

Chapter V

Conclusion, Suggestions and Recommendation

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5.1 Conclusion:

Social churning and the emergence of new identities have been a continuous process in Uttar Pradesh, since the early 1980s and it has maintained a stranglehold on the politics of this state. Throughout the 1990s, mass politics in the state of Uttar Pradesh was driven by identities constructed around the terms "Hindutva", "Mandal" and "Dalit", as political parties mobilized and divided the electorate along the lines of Social cleavages. The collapse of the Congress party led to a fragmented multi-party system with narrower identity-based parties, new strategies of mobilization and sharp contests in electoral politics, resulting in political instability and coalition governments.(Prof. Pai :2007).

The regional parties (like SP) have largely thrived on the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) vote bank by adopting socialist overtones and populist policies. The shift of political power from the savarna classes to backward classes- what is called by Christophe Jeffrelot as "Silent Revolution" has been gradual since independence but gained momentum with emergence of regionalization of political parties in Indian politics. These outfits have assiduously cultivated the OBC vote bank and have tried to maintain their support base. The emergence and consolidation of the Samajwadi Party (SP) is very interesting and important phenomenon in national as well as state politics in U.P. The emergence of SP acquires added significance in the context of the Uttar Pradesh being the most populated state and its traditional preeminence in Indian politics. The SP in U.P. emerged as an offshoot of the backward caste/class movement.

The Backward castes form a large block in the state, according to some estimates approximating 52 % of the total population. It is necessary to understand that they do not form a homogenous bloc, nor have they operated as one in politics. The first round of backward/middle caste mobilization in the 1960s brought the upper sections consisting primarily of Jats and some of the better land-owning Yadavs in western U.P. into politics, creating a fissure between them and the rest of the

backwards. Hence, while the Bhartiya Kisan Dal (BKD) became an important party, its support base remained limited largely to western U.P. and pockets elsewhere.

The 1980s witnessed a second round of mobilization that brought the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) the Yadavs, the Ahirs, the Kurmis and the Kories into politics fuelled by the extension of the green revolution into eastern and central U.P. and a desire for share in politics so far dominated by the upper castes and Jats.

In the fast changing social and political scene in U.P., during the 1990s two factors impacted upon the OBCs: 1) increasing awareness of their distinct sub-caste identity 2) and rapid economic differentiation. These two factors have proceeded to divide them into segments with implications for politics. Class divisions among the backwards have widened with the Yadavs, Ahirs, Kurmis using their political clout to advance economically. When Mulayam Singh was in power the lower posts in bureaucracy and the police were given mainly to Yadavs, a move which is described as "Yadavization Campaign". All backward groups have also imbibed the lesson that capture of state power is important as it enables them to improve the economic situation of their community at the expense of 'others'. The example is provided by Mayawati's Dalit -oriented policies which created intense antagonism and jealousy both among the upper castes and those sections of the lower backwards who were left out.

By the end of 1990s, this process led to the emergence of the Most Backward Castes (MBCs) made up of groups such as the Gadarias, Luhars, Jogis, Dhiwars. Nais, Kumhars, Mallahs etc. Perched on the line of pollution, they form the lowest rung of the backward caste ladder and are also the poorest sections among them. These landless castes remained earlier within the Jajmani System and therefore, scattered all over the state. They are difficult to mobilize along political lines. Although numerically the MBC group together are much larger than the Dalits in U.P.,- none of them with the exception of Sainis- form an effective political force in electoral politics. It is due to the fact that these groups have not found yet an alternative party after the disintegration of the Congress. They lack a strong leader with whom they can identify and who could weld these various groups in a cohesive force. Consequently, they have remained divided among all the major parties- the BJP, BSP and SP. Mulayam's Yadavization make them apprehensive. The results of the SP's efforts at bringing about social justice could not percolate to the MRBCs and MBCs as the elite

among them (Yadavs, Ahirs) were really not keen on sharing the advantages with those sections below them in the social hierarchy. This factor has been a stumbling block in achieving backward caste homogenization as these groups resent their exploitation at the hands of their own community. This is also seen in the social profile data. While 73% yadavs supported SP in 2004 Lok Sabha elections, only 23% of non-yadav OBCs voted for it. Now, the statistics of the electoral politics suggest that MBCs are coming back to Congress in U.P. in the recent past. Rahul Gandhi has played a substantive and significant role in this regard.

Many political parties that espoused the cause of the backwards in Uttar Pradesh remained wedded to the same ideological tradition, with a difference in emphasis. They played a part in defining the contours of Indian Politics, in providing the platform for transformative politics.(Yadav:1996)

On important issues, however, the performance of the backward movement in U.P. has been less than satisfactory. The SP appeared at a historic juncture and could have attained greater heights and loftier goals had it, but, made a serious attempt. The Party appears to be in decline, as indicated by its performance in certain areas. The backward movement has failed to address the issue of "backward identity". The backwards constitute a major segment of Indian society, but the traditional structure of social relations has not allowed them to be recognized politically. The SP also shares the blame for this; its failure to create a political identity through the mobilization of the backwards can be analysed on four counts (Verma: 2007). These are-

- 1) Its failure to develop backward class constituency.
- 2) Its failure to attempt the homogenization of the upper and the lower castes among OBCs
- 3) Its lack of will in attempting the consolidation of the upper backward caste throughout the state.
- 4) Its failure to connect the backwards in the different states of the country.

Prof. Zoya Hasan remarks that there could not even be a successful attempt to bring the upper backward castes together in the entire state of U.P. The SP could not even attempt a limited and partial backward caste mobilization at an all-U.P. owing to differences in social stratification, production relations and power structures in

different parts of the state. The more prosperous Jat peasants of western U.P. and the more numerous but poor kisans of eastern U.P. could not come together on a common political platform. Once the Mandal factor entered the politics of U.P., the BLD-LD could not sustain their position in the politics of the state.

The Mandir issue came as windfall for the SP. The BJP (Kalyan Singh as Chief Minister) government was in power in U.P. when the SP was launched formally in 1992. The demolition of the Ram Janmabhoomi- Babri Masjid structure in Ayodhya in December the same year presented the SP with a politically explosive issue that it could exploit for its own purposes. It is due to the fact that Muslims saw destruction as an act of Sangha- Parivar with acquaintance of Congress. The result was that the Muslims turned to Mulayam Singh Yadav, who opposed the demolition with all his might. The SP organized protests all over the country, which even turned violent. Earlier also, when he was the Chief Minister of the U.P. (05 Dec. 1989-23 June 1991) he had taken unusually harsh and repressive measures resulting in firing on Kar Sevaks. Consequently, the Muslims hailed him as the saviour and defender of Secularism so much so that he was praised for his pro-muslim policies with the epithets of "Mulla Mulayam" or "Maulana Mulayam". The decade of 1990s simply belonged to the SP so far as commitment to Secularism was concerned. But in the meantime the SP realized that its framework of caste-class cleavages was not sufficient for the party to cross the threshold necessary for commanding the popular mandate for governance. This is the reason why it has renounced "exclusionary politics" and resorted to "inclusionary politics". The party felt the need of persuading upper class people to join the party. This made the entire rationale of the party irrelevant. If the party wanted to accommodate people of all shades and denominations, then, it would have to abandon "cleavage politics" and give all caste groups representation in the party structure. The BSP has also done the same. It has also accepted the philosophy of "Sarvajan Hitay, Sarvajan Sukhay" and deserted the policy of serving Bahujan Samaj only. Earlier, its slogan was used to be "Tilak, Taraju aur Talwar, Inko Maro Jute Char" which has now been replaced with "Tilak, Taraju aur Talwar, Ye hain BSP ke Aadhar. (Here Tilak denotes Brahmins, Taraju is for Baniyas and Talwar means Rajputs/kshatriyas).

The inadequate and incomplete political mobilization of the backward castes and classes resulted in the absence of a bi-polar party system in U.P. The splendid

performance of JD in 1989 elections in U.P. had raised the possibility for same. The JD got 54 out of 85 Lok Sabha seats with 35.9% of votes and 208 out of 425 assembly seats with 29.71% of votes. Some scholar have opined that it represented the coming together of rich and middle peasantry in the medium and semi-medium landholding areas because of the green revolution (Prof. Pai 1993:11-12) while others have challenged this argument by pointing to the disintegration of JD in less than 18 months, when in the assembly and Lok Sabha elections in 1991, the JD was reduced to half its size (Verma 2003:256). But by the time SP came in to being, it was too late. The BSP had already appeared on the political scene and sealed the fate of any movement seeking to establish itself on the basis of consolidating the Dalit votes. This led to the emergence of a multi-polar divergence model of the party system in U.P. from 1989-1996. This later transformed into the multi-polar convergence model since 1996 as the agendas of multiple parties converged on the core ethnic issues of Mandalization and Dalits (Yadav and Palshikar 2003:21).

The attempt of the SP to forge an alliance of OBCs across the states also failed. In June 1998, the SP and RJD of Laloo Prasad Yadav floated the Rashtriya Loktantrik Morcha (RLM). Mulayam Singh became its president. With both the leaders nursing ambitions at all-India, level and also claiming to be the leader of backward community, this front was bound to be a non-starter, according to Prof. A.K. Verma.

The Organizational capacity of SP like that of other state-level parties is weak. To many people, it appears as a one man show. Mulayam Singh Yadav continues to be the party's undisputed leader. Since its inception, the SP has never really discussed and debated the issue of leadership. There is no second line of leadership and hence, inner party working has been based not on any collective leadership and decision-making but on the whims and fancies of the leaders. At the most, the party is being run as a family business. Many members of Mulayam's family- Ramgopal Yadav (Brother), Shivpal Singh Yadav (Brother), Akhilesh Yadav (Son) and Dimple Yadav (Daughter-in-law) hold important positions and weild considerable influence in party affairs.

The SP has never imparted the kind of political training to its workers and supporters that could give them a clear and solid orientation in the ideology of the party, its structure, functioning and constitution. Moreover, Mulayam's line of Muslim

appeasement has also exposed the de-ideologized political perspective of the party. Notwithstanding with his claim of representing the secular face in U.P. politics, the lack of ideological training to party cadres results in ignorance. Of late, SP has realized this and has organized some training camps for its rank and file.

The SP has not been able to hold to the socialist ideology of Dr. Lohiya, Acharya Narendra Dev and J.P. Narayan. There are repeated references to these leaders and their ideologies in the constitution and the resolutions of the SP claiming that the entire socialist movement led by the party stands on the foundation laid by these stalwarts. So far as the question of its social base is concerned, it suffers from a dualistic approach. On the one hand, it originated as an enlarged caste association i.e. it evolved as a party with the dominant backward caste of Yadavs at the core but claimed not only to represent the OBCs but also the other section of the Indian population- the savarnas, the dalits and the minorities. While nothing is dear to its founder-leader than the economic and political interests of his fellow caste-men, even if he claims to be struggling for social justice for all. The ideology of caste has swayed over the ideology of socialism.

We do not think this is something undemocratic or illegitimate in Indian milieu. This is a characteristic and normal feature of all the Indian parties without any exception. Leave aside the rightist parties which openly espouse the cause of the upper castes/classes, even the extreme left is too caste-ridden. There is no party institution or policy or decision that is neither determined nor influenced by caste-considerations.

Of late, Mulayam's continued association with industrial magnets ostensibly seeking to boost the development of the state do not quite match his socialist commitments, although he defends these people as social assets who could be used for social welfare. The ideological position of SP seems to have adjusted itself to the broad socio-economic policy paradigm of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG). Thus, the emphasis is on big and luxury cars, -urban development, industrialization, big projects, even though the SP continues to retain the agenda of furthering the cause of rural, agricultural and poor citizens of the state.

The SP is also charged with having criminal associations. Whatever may be the reality, there is a widespread belief that whenever the SP has come to power,

criminal elements have become more active and fearless. It is widely believed that SP harbours criminals, though the party leaders vehemently deny the charges as baseless and politically motivated. However, the statistics reveals the different story. In 2007 Assembly elections hardcore criminals like Mukhtar Ansari who is facing charges in 29 cases (of murders and other atrocities), Raghuraj Pratap Singh alias Raja Bhaiya, with 35 cases filed against him won with SP's support. Also, Chandrabhadra Singh, notorious gangster, won from Issauli in Sultanpur district on SP's ticket.

The number of criminal politician participating in the elections in U.P. has been growing particularly because they have been successful in the past. In 13 .P. assembly elections 2002, candidates with criminal records won 206 out of 403 seats in the assembly i.e. more criminals were elected than regular politicians (Source-Financial Times, 13-05-07). Similarly, in 2007 participation by criminals increased significantly. Prior to elections, 74% more criminal politicians were given tickets by the mainstream parties-BSP-36.27%, SP-27.01%, BJP-23.05% and INC-21.60% (Sourcer UP Election watch, Independent NGO headed by ex. DIG-I.P. Dwivedi). However, partially owing to strict measures adopted during elections only 100 persons with criminal records won the election as opposed to 206 in previous elections. These include Mayawati, Mulayam Singh Yadav and other hardcore gangsters/hardened criminals.

Likewise, U.P. has once again set a record of sending the maximum number of tainted MPs to 15th Lok Sabha (2009). 31 out of 80 MPs in the state have criminal cases pending against them. Out of these 31, as many as 22 have serious criminal charges against them according to the figures released by Association for Democratic Reforms(ADR), an umbrella organization of NGOs that monitors elections. Previous Lok Sabha had 128 tainted MPs, now the no. has gone up to 150. There is an increase of about 17.2% in MPs with criminal records and 30.9% increase in the MPs with serious criminal records. To add to U.P. statistics, 3 MPs of the state have made it to the top 10 list of MPs with heinous criminal charges against them. These are- Varun Gandhi (BJP), Kapilmuni Karwaria (BSP) and Bal Kumar Patel(SP). The BJP leads the partywise figures with 42 MPs who have criminal cases against them, followed closely by INC with 41. The SP is in third place with 8 followed by BSP's 6 criminal MPs.

This analysis depicts the fact that no party in U.P. is clean and crystal clear so far as politics-criminal nexus is concerned. It seems that whosoever comes into power in U.P. harbours nexus to crime and corruption. This is done to fill up their pockets and foreign bank accounts, to intimidate the oppositionist forces and to consolidate the rule. The charges of Crime, Corruption and Capitalism have damaged the Image of SP significantly. It depicted in its defeat by BSP in 2007 elections.

The role of the SP as an opposition party is not worthy of mention. Driven out of power because of its own follies, the party finds itself in a tight comer. It has paid a heavy price in the form of ousting and expulsion of various influential leaders (like Beni Prasad Verma, Mohd. Azam Khan and not to forget Amar Singh) and scores of its loyalists and victimization of others. The regrouping and resurgence of Indian National Congress and the exclusivism of Mayawati bloc is gradually eroding the support-base of the SP. It is in the light of the foregoing discussion that we have an apprehension that the backward caste movement led by SP is declining despite its good electoral performance. One of the major constituent of the party- the Muslims hold the key to its dominance in U.P. That is why

Mulayam Singh Yadav has tendered a public apology in wake of his connections with Kalyan Singh (former BJP Chief Minister). If the Muslims were to turn to other party, the SP may be shown the door in state politics. The irrelevance of SP in .national politics is motivating the Muslims to turn to the Indian National Congress, BSP and BJP. We have already seen its glimpse in the parliamentary elections held in 2009 and 2014 where SP's graph came down to 22 and 05 respectively. If such a calculation goes on, we might see BSP with its New Social Engineering of Dalit- Muslim Combine, regaining the lost ground in U.P. That day may be a said one not only for the SP, but also for the entire backward movement and politics in the state of U.P. since SP has been an offshoot of this very movement and claims to carry it further.

The establishment of modern political institutions and practices in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries threw open new opportunities to the hitherto marginalised sections of society, who were traditionally relegated to only the subordinate, lowly, and service professions to aspire for. However, breaking the traditional structures of power proved awesomely difficult, especially for the backward sections of society. Any such attempt demanded from them a certain

amount of social status, educational competence, cultural disposition, and' economic standards, which the backward sections of society in India were definitely lacking. They could tap the strength of their numbers in a system where political power is reproduced through universal adult franchise. It took a long time for this fact to sink in, to' ostracize the hegemonic influences present within and to convert the power of numbers into an effective political strategy. Therefore, it took a very long period for these oppressed social groups to make their autonomous existence in the political map of India in general and that of U.P. in particular.

The dominant proprietary class was the first to question the Brahmin domination in South in the fields of political and administrative power and access to educational facilities. The powerful Vokkaliga and Lingayat communities led the movement against Brahmin domination. Following this path, other backward communities too organised themselves to secure their due share. One of the facilitating conditions for their claim to obtain their due share in political and administrative power was the extent to which they had succeeded in establishing a distinct social identity and promoted the educational capabilities of its members. Today, the presence of Backward Classes in the social, political, and economic fields in India is very striking. The State of Uttar Pradesh is no exception to it.

We have seen that in spite of the support of the colonial government to the Brahmins and other forward castes, the modern legal, social, and economic system introduced by it had a 'trickle-down' effect helping the mobility among the backward castes and dalits. The work of Christian Missionaries and socio-religious reformers in different parts of the country opened some space for the low castes in India. The Backward Class Movement, which initially started as a cultural revolt, in due course transformed itself into a political initiative with the development of the representative and democratic institutions. The formation of caste associations and caste federations facilitated the process in the making of the political constituency of Backward Classes by forming a common platform of active units.

The Backward Class Movement did not climb its heights in the North as it did in South India. In South India there was a very strong anti-Brahmin sentiment fuelled due to many reasons including being well entrenched in all spheres of life - power, status, and comforts - compared to non-Brahmin castes and communities. On the other hand, anti-Brahmin sentiment did not emerge in North India early on due to

many reasons, including the relative weight age of the twice-born castes. The presence of a large number of twice-born castes in the North acted as a fortress, unlike the South where Brahmins formed only 3 per cent of the population. In some parts of the North, the Arya Samaj Movement mellowed down caste cleavage to some extent. In the North-Eastern states the presence of tribal communities had diluted caste-cleavages to a very great extent. However, in spite of such regional variations the Backward Class Movement had some common features shared across regional boundaries.

The Backward Class Movement was a part of the National Movement before independence. But after independence, the backward class expressions were largely reflected in the peasant movement, especially in movements led by middle and lower peasantry. The peasant class, which was both numerically significant and economically dominant among the backward castes groups initially, had its sway over the whole movement. Though dalits too formed a part of the Backward Class Movement in the initial stages, soon they drifted away from the Backward Classes to form an autonomous constituency as they felt that the problems of the dalits were fundamentally different from those of the Backward Classes. Further, it was increasingly evident that some of the Shudra castes turned out to be formidable oppressors of dalits. However, even after the separation of the dalits from the Backward Class Constituency, the Backward Class Constituency did not become free from its nebulous character.

After independence, by and large, the Backward Classes resorted to participation in democratic politics increasingly to pursue their interests. Though in some states like Tamil Nadu, the Backward Classes were successful in organising their own party they failed to employ this strategy in practice in other states. The ruling Congress Party tried to bring the backward caste groups within its broad coalitions of social groups but it could not do so due to the opposition of the dominant peasant castes considered backward. The OBCs have always been trying to establish a niche for themselves outside the ruling party. Traditionally, they were divided across the Bharatiya Kranti Dal, Socialist Party, independents, and other small regional and local parties. In recent years, they have been supporting the Samajvadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Bharatiya Janata Party, and other regional parties to a significant extent.

Consequently, the Backward Class Constituency has been diluted to some extent in recent years.

The process of liberalization and globalization has also affected the backward class interests. Preferential treatment around which the whole discourse of social justice has been constructed in India is losing its centrality due to the liberalization process. The state has increasingly deserted the Backward Classes, and the concept of 'social justice' has been reduced to symbolical significance.

Legacies and memories often help in the growth of the movement. We have argued in this study that the region of the present Karnataka State witnessed a powerful anti-caste movement with strong non-Brahminical overtones in the form of the Veerashniva Movement in the 12th century itself. Though that movement could not succeed in totally eradicating the caste oppression, it had definitely introduced egalitarianism as the core value to be pursued in social relations. However, the struggle at that point of time was not for political power but for cultural access, recognition, and dignity.

It was only in the beginning of the 20th century that the demand for political and administrative access came up in Karnataka from the Backward Classes when economically and numerically powerful non-Brahmin Communities raised their voice against Brahmin domination in those spheres. Of course, the ideological baggage required for such a movement was imported from neighbouring regions such as Maharashtra, Madras, and Kerala.

Eventually, the Backward Class Constituency came to be redefined and reformulated so as to exclude the dominant sections from it. Although such a redrawing of boundaries did not always succeed politically there was an increased moral consensus on it. This study has attributed a great part of the success of the Backward Class Movement to the efforts of caste associations and Backward Class Federations, representing the interests of the Backward Class Constituency.

Recently, the perception that the preferential treatment given to the Backward Classes is monopolised by the forward sections within the caste-group is gaining public attention. There is-a growing demand for the exclusion of this 'creamy layer' from backward class benefits. Though outwardly this argument appears genuine, the context in which the argument is made may prove detrimental to the interests of the

'real backwards' too. The debate on 'creamy layer' is centered on the understanding that Backward Classes is an economic category. The idea that the creamy layer is also a sociological category is totally missing in this perspective. It is necessary to reopen this issue afresh by contending against the economic mould in which Backward Classes are perceived.

We have seen that in the absence of compartmentalized division of Backward Classes, benefits have accrued to only a few entrenched sections among the Backward Classes. This has resulted in the demand for much finer classification of backward class categories. Such an orientation has made politically powerful groups to attempt to secure a much more beneficial category. This study therefore suggests the need for a very systematic investigation of the relative position of various caste groups in the state. The study brings out that in the initial days backward class benefits were mainly expressed in terms of government jobs and seats in academic institutions. But recently, in view of the reduction in job opportunities the Backward Classes are increasingly after political representation and other welfare schemes of the state. A demand has also been voiced to extend reservation benefits in the private sector.

The social and political changes ushered in at the national level during the 1960s and 1970s coupled with the social dynamics among the Backward Classes in the region, brought to the fore new political equations. They threw up a host of non-dominant backward caste members to frontline leadership, challenging dominant caste hegemony. However, such affront of the non-dominant groups did not last long. In 1980s, once again the dominant caste groups elevated themselves to the position of power and reduced the Backward Classes to the condition of instrumental utility. They even attempted to dilute the Backward Class Constituency through the inclusion of the dominant landed castes among them. As a result, in 1990s, the Backward Class Constituency was in a fragmented condition. Almost all political parties tended to make inroads into the Backward Class Constituency. Consequently, the whole constituency came to be politically diluted and impotent. The “constituency seemed to have further lost its edge due to the process of liberalisation and globalization. However, this alarming situation has created a new awareness among the Backward Classes and attempts are on to consolidate this constituency by undertaking more intensive organisational efforts among themselves. They have resorted to ‘self-help’ as a strategy to reconstitute their constituency from the late 1990s. Backward Classes

wish to be a major presence in civil society and do not merely wish to confine themselves to the political domain.

Democratization in former colonial states has been inconsistent and erratic. India has been an exception. It has maintained and consolidated a democratic system, despite the fact that the preconditions often associated with democracy, ranging from industrialization and mass literacy to a minimum standard of living, were absent in the 1950s when India first became a democratic; secular republic. Yet, democracy has not only endured, it has developed into a vibrant system. The democratic process has deepened, drawing historically disadvantaged groups into the political system. Political parties have undoubtedly played a decisive role in this process. It is hard to conceive of India's democratic system and its success without the crucial role played by political parties.

Political parties were significant institutions even before Independence. After Independence, they assumed a new importance. On the one hand, they provide the linkage between institutions and constituencies within the polity, and on the other, they provide the crucial connection between the political process and policy makers, and bring to the forefront issues affecting the interests of social groups and the public at large. Yet, there is a great deal of dissatisfaction with parties. Parties and politicians are accused of weakening the democratic fibre of the country: by practicing corrupt politics, by eschewing a long-term perspective on social welfare, and by maximizing their personal gains and influence at the expense of larger national interests. However, without political parties the democratic system would not have worked. Parties remain the principal force around which contestation and mobilization are organized, working to structure political alternatives and formulating policies and translating them into effective choices for the people. Parties are, in short, the agencies and mechanisms through which power is organized and exercised in a democracy,

The most striking feature of India's party politics is that it does not fit neatly into any of the theories of liberal democratic politics or the conventional categories of party systems known in the West. Political parties in India do not correspond to European or American party processes. At the same time, India's traditional social divisions have not translated easily into the party political system. Congress dominance, for instance, was not based on a particular caste, religion, or class; in fact, no party based exclusively on a single social cleavage such as majority-minority or

caste can hope to sustain its dominance throughout the country. Political parties display numerous contradictory features, which reveal the blending of different forms of modern organization and participatory politics with indigenous practices and institutions. Parties are indeed complex, and an important reason for this complexity is the social heterogeneity that has made it impossible for a single set of parties to emerge across the country, as has happened in more homogeneous societies. Thus, there exist many types of parties. Among them should be noted the continued presence of one of the oldest parties in the world, the Congress (established in 1885); the emergency of the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); and the world's longest surviving democratically elected communist party government at the state level in West Bengal.

Major changes have taken place in Indian party politics since Independence (Manor 1990: 62-98). From 1989 the leadership, organization, electoral strategies, and support base of political parties have undergone significant changes. To understand the significance and implications of these developments, it is useful to distinguish broadly two important phases in its development. One-party dominance, moderate levels of political participation, and elite consensus characterized the first phase. This has given way to a second phase of greater democratization and the opening up of the political system to non-elite participants. Major changes in party politics include the replacement of the Congress system with multi-party competition; an intensification of political competition; and fragmentation of the party system and coalition politics. Particularly marked is the decline of one-party dominance, the rise of the BJP as the single largest party in Parliament, and the advent of coalition politics. Since the last six parliamentary elections have not produced a single-party majority, they have necessitated a coalition government.

Equally significant is the democratic upsurge among the hitherto underprivileged and the influence of subaltern sections on the structure of electoral choices and outcomes. A significant aspect of the political process is that on the one hand, parties are the key to democratization, leading to a deepening of democracy; and on the other, they lack strong organizational structure or internal democracy and mobilize support along ethnic lines.

Through a combination of these processes—the creation of new parties and groups and their pursuit of sectional strategies—parties have increasingly fragmented

over the years. Frequent party splits, mergers, and counter-splits led to a significant increase in the number of parties.

Political parties are registered with the Election Commission of India (ECI) under the law. The registered parties are granted recognition at the state and national levels by the ECI on the basis of their poll performance at general elections according to criteria prescribed by it. There are three types of parties according to the criteria laid down by the ECI: national parties, multi-state parties, and state parties.

The Congress party has been the most important political institution in India's modern political history. Led by the Cambridge-educated Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress reaped the rewards of its role during the anti-colonial movement against the British. It won nearly three-fourths of the seats in Parliament in the national elections in 1952, 1957, and 1962. The Congress ruled every state until 1967. However, an important feature of Congress dominance was the large degree of autonomy that provincial units were able to assert in relation to the central party leadership—a far cry from the situation that obtained after Indira Gandhi. Their recommendations for candidates for parliamentary or assembly seats or Chief Minister were almost always accepted by the central leadership. Although led by upper-caste/class leadership, there were Muslims, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and various regional and linguistic groups represented in its higher echelons. It enjoyed enormous prestige with the rural and urban masses. Its hegemony was based on a concrete set of achievements: an independent model of industrial growth; considerable reduction in large-scale feudal landholdings, which benefited the upper peasantry; growth in infrastructure; expansion in educational facilities and technical personnel. A noteworthy feature of this project was a national definition of the polity with an emphasis on the states responsibility towards society. It did deliver some tangible benefits to the broad mass of the population through various development projects, the initiation and construction of the public sector, and the provision of public services such as health; education, and transport.

This political system worked until the split in the Congress in 1969. The split transformed the Congress party from a loose coalition of ideologically diverse groups, which stretched from the Right to the Left to a populist party, in which the supremacy of the parliamentary wing over the organizational was once and for all established. Political rule was entirely dominated by central command and control, and in party

affairs, by the high command. From this period onwards, it evolved into an elector list catch-all party. The breakdown of the Congress system was starkly evident after Indira Gandhi's disastrous Emergency experiment, which resulted in a sharp and substantial drop in the vote base. After the defeat of the Congress in the 1977 election and the formation of the first non-Congress government at the Centre led by the Janata Party, a conglomeration of four parties (Jana Sangh, Bharatiya Lok Dal, Congress [O], and the Socialist Party), the backward castes emerged as a major force in national politics. However, once again the disenchantment with the Janata Party's uninspiring leadership and its internecine squabbling brought the Congress back to power in 1980. In the 1984 election, held after Indira Gandhi's assassination, the Congress polled the highest vote and seat tally ever as a sympathy vote swept the country and brought her son Rajiv to power. But the underlying trends signified the collapse of one-party dominance and the end of the Congress epoch in Indian politics.

With the decline of Congress dominance, the second phase of party politics began taking shape. New opposition parties and ideologies began to take centre stage from the late 1980s. This period saw the emergence of the BJP as a major force in Indian politics. It soon overshadowed the Congress as the largest party in the 1996, 1998, and 1999 elections. At no point before 1989 had the BJP received even one-tenth of the national vote. It emerged for the first time as the single largest party in 1996; its vote share increased to 20.3 per cent. The BJP-led government under A.B. Vajpayee lasted only 13 days. Subsequently, the United Front government, consisting of the Janata Dal, some Left parties, and some state parties, formed a government for the first time in 1996, with Deve Gowda as the Prime Minister. In 1998, the BJP-led alliance secured 253 of the 543 seats and in 1999, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a coalition of 24 parties led by the BJP, won 304 seats.

Among political parties, the BJP is atypical. It is not a denominational party, but it promotes Hindu interests. The BJP can be better defined as an ethnic party, the promoter of a Hindu ethnicity and nationalism defined along religious lines, which is something much narrower than a broad, encompassing, multi-ethnic Indian nationalism. Its aim is to create a unified Hindu nation through the politics of polarization. It was founded on the ideology of Hindutva, which encourages Hinduness. It is the political outgrowth of an extremist right-wing ideological movement. It has enduring ties with its parent organization, the Rashtriya

Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and its various fronts like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal, sharing features of the fascist type of organizations minus the cult of the supreme leader. Many of its party cadres come from the RSS, and its affiliation to the RSS-VHP network has proved decisive in its recent growth.

During the six years of BJP-led NDA rule at the Centre (1998-2004), the party struggled to achieve what Christophe Jaffrelot called a 'division of labour', with Vajpayee, perceived as more moderate, on one side, and the RSS and other elements of the Sangh which continued to pursue a Hindu nationalist agenda on the other. The BJP came to power denouncing Nehruvian secularism, advocating militant Hindu nationalism, and encouraging anti-Muslim rhetoric and action. Arguably, the anti-Muslim sentiment was deflected on to the international scene, where a range of issues identified

Muslims as a threat surrounding India, whether in Kashmir, Bangladesh (infiltration across the border), or the Middle East, where the BJP government dramatically reversed the policy of supporting Palestine to forge a new relationship with Israel. After September 2001, the 'fight against terrorism' became the centerpiece of the BJP's domestic and foreign policy. In some of these actions, the BJP had the support of groups that went far beyond its own traditional social base. The NDA lost control of the government in the elections of April-May 2004, and was defeated by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), led by the Congress. The Congress emerged as the single largest party with 145 seats, and the UPA secured 220 seats.

The BJP's vote share dipped from 22.2 per cent in 2004 to 18.8 per cent in 2009. Their number of seats dropped to 116 in 2009 from 138 in 2004 (The Hindu, 26 May 2009). In 1999 when the NDA was at its peak, the vote share of the alliance was 41.1 per cent which came down to 24.1 per cent in 2009. Marking a major retreat for the BJP, it implied a shrinking of its social base of support, a decline in its voter base in its strongholds and failure to make inroads into other states. It also revealed its difficulties in holding on to allies or adding new ones to compensate for those who left the alliance. Big allies like the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Trinamool Congress, and Biju Janata Dal had moved out of the NDA for fear of losing minority support. Its capacity to represent and accommodate diverse interests severely dented, the BJP was increasingly less attractive to existing and potential allies.

The balance between the BJP and the Congress shifted decisively to the advantage of the Congress in 2009. In this election, voters delivered a significant verdict with the Congress and its alliance winning 262 just 10 short of the majority mark. The Congress won 206 seats, crossing the threshold of 200 seats for the first time since 1991. The party has made major gains in Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, and Rajasthan.

The 1980s, a period of great turbulence in Indian politics, marked the appearance of several new political parties. As the Congress went into a long decline and the Janata Party unravelled, several regional parties emerged in various states and enlarged their support. In the process, national parties were marginalized, or became adjuncts to the state parties in major states of the country. Many of these state-based parties are not confined to one state, but exist in several states, whether recognized or not. Parties such as the Samajwadi Party (SP), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Janata Dal (Secular), Janata Dal (United) have units, and have fielded candidates in many states. National parties such as the CPI[M], Communist Party of India (CPI), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and the Nationalist Congress Party could also be described as multi-state parties because their presence and representation in the Lok Sabha is limited to a few states.

Regional parties with an explicitly regional-ethnic character include the TDP in Andhra Pradesh, the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (DMK), and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (AIDMK) in Tamil Nadu, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in Assam, and the Akali Dal in Punjab. For example, the Akali Dal represents only the Sikhs and the AGP represents caste Hindu Assamese. While the SP and the BSP in Uttar Pradesh (UP) are essentially ethnic in character and represent the backward and lower castes, they also share the characteristics of an elector list part)', promoting the interests of distinct social constituencies.

The story of UP is a telling illustration of the fragmentation of the party system, and with it the nature and dynamics of catch-all parties in particular. For many decades after Independence, UP was the fulcrum of politics and remained central to the formation of any government in New Delhi. The party which won UP invariably formed the government at the Centre. But more important than the number of parliamentary seats was the strategy of building inclusive social coalitions which would include the majority of the electorate. The withering away of the Congress

umbrella and its social coalition of Brahmins, Dalits, and Muslims gave rise to new alliances represented by caste-and community-based parties. This led to the institutionalization of caste-based fragmentation and the exponential growth of the BSP and SP in UP at the expense of the Congress. The BSP emphasized its distinct character as a Dalit-based party; and attempted to mobilize the underprivileged using caste as a tool to break the existing system, so as to distinguish itself from the Congress and the BJP and create an alternative space as a Dalit party. Subsequent years witnessed a shift in its strategy as the party attempted to gain the support of Brahmins by providing them with tickets, further weakening the influence of national parties. Its social engineering collapsed in the 2009 election; with both Brahmins and Muslims returning to the original Congress coalition of extremes.

On the other hand, the contrasting trajectory of the Left parties that have been elected to power in Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura stresses the centrality of broad-based mobilization in determining the salience of social cleavages on patterns of voting and party strategies. The most important of these is the CPI (M), which has run the state government in West Bengal for nearly three decades, and has deep pockets of influence and support in Kerala and Tripura as well, where too it has regularly won elections. The Left parties were able to establish a strong presence in these three states by focusing on distributive policies and radical reforms, rather than the politicization of caste differences and subordination.

The vote share of Left parties has varied from 7 in 1957 to below 8 per cent in 2009. The 2004 parliamentary election represented a high point for the Left, as it surpassed its own previous record of 56 seats in 1991. The Left bloc had 61 MPs, and the overall vote share for the Left was 8.3 per cent, compared to less than 8 per cent in 2009. However, the elections of 2009 delivered a severe blow to the Left parties. The CPI(M) suffered its worst defeat since its inception after the split in the united CPI in 1964. Its seat share plummeted to 24, its vote share declined from 5.7 in 2004 to 5.3 per cent in 2009. Between the CPI (M) and CPI, the strength of the CPI has declined to just 4 and that of the CPI(M) to 16. Most of the Left MPs are drawn from West Bengal and Kerala. This underlines the limits of the Left's electoral support, which has been unable to grow beyond West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, despite their resolve and attempts to do so. Their vote share has fluctuated in their strongholds at the same time as it has not registered an increase in the other states such as Andhra

Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu where they have had some presence.

In the 1990s political power shifted from the grand encompassing parties which had dominated politics for close to three decades to regional parties and multi-party coalitions. Until the late 1980s, it was taken for granted that national parties would govern India. Regional and state-based parties did, of course, contest elections, but their role was insignificant. In 1952, about 50 parties contested elections) while the number had gone up to 342 in 2009. Since the fragmentation of the party system that set in after the decline of one-party dominance and the coming to power of a non-Congress coalition government more and more parties have been formed with the largest number in last elections-over a hundred new parties formed between 2004 to 2009 (ibid).

While there has been no actual decline in the number of national parties from 1957, the number of Indians who vote for them has come down. Until 1996 the total number of seats won by regional parties did not change much. Their numbers varied between a low of 31 (1957) and a high of 75 (1984). The major change occurred in 1996 when the number of seats won by them went up to 127, in 1999 it climbed up to 158 and in 2004 to 159 and 28.1 per cent of the vote. This increase has taken place at the expense of national parties, especially the BJP and the Congress, which had just over 320 seats between them in 2009. The combined votes of the Congress and the BJP in the 2004 and 2009 elections was under 50 per cent. The vote share of regional parties remained the same—roughly 29 per cent in the last three elections. This means more than half the voters continued to vote for parties other than the two big parties. Even though the balance appeared to have shifted in favour of a national party reflected in the resurgence of the Congress, regional parties remain significant because states continue to be the principal arena of politics and hence state-specific parties are still, relevant. Indeed, a striking feature of this election was the strong showing of regional parties, such as the Janata Dal (United) in Bihar, Biju Janata Dal in Orissa, Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, and DMK in Tamil Nadu.

Six elections between 1991 and 2009 did not produce an absolute majority for a single party or coalition, and, as a consequence, minority and/or coalition governments. However, the 2009 elections resulted in a near majority for the Congress-led UPA which won 262 seats. In the first five national elections from 1952

to 1971, India had a one party dominant system in which the Congress party received a plurality of votes averaging more than 40 per cent, while the second largest party could win only 10 per cent of the vote. In the 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998, and 1999 elections, the Congress majority was well short of the vote share needed for a seat majority. These elections saw the vote share of the second party or alliances go up, thereby making the system more pluralistic and competitive.

More than eighteen state parties have held power both at the Central and state levels, while many more have shared power at the state level. Both regional and state-based parties are contenders for power in all the states except Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh. Taken as a whole, all these changes have substantially altered India's party system, and the transformation has been far-reaching. Three major trends post-1989, the decline of the Congress, the rise of the BJP, and that of regional and state-based parties have led to the formation of minority and coalition governments. After a considerable change in parties and the party system, two coalition blocs have emerged. Both the NDA, led by the BJP, and the UPA, led by the Congress, were propped up by a host of state-based and regional parties eager to share the spoils of office. Some major state parties are not part of the two coalition blocs, and from time to time they attempt to revive a Third Front, opposed to both the Congress and the BJP.

The succession of coalition governments since the 1990s, while reflecting the expanding process of democratization, is based on spatial, not ideological, compatibility. This was the case with the BJP's Alliances in 1998, 1999, and 2004, as well the Congress-led UPA in 2004. Thus, in 2004, the strategic alliance of the Congress and the Left, forged in the six years of the Vajpayee period, formed the lynchpin of the new dispensation built around a strong opposition to communal politics; at the same time, there was a range of issues, especially in economic and foreign policies, where their policies and perceptions differed, resulting in the withdrawal of support by the Left parties in August 2008 on the issue of the controversial Indo-US nuclear deal and the growing strategic partnership between the two countries.

5.2. Findings:

1. Transition from Caste to Class Politics:

Caste relations in India are governed by relative caste superiority-inferiority in caste hierarchy. Each caste is in conflictual relationship with its immediate caste either in the ascending or descending order. While there has been a macro-level conflict between the forward castes (Brahmans, Rajputs, Vaishyas, and Kayasthas) and the backward castes (OBCs/Dalits), there have been greater conflicts within the forward and the backward caste groups. By this logic, we have seen more conflicts between Brahmans and Thakurs (in upper castes), between Yadavs and Kurmis (in OBCs), and Chamars and Pasis (in Dalits). Gradually, the focus in north Indian states has been shifting from inter-caste exploitation to intra-caste exploitation.

The dominance of castes in political contestations in India had always been an enigmatic point baffling scholars. Why had ideologies been relegated to margins in such contests? Why primordial bases attract people in place of the political and the economic when it comes to exercising their franchise? Why had caste politics overtaken class politics in India?

Western liberal societies insist on ideology-based political contestations. These societies were largely homogenized at the beginning of their democratic politics; political mobilization was possible only on basis of the political, that is, ideology. India accepted Western liberal democratic model for her polity with a society rich in diversity, multiculturalism, and heterogeneity. Hence, when it came to political mobilization for electoral contestation, we had a choice; we had primordial factors (caste, religion, language, ethnicity, and so on) as well as ideologies, and we could use either as instrument of effective political mobilization. But we chose the social (caste) over political (ideology). Why?

That was because of historical reasons. During the freedom struggle, all social denominations coalesced under the umbrella of the Indian National Congress acquiring common political orientation. So, there was ideological homogenization, and most people thought alike politically. All social groups continued to stay in Congress making it a rainbow social coalition. When new parties started showing up, they were still not sure about any alternative ideology as there was still very great deal of consensus in country on political and economic issues in domestic and international

arena. Hence, 'political' (ideology) and 'economic' (class) could hardly help such new parties in effective political mobilization; so they had only one option-social (caste). That is why caste came to define political contestations in India. The only exceptions were communists who followed communist ideologies but did not find favour with people in spite of a very favourable environment owing to acute poverty, unemployment, and exploitation of masses.³

The rise of backward caste politics in north Indian states in early nineties was accompanied by two more very important developments-beginning of the era of globalization and sharpening of the communal-secular divide. In UP, religion tried to overtake caste but for a short time. The people of UP defeated BJP and there was a steady decline in party's performance during nineties and thereafter [1991: 221 seats (31.5 percent vote); 1993: 177 (33.3 per cent); 1996: 175 (33.9 per cent); 2002: 88 (20.7 per cent); and 2007: SO (16.9 per cent)]. Very soon, caste emerged as a dominant variable and overtook religion signaling the coming to power of caste parties, the BSP and the SP. But caste proved to be limiting experience as its share in overall population was limited, and whatever the share, there was no homogenization of respective caste groups, especially OBCs and Dalits. Hence, the third variable-'plurality of castes'-entered through inclusive politics of BSP and SP. The BSP got absolute majority (206 out of 403) in 2007 assembly elections with just 30 per cent votes. But people demonstrated in subsequent Lok Sabha elections (2009) that caste support to BSP had been given with a purpose and that purpose having been lost sight of, they shifted their focus to new variable in state politics, that is, 'development'. That resulted in surprise win of the Congress from UP where it fought elections on development plan. The party not only more than doubled its performance (from 9 to 21), it also improved its vote share in almost every section of society.

But development may work as a catalyst to create awareness among deprived sections of all castes and religions about their common plight, and hence may work as a facilitator to create 'new subaltern classes'. Thus, 'classes' may soon overtake everything else in the domain of political contestation in UP (Verma 2010). This shows that electoral politics in UP has travelled a long way from religion to class through intermediary variables of caste, inclusion and development. So, backward politics in UP would do well to 'transcend caste and address this class' (ibid.).

Bihar was a case of better backward class politics but myopic leadership of Lalu Yadav reduced it to backward caste politics that is shared between Lalu-led JD and Nitish-led Samata Party. Today, competition between the two is how to become more and more inclusive so as to transcend from caste to class.

The Bihar model of backward caste mobilization demonstrates 'class orientation'. However, the Lalu-Rabri class orientation was a limiting one, exclusivist and focused more on horizontal homogenization among Dalits and OBCs, whereas the Nitish orientation is more open, inclusive, and has greater focus on vertical integration of the marginalized that runs through entire hierarchical social structure attempting formation of a 'subaltern class'.

The compulsions of inclusive politics are so obvious, as in UP, that a logical corollary appears to be an all out effort by parties to expand their constituencies through (a) vertical and horizontal homogenization of 'backward castes' and (b) reaching out to subalterns from other castes, especially from upper castes, so as to reinvent a 'backward (read subaltern) class' constituency for them replacing 'backward caste constituency'.

The 2012 (February-March) assembly elections in UP giving SP absolute majority (224 out of 403 seats) also substantiate this thesis. Akhilesh Yadav, the new and youngest chief minister, succeeded not only in homogenizing 'backward castes' but also in amalgamating them with the Dalits to create a new 'subaltern class constituency'. Hence, the SP vote share; among UBCs (+14 Kurmis, +6 most-backwards) and Dalits (+12 Jatavs, +6 other SCs) increased substantially. That was a difficult task that had defied even Dr Lohia and Kanshi Ram earlier. The political coming together of these two social denominations had been blocked by conflictual economic relations between them; the Dalits were usually subjected to exploitative labour by predominantly landowning Yadavs (Verma 2012). Ironically, some Yadavs—the hardcore supporters of the party—shifted away (-7 percentage points) from SP and moved to BSP (+3 percentage points). Notwithstanding that, 2012 assembly elections in UP may be considered a u-turn in the history of 'backward class' movement in the state.

As backward leadership is divided in Bihar, the one led-by JD (U)-BJP combining non-Yadav OBCs (lower OBCs) and upper castes has a better chance of

structuring 'subaltern class' because upper caste subalterns have greater comfort with and better access to this leadership. The amalgamation of lower OBC and upper-caste subalterns may also attract lower Muslims owing to subaltern osmotic effect'. The JD (U)-BJP alliance is actually attempting to form a subaltern class in Bihar that includes lower OBCs, Mahadalits, *pasmanda* Muslims, and the poors of upper castes. The CSDS data shows sharp decline in OBC, Dalit, and Muslim support for RJD since 1995 (Kumar 1999).

The JD (U) has a strong support base amongst Kurmis and Koeris, and its alliance with BJP helped attract upper caste voters. Yet, in simple numerical terms, the JD (U)-BJP alliance lagged behind the RJD-LJP alliance that represented 50 per cent of total electorate (Yadav, Muslims, and Dalits). But in spite of that, the RJD-LJP alliance was defeated in 2009. Nitish Kumar sought to break Yadav-Muslim alliance by initiating several welfare measures for weaker sections of Muslims. He identified backward Muslims as 'Pasmada' Muslims (such as weavers and dhobis) who constitute about 15 per cent of Muslim population and gave them reservation in local bodies. Dalits constitute 16.5 per cent of state's population and LJP leader Ram Vilas Paswan is their powerful leader coming from the 'Dusadhs'. The Nitish government floated welfare schemes for 'Mahadalit' that included Dalits other than Dusadh and Chamars. That was to break Paswan's hold on Dalits. Post-Mandal Lalu politics hinged on support from lower OBCs. The 2009 Lok Sabha elections confirm shift of lower OBCs from Lalu's RJD to JD (U) of Nitish: more than half of lower OBCs voted for JD (U)-BJP and only a meagre 12 per cent for RJD-LJP. While 'Kurmis and Koeris (supporters of JD [U]) turned out in large numbers, Yadavs and Dalits turnout was low (Sanjay and Rakesh 2009). The structuring of a backward (subaltern) class had been on agenda of Bihar for quite some time. A very unique attempt at concretising that could be seen in the reservation policy of socialist Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur who promulgated it in 1978. It provided 26 per cent reservation to 'Backward Classes' in government employment in addition to 24 per cent reservation for Harijans and Adivasis. Out of the 26 per cent, 'more backwards' were allotted 12 per cent and 'less backwards' 8 per cent; 3 per cent were reserved to women of any group, and 3 per cent to those who were 'economically backward' (Blair 1980).

In Bihar, identity assertion and empowerment urge of backwards led to greater mobilization and empowerment of RJD espousing their cause initially. But RJD

provided them only 'notional' empowerment without improving their economic life. Steadily, Bihar was plagued with crime, corruption, and misgovernance that led to disillusionment of lower backwards with Yadav dominant RJD government in Bihar.

As the 2010 assembly elections have demonstrated, the JD (U)-BJP combine led by Nitish Kumar has made a significant move in the direction of creating a 'subaltern class'—a conglomerate of backwards, Dalits, STs, and Muslims. The density of subaltern groups is greater around JD (U)-BJP than RJD-LJP combine (Figure 13.4a). But in spite of decline in overall vote share of RJD-LJP, the pattern of support in different economic groups is not different from JD (U)-BJP alliance.

Madhya Pradesh is a different case altogether. The backward castes/classes have been almost evenly divided between two major parties—the Congress and the BJP. But a new phenomenon is the appearance of BSP on political firmament of Madhya Pradesh. The BSP has been an insignificant player so far but is slowly driving a wedge between the Congress and the BJP. In 2008 assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, BSP got 11 per cent votes and won seven seats. But the party could have won at least 17 more seats (Verma 2009b). It is also very significant that the BSP very effectively drove a wedge between the BJP and the Congress and played role of spoiler resulting in defeat of the Congress in 48 constituencies and defeat of the BJP in 33 constituencies (ibid.). If that is any indication, we may say that present position of the BSP in Madhya Pradesh is similar to its position in UP in the early 1990s when it used to get about 9-11 per cent votes (1989: 9.41 per cent, 1991: 9.3 per cent, 1993: 11.1 per cent, 1996:11.2 per cent).

So, contrary to UP and Bihar, Madhya Pradesh has potential for slow but steady formation of subaltern class that was evenly coopted by the Congress and the BJP. However, much will depend on the BSP leadership and their strategies to take advantage of situation and extricate backward classes from the clutches of the present players.

Thus, the entire northern India seems to be undergoing transition from 'caste politics' to 'class politics'. On a deeper analysis, it appears that nineties was not only a decade of beginning of liberalization, privatization, and globalization, but also a decade of deepening of democracy in India owing to coming of panchayati raj institutions that suddenly empowered three main castes/classes at grassroots level—

OBCs, Dalits, and women—by giving them reservations in the third tier of our federal structures both in rural and urban segments.

The third tier elections in UP, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh seem to be diluting the element of caste in political contestations as these elections are won or lost on the basis of socializing and mobilizing within a very small group of electors where caste does not work because the same caste candidates contest elections in a small 'panchayat or ward, and for winning, a candidate needs to mobilize people of other castes so as to offset division of votes in the same caste group. This is because of reservation of seats for OBCs, Dalits, and women—that means that in most of constituencies, all the candidates are either only OBCs or only Dalits or only women.

While Bihar and Madhya Pradesh reserve 50 per cent seats for women in panchayati raj institutions at all level, UP gives them 33 per cent reservation. In Bihar, one of the first acts of Nitish-led JD (U)-BJP government was to enhance the women reservation from 33 per cent to 50 per cent by amending the Bihar Panchayati Raj Act 2006. In the same Act, OBCs were granted reservation up to 20 per cent. Nitish Kumar also favours the implementation of Ranganath Mishra Committee recommendations giving 10 per cent reservations to Muslims on the basis of educational and economic backwardness. Of late, the JD (U) strategy in Bihar is to attract anti-Dalits (by organizing '*maha dalit sarnmelans*'), pas-manda (Dalit and backward) Muslims, and more/most backward caste along with women. This is a very calculated strategy to structure a 'subaltern class' to be used for political purposes. But this drive is perfectly inclusive and in tune with democratic politics.

2. Pragmatism of Indian Parties:

One remarkable feature of political parties in India since the 1990s has been their tendency to move away from ideological frameworks. It is important to note that until this period, there were different types of parties in India. There were parties that represented the interests of the established order, and parties that sought basic social and economic transformations and engaged in struggles on behalf of the interests of the oppressed and those marginalized in society. However, this has changed as most political parties are more like each other on many issues and are devoted to parliamentary politics, including the Left parties. The ideological differences between parties are fading and hence they are likely to adopt the same mix of policies when in

power. By and large, Indian parties are more pragmatic than ideological, which make party boundaries highly flexible and impermeable. The majority of leaders and legislators could be in one party or the other because their presence in the party is often influenced by their success in obtaining the party ticket. Parties seem to have no distinct ideology that would distinguish one party from another in the course of election campaigns, for instance, although what they do when they are in power embodies or expresses interests of various kinds (Sarangi 1984: 189-207). The idealism that exemplified the first few decades after Independence has been replaced with a purposefulness characterized by self-interest, flexibility, and dissimulation. The nationalist fervour in the aftermath of Independence has given way to the politics of unbridled power, involving all the features of bargaining, negotiation, and compromise. Intra-party debates on secularism versus religion or market versus the state in the Congress, or globalization versus *swadeshi* in the BJP are fairly infrequent. Even secularism, which has been a defining difference between parties, is confined to the Congress, the BJP, and the Left parties. None of the state or regional parties has displayed any real ideological reluctance in allying with communal parties such as the BJP, if their interests so require, despite the party's open association with the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya in 1992, the pogrom in Gujarat in 2002, and its active association with numerous anti-Muslim campaigns.

The explanation for these changes is traceable to the radical transformations taking place in both state and society, and the way in which individuals and groups perceive their roles as constitutive elements of a political community (Nayyar 2001: 361-96). During the earlier decades, each political party tried to locate itself in an ideological continuum and in relation to the state. The economic policy paradigm shift that took place in 1991 entailed shifting priorities away from distributive justice to high growth as a state goal, the demotion of planning and the planning commission, public-sector industries, and the encouragement of private investment to achieve this goal. These changes were quite significant as they involved a shift from a multi-class state committed to pro-poor measures to a narrow conception of the state that is more closely aligned with business, capital, and the middle classes, and openly committed to a capitalist path of development. The new phase is characterized by an intensification of conflict in the economy and polity, and a clear tension between the economics of markets and political democracy. The result of this shift was a widening

gap between these classes and the bulk of people, who have not gained significantly from the economic reforms of the past two decades or so.

The growing disjunction between policies and the support base of parties is an obvious consequence of these processes. The Congress has had to reconcile the contradiction between economic reforms, which benefit the elite and upper-middle classes, and its mass support among the poor, who have been the losers in this process. This discrepancy results from the effect of two factors: the change in India's social structure—from an elite-mass structure to one with a substantial middle class sandwiched between these two poles—and the parties' need to continue to cater to a range of groups. Earlier, party leaders used to argue that they represented the interests of the people. Now, since the parties tend to represent sectional interests, they seem to claim that they themselves are 'the people'. On the one hand, this represents a step in the inclusion of marginalized groups. On the other, the parties and their leaders can afford to be undemocratic and authoritarian, because their own interests are submerged in that of the group (Hasan 2006).

This shift towards pragmatism is a strong tendency in the development of parties globally. Both the Democratic Party in the United States and the Labour Party in Britain, as well as other many parties of the Left have embraced the free market policies first made acceptable by Bill Clinton, and subsequently by Tony Blair. Indian parties are not immune to this trend. Quite a few major parties have moved ideologically in a rightward direction, even as they remain politically opposed to the right-wing BJP. Except for the CPI and CPI(M), no other political party uses the term socialism or anti-imperialism; these terms have virtually disappeared from the political discourse. Almost all the political parties today, despite each one's familiar slogan to defend the interests of the poor, the disadvantaged, and the marginalized, increasingly think and act in similar ways. In spite of some differences between parties, there is a fair degree of consensus on economic and foreign policies. No matter which party comes to power the Central and state governments are unwilling to roll back neo-liberal. A remarkable feature of Indian politics lies in the advent of parties centred around one person, be it a politician or movie stars turned leaders. There is a proliferation of parties that promote family rule and personality cults around the family name, caste, or charisma. Parties have become a preserve or families and are subservient to one supreme leader. The leader can wilfully impose

her/his offspring or relatives on the party. Twenty-seven MPs in the Fifteenth Lok Sabha and a large number of cabinet ministers in the second UPA government belonged to prominent political families'- an indication that politics has indeed become a family business. Major and mini dynasties control national and regional parties.

Family rule or dynasty is a striking feature of the Congress, but it is only fair to add that neither family rule nor the dynastic pattern is the monopoly of the Congress. Quite a few political families have sprung up in the recent past, and more are mushrooming all the time. In other words, what began in the Congress now extends to the bulk of party politics. From the Karunanidhi clan in Tamil Nadu to the Abdullah and Mufti families in Kashmir, the Thackerays and Pawars in Maharashtra, Sangmas in Meghalaya, Patnaiks in Orissa, and the Mulayam Singh Yadav clan in Uttar Pradesh, parties have become a family business propped up by an unremitting focus on these leaders. The most striking change has occurred in the cadre-based DMK which has yielded itself to dynastic pressures and gradually turned into a family enterprise. Family control or dynastic rule is not as pervasive in ideology-based parties as it is in others. One consequence of family dominated politics is that parties have become a closed shop with entry restricted only to those who have the right credentials of birth (Sanghvi 2009). As the political class becomes a self-perpetuating dynastic elite Indian politics is rendered less representative. Such politics of inheritance has undermined internal democracy and obstructed institutionalization of parties because it can constrain the individual discretion and personal power of charismatic leaders (Chandra 2005: 87-125). The absence of clear democratic procedures, parties will continue to be plagued by the factionalism that has been so detrimental to both their own interests and the stabilization of party structures (Chandra 2004) All in all, the internal structures of parties, and the lack of intra-party democracy in particular have impeded the growth of strong and vigorous parties.

A larger consequence of the decline of ideology and the rise of one-leader or one-family centred parties is the reduction of party organizations into election winning machines, which depend for their success on the charisma of the leader and their capacity to raise massive funds. An important aspect of the struggle for power is the financing of election campaigns. This has assumed tremendous importance because winning and losing elections has become the only role a party envisages for

itself. The party and the leader's ability to win a majority in the national or state elections is the sole basis for judging the success or failure of a party and its top leader. Since most parties function as vote-gathering machines, there is a distinct unwillingness to enlist public support through political campaigns and movements between elections, build cadres, or mobilize people around new political initiatives. The privileging of elections at the expense of other aspects of the democratic process implies that parties are inattentive to the need for constant organizational renewal, or to the requirements of popular mobilization. Leaders are valued for their capacity to attract crowds, strike deals and alliances, and raise resources as elections become more and more expensive in India.

Electioneering is labour-intensive and expensive in India's sprawling urban and rural constituencies. Parties and candidates need large sums of money for advertising, polling, consulting, travel, vehicles and fuel, and the printing of campaign materials that are to reach voters in constituencies. Historically, parties have been dependent for finance on big businesses and wealthy individuals, especially parties of the Right and the Centre (Sridharan 2006: 311-40). During the 1950s and 1960s, the business community contributed the bulk of the funds (Venkatesan 1999). There are laws to limit campaign finances and restrict the expenditure of parties in elections, but they are largely inoperative because it is easy to circumvent them. Since the 1980s, there has been a closer and more open link between big businesses and the corporate sector and parties after the lifting of the ban on company donations in 1984 (Sridharan 1999: 229-54). The objectives of corporate funding of parties underwent a significant change in the wake of liberalization and the perceived irreversibility of the economic reform process. Nowadays, organized industry and business houses fund parties and dominate policy making for individual benefits.

The growing nexus between politics and the corporate sector and the corporate sector and the dependence of parties on the corporate sector for funds is a not a new feature of party politics, but has become more manifest. This is also because the unrealistic ceiling on election funding has made the process of election and party financing less than transparent. The Election and Other Related Laws (Amendment) Act 2003 was one measure that promised major changes in the financing of political parties and their candidates for elections. However, these provisions have failed to ensure transparency in party finances-both how money is raised and spent.

Consequently, there is a growing dominance of special interests in the polity, leaving parties politically vulnerable to these leading interests. This limits the ability of parties to boldly articulate the concerns of the marginalized and poor people. Political finance reform is necessary for the stability of democracy itself, because election funds raised through corrupt means increase cynicism about parties and politics.

Political parties in India have played an important role in democratic consolidation. They have done so through a politics of accommodation and consensus that binds the political class together despite their different party affiliations. They have facilitated the inclusion of varied groups in the political system, by giving voice to historically excluded groups, and helping them to gain access to the political system. At the same time, it is increasingly difficult to reconcile the absence of intra-party democracy within parties with the robustness and resilience of the democratic polity.

There is considerable dissatisfaction with parties and politicians as vehicles of representation and governance. Paradoxically, voters feel that parties are essential for the functioning of democracy, but do not seem to trust them to make democracy work (*State of Democracy in South Asia: A Report*). The biggest institutional weakness of parties is that they are leader-centric and lack internal democracy, as leaders are unwilling or unable to institutionalize party elections or procedures for the selection of candidates, and increase the participation of members in party functioning (Suri 2005). The absence of internal democracy, dynastic rule, elite capture, and the inability of parties to offer real choices to the people are among the major issues confronting India's parties'.

By a long way—the most disturbing trends are noticeable in political parties which function as family fiefdoms and without a trace of internal democracy, most political parties lack the political capacity to take the lead in formulating and debating policies which reflect people's aspirations and needs. Although parties and party leaders do profess to stand for ideology, in reality they are flexible and not all reluctant to give up their ideological stance or put it on-the-back burner if that helps them to gain a share of political power or to obtain a ticket for contesting an election. Although the divergence between election rhetoric and the actual implementation of government policy remains large particularly with regard to policies that have distributive and welfare outcomes, the UPA government has attempted to shift away

from technocratic strategies of governance to a political approach which focused on inclusive growth through social and welfare measures. At one level, the Congress has stuck to the neo-liberal path of market-oriented reforms, which was aimed at generating economic growth but at another level to contain the ill-effects of the market economy, it came out with legislations like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, and a host of other social welfare schemes which held out promise of relief, particularly for the rural poor.

Though encountering serious problems with regard to the healthy functioning of parties, the fact remains that there is no alternative to political activity based on party competition. Parties cannot be dispensed with as long as we have a democratic parliamentary system of government. India's democratic stability, which defies conventional theories of democracy, underscores the positive relationship between" parties and democracy. In India, the legitimacy of party-based governments has never been questioned. Even frequent elections for Parliament, state assemblies, and panchayats have not alienated the electorate; in fact, they seem to give the mass of voters a sense of popular control over government. The significant changes in the social composition of India's ruling elite since Independence, both in politics and in the bureaucracy are largely due to parties opening their doors to new recruits from marginalized groups, which ultimately make their way into the government. This is obvious from the significant increase in the number of lower-caste legislators and senior civil servants in influential government positions (Suri 2005). This trend signals a social revolution that is giving voice to previously marginalized groups (Jaffrelot 2002). Despite the erosion of party organizations and the degeneration of politicians; which so preoccupies intellectuals, the media, and the middle classes, the Indian voter, going by the over 60 per cent turnout in national elections and an even higher turnout in state ; assembly elections, appears satisfied with the choices that political parties offer.

None of this minimizes the seriousness of the problems facing political parties and the political system they run. The most serious problem, is the failure of parties to keep their promises to the electorate-promises to implement economic development alongside the reduction of social inequalities. India cannot build a truly inclusive polity without an inclusive economy. Parties need to think why, six decades after Independence, more than a quarter of our population still lives below the official

poverty line, and millions are deprived of the basic necessities of life or face daily preventable problems such as malnutrition and endemic hunger, or lack of purchasing power. Parties must ask why faster and more effective political intervention to relieve the suffering of millions of the poorest and disadvantaged is not forthcoming. These are the difficult questions confronting our political parties. This is the great unfinished agenda of the nation-building project that parties have yet to implement.

3. Decline of Backward Caste Politics in Northern India

The backward caste movement in northern India, especially in UP and Bihar, seem to have suffered decline by end of twentieth century and beginning of twenty-first century. An indication of this is the fact that SP-a party espousing cause of backwards in UP led by Mulayam Singh Yadav-lost power in UP in 2007 and RJD led by Lalu Prasad Yadav lost power in Bihar a little earlier in 2005. Loss of power itself may not indicate decline of a party; the same is provided by (a) steady decline in overall vote share of a party, and (b) loss of support among traditional voters of the party.

The SPs record in UP since early 1990s has been a story of sharp incline in vote share (1991-2002: 12.5-25.4 per cent) followed by stagnation (2002-7: at 25.4 per cent) and, then, beginning of decline (2007-9: 25.4-23.2 per cent) (Figure 13.1a). The party had two major support bases: Yadav and Muslims. While Yadav support base remains intact, there has been loss of support in more backward castes (MRBCs: -11 per cent) and most backward castes (MBCs: -2 per cent) during 2007 assembly elections (Verma 2010). But what must worry SP is loss of Muslim voters. Since 2002, Muslim support for SP has been declining sharply; during 2002-7, it declined by 5 percentage points, but between 2007 and 2009, it declined by 17 percentage points (Figure 13.1b).

The RJD in Bihar ruled from 1990 to 2005. Interestingly, its vote share was stagnant in both 1995 (32.2 per cent) and 2000 (33 per cent) assembly elections. But in every subsequent election since 2000, RJD's vote share had declined. During 2000-9, party's vote share declined by 13.7 percentage points. Unfortunately for RJD, lower OBCs have sharply shifted from RJD to JD (U)-BJP combine. In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, JD (U)-BJP got a huge 58 per cent lower OBC votes as compared to their

paltry 12 per cent votes polled by RJD (Figure 13.2b). The position remained the same in 2010 assembly elections [JD (U)-BJP: 55 per cent, RJD-LJP: 12 percent].²

Thus, there is a common cord between UP and Bihar. Parties claiming to be champions of backwards are slowly being disowned by a section of backwards and their traditional supporters in both states. Why is this happening? And, where are the deserting backwards and their supporters going? Madhya Pradesh is a different case where backwards have yet to come up as a social group claiming distinct identity, building social movement, and asserting for empowerment. They have yet to incline in the politics of state and, hence, the question of their decline does not arise.

Is mobilization only providing 'notional' empowerment to backwards and Dalits? And, is that a valid strategy for long-term politics? Do we not need to link mobilization not only with greater consciousness, identity, and notional empowerment but also with better governance and greater development positively impacting the day-to-day life of backwards and Dalits?

Lohia 'argued that horizontal mobilisation of lower castes on basis of explicit appeals to caste identity had substantial political potential for organising poor and the deprived. That shows that Lohia not only realized the need for transcending caste barrier to form 'subaltern class' but anticipated possibility of horizontal division among backward castes once mobilization had taken them towards political empowerment (as was to happen in UP and Bihar later). Probably, Lohia's '*jati todo andolan*' was aimed more at horizontal homogenization of backwards than anything else.

Another reason for decline of the backward movement in north Indian states may be due to elite-based leadership of backward castes and its failure to become a mass based radical movement. Owing to changes in agrarian structure, urbanization, and English education, some backward castes improved their economic condition and attempted 'sanskritisation'. Yadavs in Bihar and UP took early lead in this. Their links with cow and Lord Krishna facilitated their 'sanskritisation'. Kurmis and Koeris followed suit. The sanskritisation was aimed at getting rid of socio-economic exploitation by zamindars. Jaffrelot opines that Yadavs tried to substantiate their sanskritization through attempt to 'aryanise' their history. Conversely, lower backwards did not attempt this; hence, wide disconnect appeared between upper

backwards and lower/lowest backward castes that prevented cultural homogenization of backwards as a whole. That was in contrast to low castes of Maharashtra and south India where they did not attempt sanskritization but revolted against the caste system.

In UP, caste politics had been showing signs of unease for quite some time now. The two caste parties-BSP and SP-realized this during the second half of the 1990s. They represented what we call 'backward class' that included two major social denominations known as OBCs and Dalits. Unfortunately for 'backward class' movement and politics, these two groups got horizontally divided; the upper segment (OBCs) was led by the SP and its leader Mulayam Singh Yadav, and the lower segment (Dalits) was led by BAMCEF, DS-4, and BSP and their leaders Kanshi Ram and Mayawati. It is surprising that backward classes could not homogenize in spite of the fact that ideological moorings of the two parties vouched for 'backward class' and not for 'backward caste', But the old social structure with in-built exploitation of lower ones in the hierarchy by the higher ones ensured that OBC-Dalit exploitative relationship and economic conflict would browbeat this ideological commonality between Kanshi Ram and Lohia, and not allow backward castes and Dalits to come together and homogenize to form a subaltern class.

In Bihar, upper castes generally owned land and wielded social and political power. The backward castes, who owned some land, provided strength to land reform movement expecting direct benefit. They were able to improve their economic status and emerged as new-rich agrarian class, popularly known as 'kulaks', and played important role in the politics of state. Their aspirations for a share in political power led to realignment of social forces in 1970s. That process galvanized in early 1990s. However, it is now giving way to a process of 'de-alignment' among the forces of backward castes. The backward castes are splitting and a section of them aligning with upper castes to challenge the dominance of Yadav led OBCs.

Bihar displayed an early protest by backward castes against upper castes. The Ahirs (Yadavs) and Kurmis/Koeries in Bihar opposed beggar (forced labour) during 1910s. They collectively refused to perform beggar for landlords and opposed taxes imposed by them. The Ahirs refused to sell cow dung cakes, curd, and milk to upper castes at concessional rates. In independent India, they used electoral process as a tool of effective political mobilization, and because of their superior numerical strength, they succeeded in getting more and more seats in state legislative assembly

inviting some scholars to call that as 'India's Silent Revolution. The Yadavs and Kurmis in Bihar organized movement and got support of various sub-castes. But leadership for backward caste movement came from the rich. Businessmen and large farmers supported Yadav movement. The Yadavs were also very quick in organizing caste associations not only at district levels but also at state and national levels.

We may conclude our argument by saying that without either a well-defined socialist agenda or a clear socialist ideology and with the handicap of soiled image among electorates SP faces a uncertain future.

ABP news opinion poll: BSP to win 185 seats if up polls are held now

It's an alarming situation for the incumbent government Samajwadi Party, nine or ten months before Uttar Pradesh is set to hold state elections.

Table 5.1

ABP News comparative voting % prior to 2017 State Assembly elections

Party	Actual vote % in the 2012 election	Actual seats in the 2012 elections	Forecast vote % as per Opinion Poll Mar 2016	Forecast vote % as per Opinion Poll Mar 2016
BJP	15.3	42	24	120
AD	1.0	1		
BSP	24.8	80	31	185
INC	11.5	29	11	13
RID	2.3	8		
SP	30.1	228	23	80
IND and Others	15.0	15	11	5
Total	100.0	403	100	403

Source: ABP News Bureau New Delhi. Wednesday, 16 March 2016

ABP News latest opinion poll that gauges the current mood of UP has revealed that BSP supremo Mayawati will make a comeback in the state by roping in allies if elections were to be held today. The survey has predicted that BSP is likely to win 185 seats in the 403-member assembly. BSP was reduced to 80 seats in the defeat of 2012 polls but the scenario now would let Mayawati return to the helm of affairs in

the state. SP, on the other hand, is keen on repeating its performance of 2012, but the party is witnessing a wane in its popularity. The survey has found that Samajwadi Party may win only 80 seats (228 in 2012) this time around. In last year's Lok Sabha polls, it won only five of the 80 seats in the state. The BJP swept the state by winning 73 seats along with allies. The 2017 election that holds the key to Narendra Modi's second term in 2019 has suggested that the BJP+ is likely to bag 120 seats but that wouldn't be enough to form the government. Uttar Pradesh is also crucial because after being routed in Bihar last year, the BJP cannot afford to lose the heartland state.

Despite attaining successes in Gujarat in 2014 and then Bihar in 2015, master poll strategist and public health professional, Prashant Kishor, does not seem to be doing wonders for Congress. The party with RLD is seen winning mere 13 seats while Others in fray bag five.

Table 5.2
Region-wise break-up below

Party	Avadh Pradesh	Bundelkhand	Paschim Pradesh	Purvanchal	Total
BJP+	19	5	32	64	120
BSP	31	11	80	63	185
INC+	1	1	3	8	13
SP	12	2	28	38	80
IND and Others	0	0	2	3	5
TOTAL	63	19	145	176	403

Important points of the Opinion Poll:

Maya 'Best Suited CM'

BSP Chief Mayawati (31%) has emerged as best suited to become the next CM of UP closely followed by Akhilesh Yadav (30%) of SP. Rajnath Singh (18%) of the BJP was a distant third.

Four key issues

According to the respondents, unemployment, inflation, corruption and poverty are going to be the four most important election issues in the forthcoming Vidhan Sabha Elections to be held during 2017.

SP's 'Below Average' Performance

Performance of the SP Government since last four years has been rated just below average with a mean score of 2.9. 32% respondents gave a rating of Very Good or Good compared to 36% who rated the government performance as Poor or Very Poor. However, Muslim voters feel it is well above average. Similar response received when asked about the performance of the UP Chief Minister, Akhilesh Yadav.

Law & order has become worse

A high proportion of respondents, 60% said that the law and order situation has become worse in last four years of SP Government. Except the Muslim population, 54% of whom feel it has improved, the response is same across the demographics. Two thirds of the respondents said that they have not seen or heard about any development work undertaken by the Government in the last four years. Even half of the Muslim voters agree to this view. Nearly two-third respondents were dissatisfied as Govt. unable to prevent crimes against women.

Constant threat to religious harmony

More than half of the respondents were dissatisfied with the current government in maintaining the religious harmony among people. However, half of the Muslim voters feel otherwise and the opinion is divided among other minority religions. Controlling the law and order situation is a big concern; nearly two-thirds of the respondents recorded their dissatisfaction with the current UP Government on this count.

BSP less corrupt

The current SP Government led by Akhilesh Yadav has been seen as more corrupt compared to the previous Mayawati led BSP government in UP. This perception is higher among the Hindus and BPL respondents.

62% satisfied with BJP-led NDA in Centre

62% of the respondents said that they were satisfied when asked about the performance of the current BJP led Central Government. But more than half of the Muslim voters felt dissatisfied with the Central Government.

Modi Still Popular

Narendra Modi emerges as the most popular leader in Uttar Pradesh. Mayawati comes in at second position closely followed by the current Chief Minister, Akhilesh Yadav.

5.3. Suggestions and Recommendations:

1. Ideology based political contestation should take place during elections.
2. Inner party democracy is to be established and institutionalized in the party.
3. Stop Yadavisation of the Political and Administrative system with immediate effect. This would help in attaining lost confidence of electorates in U.P.
4. Decision making must take a note of promises made in election manifesto.
5. Leader worship/ leader centricism to wither away.
6. Strict monitoring of electioneering process has to be done by State election commission during the election at grass root level.
7. To break down the corporate political nexus, a regulatory body should be framed.
8. Inclusive Politics /Subaltern class category.

5.4. Direction for future Research:

This is a new experiment in Indian politics and many ramifications of the same need be studied seriously by future researchers. But in all fairness, one may say that the third-tier democracy in northern India has completely changed nature of political contestations at grass-roots level and has not only pushed politics away from caste but has also signalled beginning of its class orientation. One may hypothesize about a linkage between consolidation of grass-roots democracy and the beginning of subaltern class politics in India.

The implications of subaltern class politics can only be positive for democratic politics in India. The subalterns have suffered most due to social humiliation, discrimination, and economic deprivation. The rigidities of caste system and its consequent strong hold over political process have almost left everyone convinced that Indian electoral and political processes are permanently showcased in the framework of caste politics. One would not be ready to believe that this could be

changed in near future. But as caste parties in UP and Bihar have shown, compulsions of democratic politics have forced them to take new initiatives in twenty-first century; instead of caste-based exclusive politics, they had to turn to class-based inclusive politics. And the most convenient inclusion can be of those segments of society who come from the lower/lowest strata and marginalized sections of society.

There are many issues that may arise. Can inclusive politics really banish caste politics? Will social structure contingent upon the hierarchical caste arrangement collapse? Will the 'economic' overtake the 'social' and lead to formation of a 'new subaltern class'? How will this happen? What ideological innovations may be required for taking such an initiative? Can that be done without strong mobilization of farmers, agricultural workers, industrial labours, Dalits, women, students, and so on? How the mobilization will come about and by whom?

These and several interrogatories may not be addressed here, but surely our future researchers may like to concentrate on some of them. However, the entire dynamics of transition from caste to class in northern India may shift focus in academic discourse from identity and empowerment to governance and development, and may also substitute social cleavages and conflicts by sharpened political and ideological competitions.

The researcher's hypothesis is further substantiated by ABP News opinion poll survey covering a large sample among electorates since BSP is carving out a new social class constituency of Dalits and Muslims OBCs together for campaigning ahead of 2017 Assembly election.

5.5. Epilogue

This study has been aimed at the Backward Caste Movement in Uttar Pradesh. The Samajwadi Party Claims to be its offshoot/brain child. The study has been conducted with the sole objective of knowing the reality of Backward Caste Movement and Performance of Samajwadi Party in actual practice in Northern part of India and particularly in Uttar Pradesh. To find out the consequences primary and secondary data along with empirical method has been used. The study has provided valuable results and further scope for more improvements. Thus, the study has fulfilled its aims and objectives; and hence, is now completed.