ABSTRACT

This research work, "Electoral Politics in UP: A Study of BSP Since 1992" aims at to investigate the electoral politics going on in Uttar Pradesh specially since 1990s a period when states politics became fragmented and polarized due to the political assertiveness of Backward Castes and Lower Castes (Dalits). Infact, this period is characterized with transformed nature of electoral politics when caste and community became as a major mobilizing factor leading towards the upsurge in political participation in North India by socially and economically underprivileged in the caste and class hierarchy. This transformed nature has given birth to new entrants into the politics who make appeals to mobilize these underprivileged sections on ethnic basis that also may be said as ‘politics of recognition or identity’. Caste and religious identities have become so strong and basic mobilizing factor that it has ignored the division among the populace, whenever one particular community is mobilized against another one, it lead the society or nation towards distortions and fragmentations. If political scenario of UP is analysed it can be seen that since 1990s the state’s system has been destabilized. This instability in political sphere grew when one party dominance (Congress) came to an end, and its vacation was filled by the various newly emerged castes and religion based political parties like BJP, a party with Hindutva ideology while SP and BSP parties of distinct electoral constituencies based on caste identity such as OBCs, among them Yadavs particularly, and Dalits. The development of such kind of electoral mobilization strategy on undemocratic bases created a situation of uncertainty, instability in the form of lack of majority party in the Legislative Assembly of the state, and because of this state has to face Hung Assemblies and Presidential Rules during 1990s for several times. Significantly, the early 1990s happened to be a period in country’s post independence era when it
was believed that caste could provide the basis against communalism and hierarchical order in society and politics.

After analyzing state’s electoral politics we find two significant aspects of this transformed nature: on one hand there is an upsurge in political participation by depressed and marginalized sections of society with a hope that political power is a means by which they can break the tyranny of the traditionally dominant castes and communal groups in social as well as political sphere and would be helpful in improving their lower strata in society to live as a dignified human beings like others who belonged to the upper castes ranked above them in caste hierarchical order. For this purpose people provide their support to those parties who represent them and their cause. But second aspect of this transformation is that political parties representing these sections do not fulfill their real job to work for their cause. Though they mobilize their electoral constituencies on castes and communal basis, yet such mobilization strategy do not reach its real objective because these parties only use the castes and religious sentiments of these sections only to form their vote banks to come into power for their own welfare not for the community’s interests and upliftment.

However, these undemocratic electoral mobilization shows that election, that is a very significant part of democracy, has become only a competitive one where sole objective of political parties has become to be victorious one by any way whether it is an the interest of the state or nation or not, whether it would strengthen political system or not, and whether it is of secular nature or not? Such type of electoral politics can be seen in UP where electoral constituencies have been divided by political parties on castes and religious line and it has created a type of electoral fight between distinct parties: BJP, SP and BSP specially, after the decline of the Congress Party which transformed the one party dominance system into a multi party
competition that was characterized by several issues like Mandir, Mandal etc. In the early 1990s Samajwadi Party became dominant but BJP emerged as a stronger party which displaced Congress and emerged as a national contender by espousing the cause of Hindutva while SP under Mulayam Singh was attempting to consolidate his own power base by extending reservations for the Backward Castes in state educational institutions and administrative services. Besides these two the third contender is the BSP representing Dalits, the lower strata of society. For this section it was the period of 1993 when they got an opportunity to come into the main stream of politics or administration and to strengthen Indian democracy. With the formation of the government of this outcaste section on their own majority basis in the country’s most populous and largest parliamentary constituencies state UP, Dalit politics developed enough to challenge the very definition of Hinduism. Its sole objective is the pursuit of power which is proved by the wordings of Kanshi Ram, the pioneer of the Bahujan Movement in UP, “We have a one point programme to take power”. And “Bahujan Samaj Party” (BSP) founded by Kanshi Ram, defines Dalits as a community of humiliated who could be liberated only by gaining political power of their own. To achieve party’s objective, it passed through various mobilization strategies centered on Dalits themselves. For most its strategy was of isolationist nature when it entered into politics during 1980s. But soon it became familiar with the electoral politics of the state where end of the one party dominance has created a fragmented situation in the state. Electoral competitiveness among these fragmented groups did not proved any single majority party which could form a stable government. Such a lack given birth to the coalition politics in the state in which in the absence of any party to be able to form the government on its own absolute majority basis then one party has to be aligned with another party or parties in order to
come into power or to form the government. So, during this prevailed situation BSP also became opportunistic one and moved from its isolationist strategy to coali- tional one by which it became able to enjoy political power in the state. First chance for it to form a Coalition Government was of 1993 Assembly elections in UP after the demolition of Babri masjid in 1992 led to the fall of BJP government of state, and BJP joined Samajwadi Party (SP) and both by eliminating the gap between them irrespective of their ideological differences and opposed electoral constituencies: Dalits and Yadavs (OBCs). Though a political attempt was made by them, yet their alliance could not survive longer due to the lack of the social alliance between these two opposed constituencies having hostile relationship since a long time. After the failure of the bahujan alliance, party adopted another strategy by forming post-bahujan alliance with the BJP, the party of upper castes or a manuwadi party, of which BSP had always been anti because of its manuwadi ideology and of exploitative nature who have exploited the Scheduled Castes since ages. The devotion for seat of power could not stop it to go ahead in the way of coalition politics. So, it was mid 1990s when BSP did not hesitate to compromise its ideology, upliftment of Dalit bahujan sections, by aligning itself with BJP in 1995. Political power was the only main point which made it ready to enter into the post-bahujan alliance for several times: 1995, 1997 and 2002. To make justification of this move it was described by Mayawati as a temporary and tactical method to gain power. It shows that the pursuit of political power is the sole objective for any party whether BJP, SP or BSP and Congress, the major parties of state.

Such type of coalition politics in state was not only characterized with compromise on ideological basis but the game of split or defections, distrust on each other. These negative features of coalition politics could not brought stability in
state’s political structure due to which administration has to come under the
President’s Rule several times in 1990s as from December 4, 1992 to June 3, 1993,
Again it was the 2002 Assembly elections when Hung Assembly arises due to the lack
of majority party in the Lower House. It was followed by negotiation among parties to
come to the point to form the Coalition Government. Such type of negotiation ended
with the formation of BSP-BJP alliance. Here if we analyse the on going coalition
politics, we will find a type of bargaining strategy. It means, a party in Coalition
Government has as much strong hold as it has its strength.

Another significant part of UP’s electoral politics is that for a certain period of
time the identity based parties like BSP and SP remain exclusivist in nature, means
they were confined to their particular vote-banks such as OBCs (Yadavs) of SP and
Dalits of BSP. But soon it was realized by these parties that their confinement to an
exclusive vote banks could not provide a strong base to come into power without any
support from outside. Then this realization changed their exclusivist attitude towards
inclusive by which they attempted to extend their support base to other castes and
communities. Because it’s the demand of ongoing electoral fight where every party
wants to come in power by getting majority of votes that is only possible when it has
the larger support of castes and communities. And the reality is that population is
divided into various castes, sub-castes and communities, and are being represented by
distinct parties of their own caste and community elites. So, no party is able enough to
place itself of winning position only with its particular section of society unless it woo
other sections also. Therefore, every party is in competition with each other to woo as
many sections as be possible. One of the example of such type of mobilization
strategy is presented by BSP in UP. At its initial stages of politics, it remained
confined to the Dalits, particularly and other bahujan sections like OBCs, STs and Minorities but since late 1990s it realized that to win elections it’s essential to woo other sections also. However, it moved towards the upper – castes particularly Brahmins and Banias by giving them election tickets in order to extend its social base. Gradually, since 2005, party started to approach these upper castes sections, directly through organizing various sammelans like ‘Brahmin Sammelans’ and ‘Bania Sammelans’ throughout the state to mobilize these people within party’s fold by assuring them their share in the administration who were neglected by their parent parties like Congress and BJP. This historic move of the BSP in UP’s political sphere became successful in providing a five year full term majority government of BSP in UP from 2007 to 2012. And it was seen as a revival of old Congress’s Social Alliance of Brahmins, Dalits and Muslims. Here it may say that electoral politics of the state having socially heterogeneous constituencies have forced the political parties to transformed their strategic position of demobilizing and excluding other social categories to the strategy of the maintaining a type of electoral tie between included and excluded sections.

This present research work based on the descriptive research strategy is divided into several parts: introduction and four chapters with concluding part. In which introductory part deals with the nature of electoral politics in Uttar Pradesh during one party system, means Congress rule after independence till the emergence of other political parties those were in opposition to it and led the Congress Party towards at end in terms of its domination. While first chapter deals with the aftermath of Congress’s domination in UP and how its vacated position was filled by other political parties which were emerged as identity based parties. Among them one was Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). However, in this chapter the aspects of BSP’s origin is
discussed and even before its emergence as a political party, the stage from where it started its journey as a ‘Social Movement’ in the form of BAMCEF: “All India Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation”, to a quasi political body, DS-4 “Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti”, and finally the formation of BSP ‘Bahujan Samaj Party’ a political one. This chapter describes each and every stage of BSP’s formation by Kanshi Ram, the funder of it who is known as the architect of BSP and after him another leader Miss Mayawati whose objective behind party’s formation is the pursuit of political power through which the miserable condition of Dalit could be ended and they could strengthen their Dalit identity in society. Apart from this Dalit’s consolidation, there are other castes and communities also that are the part of BSP and what was the reasons which made it possible for them to align with BSP, and by coming closer with each other how they carved a new political identity, “Bahujan identity”.

Second chapter entitled as “Coalition Era of Bahujan Samaj Party” describes those aspects of BSP from where it left its isolations policy and changed its image as of a ‘Secular Dalit party’ to a new strategy of coalitions or alliance that were the requirement of the competitive nature of politics and lack of single majority party in which each one was dependant on other’s support. Such a dependency on aligned party created instability in politics for a long period. During this era BSP came closer to its enemy party (BJP) well, that was an impossible one before the coalitional politics. During such politics nothing was certain. And after this politics BSP adopted another mobilization strategy in order to expand its political base by wooing upper castes people: Brahmins and Banias within its fold. This aspect is discussed under third chapter of the thesis. This turning point in BSP’s mobilization strategy may be say as the ideological shift of BSP from Bahujan to Sarvajan’ in which it has
represented as a party of *Sarvajan* not of *bahujan* only. By adopting this inclusive strategy, instead of exclusivist as was earlier, it still believes in the pursuit of *political power, a master key to all problems*.

After discussing these aspects at the end of the thesis various policies and programmes of the BSP government are mentioned with its positive and negative aspects. To what extent these policies were implemented and which sections of society were benefited from these programmes.

In this way plan of this work focuses on BSP’s emergence, its core electoral constituencies and different mobilization strategies in accordance to the requirements of the electoral war in Uttar Pradesh. Though, this work is mainly based on Bahujan Samaj Party’s electoral politics, yet it put light on other parties’ affairs and their ideologies also because the game of electoral politics may not be confined to a particular one, it needs other players also.