

Chapter I

Introduction

CHAPTER-1

Introduction:

The assertion of the backward classes has had an uneven, and sometimes uneasy, presence in the public domain in India over the years and their impact varied profoundly in different regions of the country. At the same time this assertion has had manifold expressions it has taken overt religious as well as anti-religious forms: informed the intermittent peasant movements in the country; assumed numerous egalitarian stance and a complex nexus with the overall thrust of democratic inclusion in India. While the category, Backward classes had found widespread usage in the political vocabulary of Modern India, its substantive meaning and appeal to hearts and minds, has remained deeply contested over time and in manifold.

Backward classes is a category that denotes an array of disadvantage social groups that precipitated during the national movement and found ardent votaries in the Constituent Assembly and in the subsequent political developments in India. The disadvantage did not necessarily proceed from relative marginality or deprivation, but was closely related to the specificity of India's social formation. While the Backward classes were closely bound up with the idea of the Nation, they, in turn, demanded a differential understanding of the same. In other words, while the Backward classes were internal to a shared bond, they also called upon the Nation to be deferential to their disadvantage, as well as legacies of distinct cultural traditions and sometimes, even ways of life. Their movement sought a redefinition of the Nation of which its existing articulations were little sensitive of the 'backwardness' implied in the term was not merely economic but social as well. Often the concerned groups did not see the concept of class adequate to encompass the specific deprivations and exclusions that they were caught in and strove against. In several ways the rise of the Backward Class movement is also a statement on the nature of class-based movements in India demonstrating the inability of the latter to reach out to the multiple forms of exploitation and domination embedded in the social relations in India.

The Backward classes have been an inclusive as well as an exclusive term. As an inclusive term, it connoted all social strata that were not part of the dominant forward castes, although terms such as 'dominant' and 'forward' did not have the same connotations, particularly given the complexity and diversity of India's social

formation. As an exclusivist term, it is used to denote social groups other than the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Historically, this distinction became prominent from early 1920s as the Schedule Caste Leaders became emphatic on the features of exclusion, exploitation and dominance specific to their communities across the country. The Adivasi movement in India brought of the fore issues of autonomy and cultural difference that marked them off from the central concerns of the backward class movement. The attempt of draw a legal and administrative line of separation between the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on one hand, and the Backward classes on the other affected the lower rungs of the latter deleteriously as there was no marked differentiation between the kind of marginality and cultural domination that they were subjected to, in relation to the former. Socially, the Backward classed hailed from the peasant and service castes, low in the social hierarchy. These social constituencies have been in the throes of change both during the national movement and subsequently, although, often the advocacy and legal platforms attempted to arrest such processes and attempted to essentialise specific kind of Backwardness.

Backward Classes, therefore, remained a relational category in India. It denoted a set of social relations that assigned dominance, status, exclusion, and specific modes of recognition. As social relations came to be deeply contested in the course of the national movement and the class-based movement, the social relation called backward classes came to be reformulated in several respects. Similarly, the Backward class movement was to exercise a profound impact on the National movement and the kind of Democracy the it bequeathed to India, and on the class-based movements, before and after independence.

The constituent assembly while registering the existence of socially and economically backward classes in India and demarcating them from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes refused to spell out who these backward classed were and what specific measures were called for to remove the concerned backwardness. We find a series of reasons being mounted in this regard: give the unevenness of the existence of backward castes in India it was felt that any specification in this regard would not be fair to the situation. While constitutionalists such as Ambedkar admitted the Backward Classes would necessarily include 'a basket of castes', they were not prepared to confine the term to a specific number of castes or merely to a caste bloc as

such. In fact, Ambedkar argued that this task must be left to the dynamic of the democratic process in India and the reflectivity and deliberation of democracy should lead to the identification of not merely who the backward Classes were but also to the institution of measures for their emancipation. Otherwise, they constitutionally legal structure of India is going to arrest a process and begin to dictate terms to democratic reasoning in India. It was also felt that given the uneven presence of Backward Classes in India the grievances that they suffered from can be attended to at the appropriate levels rather than inundate the agenda of political authority at the central level.

The march of India democracy after independence has impacted the Backward class movement and the issues that it raised very differently over the years. Often a backward caste or a coalition of backward castes has emerged as a prominent player at the regional level. Such developments at the regional level have also reflected on the political equations at the Union level. Overall, we find that the backward castes have registered an appreciable advance with regard to political representation after mid-970s with certain setbacks in the early eighties. However, such political advance may not have necessarily reflected in influence they wield in the economic, social and cultural life of the Nation as a whole. The deeply embedded hierarchies at various levels have succeeded in confining and even co-opting the egalitarian thrust of the social advance of the backward castes. Further the political advance of the backward classes and particularly to those who are lowest in the social rung even among the more numerous backward castes. The benefits have accrued basically to a certain strata, rather than a majority of members of social group. Party-based competition revolving around caste and communities has also not facilitated the coming together of various castes and communities on a common platform to fight against agreed issues of backwardness. In the context of the coalition politics of the 1990s and the regionalization of India polity, the clout wielded by backward caste leaders has increased, given their significance in the regions, but the necessity of keeping the national unity intact has also made them deferential to modes of hierarchy and dominance. The culturally amorphous nature of the Backward Class constituency while making it a protagonist of certain forms of egalitarianism may also harbor every strong antagonism towards the egalitarian thrust of other sections of the society including women. Therefore, the democratic thrust of the Backward Class Movement

may not always be appreciative of freedoms and egalitarian consideration of other member of society. In recent years, certain minority communities in India, particularly, the Muslims have registered backwards strata within themselves but there is little agreement so far whether such backwardness has to be attended to as part of the overall process of democratic empowerment or by registering the community as a priority consideration in this regard. Legally and administratively these issued can lean to a great deal of complex demands such as compartmentalization of castes within backward classes, and compartmentalization of backward sections across backward classes and across society as a whole.

The state has not been a neutral, agency in India with regard to the backward class movement. It has intervened in the movement both to define what backward classes are and to visit class with caste, and sometimes caste with class. While sometimes the rationale advanced for such interventions has been shared citizenship, this did not seem to be the most important reason always. Often it has been to balance a set of demands against another and maintain modes of dominance and unity of the social formation as a whole. In the process there has not been a coherent ideology that the state has mounted in response to the backward class movement. Such ambiguity is manifested not merely in major authoritative pronouncements but also in numerous Court judgments over the years. At the same time it is important to point out that the democratic process has not necessarily expanded the reach and depth of the Backward Class movement in India or thrown up foundational agreements regarding appropriate ways of engaging with the issued that it has given to. Sometimes, the politics that it has spawned has been a cloistered kin, sub-serving partisan ends.

Given the complexity in which the Backward Class movement in India is caught in a scholarly judgment on this issue is extremely difficult to formulate particularly at the all India level. This is in spite of the impressive advance that empirical studies have registered in this regard. An investigation bearing on some of the central concerns raised by the Backward class movement, pursued unproblematically by neglecting other consideration, has the danger of becoming partisan and advocacy-prone. On the other hand, there could be several social analyses which in the name of university and impartial considerations have tended to neglect the specific concerns that Backward Class movements have raised in India. In many ways this study attempts to stay clear from partisanship and cheap advocacy and at the same

time its impartiality and cheap advocacy and at the same time its impartiality is not tinged with lack of commitment to the central concerns raised by the Backward Class movement in India. While it is justifiably sympathetic to the concern needs to take overboard other voices in the democratic arena.

The rise of democratic institutions and egalitarian values in the twentieth century had to face lot of challenges and contradictions in India due to the unique features of the society based on principles that were in deep conflict with the egalitarian values. The disparities between superior social "groups and a large majority of the population living in conditions of disadvantage and disabilities were historically pervasive in Indian society. A major reason for the disadvantageous position of these groups was the status ascribed to them by birth in certain castes, creeds, and tribal groups. Indian society was made of a multitude of relatively closed status groups, with unequal ranks, each with its own privileges and disabilities supported by traditional sanction.

The colonial approach to the caste system was ambivalent. The introduction of a uniform legal and judicial system under the British Raj radically redefined social relations expressed in the caste system in spite of the avowed policy of non-interference in social issues. At the same time through the development of Anglo-Hindu legal system, the fixation of certain roles in religious rituals in general and within the temple practices in particular and the census enumerations that led to defining and redefining caste categories, the colonial state attempted to uphold caste system and its privileges and deprivations. In spite of such ambivalence the scope for individual and collective mobility increased and identities came to be significantly recast. The new sources of secular education, modern employment and opportunities that came to be delinked from caste affiliations and the participation of the masses in the political arena slowly undermined traditional sources of legitimacy which upheld hierarchical values of caste system and patriarchal authority.

These developments created in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, a social atmosphere in which certain sections of the Backward Classes of society became aware of their basic civic rights and felt that they too should protest against then-conditions of disabilities and deprivations. Their voices of protest came to be heard in different parts of the country and in politically effective ways first appeared in the Bombay and Madras provinces of the British Domain and in the

Princely State of Mysore. Conflicting relationship between Brahmins and non-Brahmins began to develop in these regions, as the Brahmins were the first to exploit modern educational and employment opportunities. The non-Brahmin elite" began to organise themselves in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and demanded positions in political parties legislative bodies, the cabinet", and public institutions. At the same time they pressurised the government for reservation in-Government jobs and educational institutions. Later this awakening spread to other lower ranks and depressed classes too. Consequently, the second quarter of the twentieth century saw both the government and the Indian National Congress constantly engaged in negotiating with these social strata on issues of enlargement of opportunities in public life for the latter.

At the time of independence there were three broad divisions among the Backward Classes: Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. Among them the Scheduled Castes have a distinct history of preferential treatment under the British Raj with provisions which later came to be incorporated in the Constitution of the Republic of India with appropriate modifications intensely debated and even combated in the Constituent Assembly. The tribes did not explicitly form a part of the strategy of statutory safeguards and benefits during the British Raj as the latter followed a policy of isolation towards the former. The Raj paternalistically claimed them as its charge. Following independence some special provisions were extended to them. However, the Constitution of free India treated the Tribes on par with the Scheduled Castes as far as the considerations of disadvantage was concerned and listed them for providing various safeguards and benefits. Further, their cultural identity was ensured through other constitutional provisions. The third component, the Other Backward Classes, in spite of their prolonged movement for certain safeguards and preferences, was not spelt out in the Constitution although the state was enjoined upon to be 'additionally considerate'-towards the category as a whole. The absence of specific provisions for determinate groups in this category made the operationalisation of such considerations largely ad-hoc and arbitrary. The Other Backward Classes was still a nebulous category and could not be wielded together under a single platform, a situation which continues in several respects even today.

The non-Brahmin movement lost its edge when the upper classes gained direct control overstate power with independence. The lower strata of Other Backward

Classes were very much comparable to the Scheduled Castes and lacked education and resources to wade through the demands of social existence or to even fight for a decent reproduction of it. For more than three decades after independence, the Other Backward Classes hardly made their presence felt. They could assert their presence significantly at the national level only during the late 1980s on the eve of the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. But by that time, in some of the states the Other Backward Classes were successful in making themselves a socio-political constituency of great significance with all its ups and downs.

1.1. Problem of the Study

Uttar Pradesh has had a tradition of Backward Caste politics since independence. The backward caste movement grew in U.P., despite its late arrival in North-Indian states, at the end of 1960s. However, India has a long history of backward caste movements in the south. Backward caste politics in U.P. is currently at a cross-road and the party of the backwards, the Samajwadi party (SP), is steadily losing its identity by becoming more inclusionary, urban-based and capitalist in character.¹

The Constitution of India talks about the backward classes of citizens and not about backward castes. Article 15 of Indian Constitution provides for positive discrimination for them. It authorises special preferential treatment not only for Scheduled Castes (SC's) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) but also for "Other Socially and Educationally Backward Classes" (OBCs). In view of the recent upsurge of interest in OBCs, it is necessary to reflect on how this term became a category for public policy in India, especially in Uttar Pradesh, Backward classes, first, acquired a technical meaning in the princely state of Mysore when in 1918, the Mysore government appointed a committee to enquire into the question of encouraging members of the Backward communities in Public service. At the time of independence, the term backward classes had a less fixed and definite reference. The term had been around for some time and had variety of referents i.e. it had shifted rapidly in meaning and had come to mean differently in different places e.g. In 1917, the Maharaja of Kolhapur recounted to Montague that he had been taking keen interest in uplifting the backward classes and especially the untouchables. While Southborough committee did not mention any such groups other than depressed classes, the Hartog Committee (1928)² defined backward classes in their glossary as- "Caste or Classes which are

educationally backward. They include the depressed classes aboriginals, hill tribes and criminal tribes.” Thus, the term had never acquired a definite meaning at all-India level.

By the time of the Constituent Assembly the usage of the term “Backward Classes” refers to some larger or smaller portion of the population deserving of special treatment was familiar in many parts of the country. However, this term was debated very much in the assembly as the delegates from the northern part of India expressed puzzlement. Chandrika Ram from Bihar,³ who had the most active backward class movement in the North explained that- “Backward classes were a section of society between the highest castes and the scheduled castes: the third section occupying the middle position, no doubt, they are not treated as untouchables.” K.M. Munshi assured the house that it signifies people- touchable or untouchable belonging to this or that community, who are so backward that special protection, is required in the services. Although, T.T. Krishnamachari pointed out that classes were not necessarily castes and the literacy might be the test of backwardness, it was generally envisioned that the backward classes would be communities. When asked what is a backward community, Ambedkar defending the draft explained- “We have left it be determined by each local government. A backward community is a community, which is backward in the opinion of the government.”

However, the matter was not as clear as this suggests. The most prophetic statement was T.T. Krishnamachari’s prediction that the clause would be “a paradise for lawyers”. It was anticipated then, that the backward classes (other than SCs/STs) were to be designated at local level. In the meantime, the Objective resolution of the constituent Assembly moved by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru on Dec. 13, 1946 had resolved to provide adequate safeguards for “minorities, backward and tribal areas, depressed and other backward classes”. The delegation to local authorities undoubtedly reflected an acceptance of the divergence of the existing practices, a desire to preserve flexibility and awareness to the difficulties of prescribing universally applicable tests of backwardness in view of the varying local conditions.

It may also have been presumed that backward classes were sufficiently potent enough politically to look out for their interests on a local level and unlike SCs/STs central control of their designation was not required to ensure the inclusion of

deserving. However, central government was not entirely excluded from the process. The President is instructed to appoint a backward classes commission.

After the listing of SCs, the usage of OBC as a synonym for untouchables and depressed classes withered away. Two major species of Usage emerged then- 1) as the more inclusive group of all those who need special treatment and 2) as a stratum higher than the untouchables but nonetheless depressed. This double usage continues today. The former in the usage of backward classes in the wide sense (including SCs and STs); the latter in the usage as equivalent to other backward classes. It is with the latter that we are now concerned in this research.

Since the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s backward caste politics has dominated the political scene in U.P. It had aroused the hopes and aspirations of the backwards for political identity, empowerment and a share and role in government. But the period from the 1980s onwards shows that the backwards are not only badly divided but are also leaderless. A strong upsurge among the backward castes in the late 1980s, coinciding with the collapse of the Congress party provided space for the backwards to unite under the Samajwadi Party (SP). However, the attempt failed.⁴ The SP remains a party of the Yadavs and the Ahirs, who have cornered the benefits provided to the backwards, thus alienating other sections like MRBCs (More Backward Caste) and MBCs (Most Backward Castes) which have gravitated towards the BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) and the BJP (Bhartiya Janta Party). The SP leadership has become opportunistic and corrupt. Unable to capture power alone, the party is now trying to gain the support of the upper castes and Muslims who have somewhat drifted away from SP since 2007 assembly elections in U.P.

The backwards are drifting away from the defined socialist ideology of the SP. Hence, losing the drive and energy so vital to make the entire backward caste/class movement vibrant, cohesive, purposive and productive (Verma : 2007). However, the leadership of the backward caste politics has let the community down. it brought about backward caste mobilization but failed in sharpening the backward caste/class cleavages and also in bringing homogenization and consolidation of “Backward Identity” as a whole.

The rise of Identity politics has transformed the political process in the state of U.P. quite significantly. At the time of independence, the dominant single party

Congress System prevailed. The Congress had not become dominant by undemocratic means. It became dominant-firstly, because it was the prime platform of a cause, the independence which had the support of all sections of the people. Secondly, since everyone supported the cause, the Congress was able to just bring about everyone under its flag, whatever his/her religion, caste, language, community or economic status was. Thirdly, it had the inestimable advantage of the leadership of two most remarkable personalities- Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. Consequently, until the late 1980s politics in U.P. had a stable and predictable character. Although change had been taking place, it was slow and gradual. Parties did not promote social conflict and religious strife by their activities.

From the 1980s onwards, the ongoing process of democratization underway since independence accelerated in northern plain especially in the state of U.P. Thus, creating greater consciousness of caste and communal identities accompanied by increased politicization. These rapid changes ushered in the rise of primordial identities and decline and de-institutionalization of the party system.⁵ The rise of primeval identities, in turn, made the single party system no longer workable and the latter created the room for the mobilization of narrow sectarian parties. The Congress system was replaced by a fluid and fragmented multi-party system with three poles- the BJP, the SP, the BSP. Prof. Pai remarks that these cannot be described as clear-cut parties rather they are identity-based movements operating in electoral arena mobilizing people along social divisions, thus, creating conflict, violence and political instability. However, Caste-based mobilization created social antagonism, it also challenged upper caste dominance and played a positive role by contributing to the social deepening of democracy (Prof. Pai: 2002).

In the second half of 1990s caste and community based mobilization reached to its zenith and then started to decline. Today, parties are attempting to widen their social bases and build broad social alignments owing to the compulsions of electoral politics. While BSP has entered into "Social Engineering formula" with maxims of 'Sarvajan Hitay, Sarvajan Sukhay', the SP is trying to woo upper caste people and to somewhat extent Muslims who have deserted the party in 2007 assembly and 2009 parliamentary elections in U.P., though they voted S.P. to power in 2012. Yet if we see at the ground level, voters can no longer be enticed into party's fold purely by appealing to caste and religious orientations.

Following a strong wave of mobilization on ascriptive identities, there has been a move towards the increasing secularization of the caste and communal politics, thus opening up the possibility of a more politically stable system based on more normative and secular politics. For instance- historical victory of BSP in 2007 assembly elections garnering 30.43% of votes and getting absolute majority ensuring a stop to hung assemblies and coalition politics in the state. Thus, we see throughout the 1990s parties in U.P. have engaged in construction and reconstruction of identities (BJP-Hindutva, SP-Backward caste, BSP- Dalit) and constantly shifted their strategies moving from narrow sectarian formations to broader aggregative combines in response to the swiftly changing political situation.

Our concern, here, is the Samajwadi Party (SP) which emerged as an offshoot of the backward caste/class mobilization and claiming to be the true representative of the backward castes in U.P. We will trace the rise and evolution of SP, situating it within the overall matrix of the backward caste movement and politics in U.P. Further, an attempt would be made to pick out the possible reasons for why SP is falling apart in U.P. despite having good electoral records since its inception in 1992. There are certain problems relating to SP which need to be focused upon so far as to fully understand its socialist orientation, electoral process and the political environment in which it works. These are-

1. Mulayam Singh Yadav and his Samajwadi Party (SP) epitomize the relic of a great socialist tradition,⁶ one which is fast withering away in Uttar Pradesh. Mulayam entered active state politics in 1967 when he was first elected to U.P. Legislative Assembly. Samajwadi party was born in October 1992. So before the birth of SP he was in the company of India's leading Socialists & thus, can legitimately claim to be their progeny. Yet, in almost 24 years of its existence, Can SP show any linkages & continuity with the traditions of Ram Manohar Lohiya, J.P. Narayan and Madhu Limaye? Can it demonstrate that its evolution (ideological, organizational and as a party of government) has been in consonance with ideals & expectations of Socialists mentors. The general belief regarding these questions is in negative. Party's Symbol, Bicycle reflects it to be the party of common man but even the ordinary worker of the party ride in big & expansive cars. So the question arises-How much Samajwad is left with the Samajwadi party?"⁷

2. Ever since Samajwadis first came to power in U.P. in 1989 (JD) under the leadership of Mulayam, SP has been firmly committed to secularism & protection of minorities especially the Muslims & the Mosques. This induced Muslims to drift away from Congress and to associate themselves with the “psychological security” of SP. Excessive posturing about the need to defend Muslims through secularism by SP leaders led to an equation of “secularism with minoritism. It also seemed to put Hindus on defensive. Such over enthusiastic rhetoric has bred disaffection against Muslims & unnecessarily sharpened the communal divide.
3. The Samajwadi party often claims to be the champion of kisans. But it hasn't lived up to their expectations, despite being in power 4 times 1989 (JD), 1993 & 2003 & 2012 the SP failed to initiate any land reform measures in U.P. for the benefit of the marginal farmers. Notwithstanding the abysmal conditions of kisans in some sub-regions of U.P., Agrarian reform⁸ is nowhere on SP's agenda. Furthermore, Reliance land acquisition controversy for Dadri power project reflected that the interests of farmers were subordinated to a corporatization of agriculture.
4. For Lohiya, Caste was a stumbling block to India's progress. But these so called Lohiyaites have consistently deployed caste as an effective tool to sharpen the social & electoral cleavages on the support of backward castes. In current times, SP has started “inclusionary politics”. The manner in which it has opened up for Thakurs, Baniyas, Brahmins & non-chamar dalits speaks volumes about this shift.
5. M.S. Yadav remains the unopposed president of SP. There is a dearth of good second rung leaders as he has been promoting his son, brothers & nephews to Leadership positions. This makes Samajwadi party vulnerable in the event of departure of top leadership from the political scene.
6. The Party's image as associated with 3Cs- Crime, Capitalism & Corruption has done an incalculable damage to the party. Party's criminal elements have become a liability on the party.
7. Samajwadi party leaders played an active role in Mandalization of state politics leading to a second democratic upsurge. But the party is not equally concerned

with the problems of More Backward Castes (MRBCs) & Most Backward Castes (MBCs).Yadav are the dominant⁹ & prosperous group among them & the SP is negligent towards all other backward castes except Yadavs.

8. No doubt, electoral graph of party has shown steady improvement since its inception but it remains difficult to defend the governance style of M.S. Yadav and of his son Akhilesh Yadav. It is erratic with little focus on rational decision making. Decisions are changed over night. Arbitrary transfers & postings have become lucrative industry for him & his cabinet. The same is true of policies also.

The biggest question is whether the SP's Political leadership especially Mulayam Singh Yadav & his son Akhilesh Yadav has the skills to live up to the new hopes and to manage the contradictions that conflicting priorities are bound to throw up.

1.2. Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of this study would be-

1. To study Backward caste/class movement in Northern India and its resultant premise.
2. To study the voting patterns of Backward Castes/Backward classes.
3. To explore the political environment that made SP to focus upon "Corporate Samajwad" as against "Lohiyaite Samajwad".
3. To study why SP is unable to stop widening cracks in its Muslim vote bank after 2012 assembly elections in which Muslims voted all out to SP.(to a full majority). In Lok Sabha elections 2014 Muslims also voted for Narendra Modi (BJP), thus, question arises what happened to Samajwadi Party? Why it could not be able to garner support of its core support base. i.e. Muslims
4. To study about the governance style of Samajwadi Leaders.
5. To explore the political insights regarding future of Samajwadi party.

There are certain central questions on which this work revolves around. I would try to trace their answers during the course of my research. These are.

1. What happened to the samajwad of the Samajwadi Party? Is the claim of SP to be the torch bearer of socialist tradition valid?
2. Why SP does not pay heed to MRBCs & MBCs even after playing active role in Mandalization of state politics & claiming itself to be a Backward Caste Party?
3. What prompted Muslims to have associated themselves with a party having socialist orientation?
4. Why SP is falling apart in U.P. itself even after showing improvement in electoral records since its inception in 1992 and even after attaining absolute majority in 2012 in U.P.?
5. What could be the future implications of SP and its so called Samajwad on regional & national politics?

1.3. Hypothesis

H1: Without either a well defined socialist agenda or a clear socialist ideology and with the handicap of soiled image among electorates, S.P. faces an uncertain future.

H2: Samajwadi Party is responsible for the decline of Backward Caste movement in Uttar Pradesh since it is losing its identity as progeny of the Backward Caste movement by becoming more inclusionary, urban based and capitalist in character.

1.4. Source of the Study:

1.4.1. Research Methodology:

This study has taken resort to many ways to gather the needed data, reflections and perceptions. I have consulted reports of colonial social explorers as published in different literatures. The Constituent assembly debates and reports of Backward Classes Commissions have been of immense importance. I have gone through statistical reports of the Election Commission of India for comparative data of different elections held at state as well as national level. I have also gathered available pamphlets, booklets brought out by different caste associations. Certain govt. orders/circulars have also been ascertained.

The proposed research would rely on descriptive design and comparative analysis. Comparative analysis would be focused on Lok Sabha & Assembly elections since Samajwadi Party's inception in 1992 till 2014 Lok Sabha Elections. Opinion Survey has been taken among different Caste groups using stratified Sampling on the questions of reverse osmosis voting for SP. Structured interviews of Political leaders of different political parties and S.P. Leaders has been taken in regard to its drifts in Ideological planks.

1.5. Significance of the Study:

The Backward Classes as a collective entity, in spite of some ups and downs, has emerged as a major political player especially after 1960. Being numerically large compared to other social groups such as forward caste, dalits or minorities, the Backward Classes possess significant political prospects across many states in India.

The Backward Classes as a whole suffer many forms of oppression and are subject to numerous forms of domination. The establishment of a faired social order cannot but engage with this collective, aware of its articulation overtime. As a whole it shares a common situation vis-a-vis other dominant groups in society, a situation which in many respects is akin to that of the Dalits. It can be argued that certain other categories such as classes are more appropriate to denote a social phenomenon termed Backward Classes today. But historically it is the latter category that has been socially and politically precipitated and the social agency for large-scale social transformation is borne by it.

One of the major failures of the Indian State has been its inability to devise an effective policy with respect to the Backward Classes in India. This failure is not merely administrative and political, i.e., with respect to the execution and devising appropriate policy for Backward Classes, but conceptual as well.

Striving for political power is imperative for the Backward Classes. Often such striving has been caught in the vortex of the hegemony of other classes and state or is merely a symbolic enablement. This study goes into the political strategies that have led to the real enablement of the Backward Classes against the hegemonic and symbolic ones. Issues confronting the Backward Classes may be significantly different from those confronting others, but the Backward Classes also shared concerns with other members of a democratic polity. This study elicits the perceptions

of other social groups and trends of thought and marks the areas of shared concerns and those where strong differences exist. Such a Classification definitely helps in searching for amicable solutions to issues where shared concerns co-exist with significant differences.

The Backward Classes in the course of making a political constituency for themselves have thrown up various socio-political organisations playing a significant role in state politics and civil society. A study of these developments is of utmost importance to understand the state-civil society nexus in India.

Further, different political and ideological blocs have their own definitions and explanations of Backward Classes and programmes for their emancipation. Divisions of various kinds and levels of intensity came to be built around such positions. This study helps to explore the possible ideological and political alliances that could further the backward class interest

An attempt to demarcate Backward Classes in one of the important pursuits in this study. Social groups Classes over the period has been formulated and understood differently. The various organised interests in society have their distinctive conception about these classes. The scope of the term too has varied from time to time due to various historical and sociological reasons. The present study brings to the fore this discursive context in which the term is located and explicates the spectrum of meaning in which it is deployed.

This study intends to locate the process of the formation of the Backward Class Constituency in state context. The erstwhile State of Mysore, later Karnataka, prides itself as one of the first states to witness a well-organised movement of the Backward Classes. U.P however has been a late starter to this movement. The researcher has chosen this state because I am a resident of U.P. and Samajwadi Party claims to be the offshoot of this very movement. We cannot treat the rise of Backward Classes as an event that took place in isolation. This study therefore, attempts to look into the development that took place in U.P vis-a-vis those that occurred elsewhere in northern part of the country.

The state in India both at the State and Union levels has intervened in the socio-economic realm in a big way after independence. In the formulation of public policy, welfare of the Backward Classes has remained an important objective of the

state. We have attempted to assess the extent of benefits the state is dispensing to the Backward Classes and the mobilization and organisation they had to resort to in obtaining the same.

The policy of positive discrimination envisaged by the state has brought to the fore many issue deeply contested between the Backward Classes and forward caste on one hand, and among the Backward Classes themselves, on the other. They include the criteria for determining backwardness, the issue of creamy layer, subdivision of the Backward Classes on the basis of relative backwardness, nature and extent of benefits over and above equal treatment, inclusion and exclusion of caste groups, etc. Although we have situated this discussion in the context of Uttar Pradesh, these issue are the shared and the recurrent concerns across the country.

A social constituency is not something readily given. It is a product of history. The carving out of a social constituency is informed by the perception of other social segments particularly by those who are affected by its presence. The present study makes an attempt to register the perceptions of those social segments having a direct bearing on the Backward Class Constituency.

The special provisions extended to the Backward Classes on one hand, and social dynamics on the other, call for and result in specific political responses. The Backward Classes have sometimes as effective political across directing state policies to their advantage while at other times they are caught in the hegemonic designs of the dominant castes. The electoral system based on universal adult franchise has it impact on the nature of political agency that the Backward Classes can enjoy. This study goes into the social and political conditions that can enhance or retard the expression of this agency. This study suggest the ways by which Samajwadi Party can shift its focus from identity based contestation to the development and governance paradigm so as to transform itself from caste oriented to inclusive subaltern class oriented politics.

1.6. Review of Literature

The historical and discursive of the making of a relatively stable political constituency termed Backward Classes at the level of a state (of U.P.) in India is not comprehensively explored in any of the existing studies. Backward class mobilisation occurred at first and primarily at the state level in India and so far it continues to be

the reality by and large. In an era of coalition politics at the centre, however such political formations at the state level tend to become major players in shaping the central power. However, even in such cases their locus of reference lies in the states.

With the emergence of Backward Classes into political prominence there has emerged ample literature on the subject. We can broadly divide it into two types-general literature on Backward Classes and literature pertaining to them with respect to U.P. Further, keeping in view its content it can even be divided into normative and descriptive literature. Of course, the former variant often demands the latter.

The general descriptive literature explains the factors that led to the mobilisation of Backward Classes, formation of backward class organisations, various states of Backward Class protests, etc. The works of M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India* (1962), *Social Change in Modern India* (1972), *Dominant Castes and Other Essays* (1987), *Religion and Society Among Congress of South India* (1952), etc. fall within this framework. They are really useful for our study on Backward Classes. However, his theory of 'sanskritisation, to encompass the protest movement among the Backward Classes has always been contested on grounds of its authenticity. Similarly, two important works of another prominent sociologist. M.S.A. Rao, *Social Movements in India* (1979) and *Social Movement and Social Transformation-A Study of Two Backward Class Movements in India* (1987) are worth mentioning.

If the former explains various subaltern and tribal movements, the latter deals with movements among backward caste groups in India like the Yadavas of the North (U.P) and Izhavas of Kerala. However, most of his studies are preeminently empirical in character and refuse to take up a normative stance. Andre Beteille is another important theoretician in this regard with such works as *Backward Classes and New Social Order* (1981), etc. But Beteille is too caught in liberal approach towards the Backward Classes and the principle of equal rights often ignoring considerations for preferential treatment.

The early works of Rudolph L. and Rudolph S.H., especially their *Modernity of Tradition – Political Development in India* (1969), are significant as they suggest that pursuit of modernity may not necessarily require rejection of traditional belonging as a whole, and traditional sites of belonging too may overhaul themselves to be conducive to modernity. However, they do not raise the concerns of equality and

domination centrally in their works. In this vein too is the work of Dipankar Gupta especially his publication, *Interrogating Caste – Understanding Hierarchy and Difference in Indian Society* (2000). His principle writings, however, do not touch the central concerns of this study

A number of scholars have studied the non-Brahmin movement and the ideologies that shaped it very closely. Notable mentions could be made of the works of Robert L. Hardgrave's, *The Dravidian Movement* (1965), Eugenc F. Irshick's, *Politics and Social conflict in South India : The non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1911-1929* (1969), and T. K. Ravindrans' *Vaikkam Satyagraha and Gandhi* (1975), and V. Geetha and S.V. Rajadurai's *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium – From Jyothee Thas to Periyar* (1998). The writings of Kancha Ilaiah such as *Why I am Not a Hindu: A Shudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy and Political Economy* (1969), *Buffalo Nationalism: A Critique of Spiritual Fascist* (2004), *Post-Hindu India: A Discourse on Dalit- Bahujan Socio-Spiritual and Scientific Revolution* (2009) etc. provide strong ideological inputs to the Backward Class Movement in India.

The Backward Class Movement in the erstwhile Bombay Province has been ably dealt in such works as Gail Omvedt's, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society-Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India 1850-1935* (1976), Eleanor Zelliot's *From Untouchable to Dalit-Essays on the Ambedkar Movement* (1992), and Rosalind O' Hanlon's *Caste Conflict and Ideology-Mahatma Joti Rao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth century Western India* (1985). One of the early commentators on the Backward Class Movement in Maharashtra is Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, whose comments on the movement are scattered all across his writings, *Babasaheb Ambedkar's Writing and Speeches*, brought out by the Department of Education, Government of Maharashtra. The best of his writings on social and political issues are highlighted in Valerian Rodrigues ed., *The Essential Writings of B.R. Ambedkar* (2002). We can get an outline of the early phases of Backward Class Movement in Northern India of Mark Juergensmeyer, , *Religion as Social Vision – The Movement Against Untouchability in 20th Century Punjab* (1992) and Peter Robb, ed., *Dalit Movements and Meanings of Labour India* (1993). An overview of the Backward Class Movement in India could be obtained from S. Nataraj's *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables* (1945), Barbara Joshi's *Democracy in Search of Equality* (1989), and Michael Mahar ed., *Untouchable in Contemporary India* (1972).

The Writings of scholars such as Ghanashyam Shah, I.P. Desai and P. Radhakrishnan are of great importance to any serious study of the backward class problem in India as a whole. Mention may be made of Ghanashyam. Shah's 'Middle' Class Politics: Case of Anti-Reservation Agitation in Gujarat' (1987) and 'Caste Class and Reservation' (1985), I.P. Desai's 'Should Caste be the basis of Recognising Backwardness?' (1989), 'Caste Class Conflict and Reservations' (1985) and P. Radhakrishnan's 'Ambasankar Commission and Backward Classes' (1989), ' Tamil Nadu Backward Classes' (1989), etc. These papers reflect critically on a mass of data, suggest tendencies at work in the Backward Class Constituency and propose appropriate concepts to handle the task at hand.

Recently there has been a growing realization that majoritarian communalism in part derives its strength from the popular projection of minorities especially the Muslim community as a 'collective communal monolithic entity'. Against this trend there have been attempts to highlight the heterogeneous nature of the community. As a part of this there appeared a series of research articles on the Muslim OBCs by scholars like Irfan Ahmad, Seik Rahim Mondal, Sayyad Zainuddin, C.G. Hussain Khan, Answer Alam, S.A.H. Moinuddin, and S.S.A. Saheb published in the Economic and Political Weekly in 2003. Likewise when the issue of reservation in higher education came up in 2006, the Economic and Political Weekly brought out a series of articles on the subject by renowned scholars like Satish Deshpande, Yogendra Yadav, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Kancha Ilaiah, Sukhadeo Thorat and others. Hani Babu M.T.'s article 'The Curious Case of OBC Reservation's is a recent addition to this series. All these and other related studies, however, while providing information and reflection on the background setting did not contribute much byway of focusing on Karnataka on the specific subject matter to the study, undertaken here.

One of the ambitious works on preferential treatment to Backward Classes in Marc Galanter's *Competing Equalities: Law and Backward Classes in India* (1984). This work has strong normative underpinnings as well. It is a product of long and painstaking research on the question of positive discrimination toward the oppressed classes in India. The book deals with a wide array of preferential policies and considerations, their background. Their designs and operations and judicial intervention on these issues. However, his approach remains legalistic in nature and much less informed historically and sociologically. His study lacks information from

below, which he himself admits. Besides, this work remains dated today as the developments taken into account are only up to the end of 1970s. Further, among the three categories of the Backward Classes SCs, ST, and OBCs. The OBCs find relatively lesser mention in his study compared to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

There are several works that give an account of and assess preferential policies: Paramanand Singh's *Equality, Reservation and Discrimination in India* (1985) and Ishwari Prasad's *Reservation: Action for Social Justice* (1986) are important in this respect where a strong case for the policy of positive discrimination has been made. Their scope, however, is different from the present study.

When the Union Government decided to implement the Mandal Commission Report in 1990 a series of studies came up on the Backward Classes. Important among them are Anirudh Prasad's *Reservation Policy and Practice in India: A Means to an End: A Critique* (1991) and Hiranmay Karleka's *In the Mirror of Mandal: Social Justice*.

Caste, Class and the Individual (1992). However, the main thrust of these studies was directed against the main provisions of the Mandal Report and blaming it for the developments that took place after its implementation. Soon writings on the defense of the Mandal Report were to be produced by other. The recommendations of the report were stoutly defended by K.C. Yadav in his work *India's Unequal Citizens – A Study of the Backward Classes* (1994); Anirudh Prasad's *Reservation Justice and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) Theoretical and Practical Issues* (1997); and O.P. Ralhan, ed., *Non-Brahmin Movement* (1998) are important interventions on this debate. We have drawn extensively from these works while at the same time, focusing on the specific subject matter of this study.

We need to identify the diversity and pluralism of the Indian electorate and how it gets reflected in the social profile of Indian Legislative bodies. The greater presence of Backward Classes has also resulted in the reformulation of the concerns that were central to these bodies. These aspects are well discussed by B.L. Shanker and Valerian Rodrigues in their work on *The Indian Parliament- A Democracy at Work* (2011). The contributions of the Fresh scholar Christophe Jaffrelot need special mention in this regard. In his book *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of Low Castes*

in North Indian Politics (2003), he makes an analysis of the process through which there has been a steady shift of political power from the hands of the upper caste elite to the subaltern classes over the period. Though the study focuses on the low caste politics of the North it provides us an account of the Non-Brahmin Movements of the Southern and Western states to enable us to make a comparison across regions. A recent publication, Rise of Plebeians? The Changing Phase of Indian Legislative Assemblies (2009) edited by Christophe Jaffrelot and Sanjay Kumar has been a major contribution in this regard. It is an attempt to study the broad trend in the rise of OBC groups in the parliamentary politics in the background of social profile of representative from sixteen states across the country. Though the emphasis is more on the empirical profiling than the theoretical reflection the extensive data presented in these works are of great help for any research in this area. H.S. Verma ed., The OBCs and Dynamics of Social Exclusions in India (2005) which deals with multiple issues centred around this constituency falls in this line of thought.

The implementation of economic policies based on neo-liberalism has reduced the overall space for Backward Classes and dalits in India. In this background a new debate on reservation in the private sector has come up and a voluminous literature has appeared in academic journals and newspapers. Important among them have found a place in Sukhadeo Thorat, Aryama and Prashant Negi eds. reservation and Private Sector-Quest for Equal Opportunity and Growth (2005). These papers cover all shades of concerns and also address some of the critical issue that has appeared in the recent debate on reservation. When the issue of caste enumeration in 2011 census came up recently, Japhet and Chandan Gowda Brought out a book entitled Caste Cesus towards an Inclusive India (2010), which contains a series of articles both in favour and against this measure. So far as literature on U.P. is concerned, the works so far on the related topics appreciate the way under which Samajwadi party emerged out in the backdrop of Backward Caste movement and Mandalization of state politics. None of the Script has tried to explore the possible reasons that why SP has been able to garner the support of Muslims since its inception in 1992. Similarly no one talks about why SP has shed Democratic Socialism in favour of corporate socialism. Except 2007 assembly elections SP has emerged out to be a single largest party in UP even then, the party is falling apart. Dr. Shafiuzzaman talks about the social basis, Ideology and programmes of Samajwadi Party. Anil Kumar Verma in Seminar special

issue March 2007-UP Battleground puts his focus regarding the elusive Samajwad of SP. He also talks about caste to class transition in politics of Uttar Pradesh. Prof.Sudha pai in her book-Agrarian change & Electoral politics is concerned about unavailability of land reforms measures in UP. Her recently edited volume-Handbook of Politics in Indian States is an attempt to provide a set of well researched some significant aspects of state politics in India which have been responsible for shaping the progress of democratic politics in the post-independence period. The broad areas on which this volume focuses are democratization, regions and regionalism, political parties and electoral politics and economic reforms.

Vivek Kumar in his book “India’s roaring revolutions: Dalit assertion and New Horizons comments that SP failed to directly forge an alliance with caste & communities, thereby getting defeat in 2007 assembly elections. A scholar like M. Dinesh Hegde presents an overview of Backward Class movement in India. He sympathises with the movement’s pressing demand for reservation.

Hence the proposed research would try to focus on the root cause of Samajwadi Party’s decline, and status of Backward caste/class movement of which SP claims itself to be progeny, .even after being the single largest and ruling party in UP.

1.7. Chapter Scheme:

The present work is divided into five sharply focused chapters. Chapter one is devoted to introduction of the OBCs which is an elusive category. In this chapter the researcher has tried to trace out certain problems owing to which the SP is losing ground in the State even after having a good electoral record. It further puts central questions around which this whole work revolves. These questions need to be answered as far as the role and overall performance of the Samajwadi Party is concern in the Backward Caste Movement in U.P., of which it is an offshoot.

Chapter two presents forth the background to the process and understanding of the backward caste mobilisation which eventually led to the formation of the present day Samajwadi Party. Apparently, it puts a light on the rise of the OBCs in Northern India specially in the State of Uttar Pradesh.

Chapter three deals with the factors and forces which provided the needed platform to the emergence and consolidation of the S.P. on the political scene of U.P. in 1992.

Chapter four discusses the electoral politics of S.P. and its visible trends in the recently held elections in U.P. The Party has been ruling currently and has been a single largest party in U.P. for quite a sometime (except in 2007 Assembly and 2014 Lok Sabha election). Yet its social base is eroding away. Why it is falling apart? A critical appraisal of S.P. has been made against its declared policies and programmes.

Chapter five contains the broad conclusions formulated on the basis of data analyzed in pervious chapters. It conclude that S. P. is on declining trend and with it, there is a halt to backward caste, class mobilisation in U.P.

1.8. Approaches to Study Political Mobilization in India:¹⁰

The word Mobilization suggests the setting in motion of previously inert entities. In purely top-down views of mobilization, this is achieved by elites- broadly understood to include political elites-who stir up the rabble or capture alienated individuals for their own purposes. In bottom-up views, mobilization is self-generated, as like-minded individuals band together around natural sources of solidarity. In either view, mobilization carries the imminent threat of upheaval.

In the view presented above, elites do not necessarily cause political action to occur but they do help to define which potential lines of divisions are more Salient than others. They do so by providing the means for the expression of grievance, shaping the manner in which interests and grievances are expressed and defining the context in which mobilization occurs through the introduction of policies and institutions that create new opportunities or grievances. This strategic channelling of political activity is especially important in understanding electoral behavior, which raises the question of whether electoral participation counts as Political mobilization. It is assumed that winning ‘mass support’ for a party at election time is among the most important form of political mobilization that can take place. This is especially true for India, where continued electoral politics remain the central arena for political mobilization, even to the extent that non-electoral forms of mobilization typically aim to influence or enter electoral politics. While the fundamental driver of Indian politics, over the last century, has been the successive emergence of new groups and interests

available for political mobilization, the nature and outcome of this mobilization has been shaped by the inter-play between two strategies of alliance-building. The first, ANTI-HEGEMONIC ALLIANCE, unites intermediate powers against one that exercises or seeks to exercise hegemony. The second, SANDWICH ALLIANCE, by contrast, unites the extremes of a power hierarchy against those in the middle.

The study of political mobilization is such a vast topic that only the most cursory of reviews can be attempted here. The brief survey of approaches in comparative politics undertaken below highlights two kinds of analyses, which have been largely missing from the study of Indian politics. One is the study of how political strategies influence whether a potential cleavage become an active source of conflict. The other is the systematic comparison of the way cleavage structures emerge across Indian states.

a) *Political Mobilization and Comparative Politics*

For the sake of efficiency, adapting from Harold Lasswell's famous definition of politics, that the study of political mobilization can be divided into four questions: *who* is mobilized, for *what purpose when*, and *how*. Many approaches to the analysis of political mobilization centre around one or two of these questions. Different scholars also vary according to whether they adopt a broadly structural or *macro* analytic approach or a *micro* analytic one that focuses on explaining the actions of elites or even individuals. Additionally, answers to each question can range from broadly *structural* or macro-analytic approaches, to those that focus more on elite activity or individual motives and strategies.³

The question of *who* is being mobilized is typically answered in one of two ways. Structurally inclined analysts focus on identifying some collectivity- economic classes, cultural communities, or other kinds of social groups—on whose behalf a demand is made. There can often be many possible answers, and accordingly analysts will differ over which collectivity is being mobilized. To cite one famous Indian example, the Chipko movement against logging, undertaken by hill women in what is now Uttaranchal state, was variously viewed as a peasant movement to preserve access to forest resources, an environmental movement to prevent deforestation, a women struggle against the impact of logging on domestic labour, or even a regional movement against plains domination.

Micro analytic approaches avoid this kind of ambiguity by adopting a narrower approach to the 'who' question by asking which individuals are actually participating in collective political action. Here, the answers are often tied to 'how' mobilization is effected, since quite different kinds of people participate in electoral politics than, say, in direct action or revolutionary activity. A weakness of this approach is that scholars often focus excessively on the self-interest of politically active individuals. At the same time, this kind of focus often shows that politically active individuals are better educated or better-off than the group they seek to represent, forcing analysts to inquire whether issues activists focus on are salient for the larger constituency.²As we will see, this question is very relevant for the present essay.

For obvious reasons, the second question analysts ask about political mobilization 'what' interests and grievances motivate political action is central to understanding its consequences. Macro analytic approaches to this question tend to examine how a set of policy issues, such as the role of agriculture in the economy or the cultural policy of the state, create more persistent divisions or 'cleavages' in society. Often scholars working in this vein treat the 'who' and 'what' questions together through a systematic analysis of the social divisions or 'cleavage structures' arising out of fundamental policy conflicts in a given society or set of societies. In the best-known effort along these lines, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) argued that the party systems of Western Europe were shaped by the varying intensities of four basic cleavages—centres vs periphery, secular vs religious, rural vs. urban, and owner vs. worker—and that these sandwich alliances, are generic forms that can be adapted to many contexts, allowing for comparison.

b) *Anti-hegemonic and Sandwich Alliances*

Anti-hegemonic and sandwich alliances are general categories that include the styles of populist mobilization that have earlier been termed empowerment and protection populism, respectively (Swamy 1996; 1998). These terms drew attention to rhetorical styles that united upwardly mobile social groups against established elites, or appealed to vulnerable and marginalized groups respectively. By contrast, the terms 'anti-hegemonic strategy' and 'sandwich tactic' emphasize the more generic modes of alliance-building that frequently result in these distinctive modes of populism. They allow us to incorporate into a single framework calculated tactical

alliances and diffuse populist appeals, and to compare alliances that operate on a spatial or temporal plane with those whose building blocks are strata in a social hierarchy. Indeed, both alliance patterns have their correlates in international relations and these analogies provide important clues to their functioning.

The common feature to those two alliance types is that the elements of each coalition are drawn to it not so much by shared substantive concerns (at least not of a permanent variety) as by their shared relationship to a third party. That is, they are united by a shared foe rather than by shared interests. Consequently, in a dynamic social situation such as that characterizing a developing country, the relative situation of particular groups can change rapidly, and with it, so will their interests and the alliance they are drawn to.

In the most general terms, an *anti-hegemonic alliance* is one that unites powerful actors against a greater power that exerts or seeks to exert hegemony over them. The analogy here is with international alliances among powerful states that feel threatened by a rising superpower. In domestic politics, a very close analogue is provided by conflicts over the centralization of power between national governments on one hand, and advocates of states' rights on the other. In disputes over socio-economic policy, anti-hegemonic alliances tend to favour policies that broaden the elite, adopting redistributive policies that identify broad groups of beneficiaries over the most needy, or promote upward mobility among disadvantaged sectors.

From the perspective of their social composition, anti-hegemonic alliances in domestic politics unite out-groups or counter-elites across diverse social domains against core elite. These counter-elites might be the ' elite segments of upwardly mobile social strata, or the established elites of relatively peripheral regions who find common cause in opposing the core group. In India, anti-hegemonic alliance-building strategies can be detected among the Extremists within the Congress in the early twentieth century, among representatives of minority groups *outside* Congress in the 1930s, among the various 'national' opposition parties in the 1960s, and among regional parties in the 1990s. Notably, the last three alliances were directed against the Congress, and only the last was successful.⁵

The sandwich alliance, by contrast, unites the extremes of a power hierarchy against powerful mid-level actors. In international relations, sandwich alliances occur

when superpowers champion small states against 'regional bullies', or wealthy countries respond to challenges from newly industrializing countries by championing the interests of very poor countries. In domestic politics, there is a 'sandwich' corollary to the conflict between central authority and states 'rights mentioned above in centralization is frequently supported by the local minorities, who feel threatened try the power that local elites or majorities enjoy in a decentralized polity.

As sandwich alliances are commonly put together by defensive elites against counter-elites, their policies often do demonstrate an ad hoc *tactical* character rather than a consistent strategic vision. It is therefore easier to specify which of the two policies prefer a sandwich alliance than to spell out a consistent policy agenda.⁶In social and economic policy, their redistributive proposals are often reactive rather than proactive, and may take their specific form from the proposals of the anti-hegemonic alliances that they are seeking to defeat. Subject to this qualification, sandwich alliances are likely to favour means tested distributive measure that target benefits more narrowly to the most needy over broad entitlements; the provision of social insurance over structural measures that redistribute social and economic power; direct spending on public goods such as primary education over statutory measures aimed at guaranteeing upward mobility; and anti-inflationary macroeconomic policies, as inflation is more likely to hurt the poor.

What is consistent about sandwich alliances is the way they construct their policies to unite the ends of a power hierarchy against the middle (Swamy 1998, 2003). Sandwich' responses commonly fall into two categories—proposals to target benefits demanded by counter-elites more narrowly than they would like, and proposals to substitute alternate policies that are more likely to appeal the least privileged groups. The targeting approach seeks to create fissures between weak and strong elements of the anti-hegemonic alliance while the substitution approach outflanks it by appealing to vulnerable groups directly. As with the anti-hegemonic alliances, this approach can, and has to be, adapted to incorporate new interests as older ones become more ambitious and join the anti-hegemonic alliance. In India, sandwich alliances were attempted by British authorities against the Congress; by the Congress in turn against the elites of minority groups in the 1930s; and by the Congress against alliances of regional, farmers', and backward-caste parties from the 1960s to the 1980s.

The advantage of focusing on alliance-building strategies rather than on concrete alliances of specific groups is that the former approach can accommodate the shifting position of social groups over time. For example, it is difficult to apply a structural approach, which tends to attribute relatively fixed interests to particular classes, to the political behaviour of property-owning peasant castes in India over the last seventy years. When they were first enfranchised by the Government of India Act of 1935, 'middle peasants' effectively occupied the lowest socio-economic rung among the *politically relevant* segments of society. By the 1960s, they were clearly in the middle sectors of society, and by the 1990s, arguably at the top/This matches their position in different alliances, as these groups formed the bottom of the Congress sandwich alliance in the 1930s, led the anti-hegemonic challenge to Congress in the 1960s, and moved towards the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 1990s. As this example makes clear, I do not suggest that alliance strategies can reshape society as they choose. An effective analysis of alliance-building strategies requires an understanding of the coalitional possibilities offered by the available and emerging cleavage structures.

c) Cleavage Structures in Indian Political Mobilization

As suggested above, a second type of research that would benefit the study of political mobilization in India is the systematic comparative analysis of cleavage structures. This is not to suggest that students of Indian politics should seek to replicate the particular cleavages that Lipset and Rokkan (1967) discovered for Western Europe, but rather that they should identify relevant cleavages for India that vary in intensity across Indian states.

One potential application of this approach would be the study of how peasant and 'backward' castes have been formed across states. Two important sets of edited volumes in the 1980s-Omvedt (1982) and Frankel and Rao (1989/1990)-attempted something along these lines. However, these volumes did not systematically explore the links between variations in cleavage structures across states and party politics. In particular, the Frankel and Rao volumes did not examine why the 'backward caste' cluster was stronger in some states than in others. A second, obvious area where cleavage structures vary across states and require explanation has to do with religious cleavages. There has been almost no systematic work done on this.

At the same time, though, as we have already noted, the study of cleavage structures cannot explain why particular cleavages become salient at a particular point in time. Especially in Indian politics, characterized as it is by a large variety of cross-cutting cleavages, the study of political mobilization necessarily involves understanding the strategic uses of cleavage structures and not merely their existence, and an understanding of policy details is often crucial to this.

The example of Other Backward Class (OBC) reservations illustrates this well while it is clear that the OBC/middle peasant coalition-which many scholars in the 1980s foresaw and which the Janata Dal tried to give expression to-has now fractured in a number of ways, it is not clear that this outcome was inevitable. This fracture happened because the effects of reservations for the OBCs on the principal cultivator castes varied tremendously across states. Supreme Court rulings limiting all categories to reservations to 50 per cent of the available seats led the 1979 Mandal Commission to adopt a methodology for identifying backward castes that effectively sought to ensure that the sum of all reserved categories did not exceed fifty per cent of the state's population. As we will discuss in greater detail below, this, combined with pre-existing variations across states in the status of peasant groups,⁷ ensured that the principal peasant groups would be included in the OBC category in some states, but not others. V.P. Singh's decision in 1990 to implement the Mandal Commissions recommendations nationally then divided the 'backward' from the 'forward' segments of the middle-peasant/backward-caste coalition pitting peasant castes from different regions against each other in a way that state-specific reservations had not. Subsequently, 'forward' peasant castes gravitated towards the BJP, and the 'all-or-nothing' character of reservations created further opportunities for the BJP to woo 'more backward' segments of the OBC cluster away from Yadav-dominated OBC parties in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar. ,

This vignette suggests that what is required for understanding political mobilization is not just an identification of cleavages, but a dynamic focus on their emergence over time, and the role of strategy in shaping this emergence. In what follows, I will tell the story of Indian political mobilization principally from the perspective of the national arena, incorporating discussions of rural class cleavages, urban class cleavages, rural/urban cleavages, centre-periphery cleavages between the Union and states as well as within states, and caste, linguistic, and religious cleavages

as they seem relevant. The role of policies and political entrepreneurship in creating or superseding cleavages, and bringing together or breaking apart various kinds of social coalitions will be evident throughout.

d) Cleavage, Alliance Type, and Indian Political Mobilization

Most accounts of Indian politics point to the accommodative character of the Indian National Congress as the central explanation of Indian democracy. Between 1930 and 1965, the Congress was said to have met challenges from newly politicized groups by *expanding* its social base to incorporate them and, in Weiners (1967) characterization, using the local organization to mediate among them. Mirrorin Weiner view on the ideological plane, Kothari's (1989) conceptualization of India as a dominant-party system' pictured the Congress as a 'party of consensus' that mediated between the views of various smaller 'parties of pressure'. Taken together, these descriptions constituted the 'Congress system' For most scholars, the emergence of serious electoral challenges to the Congress in the 1960s was followed by the 'erosion' of the Congress organization under Indira Gandhi and the 'deinstitutionalization' of Indian politics in general, leading in turn to increasing fiscal indiscipline and social violence.

Not all scholars applauded the accommodative tendencies of Indian politics, or of the Congress. Indeed, many ascribed India's slow rate of economic growth in the first three decades following Independence to the accommodation of rival interests in policymaking.¹⁰ However, even these scholars had few kind words for the character of Indian politics following the 1969 Congress split, after accommodative politics was generally viewed as having come to an end. Rather, the view that a shift to 'populist' appeals by all parties was undermining development was widely shared among scholars who held very different views about the direction that development should take.

In retrospect, what is remarkable about this analysis is its static and undifferentiated approach towards the relationship between social cleavages and institutions. For example, many scholars blamed Indira Gandhi for destroying the Congress party's ability to mediate between rival social groups in the manner described by Weiner, but ignored the fact that the type of institution represented by Nehru's Congress—which, at the local levels, was a classic patronage machine—can only exist when the general level of social mobilization is low, or when the resources

available for patronage are high. The sharp reversals suffered by the Congress in the 1967 elections suggest that the Congress 'system' was in any event on its last legs. What has been remarkable about Indian democracy since then is the survival of the electoral principle through several decades of increasingly competitive mobilization of new political interests.

The sixth general election held in 1977 after the eighteen-month Emergency is a watershed in post-Independence Indian history. Within days of being released from prison, the leaders of three major non-Communist opposition parties and two dissident factions of Mrs Gandhi's Congress (R) merged to form the Janata Party, which swept the elections in north India and came to power with a majority of two-thirds in the Lok Sabha.

Following the 1977 election, Indian politics changed in three significant and related ways. First, and most obviously, even after the Congress returned to power in 1980, electoral politics was always predicated on the possibility that the incumbent party could lose. This did not mean, however, that agitational politics ceased to be important. Quite the contrary; the second major change was in the ways that movement and protest politics became almost institutionalized, forming part of a continuum of interest representation, with movements frequently transforming themselves into parties. This, in turn, reflected the broadening social profile of active political mobilization, most obviously represented by the coming of age of two important social groups, the middle peasantry and the backward classes or OBCs.

The emergence of the middle peasantry as an important 'demand group', as they were termed by Rudolph and Rudolph, was directly related to the Green Revolution strategy of the 1960s. The decision to subsidize the spread of chemical fertilizers, HYV seeds, and irrigation in areas where farmers seemed willing to adopt them had resulted in improved yields, and created a new class of small and medium farmers who produced for the market. With Charan Singh's BLD now a principal constituent of the Janata Party, farmers' interests were placed at the forefront of the Janata Party's agenda. The avowed aim of the Janata Party was to introduce a more Gandhian model of economic development that put the countryside first, and for Charan Singh in particular, this meant not only reducing the share of investment going to industry, but also opening up opportunities for new agrarian classes to invest in small-scale industry. Thus, the influence of the middle peasantry was seen not only in

policies concerning the farm sector, but also in industrial policy, and particularly in the expansion of the policy of reserving certain lines of manufacture for the small industry sector (Tyabji 1989). In short, the interests of the upper peasantry did not lie simply in preserving their status, but lay also in the opportunities to transform themselves into something other than farmers.

A similar logic can be found in the other major social group that came into its own in the Janata period. This was the OBCs, whose cause had been championed by the Lohia socialists, who eventually merged into the BKD, as well as by the DMK in Tamil Nadu. The OBCs are, of course, a highly elastic social category, whose existence stems from a constitutional provision that permits states to identify disadvantaged groups 'other' than the constitutionally protected categories of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs); and to provide for educational and employment preferences for such groups. This open-ended provision meant that both the questions of *who* was backward and the question of what preferences they would receive became the subject of state politics. In the event, the only states that made serious use of these provisions were the southern states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, both of which had a history of reservations for OBCs even before Independence. The Janata government appointed the Mandal Commission to carry out a nation-wide survey of castes and communities and recommend a single nation-wide list of OBCs. This single act not only defined a new social coalition, but also created a rift in another.

Beginning with the merger of the Lohiaite socialists with Charan Singh's farmer party, there has been an effort in India to create a grand coalition of the middle and poorer peasants classified as OBCs. This social cluster was even celebrated in the 1980s by numerous authors as an emerging hegemonic social coalition that would transform Indian politics by moving social power decisively downwards. However, there were significant contradictions between the interests of the middle peasantry and the OBCs. Much of the griddle peasantry came from land-controlling 'dominant' peasant communities in northwest or peninsular India—Jats, Patidars, Marathas, Kammas, Reddis, Lingayatas, and Vokkalingas—whose members were not easily classified as 'backward'.¹⁷

The Mandal Commission carried out its task through state-by state surveys that attempted to identify which castes existed—itsself not a simple act, as the unit

'caste' could be taken to mean small local fis(castes) or large clusters of jatis—and then determine whether these 'castes' were relatively 'backward' according to a long list of criteria, which included comparing the caste's average measures of economic well-being to the state average. When the Commission was done, the list varied tremendously across states. It included the bulk of the cultivating peasantry in some regions, notably eastern UP and Bihar, but excluded the Jats of Haryana, Rajasthan, and western UP, the Patidars of Gujarat, Maratha/Kunbis of Maharashtra, Reddis and Kammas in Andhra Pradesh, and Vokkaligas and Lingayats in Karnataka. This did reflect a certain social reality—not only did 'backward' peasant castes like Yadavs come from poorer regions, but their relative social status in those regions was often lower. Partly due to ecological reasons and partly due to historical ones—British land revenue settlements in the peninsula and northwest tended to be with the village-level cultivator, and in the east and northeast with revenue farmers—regions where peasants were described as 'backward' typically had a more hierarchical social structure. Paradoxically, the middle peasant/OBC coalition was rescued temporarily by the collapse of the Janata government in 1979 and the return of Mrs Gandhi's Congress (I) to power in 1980. The Congress (I) indefinitely shelved the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. Not until the Janata Dal government of 1989/90 was the Mandal Commission Report brought back to the political agenda.

Between 1980 and 1990, both middle peasant and backward-caste issues were active sources of mobilization, but on a state-by-state basis and not necessarily in tandem. Beginning with the Tamil Nadu Agriculturalist Association's (TNAA) agitation over the cost of power to pumpsets in 1978, farmer's organizations became prominent in a number of regions, where they used direct action tactics that included blocking roads and occasionally engaging in violence against government property in order to focus attention on the basic economic issues of procurement price and input cost.¹⁸ They succeeded in gradually increasing the effective subsidy to agriculture, but did not succeed in enabling the shift in sectoral priorities called for by the more ambitious farmers' representatives or in institutionalizing farmer power in decision-making, in part because they were divided by both economic and cultural considerations.¹⁹ However, appeals to farmer interests were successful in Haryana, where, in 1987, Devi Lal led the Lok Dal, once the party of Charan Singh, to victory.

Similarly, while the Congress government at the Centre shelved the Mandal Commission Report, individual state Congress governments introduced backward-class reservations. However, in accordance with the logic of the sandwich alliance, they did so in states where dominant peasant castes had been excluded from the OBC label, such as Karnataka and Gujarat, but not in UP and Bihar where the large Yadav caste cluster was identified as OBC. In Gujarat, where violent middle-class riots against the reservations policy eventually forced the resignation of Chief Minister Madhav Singh Solanki and the withdrawal of reservations, Congress had built its famous 'KHAM' coalition—composed of 'Kshatriyas' (principally composed of an upwardly mobile OBC group), Harijans (Dalits), Adivasis, and Muslims—which pointedly excluded Patidars, the peasant proprietor caste who had come to dominate the state's professional and political life, and which was not included in the OBC category. Conversely, in Karnataka, where the backward caste lists drawn up by the Congress government of Devraj Urs had excluded the two dominant peasant castes, the subsequent Janata Party government of Ramakrishna Hegde in Karnataka found itself in a continuous tussle over the efforts of these castes, which formed the backbone of the state Janata Party, to be included in the backward caste lists.

During the election of 1989, opposition forces sought again to unite middle-class peasants and OBCs into a single anti-hegemonic alliance. This was done in three stages: first, the various agrarian and socialist factions of the erstwhile Janata Party merged into the Janata Dal (JD) under the leadership of Congress rebel leader V.P. Singh; second, they formed an alliance called the National Front with like-minded regional parties; and third, the National Front agreed on seat adjustments with both the BJP and the Communist Party of India—Marxist (CPI[M]) in order to minimize the division of the Congress vote. At least in the Hindi states, the JD's 1989 election campaign wove a single populist tapestry out of promises to farmers to write off their debts and increase investment in agriculture, promises of reservations for the backward classes, and charges of corruption against Rajiv Gandhi. However, once in power, as a minority government existing on 'outside support' from the Left and the Right, the JD government found it difficult to hold its various constituencies together, leave alone satisfy outside supporters. At that time V.P. Singh's unilateral decision to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations brought about the demise of not only his government and his party, but also the middle peasant OBC coalition.²⁰

After 1990, the available evidence suggests that the support of middle peasant groups swung decisively towards the BJP in many states including Gujarat and northern Karnataka or towards regional parties allied with it.

The BJP itself, of course, was the other pole of all-India political mobilization in the 1980s. Formed after the Janata experiment had broken down, it drew members of both the erstwhile Jana Sangh and Swatantra parties into a new right-wing party that initially sought to break its association with the militant Hindu nationalism of the Jana Sangh. However, the party's disastrous performance in the 1984 elections, when it won only two seats, led to a new strategy, which Jaffrelot (1996) has termed 'ethnonationalist mobilization! The centrepiece of this strategy was of course the movement to replace the Babri mosque in Ayodhya with a temple dedicated to Ram. Launched in 1987, the movement may well have benefited from the broadcast of Hindu epics by the Rajiv Gandhi government (Rajagopal 2001), and it is credited with creating a mass base for the BJP, which won 86 seats in the 1989 elections. Yet, the BJP's vote share was not much higher than the range of the erstwhile Jana Sangh. This does not suggest that the initial Babri Masjid movement had greatly widened the BJP's base prior to 1989. Rather, it was only after the BJP revived the movement in 1990, immediately after V.P. Singh's ill-fated decision to implement Mandal, that we see a major shift in votes for the BJP, much of it at the expense of the JD, in states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, and UP, where the Dal had received the support of dominant peasant castes.

The two agitations, over the Mandal recommendations and the Babri Masjid/Ram Mandir controversy, merged, as many scholars (for example, Parikh 1998) have pointed out and so did the underlying cleavages they represented. The Mandir agitation was viewed by many as a way to undermine OBC reservations and was supported by groups opposed to reservations; conversely, the two JD chief ministers of UP and Bihar, both OBCs from the Yadav caste cluster, became the champions of minority rights and secularism, taking police action against the provocative march led by BJP president Advani to Ayodhya. Thereafter, politics in many states began to lean towards an upper caste versus lower caste pattern, with dominant peasant castes giving the former a mass base they had never had.

Other cleavages, too, opened up in the 1980s and 1990s. There were dramatic increases in separatist and other ethnic violence in Punjab, Assam, and Kashmir (in

addition to the long-standing separatist war in Nagaland). These conflicts demonstrated the limits and possible pitfalls of electoral mobilization. However, in Punjab and Assam the incorporation of separatist sentiments through regional parties was an important part of the solution to these conflicts, and in Kashmir, too, if a solution is to *be* found, it will have to involve the revitalization of electoral processes.

The 1990s also saw the emergence of more militant forms of mobilization among the Dalits or SCs. This was most notable in north India with the rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which completed the decimation of the Congress in UP by mobilizing their Dalit voters away from them. However, and importantly, although the BSP's rhetoric emphasizes a cleavage between Dalits and the upper castes, it is with the OBCs that the BSP has found it most difficult to work carrying on a feud with the OBC-dominated Samajwadi Party as late as the 2009 elections. In UP, this initially enabled the BJP to create its own sandwich alliance by allying with the BSR

The BJP's expansion in the 1990s was due to sandwich tactics used in other, less obvious ways. The two most important were first, the effort to split the OBC category in UP and Bihar by courting the less prosperous castes among the OBC groups, who had come to resent Yadav dominance in the OBC coalition. Second, the BJP very adroitly challenged centre-periphery cleavages in a number of states by supporting the creation of new states in the disaffected regions of existing ones. In particular, the BJP's support for the formation of the state of Jharkhand in Bihar represented an effort to undercut the seemingly impregnable electoral fortress of Lalu Prasad Yadav's Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD).

In the final analysis, however, the most successful use of sandwich tactics continue to be practiced by the Congress, which survived as a viable contender for power between 1996 and 2004 by emphasizing issues of poverty and championing the rights of religious minorities. Even when the party appeared to have been virtually wiped out in the two largest states, UP and Bihar, it retained a base in much of the country, primarily among the poor, allowing it to remain the largest party in terms of votes.

The use of sandwich tactics also explains the Congress party's return to power in 2004 at the head of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and, even more, its stunning victory in 2009, when it became the horst full-term government to be re-

elected in twenty-five years and the first party in eighteen years to cross 200 seats, increased its vote share and revived in UP winning a quarter of the seats while contesting without allies there. These victories make clear that the party's ability to retain a substantial base during the 1990s, especially among the poor, received far less notice at the time than it deserved. There is certainly no space to provide an explanation here, but a hypothesis consistent with the argument of this chapter can be offered. A good part of the explanation, lies in the large poverty alleviation programmes initiated by the Congress government in the 1980s and 1990s.

As is already indicated, sandwich alliances have relative policy preferences not absolute ones, so no exhaustive list of policies that supported Congress' pro-poor image can be given. Some important measures, though, can be mentioned. All had a social insurance thrust rather than seeking to alter the structural condition of poverty. First, the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) launched by Charan Singh was transformed by Mrs Gandhi from a plan to give local governments development funds to a micro-loan programme, which was widely criticized for creating no enduring assets and for not reaching the poorest members of rural society. However, it did distribute substantial funds to the nearly poor. Second, and more importantly, rural employment schemes modelled on the successful employment guarantee scheme (EGS) of Maharashtra were launched in the 1980s, and gradually, in the 1990s, displaced the IRDP as the principal source of Central government social welfare funds. Finally, school lunch programmes, used successfully by the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, became popular in several Congress states, notably Madhya Pradesh, and a part of the Congress national manifestos from the 1990s onwards.

Finally, of course, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) of 2005, which guarantees a hundred days of work a year on public work projects to every poor rural household, was the centerpiece of the 2004-9 UPA government's social programmes. The history of Congress-initiated rural social insurance programmes reminds us that the NREGA was a logical extension of twenty-five years of Congress policy, not merely a policy grafted on by the UPA's allies in the Left front, as some have suggested.

The 2009 elections have provided important pieces of evidence in support of the main argument of this chapter. To reprise, the argument is that Indian political mobilization revolves around two strategies of alliance building—anti-hegemonial

alliances and sandwich alliances; that the advantage has historically been with sandwich alliances owing to the internal contradictions within anti-hegemonic alliances; and that the Congress party's long survival is due to its repeated reinvention of the sandwich alliance in different periods. While the rise of the BJP in the 1990s made this interpretation seem dated, four outcomes of the 2009 elections provide support to it.

First, and most importantly, the early evidence from exit polls and election reports suggests strongly that the NREGA was a major, and perhaps the most important reason for the Congress' victory in 2009, providing strong evidence for the continued relevance of sandwich alliances in Indian politics.

A second notable outcome is the success of the Janata Dal (United), or JD(U), in Bihar, where the RJD's longstanding coalition of OBCs and Dalits collapsed this time around. Analyses of Bihar politics suggest two reasons for this-Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's successful record on development in such areas as building infrastructure, and his ability to woo the less privileged segments among both OBCs and Dalits (Sharma 2009). Nitish Kumar, in other words, built a sandwich alliance of his own.

Third is the marked decline in the overall in the BJP's national vote share, which went down from 22 per cent in 2004 to 18 per cent in 2009, despite the BJP contesting many more seats, which reflected the loss of key allies in West Bengal, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh. By contrast the Congress remains steady at about 26 percent to 28 per cent over the last three elections, with relatively few allies. This suggests strongly that the idea that a bipolar contest between the Congress and the BJP was emerging was overstated.²³

Finally, however, the various constituents of the erstwhile JD, formed as an anti-hegemonic alliance in the 1980s remained viable.

1.9. Critiquing the 'new' state bosses

The rise to the national level of provincial leaders like Nitish Kumar and Mulayam Singh Yadav, much talked about prime ministerial candidates-in-waiting, draws attention towards a critical need to explore the nature and forms of leadership at the state level. Leadership as a subject, unlike in the West, has largely been neglected in India by political scientists, with the scant literature available being more often than

not in the form of political biographies or worse, hagiographies.

Also, for a long time the focus of study has been on the 'national' leaders; 'lesser' ones from the states continue to be neglected. This despite the fact that even during the 'Congress era' preceding Indira Gandhi, India witnessed a host of powerful state level leaders playing a significant role in giving concrete shape to the policies shaping the polity and economy of a nascent democracy, many of them like G.B. Pant (1887- 1961) and K. Kamaraj (1903- 1975) actually moving to the national stage. Congress chief ministers like C.B. Gupta, B.C. Roy, Pratap Singh Kairon, S.K. Sinha, S. Nijalingappa, D.P. Mishra, Y.S. Parmar, M.L. Sukhadia and Ravi Shanker Shukla wielded long-term power and influence. Some of them did not even hesitate to take up cudgels with Nehru, playing the role of kingmakers as members of the 'Syndicate' for a brief period after his demise.

Besides these state party bosses, Congress also had powerful factional leaders at the local level within the party organizations, both keeping the social coalitional support intact and playing an important role in party nominations. One could say the same about non-Congress parties having regional leaders with a national presence like E.M.S. Namboodiripad, C.N. Annadurai and much later, Jyoti Basu. A fixation with national leaders could be attributed to the perception about state politics being too narrow and unimportant, besides merely being a 'carbon copy' of national politics, given Congress dominance. It is only in recent times with the newly exalted position of the states and state parties, that the considerable autonomy being wielded by states and state leaders is drawing attention. There is a realization that a study of the actions, policies, idioms and values of state leadership can go a long way in a better understanding of the distinctive nature of change and development in the concerned state.

Since this new set of powerful state leaders draw their power and influence from state parties they consider their 'own', it is useful to explore their rise. The state parties, most 'ethnic' in nature, have benefited from the fact that political articulation and mobilization in the electoral arena increasingly veers around identity politics based on caste, language, dialect and kinship which are regionally located. Also, the fragmented nature of the party system under a single plurality electoral system is advantageous for state parties as they originated and continue to thrive on the support of a 'core' social constituency consisting of a single numerically and economically

significant caste/community, or alternatively a cluster of them. The narrow victories of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi Party (SP) in the last two assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, or the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) victories in the 1990s in Bihar, demonstrate the effectiveness of such a strategy of nurturing a caste based coalition by promising patronage and protection. To their disadvantage, polity-wide parties like Congress and BJP, perforce have to play the ethnic card in a stealth form, whether in selection of candidates or in distribution of patronage.

Significantly, the ascendance of a patrimonial model of electoral democracy also enables the state party leader to ensure personal loyalties of kinsmen who cling to their 'own' leader, irrespective of the party, in the realistic hope of being favoured as clients. States like Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar routinely witness a marked surge in a particular caste members' share in public employment, government contracts, lucrative postings, service delivery and police protection, if a leader belonging to that particular caste succeeds in becoming the chief minister. Wary of facing a challenge from within the party, these leaders have deliberately kept their parties institutionally weak. Even the much older, cadre based and ideologically rooted parties like the Akali Dal, Dravida Munnettra Kazhagam (DMK) and National Conference (NC) have fallen victim to dynastic politics, with all levers of power remaining within the 'ruling family'. Among the newer parties, mainly offshoots of the Congress or socialist parties, one finds leaders like Lalu Yadav, Sharad Pawar, Naveen Patnaik, Ramvilas Paswan, Ajit Singh, Jayalalithaa or Mayawati, who as founder-presidents or 'natural heirs' have astutely cultivated their personalized rather than party based support base.

Depending more on their personal charisma and sphere of influence, these leaders are quite capable of making and unmaking the parties on their own terms. What helps them also is their complete control over party funds, critical for financing elections and running the party. Parties act as channels through which personal wealth and party funds are accumulated, almost like personal property, that needs to pass on to family members for safe custody as also to run the 'family business'. Lording over the states, most of them comparable in size to European countries, these leaders, when in power, automatically gain access to huge political resources, organization, money and the official machinery. This partly explains the reluctance of leaders like Nitish Kumar, despite their ambition, to move to the national stage, as they may well be recalling the dismal fate of H.D. Deve Gowda, the powerful Vokkaliga chief minister

of Karnataka. Come elections, the 'national' leaders ensconced in Delhi, even belonging to the polity-wide parties, depend on the goodwill of powerful state leaders to secure 'safer' constituencies for themselves and their kin.

So how do these 'new' state leaders differ from the 'old' ones? Though the 'old' party 'satraps' of Congress also partly drew their support from the powerful landed peasant castes and communities, the difference lay in terms of the hierarchical positioning of the castes. Earlier it was always the upper forward castes; now newly mobilized middle and upper backward castes have also joined in, thereby expanding the social base of leadership. However, the old generation state leaders' politics was not governed so starkly by narrow considerations of caste and community as is the case with the newly emergent state party bosses, who are comparable to factional leaders of the Congress of yore. The 'old' state party bosses' active participation and ideological grounding in the secular modern idioms/ values that informed the nationalist movement, in part enabled them to rise over and above the partisan interests and to recognize and accommodate the differences that would arise due to the heterogeneous support base of the Congress.

In contrast, the new crop of state leaders and the parties they lead, have come up in the backdrop of an assertion of narrow identity based politics, devoid of ideological content or activism, in the wake of Congress decline. They continue to thrive electorally on patronage based sectarian politics, even as they sprout the modern language of development and governance. Their proclivity to resort to neo-patrimonial political practices make them susceptible to regional and parochial interests even when they undertake the responsibility of being lawmakers or running the government at the Centre. Aspiring to a 'national' status, these leaders must believe and work for compromises and conciliation rather than accentuating them when dealing with conflicting regional or identity based group interests. Stitching together an opportunistic electoral alliance by the state party bosses for the purpose of building a 'power bloc' capable of capturing power at the Centre, as being attempted by Mulayam Singh Yadav, has ominous portents for a federal polity which is already under considerable strain.

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