CHAPTER – VI

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS BEFORE BSP IN PUNJAB

Today’s political scene in India cannot be understood without taking into consideration the phenomenon of the upsurge of Dalit-OBC self consciousness. With the growth of democratic institutions and the politics of numbers in contemporary India, the Dalits began to assume some importance in national politics. The Dalit leaders in different political parties, in order to take advantage of the situation and bring about their liberation, began to mobilize forces.

In the recent years caste has emerged as a critical factor of the Indian politics and it has been reinforced through elections in the practice of Indian democracy. Caste and caste affiliations have provided a significant base for political participation, leadership and political awareness to the citizens of democracy. Dalit politics can be understood within this broader framework. Political means have played the role of catalyst in the emergence of Dalit consciousness in the last few decades. Due to the role of elections as an impetus for political participation of the Dalits in Indian democracy, Dalit politics has travelled a long way from the patron-client relationship of the Dalits with upper caste.
parties towards an independent Dalit assertion through their own caste parties.\textsuperscript{201}

The major development in 1980s that culminated into the full-fledged Dalit assertion in 1990s was the formation of the BSP under the leadership of Kanshi Ram regarded as “the only successful player in the history of Dalit politics” by Dube. The BSP played power politics at the formal level, and it was and has remained the party of Dalits with the objective of capturing formal power at the state and national levels. The BSP in contrast to the Republican Party of India (RPI), brought a paradigmatic shift in the orientation of Dalit assertion. Whereas the former approached the issue in terms of social equality for the Dalits, the latter has been playing the game of power similar to that of other political parties.\textsuperscript{202} The steady decline of the Congress, which earlier used to more or less represent the majority of the SCs all over the country, created a political vacuum. This space has not been occupied by the BJP as it is dominated by the twice-born castes.\textsuperscript{203}

The BSP under the leadership of Kanshi Ram brought the most significant change in the psyche of Dalit masses by providing an umbrella identity, futuristic vision, myths, social ideology and a political strategy to become one of the most significant players in the game of power politics in contemporary
India. The BSP from its very initiation as a political party symbolized the political aspirations of the downtrodden and oppressed masses in India. The name of Kanshi Ram’s first political party, Dalit Shoshit Samaj Shangarsh Samiti (DS–4), had a broader philosophical appeal in the fight for the rights of oppressed and thus reflected the unwavering influence of Dalit social movement on him.204

The BSP’s first step in politics was establishment of an "independent Dalit political leadership" instead of a “dependent Dalit political leadership”. The latter was present in the political parties that were led and dominated by the so-called upper castes and was a product of the politics of patronage-the 'Ma-baap' culture. Against this Kanshi Ram produced an 'independent Dalit political leadership' in a party that was led and dominated by the Dalits with an independent agenda.205

Dalit politics, which revolved around the Congress until the mid-1980s took a new shape under the leadership of Kanshi Ram and Mayawati. Aware of the fact that the Dalits alone could not bring it to power, the BSP has been making conscious attempts to expand its sphere of influence by winning over upper castes.206

However as far as the BSP’s performance in Punjab is concerned, the party has not been able to use the Dalit card to
get electoral dividends. Except winning Assembly seats in Punjab Vidhan Sabha in 1992 the Bahujan Samaj Party has not been able to repeat the performance. Its vote share has been declining ever since. BSP’s success story in UP could not be replicated in Punjab because of the specific social and cultural difference in the two states. It will not be out of place to first give a brief account of BSP’s electoral strategy and tactics in UP before we focus on its problems in Punjab.

BSP had started mobilizing the upper castes in 1998-99 and in the 1999 parliamentary elections Kanshi Ram distributed approximately 12 per cent of tickets to the 'Savarnas' (People from upper castes) in UP. In the 2002 Assembly elections of UP again BSP gave 38 tickets to Brahmins of whom only seven won and the party got 4.7 per cent votes of 'Sarvajans'. But since the beginning of 2005 Mayawati started mobilizing 'Brahmins, Khatriyas, (khatries), Vaishyas and Kayasthas vigorously'. ‘Brahmin Jodo Samelans’ were organized across the state with a specific membership drive, which culminated in the 'Brahmin Maha Rally' on June 9, 2005, in Lucknow. This was a tactical move because it changed the preconceived notions of Brahmins about the BSP. To convince them further Mayawati groomed an upper caste leadership in her party and changed the party’s slogan from “Jiski Jitni Sankhya Bhari, Uski Utni Bhagedari’
(representation of each (caste) according to its population) to “Jiski Jitni Tyari, Uski Utni Bhagedari” (representation of each (castes) on the basis of their ideological preparedness to accept BSP’s ideology).207

The year 2007 will be contemplated in the history of Dalits as one of the most significant year as it witnessed a new rise of Dalit assertion in the arena of politics and religion. Many experts of democracy believe that if Indian political democracy can be proud of one thing it should be that a Dalit women has become Chief Minister of India’s most populated state, Uttar Pradesh, not once but four times. Mayawati’s ascendance to the post of chief Minister in 2007 is claimed by supporters of BSP as greater historical event because she has occupied office on her party’s own strength without outside support or in coalition. They assert that the Bahujan Samaj party’s victory in UP is also historical because for the first time in modern Indian politics a political party led and dominated by Dalits has come to power on its own.208

The rise of the BSP and Mayawati to power in Uttar Pradesh has been remarkable. There has been a corresponding rise in the political consciousness of Dalits.209 Though it has not resulted in any perceptible change in the oppressive caste system. The atrocities on Dalits, particularly Dalit women are still seen in UP.
A popular generalization has been that the 2007 election win for Bahujan Samaj Party in UP is a success of its social engineering project – a euphemism for an alliance between the Dalits and the upper castes. Mayawati's bold gambit of transforming the BSP from the party of Dalits to the 'Sarvajan Samaj or Samta Muluk Samaj' is cited as the biggest story of the year of 2007 state assembly elections. The BSP, once the hater of all Suvarna Castes, opened its doors and welcomed not only Brahmins, but also Thakurs, Rajputs and Banias.

The formula of ‘social engineering’ has been successful and is widely acclaimed as it gave the BSP majority in the Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh to form the full fledged BSP government.

This election was especially remarkable as it was the first election for the BSP after the death of party founder Kanshi Ram, who was instrumental in bringing the party to power in alliance with the Smajwadi party in 1993.

What is noteworthy is that Mayawati began her career, like the SP and the BJP, by encouraging sectarianism, pitting the Dalits against the upper castes. Her slogan at the time was “Tilak, Taraju, aur Talwar inko maro Jute Char” (beat with shoes the Brahmins, Banias and Thakurs). But today, her rallying cry in the election was “Hathi Nahi Ganesh Hai, Brahma Vishnu...”
Mahesh Hai” (It is not an elephant the BSP’s election symbol – but the elephant headed Hindu God Ganesh) and another slogan was “Brahmin Sankh Bajayega, Hathi Chalta Jayega” (The Brahmins will blow the conch shell as the elephant marches on). This shows how politically strategic tactics were used by Mayawati as the party supremo to garner support from the some upper caste people whom earlier the party had been loathing. She had realized that in the competitive Parliamentary democracy it was not viable to capture political power with the help of a limited caste group and the experiment was successful. During this election the BSP had fielded more than 100- odd upper caste candidates as shown in Table:

Table 6.1

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<th>Castes</th>
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<td>Brahmins and forward castes</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dalits</td>
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<td>62</td>
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<td>Muslims</td>
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<td>OBC's</td>
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The above Table shows that BSP fielded as many as 139 upper caste candidates including Brahmins. Out of 139, fifty one won the election. 93 Dalit candidates of the BSP were in the election fray and 62 candidates won their seats. BSP had given 61 tickets to the Muslims, 50 to the Thakurs and 110 to the OBC's out of which 24, 18 and 51 candidates won the elections respectively.

Mayawati’s victory in UP is said to be the beginning of the end for the politics that the BJP has practiced over the last two decades i.e. of communalizing and consolidating Hindu votes. In turn Mayawati found a way of factoring in the non sectarian aspirations of the Hindus, while uniting various caste groups and religious communities under a benign Dalit Bahujan rubric.²¹³

However this experiment of social engineering has its problems also. The political power seizure by BSP introduced the party in public with a new political ideology different from the consistent idea of 'social engineering' between the deprived sections of the country. In its recent 'avatar' the BSP is riding the chariot of power with the help of a community, which is notoriously condemned in history by the ideologues and thinkers of Bahujans for its shrewdness, greed of power and criminal valorization of their social status. Keeping such a partner in
power can compel the BSP to dilute the vital issues of social justice, law and order and secularism. Secondly, there is a threat that due to its fixation on power, the BSP will forget the ethical idea of empowering the "Bahujans". In the thirst of capturing "Sarvajan" there is a possibility of compromise in delivering social justice to the Bahujan masses. Such openness to the non Bahujans can also undermine the moral guidelines of the movements and offer an opportunity to the Manuwadis to gradually consolidate their domination under the garb of Sarvajan.214

No doubt, her selection of Brahmin and Muslim candidates in large numbers helped the BSP win large number of assembly seats in the 2007 UP assembly elections but to interpret it as a novel political tool would be a mistake as it was her opportunistic approach rather than her conviction in 'social engineering'.215

Brahmins joined the BSP when Mayawati offered them handsome number of tickets. It is also important to understand that coming along with Mayawati was the only option for them as Hinutava agenda was becoming too futile for everyone. Brahmins and other upper castes have joined BSP to save their interest and did not leave their caste philosophy of Hindutva.216
Brahmins came to the BSP once the party crossed a threshold with its traditional votes and they were convinced that the BSP could give them a sure victory. Moreover, the new elite and its younger generation have been stagnating in the Congress and BJP, as the established leadership has not given them any space for their development. Some experts are of the opinion that the Brahmins will stay with the BSP as long as the party has power and they themselves do not have space for development in other parties. It is to be noted that, the Dalit-Brahmin alliance in UP is not part of any social engineering process but a pure political adjustment.\textsuperscript{217}

After reviewing BSP’s success strategy in UP it is important to analyse the problems and prospects of BSP in Punjab.

As far as the BSP’S support-base in Punjab is concerned it is already stated that it is limited to only some areas of Doaba region and it has not been able to spread it to other areas. Even it has not been able to get rid of the Dalit tag. The BSP led activities began in Punjab in great earnest in late 1980’s and culminated in its participation in elections.

The Party’s base in the border state, which also happens to be the home turf of BSP founder Kanshi Ram, has gradually shrunk since 1992, reducing it to a fringe player in the state politics. The party’s best electoral performance was in the 1992
assembly elections in which it won nine seats - though it was helped to a large extent by the Akali boycott of the polls.

It did well in the 1996 parliamentary polls too, when it forged an alliance with SAD to win three seats – then BSP supremo Kanshi Ram from Hoshiarpur, Harbhajan Lakha from Phillaur, and Mohan Singh Phalianwala from Ferozepur. The BSP’s downfall began in the 1998 Lok Sabha Polls, when its alliance with the Congress also could not help it in retaining any of its three seats.218 A big factor in its rout to some extent was the prevailing factionalism in the party. But when in 2004, all Dalit leaders in Punjab returned to the BSP fold on Mayawati’s call, the party could not manage even a single seat in the parliamentary polls in the state. In fact, many candidates quit the battle midway as they realized their poor standing. The BSP candidates polled merely 7.5 percent of the total votes.219

The 2007 Assembly polls were worse. Not only did it draw a blank, its vote share slumped to 3.5 percent.

In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections Bahujan Samaj Party worked hard to become a third force in the Punjab state and even aggressively projected Mayawati as a prime ministerial candidate. But the voters in Punjab brought this to naught. With the party even failing to muster votes equal to the 2004 parliamentary elections, its candidates lost security deposits on all the 13 seats.220
This time all its nominees got around 6.80 lakh votes, while in 2004 the party got 7.84 lakh votes from all the 13 seats in the state. Even in the party’s strong hold, Doaba the vote share was reduced by around 70,000 as it had got over 3.14 lakh votes in three constituencies of Doaba while in 2004 these were over 3.83 lakh votes. Notwithstanding, the claims of the party to garner strength through Social Engineering, its vote share decreased by over 2 percent.

It clearly appears that not only its formula of Social Engineering fell flat but apparently even a part of the Dalit vote bank has also started drifting away. It was being expected that making state unit chief Avtar Singh Karimpuri, a Rajya Sabha member, might help the party to improve its performance but it proved otherwise. However, on the personal front Karimpuri survived on his party post despite dismal performance of the party in all the three elections since 2004.\textsuperscript{221}

It may be mentioned here that in its attempt of Social Engineering the party gave tickets to scheduled caste candidates only from the four reserved seats. Where other parties also had to go by the constitutional obligation. At other nine seats there were other candidates. The percentage of fielding the candidates from its old cadres was further low. Only one candidate from Hoshiarpur, Dr Sukhwinder Kumar Sukhi, could be termed an old guard in the Dalit movement.\textsuperscript{222}
In the last, Punjab Assembly elections of 2007 BSP could not win even a single seat but in UP, BSP became the ruling party by the social engineering formula. This formula worked in UP because Dalits were already consolidated as a political force and hence best placed to cash in on an anti-incumbent sentiment. The same conditions did not exist in Punjab.223

Punjab has the distinction of being home to the largest proportion of scheduled caste population in the country approximately 30 percent. Despite this strong proportion in the Punjab population and the fact that they are the best off across India, the Dalits of Punjab have still been unable to assert themselves on the political scene in contrast to Dalits in Uttar Pradesh through the BSP.224 The mobilization of the Dalits of Punjab began on the question of a distinct religious identity. Interestingly, Ambedkar’s struggle guided him to the rejection of Hinduism when he led his followers to conversion to Buddhism; the struggle of the Dalits began and ended on the issue of religious identity. The Punjabi Dalits, who fought for a distinct religious identity, were able to achieve their goal and were recorded as Ad-Dharmis in 1931 Census. As stated earlier the Ad-Dharam movement was launched by Mangoo Ram during the 1920s.225
One important point of difference between the social set up in UP and Punjab is that caste has been a weak factor in Punjab, because Punjab has been known for its liberal religious practices in relation to caste. Both Sikhism and the Arya Samaj liberated the Dalits from the stringent purity pollution based behavioral patterns. Further the political content of the BSP has been unable to capture the regional, cultural and economic specificity of Punjab. The purity pollution and Manuwad that are the BSP’s main ideological planks do not find expression in Punjab in view of the role of the Arya Samaj and the Sikhism.226

Sikhism is a religion without caste. Not only were the Sikh Gurus “beyond all doubt vigorous and practical denouncers of caste”, Sikh reformers in the late 19th century also used its anti-caste message to establish Sikhism’s distinctiveness from Hinduism. Contemporary Sikh scholars also underline this point very sharply. The following passage provides a good summary of the Sikh claim on caste:

-------Guru Nanak championed the cause of an egalitarian society as against the hierarchical structure of the Hindu community. He severally denounced the caste oppression ------- ----identifying himself with the lowliest of the lowly, he addressed to the oppressed strata of the society----- To make an actual beginning in this direction he initiated the egalitarian practices
of Sangat (religious congregation), Langer (free community kitchen) and Pangat (un-stratified arrangement of sitting).\textsuperscript{227}

Politics in Punjab operates within the given social boundaries. The composite religio-cultural tradition lends a distinct flavour to the otherwise divisive politics. Caste hierarchy is pervasive in society, but in electoral politics, it could not emerge as an exclusive factor for vote catching machines, even the lower rung in caste hierarchy, the Dalits do not constitute a captive vote bank.\textsuperscript{228}

Thus the Dalit card played by the BSP elsewhere has not worked in Punjab even Kanshi Ram had realized long back. He launched a massive political and social campaign in the state. He had not been holding only political rallies but also had asked his party cadres to wage a war against casteism and fight for the rights of contractual farm labourers called 'Siri' in local parlance. After Kanshi Ram the other BSP leaders in Punjab failed to launch any such movement against castism in Punjab. The results of last Assembly elections amply demonstrate that the casteist card of BSP had failed to enthuse the Dalits of Punjab, particularly in the light of their proportion in the total population of the state.\textsuperscript{229}

Dalits of Punjab constitute a motley group of castes, economic strata and religious identities. The SCs in Punjab are
divided into 37 sub castes and many of them refuse to be clubbed in one group of Dalits. Another important factor has been the lack of any tall BSP leader in Punjab to mobilize them across religious and regional divides. It was precisely because of these intra-Dalit cleavages that they could not emerge as a cohesive force to reckon within the politics of Punjab. In the absence of a common platform, some of the Dalits and their local elites seek their salvation through different political outfits including the Congress and the Akaki Dal.230

If we analyse the representation of Dalits in the Vidhan Sabha of Punjab, the Shiromani Akali Dal leads in sending maximum representatives of Dalits. Congress occupies the second place. BJP also gave substantial representation to the Dalits. Dalits in Punjab may have experienced socio-economic neglect, but they are not hounded like pray in the manner their counterparts in other parts of the country are. The uncertain religious allegiance of the Dalits and in the absence of caste as a defining parameter for social position, Dalits found representation in all the political parties in the state. It is interesting to note that even the Jat dominated Shiromani Akali Dal gave substantial representation to the Dalits. For instance in 1969, of the 25 elected Scheduled Caste legislators, 44 per cent were from in the Akali Dal. Not only this, in 1977 (48 per cent),
1985 (62 per cent), and 1997 (77 per cent) a majority of the scheduled caste legislators were from the Akali Dal. Similarly in 1967 (52 per cent), 1972 (61 per cent), 1980 (45 per cent), 1992 (63 per cent), and 2002 (48 per cent), a majority of the elected scheduled caste legislators were from the Congress. Even the Bhartiya Janata Party gave representation to the Dalits. For instance, in 1997, 13 per cent of the scheduled caste members belonged to the BJP. It is interesting that Dalit legislators have been elected from political parties other than the BSP and the communist party. Thus more than the BSP, the Dalit leaders fulfil their political aspirations by joining and supporting Akali Dal and Congress.

Akali Dal has produced many Dalit leaders like Dhanna Singh Gulshan, Gursev Singh Badal, Charanjit Singh Attwal, Satwant Kaur Sandhu, Basant Singh Khalsa, Guljar Singh Ranike, Mahinder Kaur Josh, Des Raj Dhugga, Sarwan Singh phillour, Gobind Singh Kanjhla, Shetal Singh and Dr. Dalbir Singh Verka. Dhanna Singh Gulshan and Charanjit Singh Attwal have remained ministers of state in the central government and Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha respectively. Similarly, the Congress party has given eminent place to Dalit leaders; from whom the central minister Buta Singh, Master Gurbanta Singh, Joginder Singh Maan, Darshan Singh K.P., Chaudhry Jagjit
Singh, Mahinder Singh K.P., Shamsher Singh Doolon, Caudhry Santokh Singh, Aruna Chaudhry, Chaudhry Sunder Singh, Chaudhry Ram Lubhaya, Santosh Chaudhry etc emerged as stalwart leaders in Punjab Politics. Moreover out of these Dalit leaders, Congress party gave party chief’s place to Shamsher singh Dullon and Mahinder Singh K.P. at state level.

Another cause of BSP’s poor performance is that it couldn’t yet make its strong base among base voters in the Punjab viz. the state has vote bank of Brahmins and Banias strongly connected with Congress party and Jatt vote bank is the base vote bank of Akali Dal. So, Dalit vote bank is mainly considered as related to BSP in Punjab. Both Akali Dal and Congress Parties have strong base but same is not true for BSP. BSP’s vote bank has swinging nature due to poor leadership of this party in Punjab. It is analysed by some Punjab politics experts that when this swinging vote bank votes for Akali Dal, this party wins and when it favours Congress Party, this party leads in Punjab. It is also a hard fact of Punjab Politics that no single party can dominate with its own vote bank. If Akali Dal ignores Bahujan Samaj then it has to depend upon Hindu Samaj for better performance. Similarly, if Jatt Samaj does not favour Congress Party, it can not make good performance without the support of Dalit Samaj.
However, Dalit visibility in the state politics has so far been rather poor. Even at the local level, they have not been able to acquire power. Despite many radical changes in the society and economy of rural Punjab, their position remains marginal in local politics.234

What has prevented the Dalits in Punjab from emerging as a political alternative despite their numerical strength is the fact that they have not been able to consolidate themselves as a homogeneous group. In fact they form a conglomerate of thirty seven distinct Dalit castes with different sub identities and diverse religious affiliations.235

Here the BSP leadership must understand that in the political dynamics of Punjab there are two major players and contenders of power namely the Congress and Akali Dal. All other political parties namely the BJP, BSP and CPI are minor players and become effective only if they fight elections by forging an alliance with any of these two parties.236

Another major problem faced by the BSP is the factionalism in it, which has contributed to the poor performance of the party in Punjab. Presently BSP has six main factions in Punjab like BSP, BSP (Ambedkar), BSP (Kanshi Ram), BSP Democratic, Bahujan Samaj Morcha and Bahujan Kranti Party. The breakway factions are mostly the BSP's own doing. Leaders of these
factions blame Mayawati for neglecting Punjab and taking political decisions with an eye on the Uttar Pradesh chief minister’s chair.\(^{237}\)

All prominent leaders including Mr Harbhajan Singh Lakha, Shingara Ram Sahngra, Devi Das Nahar and Pawan Kumar Tinu have left the BSP to form their own groups. Mr Avtar Singh Karimpuri is the only prominent leader staying with the BSP.\(^{238}\)

During the survey many party workers openly blamed Mayawati for the state of affairs in Punjab. Firstly they alleged that Punjab has never been the focus of attention of the party high command. The leaders from Punjab are not treated with any respect nor any suggestion from the state leadership is given due attention. BSP neither has an organized political cadre in the state nor a solid social base.

Despite the political sensitization of Dalits to the so-called “Mayawati phenomenon” a distinct and organized Dalit vote bank could not emerge to the level where it could influence or manoeuvre the established political structure in the state. This was mainly because the BSP leadership in the state did not emerge out of a Dalit movement. Instead the party tried to harvest a vote bank from that of the established political parties with the help of dissidents.
In Punjab the Dalit politics has shifted to the Deras and Saints who have established themselves as the sole and soul spokesmen of the Dalits particularly the Ad dharmis and Chamars. As a result this participation of the “Men of God” in public, social and political affairs of the Dalits is the newly emerged context of the Dalit assertion. According to the Dalit informants there are 176 Deras of Ad Dharmi Saints that follow Guru Ravidas as their deity.\textsuperscript{239}

Pawan Kumar Tinu who was with the BSP for 18 years before joining SAD, said the biggest shortcoming of the party has been its failure to deliver on its promises to the Dalits “As in 1997 and 2002 Assembly polls the BSP could not win any seat because it could do little for the Dalit voters” he adds alluding to the party’s downhill slide.\textsuperscript{240}

Dr Ram Lal Jassi an old timer with the party in 1995 said the BSP has been referred to as a “party spoiler” but now the BSP may not even be a “party spoiler”. The BSP, with its major following, was once feared by all other parties. Both the Congress and SAD were constantly in competition to forge an alliance with it, now the party is virtually irrelevant.\textsuperscript{241}

Ms Mayawati’s problem is to replicate the alchemy she has been able to work in UP in other even neighbouring states. The BSP’s record in Punjab, despite its high proportion of Dalit votes,
has been dismal and after Kanshi Ram’s death it is a one person party with little prospect of any other leaders being allowed to emerge in the state with their own authority.242

It is also observed that the organization of BSP has been structured wrongly that leads to the decay of this party in Punjab. In democracy people’s participation, their say in the selection of their leaders is vital for proper development of party’s structure and base. But hierarchy of the structure of BSP is from leadership to general people. Present organization structure is made from top to bottom viz. firstly the national leadership then state level leadership elected, then district level and following this constituency level and lastly village level but hierarchy should be reciprocal for better performance as from village level to state level. The party responsibilities and designations below district level can be given to efficient and newly connected persons but district level work of the party must be given to at least ten year old connected workers of the party. Similarly the state level responsibilities related to party matters must be assigned to those most senior and stalwart workers who are loyal, efficient, and honest and have good character. The leaders emerged from grass-root level to state level are the best representative of masses. However the selected leaders by party from top to bottom are only involved in spoon feeding the high
command of the party because their party status is in the hands of high command. Whatever decisions and welfare policies that are determined by these leaders do not matter for vote bank of the party. They do not take care of the grievances of the Samaj that has been voting for the party's win. The party needs decentralization strongly for development of its base in Punjab.\textsuperscript{243}

BSP has been lacking able leadership in Punjab. The \textit{BSP} under current leaders including Mr. Narinder Kashiyap has not been able to perform on the lines of Mr. Kanshi Ram. The BSP leadership has not performed well in the eyes of the masses. The leadership had been demanding funds from the people and distributing offices to its favourites but has been unable to introduce the party's actual mission to the masses. Under the guidance of Mayawati, the state leadership has not worked well. The party leadership did not take any initiative to mobilize support for the party or recruit new members. No awareness campaigns were launched, rather the party leaders remained busy in blame-game for the poor performance of the party. Many respondents made such observations during the field survey.

During the time of Kanshi Ram's illness, his family members and Mayawati had serious conflicts that made great
impact on the BSP’s politics in Punjab. The family members of Kanshi Ram alleged that Mayawati had made Kanshi Ram a captive and he was neither given proper medical aid nor his family members were allowed to see him. Meanwhile, Mayawati alleged that the family members were being instigated by opposition leaders especially Mulayam Singh Yadav (the main leader of Samajwadi Party) and blaming her wrongly.  

The BSP leadership in Punjab has been blaming the press for biased reporting of the exploited Dalit-Bahujan Samaj. Kartar singh in the Aaj Di Awaz castigated the Manuwadi Character of media and alleged that has been taking bribery from rich parties and putting these parties’ agendas on fore front to the masses. This leaves to BSP always on back foot. The big rallies commenced by millions of BSP workers always got small spaces in the newspapers and media highlights the factions of the BSP. However this appears to be a biased perception of the BSP supporters. The ground reality, which was observed during the field survey was a wide spread unhappiness among the Dalit voters over the working of the party which claims to be fighting for social transformation.

Nowadays, BSP has a rich class endowed with sources that ignores the interests of poor sections of the society. The ideology of this rich class is not matched with their poor counterparts.
that keep it far away from Dalit class like other old Dalit leaders of established parties. An elite class having been created among to the Dalits and many having contested the elections to get monetary benefits by withdrawing in favour of a candidate from the other parties was also reported by many respondents. So, BSP is still unable to give any sound program and policies for the masses. In fact, this party is lacking programmes that can be helpful for its better performance as well as raise the welfare of the masses. The lust for power and richness makes hurdles before party’s image. The lack of any firm vision before party workers, sound diversified programs, agendas and policies keep this party away from even its own base vote bank. That is why sometimes this party does not release its manifesto.246

Many Dalits from various parties including the Communist and the Congress parties who joined the BSP have returned to their original parties or have at least left the BSP- disillusioned with its culture and factionalism though some have come back with renewed assertion as Dalits. It has been happening in the party again and again that some party leaders come from other parties and join BSP to contest elections. If they face defeat, they leave this party. For example out of 13, 10 candidates left the party after the defeat in 2004 Lok Sabha elections. Out of these, Mangat Rai Bansal, Charanjit Singh Channi, Ravinder Singh
Sohal again joined the Congress party and Brijmohan Julka joined BJP. Ravel Singh, Hagopal Singh Kashiyap, Pandit Ram Sharan Pal, Pandit Surinder Arjan have also left the party. This trend in the party is not only discouraging the old dedicated workers of the party but they also feel a pinch in their minds as to why they do not deserve tickets for contesting elections.\textsuperscript{247} Moreover, after the poor performance in Lok Sabha elections 2009 the party called an urgent meeting at Jalandhar to find out the causes behind this. In this meeting party workers blamed Mr. Karimpuri’s style of functioning as responsible for the defeat of party in the state, when none of the BSP candidates could save their security deposits in the Lok Sabha elections. In this meeting, party workers lodged their protest and raised anti Karimpuri slogans.\textsuperscript{248} At Present, Mr. Karimpuri is considered a stalwart leader of BSP in Punjab and if workers are angry with its main leader to such an extent it is difficult to expect a good performance from the party.

In fact most of the Dalits in Punjab appear to be leaderless, having no party to turn to for help. The BSP’s forays into the state have so far had little success. Dalits across Punjab are disenchanted with the three – major parties- the Shiromani Akali Dal, the Congress (I) and the BJP. When they say they would vote for the BSP, it is because they want to defeat the
other three parties. If Dalits vote for the BSP in Punjab, it is because of the TINA (there is no alternative) factor and not for Kanshi Ram earlier and Mayawati now.249

So the challenges before the BSP in Punjab appear to be many. If the party has to build a strong support base or keep the base vote bank (the Dalits) intact it will have to set its house in order. The factionalism in the party must end and if it is not possible then Bahujan federation can be constructed in which all factions decide their seats according to prevailing position of concerned faction. After this it is possible to tie-up with other parties. Then the performance of the BSP can be better.250

It may be said that BSP has not been systematically organized in Punjab. The party cadre at the grass-root level needs to be strengthened along with having able leadership at the top to motivate the illiterate voters at the village level.

According to Pramod Kumar, the BSP has been able to make little inroads in Punjab as the state is known for its liberal religious practices, which gives equal space to all castes. Both Sikhism and Arya Samaj forbid subjecting Dalits to caste based harassment.

Further in Punjab, without any alliance BSP can not emerge as a formidable force. The BSP can not just use the casteist card to consolidate the Dalits in its favour. As has been
stated earlier, Punjab has been known for its liberal religious practices in relation to caste and in electoral politics caste could not emerge as an exclusive factor. In Punjab the Dalits could not emerge as a vote bank for the BSP, even though Punjab has the highest percentage of Dalit population in the country. The political content of the BSP has been unable to capture the regional, cultural and economic specificity of Punjab. The purity polluting issue and the anti-Manuwad stances that are the BSP’s main ideological planks do not find expression in Punjab in view of the role of Sikhism and the Arya Samaj. Hence unless and until the BSP focuses seriously on taking up the socio-economic issues related with the Dalits in Punjab it can not expect to have a guaranteed support base. Moreover keeping in mind the ground realities of the state it must try to forge some alliance with one of the two major parties so that it can have some presence in the State Legislative Assembly.
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