from all the OBC communities reported in the survey. This clearly meant that the OBC votes in the state had got divided between the AIADMK and DMK led alliances. During 1990s, single caste parties like PMK emerged in nearly every region of the state and claimed a substantial portion of the votes of the single OBC castes. However, the main Dravidian parties were able to accommodate these single caste parties under alliances led by the former. During 1990s, these main Dravidian parties and various sections of the OBCs started coming under the influence of Hindutva ideology.

In the decade of 1990s, both the Dravidian parties adopted the Hindu revivalist postures in varying degrees. During its tenure from 1991 to 1996 and from 2001 onwards the AIADMK government took several decisions to further Hindutva agenda in the state. Many of these decisions were aimed at providing government patronage to the Hindu religious institutions and the thus encouraging “Brahmanical Sanskritik Hinduism to become almost as it were the state religion” (Fuller, 2004: 4). These decisions included the creation of the “Chief Minister’s Temple Renovation and Maintenance Fund” to provide financial support for the renovation and maintenance of the Hindu temples. The sanctioning authority of this fund was to be the Chief Minister (CM) herself. With the desire to create the image of a ‘monarch’ for herself, Jayalalitha sought to sideline the institutional authority of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) department in the matters relating to temples in the state and took over those powers (ibid: 119). During Jayalalitha’s tenure as the CM, there was a steep rise in the incidence of temple renovation rites. The normal practice of long delay in the approval to these rituals by the HR&CE department was now given more speedily (ibid: 120). Jayalalitha also decided to set up the “Tamil Nadu Institute of Vedic Science” with the main purpose to teach the temple priests the
Vedas and Agamas and to get these Sanskrit books translated into Tamil (ibid: 123). However, this scheme could never get implemented in the state. Jayalalitha also started the Annadanam scheme under which the people visiting the temple were given food free of cost and classes were started to impart religious training to children in 63 main temples of the state (ibid: 125). Moreover, Jayalalitha supported kar seva in Ayodhya in November 1992 (Krishnakumar, 2002). In the meeting of the National Integration Council in November, 1992 Jayalalitha took a stand in favour of kar seva in Ayodhya (ibid). Moreover, she opposed the sacking of the governments run by the BJP in MP, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh due to the party’s alleged involvement in the Babri masjid demolition. In a meeting of the body constituted for campaigning for the construction of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, the Hindu Munnani head expressed his gratitude for Jayalalitha for “being with us like god”.

On top of all these efforts, Jayalalitha enacted an anti-conversion law in the state to stop the “forcible conversions” taking place in the state. This move was seen as a step against the Muslims and Christians in the state, the Hindutva forces in the state such as the RSS, the Hindu Munnani and the BJP welcomed this act, whereas the churches and the other opposition parties in the state condemned it (Fuller, ibid: 136). This step of the Jayalalitha government also made clear her inclination towards Hindutva ideology, which refused to see Conversion as a dalit assertion against social oppression, but instead viewed it as a basic contradiction between the Hindu religion and the religions of the minority communities such as the Christians and Muslims.

The DMK also had its share in furthering Hindutva ideology in the state during the post 1990 period. It continued pursuing the pro-Hindu agenda of the previous AIADMK government of temple renovation and funding the temples to carry on their daily worship (ibid: 125). In 2001, when the state assembly elections were in the offing, the then CM of the state, Karunanidhi claimed that he had performed better than his predecessor, Jayalalitha in renovating the temples (Fuller, ibid: 125). Thus Karunanidhi claimed that his government had undertaken 595 works of temple renovation every year as against the Jayalalitha government which had managed to renovate just 164 temples per year. He further stated that during Jayalalitha’s regime as the CM before him, 828 temples were refurbished, this figure had shot up to 2,669 under his rule. Karunanidhi also maintained that the popular perception that he and the DMK were opposed to the temples was based on disinformation. In 2001,
Karunanidhi as the CM of state graced the inauguration of the conference of village priests’ organisation under the aegis of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) (Anand and Srikanth, 2003). Fuller argued that, there is a kind of resonance between the Hindu nationalism and Brahmanical Sanskrit religion in TN as the Hindu nationalism which is an all India ideology is considered to be opposed to the regionally based Tamil nationalism and Dravidianism (Fuller, 2004: 136). Brahmanical Sanskrit religion shared with Hindu nationalism this opposition to Tamil nationalism. Above all, the DMK gave a political legitimacy to the Hindutva forces in the state more explicitly when it aligned itself with the BJP for 1999 Lok Sabha and 2001 state assembly elections. In 1971, the DMK government had passed a legislation to enable the non-Brahmins to become archakas (temple priests) in the temple by outlawing the appointment of archakas on the basis of caste, which had been thwarted by the decision of the Supreme Court then (Ryerson, 1988: 161-62). In the background of past radical record of the DMK, the above-mentioned compromises with Hindu revivalism and adoption of Hindu revivalism by the same party during 1990s seemed to be purely retrograde.

The DMK took several other actions that promoted the cause of Hindutva. After coming to power in 1996, the DMK enacted the Prevention of Terrorist Act, 1998. According to some observers, this act aimed overtly to counter the “emergence of terrorist crimes”, but covertly to victimize the minority community, specifically the Muslims in the state (Rajadurai, 1998: 1609). Moreover, in the special issue of Murasoli, the DMK party organ, to celebrate the 75th birthday of Karunanidhi, Cho Ramaswami, then working as a journalist “whose life mission is to bury non-brahminism” was allowed to contribute (ibid). In his article, praising Karunanidhi Cho applied “liberal doses of Sanskrit verses” (ibid). The Dravidian ideology identified Sanskrit with Brahmanism and against Tamil language which was related to non Brahmanism. Against this, Cho’s use of Sanskrit in DMK journal indicated a reversal of the non-Brahman, Dravidian stand of the DMK, if not open identification with Hindutva.

The AIADMK was instrumental in giving boost to communal symbols amongst at least one OBC community. Thus, the Thevars, a dominant OBC caste group in southern TN attacked Muslims, along with the dalits in the background of an emerging alliance between the dalit and Muslim parties in the state during late 1990s
(Jeyaranjan and Anandhi, 1999). The central figure under whom the Thevars had got organised immediately after Independence was Muthuramalinga Thevar who had initially been with the Congress but afterwards established Forward Block in the state. He had been instrumental in organizing Hindus against the Muslims over the issue of use of farmland during 1930s. In 1992 the then CM of the state Jayalalitha declared that the birth and death anniversaries of Muthuramalinga Thevar would be celebrated by the state government in his native village. This act of providing state patronage to the anniversary programmes boosted the symbolic significance of Muthuramalinga Thevar amongst the Thevar community. Thus, the AIADMK attempted to mobilise the Thevars by making use of this symbol laden with the caste and communal messages.

Apart from the DMK aligning itself with the BJP from 1999 to 2004, one of the radical Dravidian forces in the state, the DK also seemed to be hobnobbing with the pro-Hindutva political force in the state. This was clear when K. Veeramani of the DK became “a faithful supporter of the anti-democratic and resolutely pro-Hindu government of J. Jayalalitha…” (Geetha, 2005: 233).

According to Fuller, changes in the actual and aspirational status amongst the sections of OBCs in the state were partly responsible for the positive inclination of the Dravidian parties towards Hindu revivalism and Hindu nationalism. The middle class which had emerged within a number of forward non Brahman castes as a result of Dravidian party government’s reservation policies wanted “upward social mobility” as “even today elite culture in Tamilnadu is predominantly defined as Brahmatical and Sanskritic.” (Fuller, ibid: 118). Thus, the changing cultural orientations of the upwardly mobile OBCs, who constituted the main support groups of Dravidian parties to various degrees, to some extent pushed these parties to show a positive inclination towards strands of Hindutva.

**Political Hindutva**

Narendra Subramanian (2003: 72) analysed the political and electoral performance of BJP in TN post-1990. The support base of the BJP in the state during 1990s mainly consisted of the wealthy sections of the OBC communities of Kongu Vellala Gounders, the Mukkulathors and the Nadars. This, on the one hand absorbed the image of the BJP from being Brahmatical party, but on the other hand, the party fell
short of getting the support of the lower OBCs and dalits. Also the BJP’s influence was greatest in the southern, western planes and Tamirparani valley. This increase in the electoral influence of the BJP was accompanied by the rise in the tensions between the Christian minority and Hindus in the southern planes and Tamirparani valley; and between the Hindus and the Muslim minority in the western plains and Chennai city. Thus according to the 1998 post-poll survey conducted by the CSDS, 7.1% of the total respondents preferred BJP when they were asked for their preference of the political party in the presumed absence of alliances. During late 1990s, the BJP in the state made some positive symbolic gestures towards Tamil nationalism. Thus, the party demanded that Tamil should be accorded the status of classical language, it should be made the official language of Indian Union; and the year 2000 be declared as the “Tamil year” (Pandian, 2000: 1805). It also tried to appropriate the image of the Tamil saint poet Thiruvalluvar for the cause of its electoral expansion in TN (ibid).

From the late 1960s, the political weapon used by the OBCs in this state was mainly the DMK. Till the 1990s, the OBCs in the state supported the DMK. But during 1990s this support got fragmented in that, a number of OBC communities started supporting the single caste parties like the PMK\textsuperscript{11}. The 1990s also saw some of the OBC communities supporting the BJP as mentioned above on the one hand, while on the other hand the political formations of the OBCs, like the DMK and PMK also aligned themselves with the BJP in various elections especially from the late 1990s.

Two forces were responsible for this two pronged interaction between the OBCs and the BJP in the 1990s in this state. Firstly, the BJP in the 1990s had become one of the main contestants for power at the national level. Secondly, the 1990s also witnessed the regional parties becoming important players in the alliance formation for national level government. This increased the significance of securing more and more seats in the Lok Sabha as well as in state assembly elections for the regional parties like DMK. These two conditions served as incentives for the DMK and other smaller-regional parties to align themselves with the BJP. Thus the ‘MGR formula'\textsuperscript{12} which was based on twin conditions of the ideological compatibility and clear division of influence between the Congress and AIADMK at the national and state level government respectively, fell to pieces following 1996. This was necessitated partly by the downfall of the ‘Congress system’ at the national level. This challenged the monopoly of Congress influence at the national level government, and subsequently
opened up the possibility for regional parties to have a share in power at the national level too. Hence 1996 onwards, in TN, the possibility to win most of the seats, rather than common ideology started to mould the electoral alliance for the national level elections (Subramanian, ibid: 77). Secondly, the support bases of the DMK and the BJP started to come from the common social groups that is, the upwardly mobile groups amongst the OBCs (ibid: 87). This made the process of alliance formation between these two political parties easier. BJP’s electoral base was limited to some tiny pockets in the state, while the DMK had political presence across the state but was also facing challenges from single caste parties in different regions of the state. This must have made the OBC vote base of both the parties supportive to each other.

**Mobilisation of Non-Brahmans by Hindutva Forces**

During 1990s, the various Hindutva organisations started working towards dispelling their Brahmanical image and including various non-Brahman communities into their organisations and activities. Hence, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) started organizing the *pujaris* in village temples across the state. The VHP organised training camps for the village *pujaris* in order to train them in performing pujas. As a result of this activity the *pujaris’* organisation was established in the state. This organisation was successful in getting many of the *pujaris’* demands fulfilled by the successive governments of both the main Dravidian parties. Till 1998, 1200 *pujaris* had completed this training. Out of these, 670 *pujaris* seemed to belong to the backward castes and 73 to the most backward castes. Anand and Srikanth (ibid) report that in order to homogenise and Brahmanise the diverse rituals of these village deities, the VHP had come out with a “manual” explaining how these rituals are to be performed in a right way. From 1994 to 2003, this handbook had been reprinted thrice. The VHP pressurized the government to start pension for the *pujaris*. The government not only granted this pension, but the number of eligible priests was also raised during the tenure of both DMK and AIADMK governments in the state. According to Anand and Srikanth (ibid), the chiefs of the ‘*maths*’ of various castes, including OBCs and dalits, were present on the stage in a Youth Conference organised by the VHP.

Hindu Munnani, an organisation related with the BJP, in 1983 started public celebration of Vinayaka Chaturthi festival in Chennai (Fuller, 2001: 1607). The main demands of the Hindu Munnanin had been to end the influence of the government on management of temples and to get conversion declared as illegal (Wyatt, 2010: 155).
This organisation was also actively involved in fomenting communal tension between Hindus and Muslims in TN during late 1980s (Pandian, 1990: 1938). According to Pandian, though the Brahmans were overall in charge of this organisation, at the grassroots it was led and supported in some places by a number of locally dominant OBC castes such as Nadras and Thevars (ibid). According to the president of this organisation, it sought to struggle against caste system amongst Hindus, to bring all the Hindus on a common stage and to consolidate Hindus into a “vote bank”. Pandian further argued that Hindu Munnani had succeeded in destroying division between the Saivites and Vaisnavites in Tamil Nadu (ibid; 1938-39). Some amongst the Saivites had been supporters of the Dravidian movement. So, when in 1971, the then DMK government set aside the condition of caste in appointing the priests in temple, a Saivite organisation supported the government’s move, while the Vaisnavites opposed it. The Hindu Munnani sought to use this organised Hindu force against the Muslims and Christians. In this, the Munnani had been branding the Muslims and Christians in the state as “foreigners without passports and visas”. (ibid.)

According to Rama Gopalan, the chief of the Hindu Munnani, the Munnani supported the BJP as the latter has assented to all its key demands (Wyatt, ibid). The BJP as a political party had to appear to be a responsible force and had to keep its alliance with the DMK intact. Hence, the BJP could not take the militant Hindutva stand. Wyatt argued that these constraints were not applicable to the Hindu Munnani. Hence, it could take extreme Hindutva position more freely (ibid). According to Wyatt, this arrangement worked for the DMK too. This was especially so during the period from 1999 to 2004 when the DMK was aligned with the BJP as the former could have taken legal action against the militancy of Munnani. This action would keep DMK’s secular image intact. In the same vain, the DMK was also able to keep its alliance with the Hindutva party, the BJP, intact (ibid: 156).

According to Fuller (2001: 1614-15), the Vinayaka Chaturthi festival, which was initiated by the Hindu Munnani in Chennai and other parts of the state during late 1980s, since the mid 1990s found its own dynamics amongst the Hindu public in the state. Thus, from amongst those celebrating this festival publicly and privately, some were neutral towards the Munnani and some even opposed it. Yet, this had been welcomed by the Munnani leaders as according to one of their leaders, “it as a sign of success that the festival is now so popular among all Hindus, not just Munnani
supporters.” (ibid: 1614). Fuller maintained that this was a sign of “narmalisation of Hindutva” in the the day to day life of Hindus and despite people’s denials, the Hindutva organisations could claim this increase in Hindus’ participation in the religious festival as a clear sign of increase in religious assertion of Hindus.

Though Kanchi Shankaracharya in Tamil Nadu did not appear to be siding with the Hindutva forces consistently, occasionally he did seem to align himself with the Hindutva organisations like VHP (Fuller, 2004: 129, 131). The strong backing given by the Tamil Nadu elite, both Brahmans and non Brahmans, to the Shankarachrya of Kanchi made it compulsive on nearly every post-Independence government in TN to lend its ears to Shankarachrya’s views on public policy (ibid: 127). The Kanchi Shankaracharya, who was initially a caste leader of the Smartha Brahmans sought to extend his constituency to the non Brahmans from late 1980s by initiating several social service activities for the poor and dalits (Mines and Gourishankar, 1990: 779). These activities included starting “Hindu mission hospitals”, schools, vocational training institutes for the poor and dalits, mingling with non brahmans, relaxing the rules of blessing people to include several sections from amongst non brahmans, starting institution like Jan Kalyan to initiate several social service plans for the poor and dalits (ibid: 779-80).

On the one hand, the Shankaracharyas have frequently denounced the custom of untouchability and helped the Dalits, but on the other hand, many a times they have stopped short of criticizing caste system as such (Fuller, ibid: 129). After 1990, they have supported the Hindutva cause on various occasions, which did not stop them from calling for religious tolerance “consistently” and “repeatedly” (ibid). Nevertheless, The Kanchi Shankaracharyas’ polemical glorification of Sanskrit language, sustaining Vedic studies, an active involvement in the welfare activities, establishment of a university by their monastery, and their stance against non Brahmanism and Dravidianism pitted them against the Tamil nationalist, non Brahman and Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu (ibid: 129-30). Moreover, the context of the Jayalalitha government’s Hindutva overtures during early 1990s made these activities of Kanchi Shankaracharya, active agents in the spread of Hindu revivalism in the state.
De-radicalization of the Dravidian Ideology

Several forces were responsible for this entrenchment of Hindutva political ideology and force in the state. The “ideological regression” by the Dravidian political force being one of them. Unlike Periyar led Self Respect movement, which was precursor of the DMK, the latter hegemonised the identity and problem of language over all other multiple contradictions in human life (Anandhi, 1995: 26). In other words, the issue of protection of Tamil language against the hegemonic attack of Sanskrit and Hindi was taken up by the DMK in isolation from other social contradictions existing within the web of the “multiple relations of power” (ibid: 27). This made DMK keep other aspects of power relationship like caste, class, and religion unquestioned. When the various Hindutva outfits in the state sought to mobilise various sections of the population, they applied this “atomistic approach to identities”, used by the DMK. When the organisations like VHP sought to employ various social service measures amongst the dalits and backward castes in the state, they did this in the name of “improving the standard of living”, “uplift of Harijans”, thus isolating the issue of caste from the Hindu religion (ibid: 29). Thus the single axis social contradiction propounded by the DMK was utilized by the Hindutva forces only by changing its content to replace the contradiction based on language by the contradiction based on religion.

Rajadurai and Geetha (1996) argued that DMK not only deradicalised Periyar’s ideology, but also took it very close to the revival of traditional values in the universe of Hindu religion. For Periyar, Self-Respect and non-Brahmanism was associated with building rational society and destruction of caste system (Rajadurai and Geetha, 1996: 558). In Periyar’s thought, there was an attack on all the possible patriarchal structures that enslaved women. The DMK, however, inserted chastity and feudal ideas in its political discourse. Thus, DMK made use of various images flowing from the Tamil texts of Silappathikaram, Puranaanooru and Thirukkural. From Silappathikaram, it adopted the value of chastity for women and from Puranaanooru, it took the images such as King Raja Raja, who was a strong emperor from tenth century and who had “promoted Devadasi system, encouraged Sanskritic culture, and patronized Brahmans by donating large tracts of tax free cultivable land to them.” (ibid: 568, foot note no. 6). These images and values were used by the DMK to communicate the message of Tamil nationalism to the people of the state. These
messages were used in speeches, films, and dramas of the DMK leaders. Rajadurai and Geetha noted that this image of an ideal Tamil woman as being chaste and quintessential mother started to emerge during the anti-Hindi struggle of 1938 itself and in the writings of several Tamil scholars who contributed in developing Dravidian-Tamil nationalism during 1930s and 1940s (ibid: 578-79). The DMK ideologues constructed the “Dravidian past”, which they sought to project as inevitably better than the Aryan past (ibid: 561). This, on one hand, substituted the secular concept of “self-respect” with the mediaeval term of maanam and on the other hand, glossed over the caste system and ritualism that was present in this constructed “golden age” in Tamil history (ibid).

According to Subramanian, the assertion of the lower and intermediate castes that took place in the state under the aegis of the Dravidian movement was against the dominance of the upper caste but not against Hindu nationalism as such (Subramanian, 2002: 131). Subramanian also maintained that the coming closer of the AIADMK and later of the DMK to the Hindutva ideology meant that those two Dravidian outfits had merely realised the potential that already existed in the Dravidian ideology (ibid: 132). Subramanian (1999: 107-08) argued that a part of Periyar’s discourse was analogous to the arguments of the “Hindu revivalists”. Thus, Periyar was unhappy about the caste division as it stopped Hindus from becoming an integrated community on the lines of “Semitic religions”. Since the Indian constitution provided no preferential treatment to the backward castes, Periyar rejected the various concessions to the minority religions and reservations to the SCs provided by the constitution. When the DK declared its movement to crush the images of Hindu gods, the leaders belonging to both the Hindu and Muslim faith opposed this view. At this instance, Periyar told the Muslim leaders to keep away from the controversy, as the issue was not concerned with the Muslim religion. Moreover, Periyar warned them that the workers of the DK would be making sounds of musical instruments in front of the mosques if the Muslim leaders persisted in their protest. For Ravikumar, the majoritarian approach that was inherent in Periyars’ Self Respect perspective was driving the DMK towards aligning with the BJP during late 1990s. He stated that it was only for “the non-Brahman, non-religious minority, non-dalit backward and upper castes” that Periyar worked for (Ravikumar, 2004). Subramanian argued that the DMK from 1950s onwards created a close organisational as well as
ideological proximity between the OBC caste groups and Muslims in the state. However erosion in this organisational and ideological glue during 1990s made it easy for the DMK to align with the BJP on the one hand and for the various OBC communities to gravitate towards the Hindutva organisations like BJP (Subramanian, 2002: ibid).

After joining the race for political power in the state, the DMK seemed to take its ‘self respect’ legacy of non-Brahmanism lightly. During 1971 state assembly election the issue of “Hindu religion in danger” was raised by the opposition party. In this instance though Karunanidhi and DMK were able to shape this as a caste issue rather than a religious one, at times Karunanidhi had to get defensive and reiterate his credentials as the one who is not a Brahman basher. For this he announced the names of the Brahman Collectors working in the state and also mentioned that he went along with a Brahmin finance secretary on his tour abroad (Ryerson, 1988: 180). Moreover, as Ryerson pointed out, the DMK during its early days in power, advocated and used “a long tradition of Tamil regional Hinduism” (ibid: 193). According to Ryerson this variant of Hinduism borrowed from both the “Little Tradition of Village Hinduism” as well as “the Great Tradition of All-India Hinduism” (ibid). In the former Ryerson included the local gods in the TN like Murugan and in the latter he included the All-India god-Siva, the former being considered to be the son of the latter (ibid). Also there had been a strong tradition of “a popular Saivism, consisting of sects centered on gurus, and existing alongside Brahminic Hinduism” amongst the non Brahmans of TN (ibid: 194). These Saivite non-Brahmans have been ardent supporters of Tamil nationalism and the anti-Brahman movement, in the same vain they are known for their strong proclivity towards Hindu religion (Pandian, 2000: 1806). Hence, these non Brahman Saivites, opposed the Kanchi Shankaracharya for his endorsement of Sanskrit as the only language which could be used to pray the god. Nevertheless, they supported the later when he backed the anti Conversion legislation passed by the Jayalalitha government (Geetha, ibid: 233). Moreover, the DMK government during late 1960s “revived and reinterpreted” the age old festival of Pongal in the state (Ryerson, ibid: 139-41). While doing this, DMK could not completely eradicate the elements of Sanskritic Hinduism in the festival. This legitimized the traditional Hinduism in the state. Thus, this Pongal festival became a combination of events in
which both the Tamil regional elements and the pan-Indian Hindu elements were present.

Anandhi argued that once DMK came to power in late 1960s, its social intervention started to take place from the location of the state instead of from the location of civil society (Anandhi, 1995: 28). This left the space of civil society vacant only to be filled in by the initiatives of the Hindutva organisations in the state. Thus, immediately after coming to power in the state for the first time, the DMK government issued a circular ordering various departments in the government to remove the photos of deities owing to “the secular nature of our state”. This circular wished the government departments to execute this “gradually” “…and unostentiously so as to avoid attracting any notice or creating any local incident”. According to Anandhi (ibid), this reasoning behind the order and this cautious approach betrayed the statist and accommodating stand of the DMK instead of its earlier position containing strong rejection of religion and intervention in the civil society. Incidentally, this order of the government invited lot of criticism from media—which made government to water down its implementation and to reinstate many of the god’s photos in the government offices (Barnett, 1976: 271-72).

Barnett (1976) argued that dilution in the social radicalism of the DMK was related to its decision to start contesting elections in 1957.¹⁴ The “backward castes” who were identified as the core support group of the DMK then, were simply not interested in radical social reform such as destruction of caste system and Hindu religion. This group was expecting improvement in its material conditions “within the old system” (Barnett, 1976: 99). Seeing the dalits got reservations and other benefits with the new constitution, the backward castes were feeling relative deprivation, and wanted certain concrete measures for improving their conditions. Hence, the radical social reforms, wanted only by a coterie of leaders and activists of DMK, had to be kept aside in pursuance of the desires and demands of masses (ibid: 100).

Another reason behind the dilution of social reform ideology of the DMK, according to Barnett was the limitation of Dravidianism as an ideology (ibid: 100-101). The Dravidian ideology was bereft of any logic of historical certainty of realizing the radical ideals of the party. The lack of this historical sense in the theory of this ideology made the activists and leaders insecure about the ultimate realisation of the ideals of the movement and they thought that if their own organisation went asunder
then an alternative socio-political organisation carrying the ideals of the movement might not arise for a very long period of time. This made the cadres and the leaders of the DMK insecure about their organisation and instead of trying to insert their own radical agenda into the electoral and political arena, they became content with giving their constituency whatever it wanted.

The social contradiction highlighted by the DMK during 1960s was different from its earlier construction of the same (ibid: 267). For “the radical Dravidian ideology”, the socio-political contradiction was between Brahmans and non-Brahmans. The DMK during 1960s, however, started to propagate the conflict between the Tamil speaking people also identified as Dravidians and the non-Tamil speakers or non-Dravidians. This transformation in the construction of social division by the DMK subsumed the Tamil speaking Brahmans and non-Brahmans under the identity of being Tamil. This happened when the 1967 protest led by the DMK against the imposition of Hindi was supported by a number of Brahman pupils. Underlying this transformation was a widespread impression that the upper crust of Brahmans and non-Brahmans had started aligning with each other, keeping the dalits in the lurch (ibid, 265). The socio-cultural radicalism in Dravidian movement was keeping the wealthy Brahmans and non-Brahmans apart from each other. Once this radicalism was diluted there was no need for them to remain in different camps and they aligned with each other on the basis of their common economic position (ibid).

The inter-relationship between the Hinduuta and the OBC politics in this state during the post 1990 era was governed by complex web of forces. These forces include the downfall of the Congress system at the national level and the entrenchment of the coalition government at this level. Secondly, the changes in the conditions and aspirations of the OBC communities also governed this relationship. Thirdly, the ideological mutations in the Dravidian movement, according to some scholars and the potential majoritarianism in the Dravidian movement according to others also determined this relationship. This process led to a paradoxical situation in the politics of the state. On one hand the Hinduuta political force, the BJP, was not able to establish itself as a major political contender in the state politics, neither was it able to create any sustained support amongst substantial sections of the OBC communities behind it. On the other hand, the ideology of Hinduuta seemed to have normalised in
the social and political imaginations of the OBCs in particular and the Tamil masses in general.

**Part III: Uttar Pradesh**

The state of Uttar Pradesh was the epicenter of historic decade of 1990s in politics of India. This decade signified the downfall of the Congress party as the dominant political party at the national and state levels. During this decade, it became clear that no single political party will be able to replace the Congress dominance in the national or state politics. Instead, multiple parties filled that gap. In the sense of the social base of politics, this decade marked the entry of several social groups, hitherto sidelined in the structure of political power. Thus, the social groups of OBCs and Dalits started to contest the hold of upper castes over the political power in the state. These social forces did this with the help of ideology of social justice. This decade also witnessed the forces of opposition politics contest one of the important ideological bases of the Indian state. This ideological assumption was secularism. This was contested by Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), which charged the Congress of being pseudo-secular and tried to build a political majority of Hindus based on Hindutva ideology. Initially it looked like both these political forces of plebeian revolt and Hindutva politics would act against each other. The ideological force of social justice, it appeared, would carry the mantle of the secular politics in the state. However, in reality, the politics of 1990s in the state was shaped by an intimate interaction, made up of coalescence and contestation, between these two forces of the politics of the plebeians and the politics of Hindutva.

In UP, the decision to implement the Mandal reservations led to acts of violence and self-burning in public by the students of universities, colleges, professional institutions, and high schools; also at the hands of government servants, and lumpen youth (Hasan, 1998: 150, 155). *The Arakshan Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti* and *Mandal Ayog Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti* were formed by the college-going students in the state to spearhead the protests. The members of these Samitis wanted to do away with “all reservations, including reservations for the Schedules Castes”. The protests by these organisations were supported all over the state. These agitations were most intense in some of the Universities in the state from where a significant number of candidates
had joined the central government jobs since the last few years. The pupils taking part in these protests belonged mainly to the upper castes. From amongst them a bulk came from the poorer sections of middle class. In Khurja, a leaflet propagating a message against the Mandal reservations asked upper castes to beware of those policies which would jeopardize their hold over the government services and urged them to come together in opposition of such steps. The fact that the government services in UP were nearly monopolized by the upper castes till then and lack of industrial development in the state to provide for employment avenues outside the government services for the educated youth, gave an edge to the upper caste resentment against Mandal reservations (ibid: 152).

Hindutva Politics in Uttar Pradesh

The BJP was responsible for initiating the campaign for Ram Janmabhoomi movement in the state of UP. Thus, the BJP became a political force that carried the ideology of Hinduutva in the state. However, the Congress party in UP also contributed in practicing and encouraging the Hinduutva ideology in the state politics. This is amply documented by Zoya Hasan (1998). After independence, the Hindu nationalist political force had been ineffective in the state. However, many senior Congress leaders were pro-Hindutva in their ideological leanings (Hasan, 1998: 177). This was reflected in the instructions given to the activists of RSS in small towns and villages of UP. These activists were told to convey the local Congress functionaries that many senior leaders of the Congress supported the RSS ideology (ibid). Moreover, the Congress leaders’ rejection to recognise Urdu as a second official language of the state betrayed their anti-Muslim views (ibid: 181-182). Thus, the Congress party’s leadership encouraged the view that support to the Urdu language in the state means support to the Muslim separatism.

During the early 1980s, most of the Congress members started to think that Muslims have been “appeased and pampered by the government” (ibid: 193). The national leadership of Congress, during this period publicly accepted secularism. Nevertheless, they were also making use of “symbols and strategies” of the Hindu majority to resurrect their fast declining acceptability amongst the electorate (ibid). Indira Gandhi went to the extent of explaining Hindu communalism as being “retaliation to Muslim communalism” (ibid). Though the Congress did not adopt communal stand formally, its “pragmatic communalism” and “back room scheming and alliances made on
communal lines in elections." (ibid: 195) created a context in which the BJP made use of the Hindu communal symbols at Ayodhya in a more direct way during the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this period, the Congress leaders from the local to the state level in UP actively supported the Ram Mandir movement led by the VHP (ibid: 197-98).

During the initial phase of the Mandir movement in the state, the Congress party adopted stands, which appeared to appease the Hindutva sentiments. Nevertheless, during this decade of 1980s, Congress had to face the Muslim fundamentalist socio-political force in the Shahabano episode. While dealing with this issue, the Central government ruled by the Congress gave in to the Muslim fundamentalist forces. This maligned the Congress image in the state and national politics to a great extent. In addition, this gave credence to the BJP’s propaganda that the Congress all through had been following pseudo secularism/Muslim appeasement after independence. However, the Congress’ strategy of banking on both the Hindu and Muslim communalism cost the party dearly in the subsequent period. This resulted in Congress party losing the support of both the upper caste Hindus as well as Muslims in UP.

Communal versus Secular Politics?

Mulayam Singh Yadav became Chief Minister of the state in 1989. This gave the message that the upper castes in the state could be replaced by the OBCs in the seat of political power. The upper castes and middle classes in the state found in BJP a political vehicle to express their frustration at the possibility of getting removed from the power. The issue of Hindutva seemed to be an ideological tool to stitch the contradictions amongst the Hindus projected by the lower caste political parties like SP and BSP in the state. The scanty economic development of the state and declining employment opportunities exacerbated the anger amongst the middle classes. The BJP “externalized and directed this anger against Muslims who simply became a metaphor for alienation from the secular state over reduced employment opportunities”. (Hasan, ibid: 211).

During the 1990s, the upper castes started to vote for the BJP due to the latter’s initiation of the Mandir movement. The upper castes felt secure in the BJP also because of the emergence of the OBC political force in the state in the form of Janata
Dal initially and Samajwadi Party led by Mulayam Singh Yadav since the early 1990s. The upper caste had to align with the BJP in order to contain this force. The Muslims in the state, in the meanwhile started to polarize behind a strong non-Congress and non-BJP political force in the state. This was so because the Muslims had to contain the BJP and they were unhappy with the Congress. The Muslims found this political force under Mulayam Singh’s leadership during early 1990s. The OBC core support base that Mulayam Singh Yadav got initially, helped him attract the Muslims, who saw a viable political force in Yadav, capable of countering both the BJP and the Congress in the state. Mulayam Singh’s stern stand and action against Hindutva political leaders when he was the CM of UP during Rath Yatra under L. K. Advani’s leadership also convinced Muslims in the state of his strong anti-Hindutva credentials.

OBC-Dalit Political Coalition

In the year 1990 when the Ram Mandir movement of the BJP was at its peak, Mulayam Singh Yadav came forward as the only leader and political force opposing this Hindutva onslaught. Also, Mulayam Singh seemed to carry forward the legacy of Charan Singh’s anti-Congress politics. In the process, he became politically so strong that he could present himself as one of the main political options of the secularists in the state. This imparted Mulayam Singh and his politics an image of the main opponents of the Hindutva forces in the state. Moreover, for the dalits and backward castes this Hindutva represented “Brahmanical system” of which they never considered themselves as constituting elements and the BJP was considered to be a party of the upper castes (Pai, 2002: 163). In the aftermath of the upper castes’ adverse reaction to the implementation of Mandal reservations, Kanshi Ram’s assertion that reservation for the OBCs in government service was needed, made BSP “a potential ally” of the OBCs (Jaffrelot, 2005: 409). Against this background, during the initial phase of 1990s when the Hindutva politics started to become dominant force in the state politics, an experiment of coalition between the OBC and Dalit political formations was made in the state. This meant an electoral alliance between the Samajwadi Party (SP) of Mulayam Singh and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) of Kanshi Ram was made prior to the 1993 Assembly elections in the state. This coalition proved fatal for the BJP, which was ousted from power by this SP-BSP coalition. This coalition came to power after this election with outside support of
Congress, which was reduced to a crumb of its earlier giant political self. This catapulted Mualayam Singh into the seat of CM of the state. However, this experiment could not last long. Apart from personal animosity between Mualayam Singh and Mayawati, the social contradiction between the OBC landholders and the dalit landless labourers in the countryside proved fatal for this political partnership. Not only that this political experiment crumbled but also the relationship between the OBC and dalit political forces remained one of the long-standing political confrontations in the state. So much so that one of the leading Dalit intellectuals, Chandra Bhan Prasad went on record to say that the threat of social fascism (power to the Backward Castes) was greater than the threat of communal fascism (power to the BJP) (Zerinini-Brotel, 2001: 86).

One of the main reasons for the downfall of the Dalit-OBC alliance was increase in the atrocities on dalits at the hands of the OBCs in the UP countryside as reported from various parts of the state (Misra, 1994). These atrocities on dalits were often caused by the disputes over the lands allotted to the dalits by the government many years back (ibid). In reality, these lands used to be controlled and utilised by the dominant OBC castes during all these years. The assertion by dalits for possession of these lands was one of the main reasons behind atrocities on them. In addition, the dalits, working as labourers on the lands owned by the members of backward castes, were facing violence at the hands of their employers.

The Commission for SCs and STs reported that in 1989 the atrocities against the dalits in the state were 1,067, which shot up to 14,966 in 1995 (Jaffrelot, ibid: 411). The Times of India quoted the secret service which reported that half of the 54 recorded incidents of atrocities against dalits were committed by the OBCs (ibid: 412). Out of those cases against the OBCs, 6 were allegedly committed by the Yadavs. According to Kanshi Ram, the increasing amount of atrocities against dalits was a major cause behind parting of ways between the SP and BSP. He further stated that Mulayam Singh Yadav government “could not or did not want to do anything” to curtail those incidents of atrocities on dalits (ibid). Establishing Dr. Ambedkar’s statue in the countryside was another major source of symbolic assertion on the part of dalits in the state. In nearly 120 days, the clashes on the issue of establishment of Ambedkar’s sculptures in public caused 21 injuries and deaths amongst dalits (ibid).
Zoya Hasan has analyzed share of various castes and communities in the state in ownership of land as reflected in the Zamindari rights before independence and in ownership rights after independence (1989: 197, Table A.2). Before independence, the upper caste groups of Brahman, Thakurs; Baniya, Kayastha, Khatri and Muslims were nearly monopolizing the zamindari rights in land. After independence, this picture changed dramatically. In that, in comparison to their procession of zamindari rights during pre-independence era, the Brahmans’ share in ownership of land after independence grew marginally, while the share of Thakurs, Baniyas, Kayasthas, Khartis and Muslims declined substantially. The major gainers in this process seem to be the castes coming under the administrative category of the OBC. Thus before independence, the share of “ahirs, kurmis, lodhs and gujars” in the procession of “zamindari rights” was 6 percent and the share of the “Other Backward Castes” in the same was 2 percent. The share of these two groups in the “ownership of land” shot up to 20% and 18% respectively after independence. The share of SCs in the “pre-Independence zamindari rights” was 1% and went up to 9% in ownership of land after independence.

Further, a study of selling and buying of land in UP from 1952-53 to 1982-83 showed that amongst all the social groups in the state the backward castes bought highest proportion of land (Shankar, 1990: 125 Table 9.8). Thus, the backward castes bought nearly 42% of the total land bought in the state. The Hindu upper castes came next in the list of the buyers of land but were far behind the backward castes. The upper castes shared 30.54% of the land bought in the state. The SCs bought only 8.92% of the total land bought in the state. Amongst the sellers of the land, Hindu upper castes topped the list by contributing to nearly 49% of the land sold in the state. The Backward castes contributed 26.25% and the SCs 7.31% of the land sold during this period. Thus, the foregoing analysis suggests that after independence, the OBC communities share in ownership of land increased significantly. This, coupled with land relations between the OBC landowners and dalit workers, increased in the assertion by dalits made conflict between OBCs and dalis almost inevitable.

Underlying the tension between the SP and BSP was also the conflict between the parties over their common social base. Thus, both the parties took a stance of encouraging Urdu language in education for enticing Muslim community (Pai, ibid, 166). When Rashid Masud, a senior leader in BSP resigned due to the dictatorial ways
of BSP leadership, the SP publicly backed Masud, who in turn admired the policy of the SP regarding minority communities. This further accentuated tensions between the alliance partners. The increasing political muscle of SP at the grassroots level also became a bone of contention between the SP and BSP. Thus, out of fifty district local self government presidents, for whom elections were held, the SP bagged the posts at 30 places, Congress at five places and BSP at only one district (Jaffrelot, ibid: 413). In order to give stability to his own government, Mulayam Singh Yadav attempted to break several parties, including BSP by making a number of MLAs belonging to those parties to join the SP (Pai, ibid: 166-67). In fact, very serious efforts by Yadav to divide the BSP in order to make his government autonomous of the latter’s support proved to be final straw and the BSP withdrew its support from the government (Bose, 2008: 94).

The available evidence suggests that the impression that SP-BSP alliance polarized dalits, OBCs and Muslims in its favors was valid to a limited extent. Thus, Yogendra Yadav, on the basis of India Today-MARG exit poll maintains that while the SP-BSP alliance got substantial share of votes of the dalits and OBCs, the share of BJP and the Congress in the votes of these two social groups was not negligible (Yadav, 1993: 2773). Thus, while the 33% of OBCs voted for the SP-BSP alliance, 28% of them voted for the BJP. While the share of SP-BSP was 36% in the dalit vote, 22% of dalits voted for the Congress. The polarization of Muslim and upper caste votes was comparatively higher. Thus, 55% of the Muslim voters voted for the alliance, the upper caste vote for the BJP was as high as 63%. However, in comparison to the voting of castes and communities in the previous elections, this election showed “a high degree of polarisation” (ibid).

During 1990s, consolidation of OBC and dalit politics in UP compelled the upper castes here to vote for the BJP. However, the upper caste vote was not enough for the BJP to get power in the state on its own. BJP’s aim of getting power in the state was made even more difficult by the lower caste parties’ in UP getting the votes of substantial section of the lower castes. Nevertheless, the holes in the lower caste coalitions, especially in the OBC coalition enabled the BJP to mobilise and get votes of a section amongst the OBCs.

The ideological and organisational roots of OBC mobilisation done by the BJP in UP goes back to the decade of 1960s. During this decade, Deen Dayal Upadhyay rose to
become a key ideologue of the Jan Sangh. Upadhyay propounded the ideology of Ekatma Manavvad and encouraged many OBCs in the party to rise to the middle level leadership in the state (Dubey, 2007: 89).

According to Dubey, through his ideology of Ekatma Manavvad, Upadhyay

“... must have wanted to purge universality from the idea of equality and link it with fairness and impartiality, so that this main ingredient of modern thinking could be made to fit in with his broad schema of modernizing the varna system.” (ibid: 90).

Dubey further maintains that Upadhyay’s contention that the varna system must have to be re-thought under the new situation of modernity in India, “can be seen as a significant departure from the legacy of Golwalkar” (ibid). Thus, in 1967 Samyukta Vidhyak Dal (SVD) government, the number of MLAs belonging to the Jan Sangha were largest. Moreover, in this assembly, the Jan Sangha sent equal numbers of backward caste and Brahman MLAs; and during this time many backward caste leaders “began commanding respect in the organization.” of the party (ibid: 91). The Sanskritising tendencies in the organisation of the various OBC castes also came in handy for the hindutva forces in the state to woo the OBC communities. However, this trend of Sanskritisation got modified later on in the case of Yadavs, who started to join forces with the Muslims at the local and state level politics. Of course, this “modification” did not mean eradication of Sanskritisation amongst the Yadavs, but only that the issues like cow protection were downplayed at the local level to facilitate Yadav-Muslim social coalition (Michelutti, 2008: 80).

**BJP’s Social Engineering**

According to 1931 census, (Zerinini, 2009: 32) the last to be conducted on caste basis, the upper castes comprised 20.5%, the OBCs and the SCs formed 41.7% and 21% respectively and the Muslims constituted 15% of the state’s population. From amongst those categories, the Brahmans and Rajputs belonging to the upper castes contributed 9.2% and 7.2% of the state’s population respectively. Within the OBCs the Yadavs, Kurmis and Lodhis shared 8.7%, 3.5%, and 2.2% of the population of the state respectively. The Chamar, who are an important segment amongst the SCs constituted for 12.7% population of the state. After independence, until 1990s the OBCs in UP were generally allying themselves with the non-Congress political
forces. These political forces were Socialists and Independent candidates until 1967 and Charan Singh’s political formations thereafter. After 1990s, the mantle of carrying the politics of OBCs fell on Mulayam Singh Yadav, who carried forward the legacy of Charan Singh and Socialist politics in the state. However, during the 1990s, the OBCs were not voting only for Mulayam Singh’s SP. The OBCs in the state, during this time started to vote for the BJP in large numbers. This became possible due to three reasons. One, the non-Yadav OBC castes were discontented against what they saw as the dominance of Yadavs in the power structure of the SP in the state. Hence, the economically empowered OBC castes like Kurmis and Lodhs started to look for an alternative political space to the SP. This coincided with the BJP giving many Lodhs and Kurmis important positions in its party and government structure. And this became the second factor why BJP seemed to be an attractive political option for some of the OBC communities. Thirdly, the “Ram bhakti” and “cult of Ram”, which were part of a popular religious culture in the eastern and central parts of UP, were also popular amongst the lower castes of Koeris, Kurmis and Goallas in these parts of the state (Hasan, 1998: 220). This must have attracted a number of OBC castes towards aspects of religious symbolism involved in the Ramjanmabhoomi movement of BJP.

The upper caste leadership of the BJP assumed that giving prominence to Kalyan Singh in the party would get the backward caste vote for the party without attempting “backwardization of BJP politics” (Dubey, ibid: 93). Kalyan Singh got the votes of his own caste-Lodhi Rajput for the party. In addition to this, Kalyan Singh was able to make a segment of non-Yadav Most Backward Castes (MBCs) to vote for the BJP. Those sections of the MBCs saw in Kalyan Singh a strong counterweight to the leadership of Mulayam Singh Yadav, who was perceived to be making Yadavs dominant under the guise of OBC political empowerment (Gupta, 2007: 115). That there was credence to this perception is evident from the political patronage being distributed during Mulayam Singh Yadav’s tenure as CM of the state. Jaffrelot reports that during Yadav’s tenure between 1993 and 1995, 720 out of 900 teachers and 1223 of 3151 police personnel appointed by this government were from the Yadav caste group (Jaffrelot, 2000a: 103). This means that 80% of teachers and nearly 39% of police personnel appointed belonged to the Yadav caste group.

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In the 1996 assembly contests, Kalyan Singh insisted that the BJP allot its nominations to the OBCs in large numbers. This resulted in the party’s decision to distribute 190 tickets to the OBCs out of a total 420 (Jaffrelot, 2005: 486). However, this was opposed by the RSS and the upper caste faction in the party on one hand, and on the other, resulted in significant erosion in the upper caste votes to the party (ibid). Kalyan Singh seemed to have asserted his OBC politics more strongly during second half of 1990s. This becomes clear from a comparison between the relative share of the OBCs in his 1991 government and 1999 government. In his 1991 government, 21.28% of ministerships belonged to OBCs, while their share in ministries shot up to 31.76% in 1999 (ibid: 489-Table no 13.12). The corresponding share of the upper caste ministers in the same ministries recorded a decline of a little more than 8 percentage points. Thus the upper castes contributed for 57.45% and 49.21% of ministers in 1991 and 1999 respectively (ibid). In 1991, amongst the OBC ministers only 50% were enjoying cabinet or state minister rank. In his 1999 government on the other hand “most of the” OBC ministers were enjoying the same rank. In contrast to the above picture, in the BJP ministry led by Rajnath Singh in 2001, out of the total ministers, upper castes contributed to 50% of share, the OBCs shared 21% of them and SCs bagged 12% of those posts (ibid: 490). Moreover, Kalyan Singh presented one million rupees towards conserving the remembrance of Awanti Bai, a “Lodhi queen” who died a martyr fighting against the British during 1857 revolt (ibid: 485).

However, soon the upper caste BJP leadership in the state started to see Kalyan Singh as the OBC “patron” in the state politics (Gupta, ibid). This happened as Kalyan Singh was started to be seen as distributing government patronage to his Lodhi Rajput caste fellows (ibid: 116). This gave rise to periodic dissent against Kalyan Singh by the upper caste leaders in BJP (ibid). This upper caste resentment against Kalyan Singh seemed to have reached a peak when in May 1999, 36 BJP MLAs resigned to remove Kalyan Singh from Chief Ministership. Except for two, all these dissenters were upper caste MLAs. Gauging that this opposition was in the offing, Kalyan Singh organised a public meeting of the OBCs and requested them to elect the backward caste candidates without considering the difference in party to which these candidates may belong (ibid: 116-17). Eventually Kalyan Singh went out of the BJP to establish his own political outfit. However, this harmed prospects of both the BJP and Kalyan Singh in the state. This was evident by the fall in the seats secured by the party.
between 1996 and 2002 Assembly elections from 174 to 88. Though Kalyan Singh’s own party did not perform very well, it was highly instrumental in deteriorating electoral fortunes of the BJP (ibid: 117). Another case in point was Sakshi Maharaj, a Lodhi Rajput by caste, whose political journey started off as VHP activist during the Ram Janmabhoomi movement (ibid: 124). He became member of the Lok Sabha on BJP’s nomination from Farukhabad constituency in 1991, 1996 and 1998. When he was thought to be involved in killing of a Brahman MLA from Farukhabad, he had a very tough time in winning 1998 Lok Sabha elections mainly due to the “upper castes ganging up against him” (ibid). In 1999 Lok Sabha elections Sakshi Maharaj was denied ticket by BJP as the latter wanted to appease the upper castes—this made Sakshi Maharaj project his OBC card and he campaigned for the SP (ibid). His campaign was based on three things—the BJP is a party against the OBCs, Kalyan Singh’s political future was at stake and Mulayam Singh was the only leader of the “non-upper castes” in UP (ibid). This example, along with Kalyan Singh’s shows how the social engineering agenda of the BJP floundered on its upper caste leadership and support base. The social contradictions between the upper castes and OBC elite in UP often came to the fore to haunt the electoral fortunes of BJP here. This denouement of the party was captured in a statement made by Uma Bharati who was an important OBC leader of the party in Madhya Pradesh. She went on record to say, “Our image has become one of a Brahminical party. Though Kalyan Singh, Vinay Katiyar and I belong to the the backward castes, we appear like Brahmins in the garb of backwards. The shilanyas for the Ram temple was performed by a Harijan, but in the public mind our Hindutva became identified with Brahminism.” (Hasan, ibid: 221).

**BJP’s Waning Political Following**

In October 2000, BJP’s Chief Minister Rajnath Singh tried to realign the Most Backward Castes (MBCs) to the party by initiating a policy that sought to divide the OBC and SC reservations into advanced and backward sections among each of the category. The ploy was to try to get votes of the less privileged sections amongst the SCs and OBCs by specifically allotting them some seats in reservations. However, this strategy did not deliver the goods for the BJP. Instead, the Brahmins started to move away from the party in opposition to appointing Rajnath Singh, belonging to Thakur caste, as CM of the state (Gupta, ibid: 117).
After 1990, various political parties in UP tried to evolve a social coalition consisting of either more than one community or of multi-castes coming under the category such as dalit and OBCs. Thus, the social coalition cobbled by the SP, BJP and BSP consisted of the Yadavs and Muslims; the upper caste and non Yadav OBCs; and various dalit castes respectively. Nevertheless, from the late 1990s onwards, the process of various small parties mobilizing single caste OBCs seemed to have taken place in the state. A two-way perception seemed to be responsible for formation of and modest success in some pockets for single caste parties in the state (SG, 1999: 2913). There was a feeling amongst the people that unless and until they have got electoral representatives belonging to their own social group they stand no chance of solving their basic socio-economic problems in day to day life. On the other hand, there was a feeling that the parties representing a larger social group such as OBC or Hindu ultimately become tools in the hands of one particular caste group. This perception gave rise to a need of self-assertion on the part of castes such as Kurmis and Binds who found themselves overpowered by Yadavs in SP and Brahmans in BJP. At least two single caste parties were observed to be enhancing their electoral strength in some constituencies during late 1990s (ibid: 2912). Thus, Apna Dal, a party of Kurmis increased its vote share substantially in 1998 elections compared to 1996 in five Lok Sabha constituencies, where it stood fourth putting Congress party behind it. Also in 1998 Lok Sabha elections, the Apna Dal was said to have “picked up votes” in 37 constituencies throughout the state apart from the above five. Pragatisheel Manav Samaj Party, representing Binds, an MBC community, reportedly had “a presence” in nearly seven Lok Sabha constituencies in the state. This phenomenon hit BJP hardest as it ensured that the non Yadav OBCs, whom BJP wanted to stitch with the upper castes, would vote these single caste parties along with the BJP.

The SP and BSP realized by late 1990s that the votes of the Yadavs-Muslims and dalits would not enable them to secure state power on their own. After making many experiments of alliances, which failed, these parties decided to go for securing the votes of the upper castes. The fact that the lower caste parties of the yore in the state started to woo the various upper castes also harmed the prospects of BJP in the state. Thus, the SP tried to secure the votes of the Rajputs and Banias (Dubey, ibid: 101-102). And the BSP tried to include the Brahmans in its voters by using strategies such
as Bhaichara commitees of the Brahmans and dalits in various parts of the state and replacing its slogan of 'Bahujan Samaj' with the 'Sarvajan Samaj'. These parties were able to secure the votes of these upper castes due mainly to the latter's disillusionment with the BJP where they had to struggle with the OBC castes for power. In addition, these lower caste parties had their basic votes of some caste/ communities, which were transferable to the candidates of any caste belonging to these parties. This made the upper castes feel secure about getting power through these parties rather than through BJP.

Since the late 1990s, the BJP started to lose votes of many social sections. Thus, the BJP seemed to have lost more than 10 percentage points votes of the non Yadav OBCs during 1996 to 2004 Lok Sabha elections. In 1996 Lok Sabha elections, 41.7% of the non Yadav OBCs voted for the BJP (Chandra-Parmar, 1997: 216 Table 3). This figure came down to 30.2% during 2004 Lok Sabha elections (Verma, 2004a: 5464 Table 4). The non-Yadav vote for the BJP was even less in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections—it was 25% (ibid). BJP seemed to have regained some lost ground from 1999 to 2004. Nevertheless, amongst all the main political parties in UP during this period, the BJP remained the party taking highest proportion of votes from the non Yadav OBCs in all those elections. BJP also seemed to have lost upper caste votes during the same period. Thus, 83.7% of the upper castes voted for the BJP during the 1996 Lok Sabha elections (Chandra-Parmar, ibid). This figure came down to 74% during 2004 Lok Sabha elections (Verma, ibid). This means BJP has lost nearly 10% of the upper caste votes from 1996 to 2004. During 1999 Lok Sabha elections the upper caste vote for the BJP slumped down even more—it was 68% (ibid). However, during this period again, the BJP seems to be highest vote catcher from the upper castes.

BJP in UP used various strategies to woo the lower castes. One of the main reasons for this was that it wanted to create a political Hindu majority. BJP failed in this due to two reasons. First, the underlying social conflicts between the upper castes and lower castes, especially OBCs in the state came to the fore when it came to decide the leadership of the party or distributing political patronage. Second, the social fragmentation in the UP reflected in its politics so very completely that getting all Hindus together seemed impossible. This meant that the lower caste parties not only continued to exist but also continued to get stronger during 1990s.
Notes

1. The other factors were the role of V. R. Shinde’s ideology and leadership; and
   the impact of compromise between Jedhe and Gadgil, and the Gandhian mass
   movement—these have been discussed by us in the chapter that deals with the
   Historical Background of OBC Politics in this thesis.

2. For a detailed analysis of this process see Rosenthal (1982) and Lele (1982a).

3. Information on the OBC Mahasangha has been derived from the personal
   interview of Wadgaonkar Pralhad, National President OBC Mahasangha
   (dated 1-6-2010).

4. All the description regarding Samata Parishad, unless mentioned otherwise,
   has been extracted from www.chhaganbhujbal.org

5. Sharad Pawar led Congress government in 1993 implemented Mandal
   reservations in the state. However, this was done only after the Mandal wave
   had already started to shake the politics of the country.

6. Both the Mali and the Vanjari caste groups have been important constituents
   of the OBC castes in Maharashtra. Moreover, these castes have played a
   significant role in OBC politics in the state during the post-Mandal period.

7. At least the Vanjaris, one of the major OBC castes in Marathwada, seem to
   follow Varkari cult in large numbers (Gholve, 2008.).

8. This was made clear to us by Bhandari Madhav, the then state spokesperson of
   the party. According to Bhandari, the party, after 1980, recognized that it
   cannot hope to get the votes from any substantial section of Marathas, dalits
   and Muslims in the state, given the political preponderance of Marathas in the
   Congress and ideological antagonism of the rest of the two communities with
   the BJP. Hence, it was thought to be inevitable for the party to allure the
   OBCs to counter the Congress’ political power in the state. It was said to be a
   conscious decision by the party in the state to project the OBC leaders in the
   party at the state level and to project them as the leaders belonging to OBC
   castes rather than belonging to Hindu religion as such. (Interview with
   Bhandari Madhav dated 27-2-2010).
9. The analysis in this section is based on the information and arguments in Guru (1993) and Pawar (2007).

10. Based on the opinion expressed by an OBC leader of the BMS, Upare Hanumantrao in Beed, Marathwada. Upare further noted that these small OBC castes were, curiously enough, given many influential positions in the politics of the state by none other than, the Shiv Sena (Interview with Upare Hanmant, dated 14-6-2010).

11. The electoral and political process behind emergence of single caste parties in the state has been analysed by us in the chapter on Party System in this dissertation.

12. This implied the electoral alliance between Congress (I) and the AIADMK in TN, according to which the former got to contest 2/3 of the seats for the lok sabha elections and the rest of the seats would go to the AIADMK. The proportion used to get inverse between the two parties for the state assembly elections. Alliance between the two parties was roughly based on this arrangement in 1977, 1984, 1989 and 1991 elections (Subramanian, 2003: 76).


14. The ideological nature of this shift is discussed in the chapter on Party System in this dissertation.

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