ABSTRACT

Uttar Pradesh has always played a significant role on the political map of India. It is called the heart in the body politic of the country and there have taken place in this state event, so momentous, as have changed and revolutionized the course of political history of the whole country. Throughout Indian history, starting with the Mauryas, through the Guptas, the Sultanat, the Mughals and lastly the British, this region remained the nucleus of Indian politics. It has largest population of any Indian state and as a consequence it sends the largest number of Members to the Indian Parliament.

British government brought revolutionary changes in the Indian politics in late colonial era (1930-1947), which marked the development of Provincial autonomy and the introduction of limited franchise to the Provinces. During 1937-39 “popular” ministries were formed and attention was paid for the upliftment of lower castes, but the question of OBCs and Minorities was not tackled by the popular ministries and British administrators simultaneously, even no powerful leaders come forward to launch any strong movement and to raise the question of OBCs among Hindus and Muslims at the national level before partition. In late colonial period during 1930-1947, caste question among the Muslims was not raised in Uttar Pradesh, because of the communal problems and the demand of the Muslim League for the partition of the country was at that time quite prominent, thus Muslim leaders focused their whole attention on the partition and the problem was remained intact until it was raised by Momin Conference under the leadership of Abdul Qaiyum Ansari (1905-74) and later on implementation of the Mandal Commission (1990).

The lower caste movement in the Southern and Western India started much before independence. Polarization of caste affiliations was easier in the south, given the absence of a complex caste middle order in the region. Also, the anti-brahmin movement coincided with an anti-Aryan movement. But as far as lower caste movement in Northern India is concerned, the role played by stalwarts like Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), Jayprakash Narayan (1902-1979), Acharya Narendra Dev (1889-1956), Ram Manohar Lohia (1910-1967), Chaudhary Charan Singh (1902-1987),
Ashok Mehta is quite significant in the annals of caste movement in India. They were influenced by the socialist ideas of Marx and Gandhi and they strove hard for the democratic socialism and its dissemination and inculcation in the Indian politics, and more particularly in Uttar Pradesh. Nehru was seen as the champion of socialism in India. He was an ideologue of socialism, secularism and economic development. He was also seen as the champion of equality, social justice and freedom. Ram Manohar Lohia highlighted the concepts of equality, freedom and social justice. He insisted on the democratic decentralization of economic and political power. It was he who for the first time raised the demand of preferential treatment for the backward castes in independent India. He advocated that democratic planning would root out the differences and disparities. Ashok Mehta put emphasis on economic planning to remove social and economic disparities from our society. He also emphasized on planned development, social reforms and democratic decentralization to attain social justice. In Western India, Phule (1827-1890), B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), Prakash Ambedkar presents the Dalit Movement in strong way, in southern India anti Brahmin movement started in colonial era and in Eastern India like Bengal raised up the Namasudra Movements. But in Northern India, particularly in the region of Uttar Pradesh, the question of caste remains.

This thesis also explores some of themes in the unfolding drama of social and political change in Uttar Pradesh during 1930-1990. It has attempted to explore a history of the political fortunes of three different and historically underprivileged social groups in Uttar Pradesh viz. (a) the ex Untouchables, officially named Scheduled Castes by India’s Constitution, and often also called the Dalits; (b) the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) among the Hindus and (c) Backward classes among the Muslims, who, of late have started calling themselves, Pasmanda.

The proposed thesis entitled “Situating Social Justice in the Indian Political Process: UP, 1930-1980s, attempts to give a comprehensive account of Uttar Pradesh and its caste politics as a whole. It provides a comparative perspective on why the lower caste movement did not develop earlier in UP, as it did in the other parts of the country.
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The proposed thesis is divided into 5 chapters. The titles of the chapters are:

1. Uttar Pradesh: A General Profile
2. Dalits in the Political Processes of Uttar Pradesh: 1930-1990
3. The Politicization of the Peasantry in Uttar Pradesh: 1930-1990
5. Politics of Muslim Communities in Uttar Pradesh: 1930-1990

The chapter 1, “Uttar Pradesh: A General Background”, begins by examining the social, political, religious and demographic structure of Uttar Pradesh. In this process, it explores the historical geography of the state and the validity of it being called the heartland of India. Focus is also on the issue of land distribution, religious profile, and caste structure with deep caste cleavages persistent in the state.

The chapter 2 traces the emergence of political consciousness, participation in politics and parallel attempts to form a new social identity ‘Dalit’ by the SCs. The SC movement has been through phases of ‘integration’ and ‘separation’ from dominant political formations and the social groups they represent. Integration means the attempt to join or support dominant parties such as the Congress. Adaptation and accommodation are features of this phase together with little attempt to create a distinctive identity. Separation entails a revolt against the Hindu caste system and often the embracing of a different creed such as Buddhism. During such periods, SCs have preferred to form their own party in opposition to dominant ‘elite’ or ‘Brahminical’ parties.

Broadly put, four distinct phases can be identified in the politics of the Dalit Castes in Uttar Pradesh.

1. From 1930 to 1947, studies on identity formation of the SCs in the United Provinces rooted in the quest for tracing the roots of Dalit assertion. In these studies, emphasis has been given to role of important personalities and their contribution for making Dalits a powerful political force.

2. From 1947 to 1969, when after an initial period of accommodation in the immediate post-independence period with the dominant Congress party,
SCs decided to form their own party, viz., the Republican Party of India (RPI).

3. The failure of this experiment led to co-option into the Congress under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. As a result, up to 1977, the SCs supported the Congress with its radical doctrines of Garibi Hatao’ under which a number of welfare schemes were put forward to help the Scheduled Castes.

4. Since the early 1980s, the SC movement entered into a period of revolt leading to the formation of a separate party, ideology and identity. There has been criticism of, and movement away from Hinduism, though this phase has been more political than social.

The period of 1930-1947 is taken separately because of the historical reasons, during this period for a brief duration (1937-39) “popular” ministries were formed in the political history of India, for the first time, though the central control of the British crown continued, and these ministries were short lived. The British administrators, by this time, had also started taking account of such a populace of India as the Dalits and minorities and showed concerns for the uplift of these segments. The Indian National Congress had also manifested its concerns for such groups, identifying them as untouchables, Mahatma Gandhi had given them the name “Harijan” (1933, children of God). When Dr B.R.Ambedkar arrived on the scene, casteism became a real political issue. He proposed that there should be a number of special seats in parliament for the Depressed Classes which would be filled through elections from special Constituencies. While a new Constitution for India in the 1930s, the British extended to the Dalit communities the privilege of voting as a separate electoral constituency. Gandhi opposed this constitutional provision with all the strength at his command, since a separate harijan electorates would damage Hindu society beyond repair instead, he offered the Dalits reserved seats in the central and provincial legislatures on a scale more generous than promised by the British. The so-called Poona-Pact of 1932 was a triumph for the Mahatma because it ensured the social cohesion of Hindu society.

The rise of Dalits after independence in UP has not been an incremental movement increasing in size and intensity. Rather, it has passed through a number of
phases of strength and weakness, autonomy and co-option, which have given it a complex nature. The study of the Republican Party of India (RPI) and more particularly the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), circumstances leading to the formation of All India Backward (SC, ST and OBC) and Minority (BAMCEF) and BSP, on which this chapter focuses. It shows that a central problem since its formation has been a lack of clarity of both goals and the methods to be adopted for achieving them. The All India Backward (SC, ST and OBC) and Minority (BAMCEF)-BSP as a movement and as a political party, revealed a contradiction between its short-term goal of capturing political power and the long-term of social transformation. The contradiction could be said to be its weakness. As a movement, it aimed at breaking the caste system, and the upper castes and all political parties representing them were identified as ‘enemies’. Yet, it did not seek revolutionary transformation of the existing caste and parallel economic hierarchy. As a party, it has adopted the parliamentary path of gradual and democratic change, i.e., it hopes to change the system but working within it. As a result, capturing political power has become an imperative. However, as SCs constitutes only 20 percent of the population in UP, the logic of caste-based mobilization makes the support of other castes and political formations representing them crucial for gaining power, leading to alliance with ‘manuwadi’ groups. Hence, the relationship between the Dalit/SC parties and other political parties in UP has always been problematic. In the 1960s, taking advantage of the divisions over these issues within the RPI, the Congress succeeded in co-opting it. In the 1990s, by aligning with the BJP for the immediate goal of capturing political power, the BSP was in danger of losing its distinct identity as a movement for the oppressed achieved after a period of struggle. Yet, by forming a government, the BSP leadership hoped to strengthen its position within the state.

The third chapter focuses, the politicization of the peasantry in Uttar Pradesh. During the Colonial period initially the Congress was able to gain the support of the landlords as well as the tenants and the smaller peasants. This was because it was a broad based party containing the Conservative Swarajists, Socialists and others who were active in the Kisan Sabhas. Infact, in the 1930s the leadership felt the need to walk very carefully between the Zamindari interests in the Congress and the leftist elements who wanted radical agrarian change. Although the tenant movements in UP and Congress control over the province from 1937 to 1939 resulted in some modest
reforms and some amelioration of the condition of the tenants, the zamindari system remained essentially intact throughout the British rule. The 1939 Act introduced by the Congress Ministry of Govind Ballabh Pant pursued the logic of the earlier measures and granted to all tenants in Agra and Oudh full hereditary rights on their holdings. Thus by this time the zamindar had lost the actual control over land.

After independence, Congress acquired complete control over the government of UP and moved to displace the zamindars and talukdars economically and politically and to substitute for the old agrarian system a new rural social order based primarily upon owner-cultivation of family-size farms. Two major pieces of land reform legislation were enacted by the Congress to achieve these goals—the Zamindari Abolition Act of 1952 and the Imposition of Ceiling on Land Holding Act of 1960. The Zamindari Abolition Act, as it names implies, eliminated the former system of tax-farming by removing the zamindars and talukdars from their positions as intermediaries between the cultivator and the state. The Land Ceilings Act of 1960 was designed more with a view to reduce the size of the largest landholdings in UP than to redistribute and equalize landholding on a large scale. Thus, in the aftermath of zamindari abolition and the establishment of Congress rule in the rural districts of UP, the middle and large peasantry from among the elite proprietary castes benefited economically and politically. A second group of castes that benefited to some extent from zamindari abolition were the middle cultivating castes of Ahirs, Kurmis, Lodhi Rajputs, and a few other smaller castes, most of whose members were tenants of the elite castes before zamindari abolition.

The implementation of land reforms, though half-hearted, facilitated the emergence of a powerful class of peasant proprietors, who were regarded by the Congress as the best guarantor of a stable social and political rural order by providing farmer tenants legal rights of ownership. Zamindari abolition also led to the mobilization of peasants who began to assert themselves against upper caste hegemony. The process of political mobilization gained momentum offer the growth of class differentiation in the wake of the new agricultural policies pursued by the UP, government from the 1960s onwards. The Green Revolution in Indian agriculture, beginning in the mid-1960s, had a major impact on the wealth and lifestyle of Jat farmers. These changes in the economic status of the backward communities had far-
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searching social and political consequences. The speed of literacy and education in the rural areas led to a process of social awakening and emergence of a new leadership from amongst the intermediate and backward caste. The newly awakened intermediate caste started clamouring for greater share in political power as well as in government jobs—a demand that ultimately led to the reservation policies of the eighties and nineties.

The chapter 4, Rise of Other Backward Caste in Uttar Pradesh, delineates the awakening of middle class or peasant class. In the late colonial era (1930-1947), there was no movement started for the rise of middle class but the Triveni Sangh was formed during this period. Yadav, Kurmis and Koeris had formed a joint front—Triveni Sangha, to combat the opposition of Brahamans and Rajputs. There was also a Backward Class League in 1929 in eastern Uttar Pradesh especially in Allahabad and Benaras. There were some smaller outfits also. But all these organizations proved to be weak, ineffective and short-lived. They could not generate anything like the anti-Brahmana movement in south India.

The OBCs had high hopes of acquiring something worthwhile under the new Constitution of their Republic. But, they got only a promise of help (in the form of Article 340), if the President of the Indian Republic ever thought in his/her wisdom that such aid was really required by them. What did it really mean? Implicitly this: when the Article was drafted, the OBCs had no clear case for being helped; they did not suffer from social injustice or deprivation in national life; but if any such eventuality visited them in future, then the President of the Union would take care of them. Indeed, this was a setback to the OBCs. They took to introspection and lost no time in coming to the conclusion that they were maltreated because they were not organized. Hence, they formed an All-India Backward Classes Federation on the very day the Constitution came into force (26 January 1950). Its headquarters were placed at Delhi. Next, they opened its branches in almost every state. The crux of the aims and objectives of the organization was to fight for the rights of the OBCs.

Among the political forces, the Socialists were especially quick to mobilize the lower castes on the reservation issue. Lohia’s approach, in particular, was thus responsible for the early inroads made by the socialist parties he successively set up in
Uttar Pradesh. His ‘quota politics’, however, was not the only ideology that was mobilizing the lower castes peasants in the 1960s and 1970s. Charan Singh was also canvassing for the protection of the interests of the ‘kisans’, a group which was largely identified with his own caste, the Jats, but among whom there were many lower castes people. Charan Singh and the Socialists joined hands, against the ruling Congress in the 1970s and their alliance culminated in the first Janata experiment in 1977-79. This episode was the first turning point in the rise of the lower castes in Uttar Pradesh which implemented quota for them in government jobs and educational institutions on the recommendation of Cheddi Lal Sathi Report. But it was short-lived and brought few benefits to the lower castes because the proponents of ‘quota politics’ were in a minority within the ruling coalition. The appointment of the Mandal Commission (1980), however, suggested that ‘quota politics’ may well have a future in Uttar Pradesh.

The other landmark in the lower castes’ rise to power was precisely due, in the 1980s, to the electoral victory of the second Janata and the implementation (1990) of the Manadal Report (1980). This move showed that ‘quota politics’ had taken over from ‘kisan politics’. The Jats left the coalition whereas the lower castes mobilized in Uttar Pradesh where they were still marginal to all the centers of power. They formed a front against the upper castes’ vocal hostility to the new reservations. So the affirmative action programmes had at last promoted them to fight united as one group, the ‘Other Backward Classes’. As a result, OBC leaders were returned in large numbers to Parliament and they also took power in Uttar Pradesh. In the wake of this development, the Dalits deserted the Congress in favour of one force, the Bahujan Samaj Party which aggressively fought upper caste domination in Uttar Pradesh. It means that the political class is changing with the replacement of an upper-caste oligarchy by rather plebeian newcomers.

The chapter 5, Politics of Muslim Communities in Uttar Pradesh: 1930-1990. In late colonial period during 1930-1947, caste question among the Muslims was not raised in Uttar Pradesh. In the socio-political mobilization of Muslims OBCs, Muslim weavers’ movement seems to be the first attempt by any such Muslim group. The first convention of Momin Conference was formally held in Calcutta in 1928, mainly by the UP, Bihar migrants. From this year onward the Momin Conference gained an all-
India stature and became the representative organization of 3-4 crore Momins of undivided India. The Momin Conference under the stewardship of Abdul Qaiyum Ansari (1905-74) by supporting the Congress and its nationalist movement enabled the Congress to retain its national status and secular image or character.

The Muslim OBCs raised their voices for application of the recommendations on the ground of social justice and challenging the Muslim leaders on their political stand. The neglect of socio-economic dimensions of Muslim backwardness was indeed a major failure of Muslim leadership in the country. In 1955 Kaka Kalelkar Commission's Report of Backward Classes (1955) had for the first time recognized the Muslim OBCs at par with the Hindu counterparts. The commission noted the existence of number of communities amongst the Muslims who have been suffering from social inferiority in their own society and also examined the extent of their backwardness. The commission recommended their eligibility for job reservations. But the recommendations remained on paper owing to some handicaps on the part of the government. Later on in 1980, the Mandal Commission Report gave due recognition to the problems of backwardness including the Muslims. The commission treated 90 percent of Muslim population in the country as OBCs and proposed reservations in government jobs and educational institutions. Indira Gandhi (1917-1984) had appointed a high power Gopal Singh Commission to look into the problems of Muslims. But the Muslim leaders never bothered to look at the Gopal Singh Report (1983), instead they spent much time on emotional issues. Another prime minister Rajiv Gandhi formulated a 20-point programme for the upliftment of the Muslims, but no Muslim leader paid much attention to it. If the Muslim leaders had taken these issues seriously and applied political pressure, the government would have been forced to implement them for the benefit of Muslims. The Muslim leaders' indifference is usually explained by the fact that these programmes would benefit only for the backward classes of the society. This may be considered as partially true, but there are also the other factors, viz., minority syndrome, fear psychosis and communal tension under majority-minority relationship of the country. The rise of OBC Muslims has radical repercussion in Muslim politics as they constituted the majority within the Muslim minority population of the country. The Muslim politics gradually started becoming more grass roots oriented and therefore addressing concrete (socio-economic) issues, in place of emotive religious-cultural issues. This basic shift in
Muslim politics may be examined on the basis of movements or the emerging Muslim OBC organisations in the country. All these processes have awakened the Muslim OBCs which enabled them to organise movements at local, regional and national level.

Historically the upper class/caste Indian Muslim political leadership have consciously played the ‘politics of identity’ and it centered around a few cultural-emotive issues. Prominent among these issues are Aligarh Muslim University, Babri masjid, Muslim Personal Law and the question of Urdu. This can be testified by the number of resolutions and declarations passed by various Muslim conferences and organizations such as, Jamiat-e-Islami, Jamait-e-Ulema Hind, Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu, Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, the Majlis-e-Ittihadal-Muslimin, Muslim Majlis, Urdu Muhafiz Dasta, Deeni Talim Council, Muslim Personal Law Board, Aligarh Muslim University's Old Boys Association, Babri Masjid Movement Coordination Committee, Babri Masjid Action Committee, etc. However this does not mean that the above fora, conventions and organisations, have hardly raised issues concerning the educational, social, economic and political development of Muslims.

The conclusion draws out the implications of this argument for social justice behind the mobilization of caste and community in the political processes of colonial and post independence in Uttar Pradesh. During the colonial period, the issue of caste, fell under the notion of secondary contradiction and the primary motive during the colonial period was not in real terms to truly address the grievances of backward castes but to prepare them for being part of the Indian national movement and the oppression of lower castes was just a replacement of white by browns. And thus, very little has been achieved by the backward castes and minorities during the colonial period, whatever achieved was confined to their private domain i.e., status quoist, but very little has been achieved in the public domain i.e., political achievement remained confined in the form of Poona-pact (1932) and separate electorates. But during the post colonial period one can witness a real shift more significantly after the 1980s, so far as the social and political uplift of the lower caste (SCs and OBCs) is concerned. Finally, Mandal Commission Report was the culmination to address and to remove the inequalities persisting among the SCs, OBCs among Hindus and Muslims. Thus, after a long wave of struggle, some relaxation was provided by Mandal Commission
and thus it brought the social justice for the communities oppressed by the upper caste. But as far as Muslims are concerned they found themselves in a trauma situation due to the parallel development of communalism and casteism. But later on the concept of Hindutva and the communal forces were challenged by the Mandal Commission, which provided reservation to the Muslim OBCs during 1980s and thus their problem was solved to a limited extent by the coming of the Mandal Commission. Still the problem of Muslims was not fully solved and therefore, the Muslims political fortunes did not received much strength and cohesion, in comparison to Hindu OBCs and SCs.