CHAPTER II
THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY IN UP:
CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW IDEOLOGY IN THE
1980s
2.1 INTRODUCTION

The fall of the government of Janata was not unexpected and its failure did not deter the Hindu nationalist’s quest for a broader base in Indian politics. The experience of working in Janata Party led them not to revert to old Jana Sangh, but to form a party with a new name i.e., BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), ostensibly to attract new entrants. This chapter looks into the emergence and framing of the new ideology and strategy of the BJP in the 1980s.

2.2 THE FORMATION OF BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY IN UP: REASONS AND IDEOLOGY

After the disintegration of the Janata party, the ex- Jana Sanghis on 1980 formed a new party called the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In order to establish itself as a separate party from the Jana Sangh, the BJP declared the ideology of Jaya Prakash Narayan as well as that of Deendayal Upadhyaya as their ideals.

The main reasons for the formation of the BJP were:
1. The immediate for the formation of the BJP was the collapse of the Janata party;
2. The decade of 1980s provided ample opportunity for the creation of a broad based, according to them Centrist party, yet emphasising the primary role of the Hindu’s, in India. Prior to 1980s this role was played by the Hindu traditionalists within the Congress party. The factors which facilitated the formation of such a party were:
   A) Prior to 1980s the Congress derived their strength from goals of socio-economic development (Nehru’s socialism to Indira Gandhi’s populism) and the policy of secularism. However, by the mid 1980s the Congress party began to move away from these two policies. In place of social development, government began to place emphasis on liberalization. Similarly notions of communalism gradually replaced secularism. The Congress party under Indira Gandhi moved to the right in order to meet the challenge of right wing parties mainly the BJP.
(B) Second, this development was followed by a revival of proselytisation and separatism on the part of certain minorities.

(3) The decade of 1980s brought about significant changes in the UP politics in the form of decline of the Congress party and the emergence of the BJP. The main reasons for these changes were: the increasing dissatisfaction among the rural producers and the marginal groups in the rural areas, growing assertion of the backward castes, and the challenges posed by communalism.¹

In order to present itself as a party with liberal outlook, the BJP introduced the word Janata in the party's name along with putting a moderate person like Vajpayee as the President i.e. at the helm. Accordingly Janata party members like—Ram Jethmalani, Shanti Bhusan, and Sikandar Bakht were invited to join the party. The party adopted some of the Janata party's programme, by giving added priority to Gandhian Socialism, notwithstanding the inherent guiding and motivating principle of Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism. A party with a new name had necessarily to adopt a new party flag and they chose new colour of green and saffron quite similar to that of the Janata Party and the symbol of lotus replacing the lamp of the old erstwhile Jana Sangh..

The BJP defines its ideology in the following way:

"Article II : OBJECTIVE : the party is pledged to build up India as a strong and prosperous nation, which is modern, progressive and enlightened in outlook and which proudly draws inspiration from India's ancient culture and values and thus is able to emerge as a great world power playing an effective role in the comity of Nations for the establishment of world peace and a just international order. The party aims at establishing a democratic state which guarantees to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed or sex, political, social and economic justice, equality of opportunity and liberty of faith and expression. The party shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution

of India as by law established and to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy and would uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.

Article III: BASIC PHILOSOPHY: Integral Humanism shall be the basic philosophy of the Party.

Article IV: COMMITMENTS: The Party shall be committed to nationalism and national integration, democracy, Gandhian socialism, positive secularism that is 'Sarva-Dharma Samabhav', and value-based politics. The party stands for decentralisation of economic and political power".¹

Malik and Singh's comment on BJP's ideologies can be summed up as BJP's desire to work with other democratic parties to defend democracy and fundamental rights, besides fighting against fascist trends. In tune with the time, the BJP had to adopt what it calls 'Gandhian socialism'. The argument in favour of Gandhian method of development, as BJP emphasizes, is that it accepts small, medium and large industries. Gandhian socialism is usually associated with humanizing society in contrast to western model of industrialisation and capitalism that dehumanize society. Gandhian method of development, BJP thinks, is in harmony with India's spiritual heritage, as well as India's ancient glorious work on science and technology.²

The concept of "positive secularism" advocated by BJP emphasizes its commitment to religious tolerance and sarva dharma samabhava (all religions are equal), which implies equality of treatment of both the members of majority and minority communities; for, according to BJP, very special treatment to religious minorities is tantamount to appeasement of religious minorities. Additionally, "Sarva dharma Sambhava also means distillation of common moral values whether derived from different religions or from other

¹ BJP Constitution and Rules (as amended by the National Council at Gandhinagar, Gujarat, on 2nd May, 1992) BJP Publication, New Delhi: 3-5.
historical and civilizational experiences and approaches, which always remained integral to the Indian civilization".4

2.3 POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES ADOPTED BY THE BJP IN 1980s

In what follows, we discuss BJP's policies, under the following headings:

2.3.1 ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL POLICIES OF BJP

Congress that ruled the country from 1947 onwards established a number of heavy industries like Steel plants by the State (Central government) with full collaboration with foreign countries like, USSR, Germany, Britain while the major section of manufacturing sector that existed before 1947 was foreign companies. After 1947 these were converted into so-called joint ventures with Indians, with foreign companies allowed to have not more than 49 percent stake in equity. Licences were required from the government for establishing any company. Naturally, the licensing authority became a centre of corruption; but, to be fair, corruption was all pervading in the Indian society.

The BJP while formulating its 1980 "Economic Policy Statement" 5 assumed that licensing was the real cause of corruption and secondly, it stifled the free growth of the economic development; the offshoot of which was perennial low GDP (Gross Domestic Product), ever increasing poverty, low per captia income, unemployment, and so on. They were completely against state controlling of economy at that time.

In the 1980s, BJP was in favour of remunerative prices for farmers, and for the growth of small scale industries. They were against Multi-nationals (MNC's) and against the domination of World Bank and IMF. Consequently, they wanted removal of bureaucratic control over industrial

expansion i.e. abolition of License Raj, as they called it, and demanded that the state owned companies, or industries should be sold to private companies i.e. privatisation. They also wanted social benefits to be given to weaker sections.

In recent years BJP following Congress’s 1991 institution and implementation of liberalisation and globalisation, has made a complete U-turn in their practice of economic and industrial policy. The word “Swadeshi”, is no longer uttered by top echelons of the BJP.

2.3.2 AGRARIAN AND RURAL POLICYOF BJP

A necessary consequence of highlighting Gandhian method of development was that in the BJP’s policy on agriculture, the impetus was to be given to areas like agriculture, agro-products, animal farming etc. This, in short, requires development of rural areas, promotion of village industries, simplification of land laws and transfer of land to tillers, development of fisheries and poultry farming, building of wash houses and cold storage facilities in the village, etc., and the people in rural areas should be given such facilities like potable drinking water, roads, transportation, sanitation, jobs, and a minimum wage for farm and agricultural workers. In order to do all these, the BJP promised to allocate seventy percent of development money under the Five year Plan for agriculture and rural development. The main objective of these policies is to narrow down the gap between rural and urban income, improving the standards of living in villages. Villages should be such that the rural people need not migrate to urban areas for job hunting resulting in living in slums.

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6 Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh Hindu Nationalist in India, op cit.: 101.
7 Ibid.:106. Also see BJP, Kisanon Ka Adhikar Patra, BJP, New Delhi, 1987 : 31-32.
2.3.3 BJP ON MINORITIES AND CREATION OF UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

India is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic country where each religion has its own code of conduct that pervades amongst the milieu belonging to that religion. In other words, the society is not free of religious dictates. Under the existing socio-economic conditions, introduction of uniform civil code in India is extremely difficult. No doubt, Article 44 of the constitution desires the introduction of Uniform Civil Code for the entire country at some point of time.

While most of the parties, in or out of power, simply dodged this introduction all along; the BJP is the only party which insisted on the early introduction of the uniform civil code in India. However, that does not mean that the other parties do not understand its necessity. For, the classic 1985 Supreme court judgement in the celebrated Shah Bano case where Shah Bano, a divorced Muslim women, was granted maintenance allowance, created enormous problem for the then ruling Congress(I) party at the centre. The Muslim religious and political organisations opposed strongly the Supreme court judgement since it violates the Muslim Personal Law and Shariat's validity in particular. The ruling Congress government then introduced in 1986 Muslim Women's Bill (Protection of Rights of Divorce) in Parliament and got it passed.

The BJP vehemently opposed the passage of this Bill which, according to BJP, is an example of appeasement of Muslim fundamentalists. Additionally, it is against the desire of the Constitution (op cit.). The BJP utilized the Bill to mobilize Hindu sentiment against the so-called secularism of the Congress government. And, introduction of a proper Uniform Civil Code embracing people of different religious faith in particular through general consensus is an important issue in elections for BJP.

The BJP also wants to abolish the existing Minorities Commission since the Human Rights Commission can do the job of looking into every

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8 For details see Zoya Hasan Quest for Power: Oppositional Movement and Post Congress Politics in UP OUP, Delhi, 1998: 207.
aspect of injustice regardless of the person's religion, gender, caste or sects. The word "Minority" meaning religious minority is definitely misleading.

2.3.4 BJP'S VIEW ON BJP ON THE NATURE OF INDIAN FEDERALISM

Unlike the Jana Sangh, the BJP supported a federal form of government for India strictly according to the Constitution of India. But with the passage of time, they favoured the idea of devolution of greater powers to the states. This had been particularly true after the emergency rule of the Indira Gandhi in 1975 and the arbitrary use of Article 356 of the Constitution by the subsequent governments at the centre. The BJP, therefore, in its 1984 election manifesto demanded the strengthening of state governments, enhancement of financial powers of the state, formation of inter-state council under Article 263 etc. The party favours the creation of smaller states which are economically and democratically viable. Further, the party keeping in tune with the goals as set by Deendayal Upadhaya, J.P. Narayan and Gandhiji, favour the strengthening of the local self government organizations like village Panchayat, District Councils and Municipal Committees.

2.3.5 BJP's POLICY ON POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN INDIA

The question of political reform arose when the major political parties had to rely on donations from business communities to contest elections, which according to the BJP leads to corruption in politics. Therefore on the question of political and constitutional reform, BJP favoured the constitution of a multi-member election commission, whose members should be barred from holding any public office after retirement to maintain its neutrality. Further, instead of simple plurality system as practiced in India, they favoured

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9 Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh *Hindu Nationalists in India*, op cit.: 111-112.

10 ibid. 115.
the introduction of a mixed system – a combination of the present majority system and a list system which is used in West Germany.\textsuperscript{11}

The BJP also favoured judicial reform that envisaged the prohibition of assumption of public office by judges after retirement. The BJP further recommended that the Chief Justice of Supreme court of India, taking into cognizance the recommendation of an independent body, should have the ultimate say in appointing judges at high courts. Further, the BJP recommended the appointment of more judges so that cases can be settled as quickly as possible; for, every sort of court is now burdened with large number of cases.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{2.3.6 BJP ON INDIA’S SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY}

The BJP declared that "the security of the nation is an integrated whole: an amalgam of the internal, the economic, the social, the political, the military and the diplomatic".\textsuperscript{13}

Other salient points of BJP’s stand on security and foreign policy, clubbed together perhaps, guided by India’s problematic neighbour Pakistan, in particular are:

(1) adoption and practice of genuine non-alignment;
(2) improvement of relations with neighbours that include Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan;
(3) to develop nuclear capability and testing of nuclear bomb as a token of nuclear deterrence, namely for defence only and not for using it first for attacking
(4) efforts to form a cooperative South Asian Regional Security involving all South Asian countries.

\textsuperscript{11} ibid.:116-117.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid:117-119.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.: 119
2.3.7 BJP ON INDIA'S INTERNAL SECURITY

The concept of internal security of India has undergone a sea change because of persistent Pakistani and/or terrorist infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir since 1947. The problem is no longer confined to problem created by Indians within India; it is more of an outside creation. North East is another region where this problem is quite acute. Besides, Tripura and Assam are the other two regions where the problem exists. BJP thinks that the problem in Kashmir can be solved by, say, abrogating Article 370 of the constitution. Similarly, by stopping the infiltration of Muslims from Bangladesh in Assam and West Bengal, security risk of India can be lessened. The BJP is so adamant that it wants Bangladeshi Muslims in India to be pushed forcibly into Bangladesh.  

2.3.8 BJP ON THE HINDU – URDU CONTROVERSY

Hindu-Urdu controversy has always remained the most controversial issue in UP. Both Jana Sangh and the Hindu traditionalist within the Congress like Tandon, Pant, Sampurnanand, C. B. Gupta, Charan Singh, Tripathi, opposed the idea of giving second language status to Urdu. The BJP also supported the views of the Jana Sangh and Congress traditionalist in UP on the question of Hindi-Urdu controversy. Inspite of all these oppositions, the then Chief Minister, V. P. Singh in 1980 attempted to make Urdu the second official language of the state. However, he failed to get it passed due to the strong opposition of the BJP and Lok Dal. Subsequently in 1989, N. D. Tiwari introduced it and got it passed in the UP Assembly. BJP protested against the act by raising slogans like 'Urdu bill murdabad' and 'Ek rajya ek bhasha, nahi chahiye dusri bhasha'. "The Hindi-Urdu controversy mirrored the communal cleavages of the UP society and helped solidify the

15 Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh Hindu Nationalist in India, op cit.: 120-122.
matrix and mould of the right wings parties which embellished the pro-Hindi movement.\textsuperscript{16}

2.4 ORGANIZATION OF BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY IN UP

\textbf{CHART 2.1:}

BJP Organization at the State level

\begin{itemize}
  \item President
  \item Vice President (5)
  \item General Secretaries (3)
  \item Secretaries (5)
  \item Treasurer (1)
  \item State Executive (60)
  \item State Council
  \item District Council
\end{itemize}

\textbf{(SOURCE:} Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh \textit{Hindu Nationalist in India}, op cit.: 41-2.\textbf{)}

The BJP's constitution declares the party's commitment to the Constitution of India and pledges to "uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India and to build a strong India which is modern, progressive and enlightened in outlook and which proudly draws its inspiration from India's

\textsuperscript{16} Zoya Hasan \textit{Quest for Power: Oppositional Movement and Post Congress Politics in UP}, op cit.: 176-189.
ancient culture and values...". The party has a strong organisational framework. It is a cadre based party that has many levels with clear lines of authority from the top. Regular elections are held in the party and the members are expected to obey the rules.

As far as the membership of the party is concerned, under the rules of the party any citizen who is at least eighteen years of age, irrespective of his/her religion and sex can join the party by paying a membership fee of Re one. The members have to sign a declaration that they will strictly follow the rules and regulations of the party. After two years an ordinary member can apply for active membership and more duties are assigned to the person. It is the active member who can seek election to various district or state level offices. A state party organization is headed by President (see chart 2.1) and has two distinct wings—the mass wing and the Parliamentary wing. The President is elected by an electoral college consisting of members of the State Council. But in reality the President usually is elected in consultation with national party leader. The president further appoints five vice-President, three general secretaries, five secretaries and one treasurer. President has to select these member from among the members of the State Executive. The State Executive (see chart 2.1) consists of sixty members of which at least five member must belong to women and Scheduled Castes/Tribes category, and are nominated by the State Party President. The State Executive must meet four times a year.

Below the State Executive is the State Council (see chart 2.1) which gives representation to various constituents of the party drawn from the district level, region, state legislators and members of parliament. It also includes all the members of National Council, former Presidents of the state party organization, office holders of the regional committees, Presidents, and general secretaries of the district committees in the state and various others. It must meet at least once in a year. However, the State Council does not

18 Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh Hindu Nationalist in India, op cit.: 141-2.
19 Ibid.:152-153.
seem to have real power and the real power rests with the President and the State Executive. The State Election Committee, the next important agency of the state party organization, with key party leaders within it. The primary task of this committee is to recommend to the central election committee candidates for the State Legislative body and the Parliamentary elections and to conduct the campaigns. It also makes the final selection of the party candidates for the local election, such as for the municipal councils and corporations.  

The District Committee, the lowest party organization at the village level, headed by a President and consists of forty four members, who are elected by the elected member of Mandal committee. The intermediary organization between local and district committee is Mandal Committee.

Since the mid 1990s the BJP suffered from severe factionalism, which was due to the phenomenal growth of the party, territorially, socially and politically leading to indiscipline. Described as the Congressization of the BJP it stems from the shift from a strict, exclusive cadre based party to a large, unwieldy mass party, within a little over a decade. The party has grown from a membership of 15 lakhs in 1980 to two crores by the late 1990s. In a number of states the organisational and mass wings of the party are locked in a power struggle for control over the party machinery and funds. The hardliners argue that it is the result of dilution of the ideology and social base of the party.

2.5 ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE OF BJP IN UP IN 1980 AND 1984 ELECTIONS

The mid term elections to the UP Legislative Assembly was held on 28th and 31st May 1980. The Assembly elections of May 1980 can also be characterised as an extension of the Lok Sabha Poll of January 1980. The BJP for its first election in UP depended heavily upon the leaders and

21 ibid.: 154-55.
22 India Today August 14, 2000:44.
organizational units of erstwhile Jana Sangh to complete the complicated election procedure. Congress party won the election with thumping majority. The BJP could win only 11 seats, securing 10.8% votes.

Hindu backlash following Indira Gandhi's assassination put the Congress in a commanding position in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections. The twin theme of national unity and protection of the country from internal and external enemies dominated the 1984 Lok Sabha election in general. Everywhere in UP, Rajiv Gandhi criticised the opposition for encouraging terrorism and militancy.

In 1984 Lok Sabha election, Congress again returned with a thumping majority in UP by winning 82 of the 84 seats and 52.74 percent of the votes, virtually wiping out the opposition. The BJP polled 6.4 per cent of the votes in UP and could not win any seat. The humiliating defeat faced by the BJP in 1984 Lok Sabha election forced the party to abandon its liberal and moderate image and adopt an aggressive and uncompromising stand on issues of secularism and nationalism. The BJP leadership felt that only by evoking the old theme of majoritarianism and a confrontationist attitude towards the minorities would enable them to regain Hindu votes.

In the 1985 Assembly elections, the BJP which was identified with the Hindu cause could get only 16 seats with 9.9 percent of votes, an improvement as compared to its previous performance in 1984 Lok Sabha election. It can be stated that the BJP drew a complete blank in Uttarakhand region, and could get only four seats in Ruhelkhand and three in Poorvanchal.

2.6 REVIVAL OF THE STRATEGY OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS MOBILISATION AND THE MAKING OF HINDU VOTE BY THE BJP

The unsuccessful performance of the BJP led the party to review its ideology and strategy in the entire country and UP in particular. The 1980s saw the revival of the communal politics in India in a massive way. The growing importance of the communal factors in 1980s was in a way promoted
by the Congress party’s effort to curtail the growing importance of the Janata Dal and regional parties. By the mid-1980s several factors were responsible for the growth of communal politics. First, the conversion of a group of low caste Hindus into Islam in Meenakshipuram in South India stimulated the revival of VHP. The Supreme court verdict granting a divorced Muslim women, Shah Bano, maintenance from her husband by applying a section under general penal code to the case, was the second reason. The Muslim Law Board saw this judgement as an infringement on their right and vehemently opposed it. Rajiv Gandhi sought to escape the Supreme Court ruling to Shah Bano case by passing the Muslim Women Bill in 1986 which prevented the Muslim women from availing of the provisions of civil law. This was interpreted as Congress's perpetual policy of appeasement of Muslims. Such a judgement led to a widespread criticism of the Congress government by almost all sections of the society in India. The Shah Bano case became an important weapon in the hands of the BJP for criticising the Congress government. The party seized the opportunity for displacing Congress from power. The party criticised the Congress concept of secularism which was promoting the rights of the minority as a potential threat to the national integrity. The communalisation of politics in UP in 1986 manifested in the form of widespread Hindu-Muslim riots in almost all parts of UP, particularly in Aligarh, Moradabad, Kanpur and Meerut.

2.6.1 REVIVAL OF HINDUTVA IDEOLOGY BY BJP

The poor performance of the BJP in 1984 and 1985, encouraged the party to abandon its tactic of openness, and adopt the policy of militant Hindu nationalism. The party revived the strategy of militant Hindu nationalism which enabled it to muster the support of the RSS. Vajpayee was

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replaced by a more vocal Hindu nationalist advocate, L. K. Advani. Eventually
the BJP revived its Hindutva policy.

Savarkar, in his book Hindutva, stated:

"Hindutva is not a word but a history. Hinduism is only a derivative, a
fraction, a part of Hindutva. Hindutva embraces all the departments of
thought and activity of the whole being of our Hindu race." 25

Savarkar argued that there are on two main coordinates of Indian nation i.e.
territoriality and culture, and tried to demonstrate their congruence. He
defined the term Hindu in term of territorial denomination of the civilization
that developed on the Eastern side of the river Indus, Sindhu, over the
centuries, and which gradually came to be known as Hindu. He further
argued that the sense of nationality developed among the Hindus since the
vedic age in terms of cultural self consciousness and had taken root through
the development and refinement of a common language, Sanskrit and later,
of modern Hindi, and a common body of philosophy and ritual practices. In
other words, a Hindu, essentially meant a person who regards the land of
Bharat Varsha as his “holy land” (pitribhoomi), where the sacred shrines and
myths of ones religion is located or are to be found. Christians and Muslims,
according to Savarkar, could not be counted as Hindus, as their “holy lands”
is outside India and had “extraterritorial loyalties”. However if they gave up
their “alien” belief they could be admitted back in the Hindu fold as true
Hindus. 26

In contrast, as Thomas Blom Hansen has pointed out, “Golwalkar in
his book ’We, our Nationhood Defined (1939)’ argued that Hindus constituted
the racial, religious, and linguistic backbone of the Bharat. Golwalkar adopted
the draconian view that those who did not comply with the standards and
culture of the Hindu nation fall out of the pale of national life. They deserve
no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizen rights.” 27

26 Ibid.: 10-44.
27 Thomas Blom Hansen The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu
Nationalism in Modern India, op cit.: 80-81.
The BJP has rejected Savarkar's variety of Hindutva which emphasized on territoriality and culture, and was comparatively broad based. Rather it has accepted Golwalkar's concept of Hindutva which rejected the theories of territorial nationalism. Nationalism, according to BJP, is rooted in the acceptance of Hinduism as a religious identity. The BJP rejected the Nehruvian concept of Indian nationalism which according them lacks roots in Indian soil. The BJP pointed out that the India's national identity have its root in Hindu culture and should incorporate the traditions, values, practices and beliefs of Hindu heritage, as the Hindus form the majority. Instead of a composite culture the BJP talked of Hindu identity and Hindu culture. The BJP upholds the Golwalkar's conception of Hinduism where he argued that the minorities had to become Hindus not by choice but against their will, or else they had to face violence and threat from the Hindus. It is this concept of Hindutva which stress on the creation of Hindu empire by conquest and was engaged in the task of temple rescuing activities, was readily accepted and uphold more prominently by Sangh Parivar's religious organization i.e. VHP and in a lesser extent by the BJP. This explains the use of the Ramjanambhoomi issue as an important issue for mobilizing the Hindus in UP in 1990s. In UP, as argued by Amrita Basu, "the paramount object of Hindutva was political reconstruction in UP polity through the promotion of collective Hindu identity which was both exclusive and competitive."

2.6.2 EMERGENCE OF THE AYODHYA - MANDIR ISSUE IN UP

Against this ideological background, the Ayodhya movement in UP changed the nature of UP politics altogether. It became an important issue for

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the BJP for mobilizing the people in both the urban and rural areas. The Ayodhya dispute has remained a non significant issue until in 1949 when some images of Ram was surreptitiously installed. With the installation of the idol of Ram the question of building a Ram Mandir arose. Between 1950 to 1983 several rounds of dispute emerged between local Hindus and Muslims on the question of building a temple in that place which manifested in the form of civil litigation. The Ram Mandir issue emerged in a big way when Faizabad lawyer Umesh Chandra Pandey, who was also a Congress leader filed a petition in district court for opening the locks of the Babri Masjid to enable the people to have darshan of the idol. This move of his encouraged the VHP also to press the Central government for the construction of the temples in Ayodhya, Varanasi and Mathura, which according to them were destroyed by the Muslim rulers. Subsequently in 1984 VHP launched Ramjanambhoomi movement for the opening up of the locks of Babri Mosque and construction of the Ram mandir. In an attempt to appease its shrinking Hindu base, the then Congress government in the Centre opened the gates of the mosque by a court order in 1986. This act of the government however annoyed the Muslim community. Mohammed Hashim , a Muslim from Ayodhya filed a petition in Lucknow bench of Allahabad High court on February 3, 1986 against the unlocking of Babri Mosque. Subsequently Babri Masjid Action Committee(BMAC) was formed by the Muslim leaders.31

The Ramjanambhoomi movement became an important instrument for the expansion of Hindutva ideology of the Sangh parivar—RSS , VHP and BJP. In 1989 Ram Shila Pujan was organized by the Sangh Parivar. The central government allowed VHP to lay the foundation stone of the proposed Ram temple at the disputed site. For the purpose of Ram Shila Pujans thousands of consecrated bricks were collected from all over India and

brought to Ayodhya by procession. Ram Shila puja at Ayodhya, aimed at creating Hindu vote by arousing the religious sentiments of the Hindus. 'Small towns across UP echoed with cries of Hindu ki Pahchaan, Trishul Ka nishan'. UP towns like Meerut, Basti, Gonda, Khatuli, Gorakhpur, Sambhal, Moradabad, Bijnor were charged with religious activities. VHP and Bajrang Dal under the leadership of Vinay Katiyar played an important role in mobilizing the Hindus for Ram Shila Pujan. In 1989, the Ram Shila Pujans were undoubtedly—'rituals of confirmation' as well as 'rituals of mobilization'.

Thus, with Ayodhya movement religion entered politics in a big way. The movement used religious symbols, religious rituals to mobilize the Hindus. Lord Ram was made a hero. The broadcasting of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, as Llyod Rudolph has suggested, was 'playing a leading role in creating a national Hindu identity, a form of group consciousness that has not hitherto existed.'

2.7 PERFORMANCE OF THE BJP IN UP IN 1989 ELECTION: PLAYING THE COMMUNAL CARD

In the ninth general elections, held in the last week of November 1989 all major political parties—BJP, Congress and Janata Dal—played the communal card. Due to the polarization caused by the Ayodhya dispute, the BJP had no option but to concentrate on Hindu votes. In the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, although the BJP entered into seat adjustment with the Janata Dal, it pitted BJP candidates against Janata Dal. In UP, BJP contested thirty one

seats (of these about twenty in alliance with the Janata Dal), won only eight and lost deposits in thirteen constituencies. The pact with the Janata Dal was also of value in that it allowed the BJP to feature in an alternative coalition to Congress(I) that profited from the wave of hostility to the Congress government fostered by V. P. Singh's campaigns against corruption in the highest echelons of the state. Its share of votes increased to 7.6 percent, only 1.2 percent more than it polled in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections. The region-wise analysis of the vote share of the party in 1989 helps us to conclude that the party has a strong support base in the Bundelkhand region followed by Ruhelkhand (see table 2.1).

In the 1989 Vidhan Sabha elections the BJP arrived at a limited understanding with the Janata Dal in UP: that both parties would avoid fielding candidates against prominent leaders and sitting members of the other party. Accordingly, the BJP contested 278 seats in UP. As against only eight seats and 7.6 percent votes in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, it won fifty-seven Vidhan Sabha seats and 11.8 percent of votes. The analysis of election results clearly reveals that in Ruhelkhand region Janata Dal and BJP together got 30 seats out of 50. In Poorvanchal region, they got 63 seats but in Uttarakhand, the BJP drew blank.
TABLE 2.1
PERCENTAGE OF VOTES POLLED BY THE BJP IN THE THREE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN UTTAR PRADESH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGIONS</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1984</th>
<th>1989</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruhelkhand</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Doab</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
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<td>Awadh</td>
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<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Doab</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundelkhand</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorvanchal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: M.P Singh and Rekha Saxena(eds.) Ideologies and Institutions in Indian Politics, Deep and Deep Publication, New Delhi, 1998:158

2.8 SOCIAL BASE OF THE BJP IN UP IN 1980s

BJP since its inception in 1980s failed to create a stable support base for itself until the late 1980s. The party in 1980 and 1984 elections had to compete with the secular credentials of the Congress party and the Janata Dal's support for the peasant politics. In 1984 and 1989 Vidhan Sabha elections, its percentage of vote was lower than the Jana Sangh. BJP could not build a broad based support base for itself. BJP like its predecessor Jana Sangh used to get votes from the middle world between the two extremes i.e. the rural and urban world. While the Congress's support base included elite castes like Brahmins and Rajputs and Scheduled castes and Muslims; the Janata party used to get the support of the Rajputs, Backward castes and Muslims; the BJP had to compete with both these parties to create a support base for itself. With Congress, it had to compete for elite caste's votes and with the Janata Dal it had to compete for backward caste and Rajput votes. The BJP in UP used to get only a section of conscious Hindu vote in UP, concentrated among certain castes and classes: Banias, Brahmins and western educated segments of elite castes with technical and professional education. But this Hindu vote forms only a small segment of the party's over
all vote. Besides, like Jana Sangh, it had the support in the countryside among ex-landlords, zamindars and talukdars and among the backward castes in places where the Congress organization has the support base essentially among the upper caste, and in those places where the BKD or Lok Dal or Janata Dal do not pose to be a serious challenge to it. In short, the BJP failed to create a strong support base for itself in UP because the Hindu conscious vote in UP was small and divided.  

2.9 HINDU NATIONALIST REACTIONS TO THE MANDAL REPORT

The Janata Dal government in the Centre in 1989 decided to implement Mandal Commission recommendations which gave reservation to OBCs in public employment—both in the central and state government. The then Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav also implemented the Mandal Commission recommendations at the state level in UP in July 1989. While in the beginning it provided 15 percent reservation but by November the percentage of reservation was increased to 27 percent, by including reservation for Muslims also. Mandal commission recommendation created tensions within the already polarized society of UP. The OBCs formed the 42 percent of the population of UP of which Yadavs formed the dominant section in all over UP except in Western UP and Hill districts; and Kurmis and Lodhs formed dominant castes in Central and Eastern UP. Mandal report created a serious problem for the BJP. It seriously hampered the future of otherwise united Hindutva undertaken by BJP, by segregating OBC Hindus from the Ayodhya movement. Officially, BJP gave a muted opposition to Mandal recommendation because it did not want to lose its support base among the OBCs especially Kurmis and Lodhs in Central UP; but according to the party, economic rather caste should be the criteria for reservation. The BJP

succeeded in retaining the support of a section of OBCs i.e. Kurmis and Lodhs because of the vertical divisions between them and the Yadavs, and also, by increasing their representation in the party, for example, Vinay Katiyar from Faizabad and Kalyan Singh from Aligarh.36

In order to get back the Hindu support into its fold, L. K. Advani launched Rath yatra in 1990 which was supposed to cover the area from Somnath temple to Ayodhya in UP. The Rath yatra was more than a procession. It was like a pilgrimage, a religious festival for thousands of people who went to witness the yatra as it passed through various areas.37 The VHP also organized the Ram Jyoti yatra(pilgrimage of right in honour of Ram), as a support system to Advani’s Rathyatra, and for the preparation of the Kar seva which was to start on October 30. The plan of action, beginning on September 29, 1990 involved lighting with a torch from Ayodhya, other torches in Mathura and Varanasi, and from there, in all districts in order to symbolize the reawakening of the worshippers of Ram—potentially all Hindus. The larger procession formed by Ram Jyoti Yatra used anti-Muslim slogan when passing through sensitive parts of town.38

As the Advani’s Rath yatra entered Bihar, he was arrested, which finally provoked the BJP to take back its support from the Janata Dal government at the centre. Advani’s arrest was followed by Bharat bandh. Riot broke out in all the places in UP and particularly in Ayodhya between police and kar sevaks which led to the killing of a number of kar sevaks, the latter were declared martyrs by Sangh Parivar. The riots polarized the communities.

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37 Christophe Jaffrelot, “The Politics of Processions and Hindu – Muslim Riots” in Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli (eds.) Community Conflicts and the State in India, op cit.: 82.

and in a way help in solidifying and expanding the base of the BJP particularly in Central and Eastern UP states like Ayodhya, Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad, and Varanasi.  

While the people in villages especially women participated in Rath yatra because of their devotion to Ram, youths in urban areas participated in the yatra in order to express their dissatisfaction with the ruling government's decision to implement Mandal Commission. Ram Janambhoomi movement led to the revival and initiation of a number of Hindu festivals which aim at creating a sense of oneness among the Hindus. The Hindu nationalist tried to enter the everyday life of the common people through these rituals and festivals in order to bring them within the Hindu orbit, and by highlighting the differences between the communities the party tried to develop a communal solidarity among the Hindus. 

2.10 CONCLUSION

In 1980s, the Bharatiya Janata Party was presented by its ex- Jana Sanghis as the inheritor of the Janata Party. The BJP distanced itself from the Jana Sangh in terms of its action, because as far as the principles and policies of the BJP are concerned they are quite similar to that of Jana Sangh. However, the BJP's choice of a pragmatic strategy of openness proved to be counter productive.

In its first half of the 1980s a certain reversal of roles took place between the BJP and the so called secularist party i.e. Congress. While on the one hand, the BJP followed the strategy of moderation by distancing itself somewhat from RSS, on the other hand Congress during that period opted to exploit religious identities. There had been a gradual decline in the secularist norms of the Congress and the growing importance given to the communal themes by Congress which manifested in the form of Hindu-Muslim riots and more particularly in the Shah-Bano case. As a result, the BJP's strategy of

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openness and adoption of a socio-economic 'people oriented' program, did not enable it to enlarge its base, and its policy of making alliances proved to be ineffective.

The electoral defeat that the BJP faced in terms of seats and support base in UP in 1980 and 1984 forced the party to change from its earlier strategy of openness, and adopt the strategy of ethno-religious mobilisation which emphasized on strong Hindu nationalism, thus allowing the RSS to provide its exclusive support to the party. This change of strategy proved to be effective and the BJP benefited more from the Hindu revival strategy since 1989 onwards.

To sum up the BJP in the early 1980s did not have a solid support base in UP. However, the religious approach adopted by the Congress made the BJP rethink its own strategy so as to carve out a platform that would distinguish it from the Congress platform. The BJP found it electorally expedient to support the VHP movement for the construction of Ram Temple at Ayodhya. The Shah Bano controversy helped strengthen the religious fervour of BJP’s broad electoral strategy. It also started propagating Hindutva aggressively in the name of cultural nationalism. The development from 1989 onwards further reflects the strengthening of the religious and communal fervour in the electoral politics of UP.