CHAPTER 6
POLITICS OF RESERVATION POLICY

6.1 Introduction

Reservation policy has had a profound impact on all political parties particularly since the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report. Political parties of various lines were indeed compelled to effect a complete overhaul of their ideology and approach leaders from the backward class in order to give the party a backward caste friendly appearance. At the same time several members of the party belonging to the backward class utilised their caste label effectively as a bargaining chip to gain leverage, particularly in securing party nomination during elections and positions in the party leadership. Caste conglomeration, polarisation on caste lines, inter-caste strife, mushrooming of political outfits, and defections from parties were the immediate consequence of the decision. Many political parties tried to perform a fine balancing act to retain its hold on upper castes and also to make some gains over the backward castes. Certain political parties while supporting reservations on caste basis also demanded the inclusion of economic criterion or the creation of separate quota for the poor among the forward castes. This would, therefore, serve them well in appeasing both the forward and backward castes. However, none of the political parties dared to challenge the rationale of reservation policy as such.
This chapter examines the approach and attitude of political parties towards the reservation issue and the change of stand adopted by them abruptly particularly in the wake of the implementation of Mandal Commission Report.

6.2 Congress Party

The Congress party at the centre was seized of the issue of reservation for BC after the Supreme Court’s verdict against the Madras Government’s communal order of 1947 as unconstitutional. The agitation that was launched by the opposition leaders against the Supreme Court’s verdict in Madras disturbed the regional congress leaders and engendered a fear of losing their hold over the highly organised backward castes. They prevailed over the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who then conceded to introduce the first amendment to the constitution providing reservation for the backward classes. Nehru admitted in Parliament “the House knows very well and there is no need to hush it up, that this particular matter in this particular shape arose because of certain happenings in Madras” (Guhan. 1991: 48).

Thereafter, it was then realised that steps should be taken to improve the lot of the backward castes all over the country. In pursuance of this objective the First BC Commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of Kaka Kalelkar in January 1953. The report of this commission which was submitted in 1955, recommended 70% reservation of seats for OBCs in educational institutions. However, the report was replete with dissensions by the majority of members and was even vehemently opposed by its chairman himself who expressed the fear that its implementation
would stoke casteist tension. The centre hence decided against the implementation of the report but at the same time allowed the states to evolve their own policy towards the amelioration of BCs even as it expressed a preference for reservations on economic status rather than caste.  

It was only after the Janata Government's interregnum that the issue of reservation of seats for BCs in central services cropped up. The then Prime Minister Morarji Desai set up the Second BC Commission in 1979 under the chairmanship of Bindhyeswari Prasad Mandal a former Chief Minister of Bihar. The commission submitted its report only after the collapse of the Janata Government and after the re-election of Mrs. Gandhi as the Prime Minister in 1980. It recommended 27% reservation for the BCs.

The Congress government claims to have discussed and debated the report, but steps were not initiated in implementing the report fearing a backlash. According to V. N. Gadgil, the then General Secretary, All India Congress Committee (I) and official spokesman of the party “it is not correct say that the Congress (I) put the report in cold storage. Between 1980 and 1989 there were at least three full-fledged debates in Parliament on the report. We made attempts at a specially convened meeting of the Chief Ministers to arrive at some kind of national consensus on the findings of the commission but unfortunately that could not be reached. We thought the report should not be touched without a national consensus as the recommendations of the commission were socially sensitive and politically explosive. So we preferred to postpone a decision rather than rush through with it and unleash social unrest........” (Reddy 1990:31). However the
The report did not see the light of the day right through the Congress rule up to Rajiv Gandhi. The report continued to gather dust until V. P. Singh announced his decision to implement it on August 7, 1990. The Congress, taken unawares, was forced to take a stand and to provide justification for its lackadaisical attitude towards the implementation of the report. At one stroke it changed its stand and began to vociferously advocate for reservations. The violence that the decision of implementation of the report unleashed and the severe accusations levelled against certain congress leaders for instigating violence, and the fear of losing its vote banks placed the party in an unenviable position. The Congress party accused the government of indulging in a political gimmickry in the name of providing relief to BCs. It was in order to overcome the odds faced by the party due to inner party conflicts that such a decision was taken. Fear of the dismissed leader Devi Lal’s boat club rally to be held on August 9 the same year was according to them the prime cause for the implementation of the report.

Although the Congress party declared full support for the implementation of the report, it also made it clear of its desire for inclusion of economic criteria too alongside caste criteria. They floated a separate outfit known as the ‘Equality Front’ in order to win the support of the agitators and also to look and sound different. The congress working committee in a last bid effort evolved a separate formula, the ‘Rajiv formula’ comprising principles of economic criterion, reservation for entire lot of communities other than Hindus and waiver of fees for eligible candidates under the Mandal Report. However the formula was rejected by the states. In a rather surprising statement Rajiv Gandhi accepted that the party
had committed mistakes with regard to reservation policy but absolved himself of any blame or responsibility for it. The congress also accused the prime minister of diluting the recommendations by excluding several sectors from the ambit of reservations as suggested in the Mandal Report. “Even on the question of reservations while the Prime Minister has been saying again and again that there will be no dilution of the provision of reservations, he has announced so many exemptions. First he said reservations would not be applicable to the defence sector. Then came the clarification that they would not be imposed on states and would not be applicable to educational institutions. Finally, the Prime Minister said reservations would not be applicable to promotions” (Reddy 1990: 32).

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi had a lulling effect on the intensity of anti and pro-reservation stirs across the country. However the members of the agitation were still alive with various political parties in red alert to reap dividends of it. The Narasimha Rao led Congress government announced a slightly modified version of reservation policy from that of the V. P. Singh Government. It enhanced the reservation percentage to 59.5% by including economic criteria and also reserving 10% of seats for the poor among the socially and educationally backward sections. Thus it was a deft attempt to steal the thunder from the Janata Dal and also a step to appease the forwards and backwards in an attempt to keep its flock together. The government also decided to offer a package to provide economic assistance, technical training and so on in order to equip the BCs adequately enough to improve their condition and reduce dependence on the government for their advancement.” Narasimha Rao had outwitted all the major political parties
by this particular deft stroke. 11 None of the parties could accuse him of betraying the noble cause of social justice for he had only widened the ambit of reservations by clubbing the BC and the poor among the forward castes giving the policy a class orientation rather than a caste orientation. 12

6.3 Janata Dal and the Mandal Commission Report

The implementation of the Mandal Commission Report although did feature in the Janata Dal manifesto, did not figure prominently in its election campaigns. It did neither feature in the Common Minimum Programme formulated along with its allies like the BJP and the Left parties in the governance of the country. The National Front (comprising the Janata Dal, BJP and Left parties) was voted to power not on the promise of implementation of the Mandal report but due to the allegations of corruption and other evils levelled against the Congress Govt led by Rajiv Gandhi. Riding on the crest of the wave of personal popularity of V. P. Singh, the National Front succeeded in dislodging the Congress from power.

However its success was short lived with infighting within the party becoming a daily affair. The Janata Dal was a loose conglomeration of disgruntled politicians and defectors particularly from the Congress party. In the initial stages itself there prevailed severe discontent among the other two major leaders like Chandrasekhar and Devoidal with regard to V.P Singh's elevation to the post of Prime Minister. 13 Devoidal although appointed as Deputy Prime Minister became a severe headache to V.P Singh who began meddling into affairs other than his portfolio. It began to be a great hindrance not only to V.P Singh but it also evoked
the ire of the allies i.e., the BJP and the Left. Together they expelled Devilal from the National Front (NF) government. Devilal in a bid to avenge his expulsion decided to organise a huge rally in the boat club Maidan in New Delhi on August 9, 1990 with the intention of dislodging V.P. Singh. Devilal had a huge following among the peasants and farmers of whom the majority were members of his caste-Jats. The announcement of Devilal instilled a great sense of fear in the mind of V.P. Singh. He suddenly felt an urgent need to outdo Devilal. The sense of urgency felt by V. P. Singh was so great that he resurrected the Mandal Commission Report from the cold storage and announced its implementation on August 7, 1990. This act was contrary to the understanding arrived at among the allies of the government which stipulated that decisions on issues particularly of controversial nature shall be arrived at on the basis of mutual discussions. This step was resorted to by V.P. Singh to silence some of his bitter critics in his party as well as his allies. He thought that it would enable him to create a powerful dent into the vote bank of BJP by slicing it into two units- the forward and backward caste, the latter’s support which he could also lay claim to. It would polarise the entire nation on casteist lines and would also give Devilal a run for his money for the Jats were not included in the list of backward castes in the Mandal Commission report. This view was reached by V. P. Singh by taking into consideration Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia’s ideas and the consequent influence wielded by the OBCs in Indian politics.

V. P. Singh’s decision unleashed a sudden spate of violence that engulfed the entire nation. Caste violence which was until then confined to a few states suddenly acquired a national character and that too on a common issue. Students
took to the streets and began to indulge in arson and violence. Provocative statements from Janata Dal leaders like Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav added fuel to the fire of caste war. Ram Vilas Paswan who on a previous occasion pleaded for the enlargement of reservation policy. To include the poor among the forward caste now did a volteface by vehemently opposing the inclusion of any nature of economic scale for determining backwardness. In this he openly charted a style at variance with that of Babu Jagjivan Ram. The anti-reservation stir of students which was lacking in leadership now found it in Mahendra Singh Tikait, the Jat leader of Bharatiya Kisan union (BKU). The "Anti-Mandal Commission Forum" which compromised mainly of students forged an alliance with Tikait which culminated in the boat club rally on October 2, 1990. Tikait's main grievance was in the Jat community's exclusion from reservation policy. This alliance had the tacit support of Devilal and of even some Congress leaders. The movement got hijacked from the students by Tikait and it eventually resulted in hooliganism and vandalism and almost degenerated into a street affair and threw the anti-reservation stir in disarray and confusion.

Discordant voices began to be heard within the Janata Dal itself. Several of the leaders feared the loosing of their traditional vote banks which to a great degree was dependent on the support of upper castes. They also felt that V.P. Singh was more concerned with entrenching his own position in Indian politics. The Supreme Court order imposing a stay on the implementation Mandal Commission Report gave a reprieve to all parties and it also helped in lowering the pitch of agitations.
Meanwhile the BJP in an attempt to hold its flock together had launched a Rath Yatra demanding the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya.24 The arrest of L. K. Advani, the leader of the Yatra culminated in the BJP withdrawing its support to the National Front and the eventual resignation of V. P. Singh.

The untimely demise of the Congress leader Rajiv Gandhi, the BJP’s Rath Yatra, the acceptance of Mandal Commission report were all factors responsible for the Mandal Commission report losing its impact on the masses and its potentiality to attract votes. A sympathy wave following Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination engulfed the nation, which diverted the attention of the masses from the Mandal issue. B.J.P’s Rath Yatra and its consequent communalisation of the electorate proved to be an effective combatant to casteism propagated by Janata Dal and its allies. Moreover the final verdict of the Supreme Court ordering the exclusion of creamy layer, which in other words was tantamount to acceptance of an economic criteria, gained greater legitimacy and acceptance for parties like Congress, BJP and the Left who had earlier demanded the inclusion of an economic criterion. As agitation became intense V. P. Singh himself seemed to have felt uncomfortable as his subsequent announcement to the effect were to prove to exclude certain sectors like defence and educational institutions from reservations, and also promising not to impose the report on the states.25 Bereft of reservation issue, the Janata Dal was left groping in the dark to find an alternative issue and ideology to approach the electorate. To add to its woes, Janata Dal began to splinter up rapidly which was to result in its votes getting scattered. The first split occurred with the departure of Chandrashekhar and Devlal along with 54 MPs, leading to a situation where the
Delhi throne had to be sacrificed and elections ordered. The next round came in 1991 when Ajit Singh made his exit, for by supporting reservations he stood to lose and alienate his powerful Jat vote bank. A last ditched attempt was launched by V.P Singh to salvage his image and resuscitate his party from being pushed into political oblivion. A Mandal Yatra on similar lines of the Rath Yatra of L.K Advani was undertaken by V.P Singh and his Mandal lieutenants like Sharad Yadav and Paswan. But it failed to take off as too many Yatras were also begun by other parties, particularly the Congress party. The Janata Dal even made attempts to commemorate December 1 as "Mandal Vijay Saptah" (Mandal Victory Week). In the 1991 elections, the Janata Dal fared poorly loosing prominent states like UP, MP and Rajasthan, the states where they used the Mandal card to the hilt. Janata Dal as a party was reduced to regional outfits under the leadership of prominent leaders of the concerned states and failed to become a party of national stature since then.

V.P. Singh found solace in his statement that "it is my earnest belief that the Janata Dal after its formation had shown two clear aspects-one, of the political party and second, of a movement. The impact it has made on all political parties to add social justice to their agenda is something very radical. This has happened for the first time and within three years, we have mandalised every political party. That is in itself is a big achievement. The Prime Minister goes to the Red Fort, chants 'Mandal, Mandal' and gets down. The BJP is now forced to pass a resolution favouring Mandal."
I had also said that I would not return to Delhi unless the Mandal Commission Report is implemented. I will return to Delhi only to garland the candidates selected by the UPSC or else my dead body will come—not before that. It is not just a political one or an electoral one, but a long thought out plan for which we paid a heavy price, the loss of government. In our own programme we have 10 percent for the poorer sections of the upper castes too”(Pande 1993: 120-121).

True, V.P. Singh can undoubtedly take the credit for having implemented the Mandal Commission report, when other parties had made it only a passing reference to it both in their manifestoes and campaigns. At the same time he can also be accused of taking a hasty and unimaginative step towards its implementation by not consulting at least his allies, which he always took to confidence before making an announcement towards its implementation. This would have helped him in evolving a consensus and to incorporate divergent and practical points of view into the report before announcing its implementation. It was only after agitations against the report attained a feverish pitch and the Supreme Court’s verdict that he favoured a 10% reservation for the weaker sections among the forward castes. But it was too late a move and also it lacked any novelty for several other parties had advocated such a measure. Suspicions were raised against such a move for many suspected it as another attempt by V.P. Singh to salvage his image and to make himself acceptable to his caste men—the Rajputs—whom he had alienated by the Mandal decision. Thus the Janata Dal by leaning too heavily on Mandal Commission Report, which by now became merely a populist measure35, reduced itself into a cipher forfeiting the fund of good will and the enormous mandate with which it came to power.
6.4  **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Reservation Policy**

The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) support base comprised mainly of the Hindu upper castes. They often harped on issues affecting Hindu religious sentiments, which gained them many dividends politically. As a prominent ally in the National Front, they never mentioned anything regarding the implementation of Mandal Commission report emphatically in the manifestoes of the National Front. This was primarily due to the fact that support to reservation on caste basis would forfeit them their predominant upper caste vote banks and hence they were always for reservations on the basis of economic criteria. But the promise of building a Ram Temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya figured prominently in their election manifesto. A compromise on this issue was arrived at between the Janata Dal and BJP to have it resolved though mutual consultations and of course in a peaceful manner. The National Front Government had agreed upon a formula to take decisions on serious and controversial issues after holding consultations with its allies, the BJP and the Left. Until the announcement of implementation of the Mandal Report this formula was strictly adhered to. The above decision caused a great deal of consternation in the BJP camp. The BJP feared that it would cause a severe erosion of their vote banks by depriving them of OBC votes and inflicting a schism within the Hindu religion itself, rendering its efforts to forge a unity in the Hindu community futile. Severe condemnation was the initial reaction to the announcement. Later the party retracted its statements fearing the antagonizing of BCs.
The BJP was faced with a grave situation, which it had never confronted in the past decades since its birth. Support or opposition to the report would result in an irretrievable damage of forfeiting the support of the upper and lower castes, and would also cause great division on caste lines in the Hindu religion. It had to evolve an effective strategy to salvage itself from such an eventuality. BJP then thought of enlivening the Ram Janmabhoomi issue which was lying almost dormant as a counter measure to Mandal report and thus to divert the attention of the people from Mandal controversy. The controversy over the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya was raging over the years and now it began to mobilise its feeder organisations like the RSS and VHP towards this goal. A Ratha Yatra was organized under the leadership of L.K. Advani from Somanath to Ayodhya demanding the construction of the temple from 25 September 1990. This enabled the BJP to successfully divert the attention of the masses from Mandal to Mandir.

Communalism began to triumph. Communal riots overshadowed caste wars and it fragmented the ties between Muslims, OBCs and SC/STs which the leaders of Janata Dal like Ram Vilas Paswan, Sharad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav were attempting to forge. As the Rath Yatra of L. K. Advani entered Bihar, the Chief Minister of the state issued orders of his arrest at Samastipur. Immediately the BJP withdraw its support to the NF Government which led to its imminent collapse.

In the post Mandal elections BJP registered brilliant success in four major states like UP, M.P, Rajasthan and Gujarat. It was also able to increase its numbers in the Parliament. The sympathy wave generated as a consequence of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination proved to be a great barrier in increasingly its tally in
the election to Parliament. It was also able to open its account in the southern state of Karnataka where its presence was nominal.

The BJP still kept its efforts alive to garner several caste bastions into its fold even after it began to lose several states like Rajasthan and M.P after the 1993 elections. The most important step was to placate the Jats of Rajasthan particularly after it lost out the state to Congress. It was the redemption of an election promise made by the BJP to the Jat community in the course of its campaign to include them in the list of backward communities eligible for reservation benefits at the centre. This facilitated in weaning away the Jat votes from the Congress (I) and also to create a dent in the vote bank of the powerful Jat leader Devlal and his cronies.

6.5 Left Parties and Reservation Policy

The left parties like Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Part of India (Marxist) (CPM) were always in favour of reservation policy for the backward classes. While the CPI is for total implementation of the report without the economic criterion for ten years CPI(M) is for the criterion of economic criterion. Both these parties are of the firm opinion that reservation in jobs alone will not improve the conditions of the BCs. Land reforms and economic policy changes should also be effected to improve the lot of the BCs. However the CPM in a later version of its policy had demanded that reservations be made for women also. It has however demanded that the economic criteria for the identification of creamy layer as in the case of agriculturists be deleted. It has also expressed the apprehension that several castes and communities deserving of reservation may be
deprived of the benefit owing to different nomenclature. In a statement the CPI said, “The party is of the view that all profession-based and artisan communities which find place in the common list has to be released by the government of India. And this should be applicable, irrespective of their religion or faith”. The CPI holds that nearly 40 percent of the people are below the poverty line. Reservation should also be extended to the economically weaker sections of the socially advanced communities. A 10 percent reservation should be provided to such weaker sections. There is a consensus among political parties on this issue (Pande 1993:35). The CPI is also in favour of adopting the Karpoori Thakur formula in places where the system of reservation doesn’t exist but at the same time in states which have their own version of reservation policy, it should be left untouched. (Reddy 1991)

The Left parties, the other allies of the Front, were, however, unfazed. Though they did express unhappiness over the response of the government to the anti-quota stir, they stuck to their guns and refrained from demanding a deferment of the reservation decision. They instead favoured efforts for a dialogue on the issue. In the perception of the Left, the anti quota stir had taken an ugly turn largely because of the dubious role played by the Congress (I) and the BJP (Reddy 1990: 12).

Political parties have adopted almost divergent attitudes when it came to deal with reservation issue in states. They took almost a different approach to suit the situation prevalent in various states. Hence it is necessary to analyse their views on this issue in the states.
6.6 Uttar Pradesh (UP)

Uttar Pradesh, with its huge BC and being the state where the disputed site of Ram Mandir is located, was seriously affected by both the Mandal and Mandir issue. It was also a state where caste consciousness is at its highest and since it sends the largest number of MPs to Parliament, politicians always put up a valiant fight in order to maintain their hold over the electorate in the state.

UP was following a reservation policy of 15% for BCs, which alongside reservations for SC/ST, ex-service men, the disabled and dependents of freedom fighters make up a total of nearly 49%. Barring a two-year disruption, after the High Court asked the government for a review of its policy, the state government under N.D Tiwari appointed a committee for this purpose and upon whose recommendation was restored the 15% quota of OBCs in June 1989 by the Mulayam Singh government. This, however, did not evoke much protest and none of the politicians did make it an issue in their campaigns.

Mulayam Singh Yadav’s decision to implement 27% reservation for OBCs disturbed the entire social fabric in the state. His decision would have resulted in an increase of more than fifty percent in reservations. But he justified his decision by stating that several states in the south like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka were pursuing reservation policies which exceeded the Fifty percent limit. It seems that Mulayam Singh was intent on making gains on two fronts. One by implementing the Mandal Commission report he could create a rift among the UP peasantry by alienating the Jats and thus reducing the influence and domination of people like
Mahendra Singh Tikait and Ajit Singh. The increased benefits that would accrue to Yadavas through his decision would make him the undisputed leader of that community. It would also blunt the BJP’s increasing influence by alienating the backward communities from the party.41

The decision on Mandal report engulfed the entire state in violence. Government offices and educational institutions became targets of attack in several places. As was the case with the centre no political party in UP could be bold enough to condemn the reservation issue for fear of losing their vote banks to Mulayam Singh. The casteist war it unleashed spread out even to the rural areas. Certainly a polarization on the basis of caste was the result of this decision. The BJP and Congress (I) demanded the introduction of an economic criterion which was stoutly opposed by Mulayam Singh Yadav fearing the alienation of his castes.

The BJP smarting under the Mandal onslaught decided to utilize the Mandir issue to counter it.42 Muslims were also beneficiaries according to the report, and Mulayam Singh’s appeasement of Muslims served the BJP well to incite communal passions.43 Lord Rama had a huge following among the Hindus in UP and the site of his birth place where now a mosque exists was a bone of contention between Hindus and Muslims particularly since independence. The Mandir issue overwhelmed the Mandal issue so much so that the casteist issue got gradually erased from the minds of the backwards. Riots which followed in the wake of Advani’s Rath yatra also resulted in Hindu-Muslim divide. As a sop to the backward castes, they projected men like Kalyan Singh, a member of the backward Lodh caste as the
foremost leader of BJP in the state. With the aid of Ayodhya a significant number of OBCs were weaned away from Mulayam Singh.44

Communalism was effectively used in disrupting the coalition forged by Mulayam Singh Yadav amongst the backward classes. A vertical split among the BCs and their veering round the BJP was the net impact of the Ayodhya campaign. Congress seemed to have paid a heavy price- first in forfeiting the upper caste votes for not condemning the Mandal report and also of the Muslims for not coming out prominently in denouncing the riots in the wake of L.K. Advani’s Rath yatra. Mulayam Singh Yadav instead of evolving a consensus on both Mandal and Mandir issues went to the extremes by ordering lathi charges on the Karsevaks at Ayodhya and on Mandal issue by openly exhorting the backward castes to confront the opponents of Mandal report in a violent manner. The state machinery was utilized to commit excesses on both the Karsevaks and Mandal opponents. The severe loss of life and property that resulted due to the above measures cost Mulayam Singh dearly. BJP utilized these two issues to the maximum and won away the upper castes voters and consolidated its position among the BCs to emerge triumphant in the 1991 polls.

The 1993 assembly elections saw the emergence of (Bahujan Samaj Party) BSP as a major factor in UP elections. The BSP which had only a marginal existence until then and was virtually not a factor to reckon with consolidated the Dalit voters who felt that they were exploited both by the OBCs and upper castes. Realising the potential of Dalit-Muslim-Backward Class alliance Mulayam Singh Yadav began efforts towards this purpose in right earnest. Thus the alliance
contributed significantly to the victory of BSP- SJP combine under the leadership of Kanshi Ram and Mulayam Singh Yadav.

The Mandal report ceased to be a prominent issue in the 1993 elections. The major reason probably would be that the Dalits were neither gainers nor losers in the Mandal commission recommendations. According to Kanshi Ram: “Social Justice reservations, land reforms—all these ideas only give crutches to the handicapped. All parties which advocate social justice-Congress, Janata Dal, CPI, CPI(M) and others want the downtrodden people to remain on crutches forever. I want to make them stand up, walk, run and run faster. This way, they will acquire so much speed that they will be able to compete with and defeat the privileged people. The crumbs given by reservations and land reforms are such that with them, one can neither live nor die. My concept of land reforms is to eliminate the landless farmer- of the marginal farmer and the exploited agricultural labourer. I am thinking of creating a new class called peasant proprietors. In a nut shell, the agitations are for making the handicapped and oppressed classes capable in their own right, so that they will demand and capture their share in the governance of their land. By making them capable we are helping society and the country” (Ramakrishnan 1994: 11) Therefore, Kanshi Ram was firmly convinced that only social revolution and not affirmative action was going to solve the problem of backward classes. For him reservation policy would only make the OBCs further dependent on the establishment and will not empower or instill confidence or make them capable.
Uttarakhand agitation provides a classical example as to how any policy without taking into consideration the demographic pattern of the state is bound to fail. Uttarakhand region comprised of eight hill districts of U. P., i.e., Tehri, Garhwal, Pauri Garhwal, Nainital, Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Pittorgarh, Ahmora and Dehradun. The unique demographic feature of this area is that the population here constituted a majority of socially and educationally backward forward castes unlike in the plains where the backward castes/classes constituted the majority.\textsuperscript{45} A demand for the creation of separate state comprising these regions was considered the best solution to contact the backwardness of this area.\textsuperscript{46} Hence an agitation was carried out raising this demand.\textsuperscript{47} Although several political parties gave mention to this demand in their manifestoes\textsuperscript{48}, it did not find any expression in reality. On June 10, 1994 the SP-BSP government headed by Mulayam Singh Yadav approved the Rama Shankar Kaushik Committee recommendation for the formation of a separate state of Uttarakhand and the Chief Minister had announced that the proposal would be sent to Delhi for approval.\textsuperscript{49} The decision of U.P. government to implement the Mandal report in the hill districts gave rise to intense agitations in the area.\textsuperscript{50} The people feared that providing 27% reservations for castes who were a minority would deprive the majority people of the area of their rights, deny them admissions in educational institutions and jobs.\textsuperscript{51} A joint action forum called the Uttarakhand Samyukt Sangharsh Samiti (USSS) was formed comprised of members from several political parties including people from several walks of life such as teachers and ex-service men. As the agitation gathered momentum violence also took its toll in lives and property.\textsuperscript{52} The intransigent
attitude of Chief Minister only added fuel to the fire of agitations. He made several provocative speeches\textsuperscript{53} and the government whose responsibility of maintenance of law order was quite forgotten as the government itself called for a bandh. The Uttarakhand people defied the bandh call\textsuperscript{54} by keeping several shops and other establishments open while similar was the response of the plains people to the bandh call given by the Uttarkhandis.\textsuperscript{55}

Mulayam Singh by being irreconcilable to the demands made by the hill people was making shrewd attempts to make gains on two fronts. By supporting reservations he could win the support and image as champion of BCs and by conceding the demand for a separate Uttarakhand region he could win some support of the forward castes and also do away with an area where the upper caste domination would never converted itself into a vote bank.\textsuperscript{56} The Congress party, supporter of SP-BSP coalition government in U.P, was maintaining a stoic silence over the issue. Later as the agitations grew in intensity N.D. Tiwari demanded that Congress withdraw its support to the government, which has become an epitome of lawlessness.\textsuperscript{57} BJP was also extending its support to the agitations and demanded the dismissal of the government. Congress government at the centre was reluctant to be actively involved fearing the consequences it would have in the forthcoming elections in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka where the BCs are powerful forces to reckon with.\textsuperscript{58} However the dismissal of Mulayam Singh following the rift between Mayawati and him resulted in calm prevailing in the state and the decision getting shelved.
N.D. Tiwari’s firm defiance of the Congress high command and his strident postures against Mulayam Singh Yadav won him great dividends. In the elections held to the newly constituted Uttarakhand legislative assembly the congress won 36 seats in the house of 70 seats. In other words the reservation policy of Mulayam Singh Yadav had accentuated the demand for the creation of a separate state of Uttarakhand.

Reservation issue was once again raked up in UP during the tenure of Rajnath Singh. The U. P. government constituted a social justice committee in June 28, 2001 headed by Hukum Singh. Minister for Parliamentary affairs to look into the existing governmental schemes, programmes and facilities for the welfare of the SC/ST and the OBCs and suggest within a period of two months improvements to achieve the goal of social justice in U.P. There are 66 scheduled caste groups and 790 backward class groups in U.P. The data suggests that Chamars/Jatavs amongst the SC’s and the Yadavs amongst the OBCs had a lion’s share in jobs.

The new law takes cognisance of this and tries to rectify the imbalance in job reservations. It recognizes the chamars as a separate category among the SC’s. The SC’s have now been divided into chamars versus 65 sub castes of non-chamars. Of the 21 percent of government jobs that are reserved for the SCs, 10% will now be for chamars and 11% for the non-chamars.

Similarly OBC groups have now been divided into three parts-A, B and C. Yadavs/Ahirs are placed in part A: Sonar, Jat, Kurmi, Giri, Gujjar, Gossain, Lodh and Kambhooj in Part-B, and the rest 70 (viz, Kahar, Kevat, Koeri, Kumhar,
The new law has raised OBC quota from 27% to 28% of the government jobs. In the OBC quota, 5 percent has been reserved for those in part A, 9 percent for Part B and 14 percent for Part C. (Verma 2001: 4452).

According to the report on the basis of their (Yadav/Ahir) population they have been given only 5% of the OBC quota. Nine percent of the OBC quota has been reserved for MRBC (More Backward Classes) and 14% for Most BC(MBC).

The report not only retains the creamy layer inhibitions for the OBC/MRBC/MBC in accordance to the Supreme Court Judgement but also enlarges its scope (Ibid: 4455).

The Hukum Singh Committee report consisting of 200 pages was submitted on August 31, 2001. The U. P. cabinet at its meeting on September 13, 2001 accepted the report and on Sept. 15 the Uttar Pradesh Public Service (Reservation for SC, ST and OBC) (Amendment) Ordinance 2001 was promulgated by the Governor. The U.P legislative assembly approved the ordinance on Sept. 27, thus amending the existing Uttar Pradesh Public Service (Reservation for SC, ST and OBC) Act 1994.

Through the implementation of this report Rajnath Singh was trying drive a wedge between the various categories of OBCs, SC’s and ST’s. This would have a powerful impact on the powerful vote bank conglomerates of the SP and BSP. The SP leader Mulayam Singh Yadav and BSP leader Mayawati were greatly unsettled over the implementation of the report. It even caused a revolt within the BJP
government. Ashok Yadav a minister in the U.P. cabinet revolted and was expelled both from the government and party.

Recruitment procedures began on a war footing soon after the new law was enacted. Over 20000 selections had been made under the new policy. The Chief Minister Rajnath Singh often stated that he intended to recruit 50000 youths under the new policy before the elections (i.e. on February 2001). (Tripathi 2002: 36)

The new reservation policy was challenged by the expelled BJP minister Ashok Yadav before the Supreme Court, questioning the constitutional validity of the policy. The three judge bench (of Supreme Court) comprising Chief Justice S.P. Bharucha and Justices Shivraj. P. Patil and B.P. Singh ruled that “the entire exercise seems to be done in a hurry”. (The committee completed a marathon caste census for the purpose in a record two month’s time). It rejected the government’s contention, presented by Attorney-General Soli Sorabjee, that the recruitments be allowed, subject to the final judgement of the court. The judges said their order was very clear and no more appointments should be made until all petitions challenging the policy has been disposed off. (Ibid).

Later the Mayawati government had the much publicised “quota within quota” scheme of former Chief Minister Rajnath Singh touted during the assembly election campaign scrapped.

6.7 Bihar

Bihar in the last fifteen years has been following the Karpoori Thakur formula of reservations. It had a strong component of economic criterion, which
excluded the affluent among backward communities from availing the benefits of reservations. A strong bias in favour of women of all castes and also a quota for economically weaker sections among forward caste was provided at 3%. An income tax ceiling was fixed to identify the affluent members of a community.

Lalloo Prasad Yadav in imitation of V.P. Singh overhauled the entire reservation formula adopted in Bihar by doing away with two unique and widely accepted provisions. He annulled the provisions providing reservations for the economically weaker sections among the forward castes and that which provides a quota for women regardless of caste and confined it to those belonging to SC/ST. The provision, which prevented the affluent among BC from taking advantage of the reservation scheme, was removed. Lalloo justified his move to remove the economic criterion from his reservation scheme saying that the Supreme Court does not allow the inclusion of economic criterion in identifying backwardness. Thus he brought the Bihar reservation policy akin to Mandal reservation scheme adopted at the Centre. “Under the new scheme the ratio of reservations in government jobs has been raised by 2 percent each for the two sections of the OBCs i.e., from 12 percent to 14 percent for the most backwards and from 8 percent to 10 percent for the backwards. The earlier provision of 3 percent reservation for the economically backward upper caste people has been struck down. The ordinance ensures 2 percent job reservation for women belonging to the SC/ST’s and OBCs only and has excluded the upper caste women from the benefits of reservation. Gender is thus not considered to be a common denominator of socio-educational backwardness as was the case under the tax ceiling which had
been imposed under the Karpoori Thakur formula of reservation to prevent the economically prosperous section among the OBCs from taking advantage of reservation”. (Chaudhary 1993: 1145-46)

Sudden outbursts of violence were the immediate result of V.P. Singh’s announcement of implementation of Mandal Commission Report. Bandh calls were given by both pro-reservationists and anti-reservationists. Life came to a standstill in several parts of Bihar. Government establishments were set ablaze and railway stations were attacked, and hostels were closed following violence. Leaders were guarded in their reactions to the report. While the BJP and Left parties welcomed the move they regarded the exclusive reliance on reservations based on caste as dangerous. Double speak was indulged in by several leaders who refused to toe the official line of the party. The reaction of Dr. Jagannath Mishra, former Chief Minister of Bihar was quite virulent. He accused the Chief Minister of inciting casteist tension and converting the state into anarchy. Although the Chief Minister admitted that problem of poverty and unemployment were the greatest scourge, hailed V.P Singh’s decision as historic, which aimed at keeping the social fabric intact. “Social changes invariably trigger reactions, but this is certainly no agitation much less a movement” (Upadhyaya 1990: 30) Laloo remarked thus about the ongoing anti reservation agitation which he claimed had no impact on his state. Even reactions within the party was also urging a rethink on the part of the Chief Minister before going ahead with the implementation.61

Significantly, All India Congress Committee treasurer Sita Ram Kesari and Congress MLA Ramlakhan Singh Yadav (both belonging to the BCs), departing
from the party's official stand, welcomed the implementation of the Mandal report, a gesture acclaimed by the Chief Minister.

It was the pro-reservation rally held on October 8 at Patna which plunged the entire state of Bihar into an unprecedented and unparalleled caste war. The rally which was attended by leaders such as Ram Vilas Paswan, Sharad Yadav and Prime Minister V.P Singh made rabble rousing speeches exhorting the BC and minorities to confront the opponents of reservation policy. The Chief Minister Laloo Prasad went on to say: "Even if the heavens falls there can be no compromise on the Mandal decision" (Upadhyaya 1990). Immediately after the dispersal of the rally the Yadavas under the leadership of a Janata Dal MLA Pappu Yadav unleashed a spree of violence beginning with an indiscriminate firing on a Bihar Village killing several persons. The Yadavas singled out the Brahmins regardless of their status in public life or government services, looted their property and killed them. Fearing for their lives several Brahmins even crossed over to neighbouring Nepal and other places.62

The Laloo Prasad Yadav government had effected large scale transfer of district officers and SPs posting backward caste officers in place of upper caste officers. Jagannath Mishra demanded presidential intervention in Bihar in view of the complete break down of the constitutional machinery in the state. He charged that the administration was in shambles as a result of the Chief Minister's pronounced bias towards his caste men in appointments, promotions and transfers of officers. Significantly the SCs has kept themselves aloof from the violence perpetrated by the Yadavas. Karpoori Thakur formula was the most acceptable of
all formulas for the CPI(M), BJP and the Congress. The CPI was for undiluted implementation of the Mandal report.

The Congress began to make valiant attempts to infiltrate the powerful backward class vote bank deftly carved out by Laloo Prasad Yadav. They approached the other members constituting the BCs particularly the ones under the most BCs preaching to them that Laloo was intent only in furthering the interests of the Yadava community. In order to woo them they gave only 9.3% of the tickets of the Lok Sabha elections to Yadavas while 16.6% were given to the non-Yadavas. But all these efforts ended in futility. It might be because Laloo Yadav had dinned into the ears of his community members and others that all campaigns against Mandal report were to perennially confine them to the state of backwardness. Moreover Jagannath Mishra’s virulent campaign against the Mandal report and the delay in finalising the list of contestants also contributed to the Congress’ lacklustre performance at the Lok Sabha polls. His caste brethren interpreted every statement for dilution of Mandal Commission report like including the economic criterion and reserving seats for the weaker sections among forward castes as a ploy to upset the reservation policy. Since this argument was so convincingly put forth to this supporters, it only added to Laloo’s image and vote. The ambivalent stand of the congress party on the Mandal commission report and the polarisation of votes within it on caste lines eventually led the party to put up only a weak front against Laloo Yadav. He even took special care to cultivate the Kurmis and Koeris too and forged an alliance with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and thus enhanced his ambit of influence much to the discomfiture of the Congress.
BJP too attempted to wean away some of the Yadavas from Laloo Prasad Yadav's sphere of influence. L.K. Advani thought of winning away the masses by his "Rath Yatra", which was successful to a considerable extent in the neighbouring state of UP. Laloo Prasad Yadav issued orders of arrest of L.K. Advani as his rath reached Samastipur in the early hours of October 23, 1991. He justified his action saying: "By arresting this self-proclaimed reincarnate of Rama, I saved the country from a massacre. Advani wanted to use Rama's name for political ends. In fact he stepped up his communal activities after he saw the implementation of the Mandal commission recommendations was getting massive support from the people and the BJP was loosing its effect". The unexpected development after Advani's arrest was a split in the state unit of the BJP. Thirteen out of the thirty nine of its MLA's deserted the party to form a new outfit called the Sampurna Kranti Dal (SKD) under the leadership of Inder Singh Namdhari and Shamresh Singh, who were elected to the state assembly on the BJP ticket from Daltongunj and Bokaro in the February 1990 elections. The SKD has also forged an alliance with the JD and JMM thus alienating a sizeable chunk of votes from the BJP. Another greater achievement was that he effectively controlled the occurrence of communal riot in his state in the wake of Advani's arrest unlike other neighbouring states which failed to arrest communal conflagrations. This inspired the confidence of Muslim community who began to veer behind him and this dealt a great blow to the congress of which the Muslims were traditional supporters. Laloo Yadav also wooed the dissatisfied Congress leaders particularly the members of his community increasing the internal dissension in the party.
Lalloo’s strategy paid him handsomely at the Lok Sabha elections in 1991 when he maintained his position slightly lesser than in 1989 (i.e. from 30 to 28). At the same time the BJP and Congress were the major losers with their tally being reduced from 9 seats in 1989 to 5 and from 4 seats in 1989 to 1 in 1991. The upper caste votes shifted from the Congress to BJP and its traditional Muslim votes to NF combine cost them dearly in reducing their share in their Lok Sabha seats. The BCs and Muslims stood solidly by Yadav in ensuring his success.

The ordinance promulgated by Lalloo Prasad again raised the controversial reservation issue to the forefront. Congress (I) once again tried to fuel animosities in the minds of the MBCs against the Yadavas. BJP tried to influence the Yadav voters by appointing several members of the Yadava community to new outfits floated by them. It even tried to woo the SC voters.

Lalloo became confident that as in the Loka Sabha elections of 1991, any anti reservation movement would only yield dividends for his party. The movement had widened the gulf between the upper castes and backward castes. This polarisation enabled the Janata Dal allies to win 49 seats out of 54 in the 1991 Lok Sabha election. Similarly any reaction against the ordinance would only result in the exodus of upper caste voters to BJP and as a result would facilitate the cementing of backward Yadava votes behind him. Moreover his resolute attitude in opposing communal propaganda and anti-Muslim activities of the BJP had gained immense popularity for him.
Nitish Kumar raised the banner of revolt against Laloo’s reservation scheme alleging that the reversal of Karpoori Thakur formula would result in the clubbing of OBC and MBC by which the MBC would be losers. This was said at a function organized by the Karpoori Thakur Rachna Chakra and the Jan Nayak Karpoori Thakur Vichar Kendra. It demanded that the government should not reverse the Karpoori Thakur formula (Choudhary 1993: 1146).

Further, the delegate session of the MBC Coordination Committee held at Patna on February 15, 1993 demanded the increase of reservations quota for them to 16.5% from 15% in government jobs. However Laloo had the issue shrewdly tackled with the help of his colleague Sharad Yadav by increasing the quota of MBCs thus preventing any erosion of his vote banks.

The BJP however still licking its wounds of defeat in the Lok Sabha elections turned a blind eye to the manoeuvrings of the Janata Dal. They decided to depend more on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue rather than on casteist issues. However, the Congress leader Jagannath Mishra criticised the decision of reversing the Karpoori formula as a violation of Supreme Court order which specifically excludes the ‘Creamy Layer’ from reservation beneficiaries.63

The Janata Dal (Ajit Group) also criticised the move and also protested the move of the government for not constituting a committee to review the Mandal list of beneficiaries and also for identifying the creamy layer among the backwards.64 Only the leaders of Samajwadi Janata party fully approved of the new reservation formula implemented by the Laloo Prasad Yadav government.65
The triumph of Laloo Prasad in the 1995 Bihar Vidhan Sabha elections proved the invincibility of his strategy. The Kurmi revolt led by Nitish Kumar and the subsequent formation of Samata Party had little impact on the Janata Dal. A badly faction ridden Congress and a divided BJP did not pose any challenge to him. But the Muslim votes did rally solidly behind, thus compensating for any loss he incurred due to the split of OBC votes. However, the Janata Dal gained the support of the Muslims only in areas where they are in a minority. Whereas in the areas where they are in a majority their votes were split between Congress and Janata Dal. (Chaudhari: 1995:18). Finally, though surprising it may seem, the OBC- minority alliance had not led to the empowerment of the Muslims. Both Yadav Chief Ministers (Mulayam Singh Yadav and Laloo Prasad Yadav) had projected themselves (and are perceived by the minorities) as defenders of Muslim interests. But the fact remains that during their tenure Muslim representation in government had reached an all time low. Some commentators anticipate that the next threat to the BC coalitions would come from this quarter (eg. Jain 1996: 150)

Laloo Prasad Yadav has unlike Mulayam Singh Yadav-always identified himself as an indistinguishable member of his fellow caste members. He performed the role of a social reformer too similar to that of E.V. Ramaswami Naicker by solemnising marriages and thus breaking the monopoly of Brahmin priests and inducting Dalits into priesthood. They understand his language, his humour and his failings. They love to see him milking the cow in the Khatals of the Chief Minister’s residence. Laloo Prasad had made the people understand that the minority upper caste elite had ruled Bihar for so long and ruined the state.
Power should now go to the majority backwards. This message had aroused the downtrodden in Bihar. He even adopted some populist measures for the benefit of the poor and downtrodden. On March 25, 1991 the decision to raise the wages of bidi workers from Rs. 9/- for 5000 leaves to Rs. 20/- was taken. He had also accepted in principle the right of tribals to minor forest produce (Chaudhari 1991:21). He proudly flaunts his humble origins. "Then as far as I am concerned, I have come here from the Chaprasi (Peon’s) quarters". "Come to my village some time. My house was like pigsty, we lived like pigs. I recollect my mother making a gruel of dahi (curd), roti of madua (ragi) and maize, eaten with a paste of onion and chillies. Who could get vegetables? We used to herd cattle" "Look at my feet (shows his toes). See no nails. Stabbing our feet on stones and rocks, they have gone..... we are working people. In the city we used to study at night and even pull rickshaws to earn our bread". (Chaudhari 1991:22). The poor, who always remained at the periphery of politics, have come to the fore. They are the ones who have made Lalloo Prasad Yadav practically all powerful. Crafty and shrewd, he is well aware of the changes that are coming up, and therefore every political move of his is measured and calculated (Chaudhari: 1993:37).

6.8 Madhya Pradesh

The political track record in M.P was one of total disregard to the electoral potential of the OBCs until the pre Mandal phase. Only very few members of the OBC had got elected from this region. The Mandal decision, which was expected to create a powerful dent in BJP’s influence and gain dividends for JD, failed due to lack of caste solidarity and the infighting within the party. However, the BJP had, realising the
potential of OBC votes, already began to take steps to influence the OBCs by promoting a few of its members by assigning a few posts within the party and also allotting a few seats in the elections to the assembly and parliament. Most of these members emerged successful in the elections and were later to be instrumental in warding off threats to the BJP from OBCs aligned to other political outfits. 66

The Congress (I) then decided to capitalise on the political consciousness among the OBCs 67 which swept the entire nation in the wake of the Mandal Commission Report’s implementation. 68 They decided to embarrass the BJP government of Sunderlal Patwa by demanding the implementation of the Mahajan commission Report. The Mahajan commission was appointed during the tenure of Arjun Singh as Chief Minister in 1981. The Mahajan commission had recommended among several other things a reservation of 35% of posts in the state for Backward classes. 69 The Congress (I)’s appeal was a blow to the BJP which had opposed the Mahajan Commission Report. 70 A hot contest between the Congress (I) and BJP ensued in nominating the largest number of OBC candidates in an attempt to woo the BC votes. 71 However as the election results of 1993 revealed, the strength of BJP MLAs from the lower castes declined but at the same time increased from the upper castes. Even though the BJP took some steps in assimilating some members of the lower castes, several of their leaders were refusing to concede their castes as backward. 72

The election results of 1993 made it apparent to the BJP that its steps to cultivate the OBC is inadequate and that its untiring and relentless efforts towards shedding its upper caste image has not fructified. They decided to bring about a
characteristic change in the rank and file of its organisation by conceding several key posts in the party structure to OBC and SC/ST. This incensed its major feeder organisation the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) which felt that the BJP is dithering from its main ideological plank i.e., casteless society or Hindu unity. On several occasions they were at logger heads with the BJP on this issue. Statements issued by leaders became contrary to the RSS ideology and BJP strategy. However the BJP remained firm in their resolve in nominating more and more OBC/SC & ST members in order to ward off any threats from opposition parties in capitalising on the reservation issue and to shed its upper caste façade.

6.9 Karnataka

In 1986 the Ramakrishna Hegde provided for 68 percent reservation which covered 92 percent of the population including the socially and politically powerful Lingayats and Vokkaligas. It was a modification of the Venkatswamy commission report which excluded the two communities (Lingayats and Vokkaligas) from the BC list stating them to be very advanced. The commission observed that there is "... an unhappy and disquieting situation in Karnataka where in the two premier caste-community-classes of Karnataka, the Lingayats and Vokkaligas each claiming that the other is not a socially and educationally BC and each keen to be included in the list of socially and educationally BCs" (Pinto: 1994:2270). There was a large public outcry against the report, that the then Chief Minister Hegde included them in the BC list and also constituted a third BCs commission under Justice Chinnappa Reddy in 1988 which submitted its report in 1990. In his report Justice Reddy too reiterated the same conclusion with regard to Lingayat and
Vokkaligas as was made by Venkatswamy Commission. Chinnappa Reddy Commission had recommended the scaling down of OBC reservations from the existing 50 percent to 38 percent. Fearing the wrath of the two powerful communities Chief Minister Veerendra Patil dodged the issue by appointing a cabinet sub committee to study the recommendations. Before the committee could submit its report Veerendra Patil was removed and Bangarappa assumed office who again reconstituted the committee for a third time. Thus the report was frequently consigned to the cold storage.

The hotting up of dissidents within the Congress following Bangarappa's ouster and the efforts of Janata Dal to secure BC votes in the name of Mandal prompted the Moily government to implement a modified version of the Chinnappa Reddy Commission Report. In a series of orders the Veerappa Moily government implemented a diluted version of the Chinnappa Reddy Commission report ignoring certain cardinal recommendations of the commission. On April 20, 1994 government order was passed to the effect that the percentage of reservations for SC was enhanced from 15 percent to 18 percent and for ST from 3 percent to 5 percent. This order amounted to the total reservation being increased to 73 per cent (23 percent for SC and ST and 50 percent for OBCs). This move was resorted to by Moily in a bid to appease a few communities as only a month lay ahead for the Zilla Parishad and Taluk committee elections and also only four months lay ahead for the assembly elections. It may be recollected that the Chinnappa Reddy Commission had recommended the limit of reservation to 50 per cent in consonance with the Supreme Court verdict. In order to assuage the Vokkaligas
and Lingayats whom the commission had requested to be excluded from the BC list was accommodated by creating a fourth category of BCs (in addition to those recommended by the commission). It included Vokkaligas, Lingayats, Marathas, Bunts, Christians and Kodavs in the “rural areas” and apportioning it an additional 12 percent reservation. But obviously it did not go far enough. (Krishnaswamy 1994: 143). On July 23 the cabinet decided to issue a “modified reservation order” to “rectify the anomalies in the April 20 G.O”. Under this the total reservation was enhanced to 80 percent, with the OBC quota going up to 57 percent. This gave Vokkaligas and Lingayats 8 and 11 percent reservations respectively in all government educational institutions and jobs. This was a premeditated step by Moily since this order was issued in July 23 which was indeed two days previous to July 25 rally intended to be organized by Vokkaligas on July 25.

The modified government order of July 23 didn’t strike much in either appeasing or assuaging the Vokkaligas. Their rally which was held as per schedule on July 25, the one which Moily was trying to make lacklustre, demanded the resumption of the G.O of October 1986 of Ramakrishna Hegde until a Permanent Backward Class Commission is appointed. Several members of his cabinet like forest minister H. Vishwanath voiced concern at the haste shown by Moily when the Permanent BC Committee (PBCC) headed by Kudur Narayana Rai was going into the entire gamut of reservations and examining representations from various communities. Moily firmly disputed the charge that the government had adopted this scheme after consultations with legal pundits, sociologists and a wide cross section of the society and had not acted in haste. The chairman of the PBCC was also consulted
according to Moily (Krishnaswamy 1994: 144). Karnataka Congress Party President S.
Bangarappa told Frontline that the modified policy was a political gimmick by Moily
"with an eye on the vote banks" (Ibid: 145). A number of political leaders, including
state Janata Dal President H. D. Deve Gowda and Bharatiya Janata Party member and
leader of the opposition in the assembly R. V. Deshpande, wanted the government to
revert to the October 1986 order until the PBCC presented its recommendations. But
Moily dismissed that order as "an Ad hoc reservation policy lacking in many respects".
(Krishnaswamy 1994: 145).

The Vokkaliga Sangha and others in writ petitions, questioned the validity
of the April 20 and July 25 executive orders. They were in favour of implementing
the 1986 order. Another writ petition from Shamji Raghunath Rohidekar and
others challenged for the first time, besides the above orders, the legality of the
1986 G. O, assailing it on the ground that it was violative of a ruling in the Indira
Sawhney case, and the Mandal case, both of which put the limit on reservation at
50 per cent.

The 1986 G.O and its implementation had never been challenged. Its
implementation had been taken for granted. The Moily government undertook in the
apex court on August 1 not to operate until further orders the G.Os dated April 20 and
July 25. But the Supreme Court agreeing with the pleas of the petitioners in assailing the
legality of the 1986 G.O on the grounds that it was not consistent with the 50 per cent
ceiling, directed, initially in interim orders on August 30 and later making it absolute on
September 9, that the state government not implement it (Sharma 1994: 24).
Moily tried to enact a bill to include the Karnataka reservation scheme in Ninth Schedule of the Constitution under Article 31B which takes it away from judicial scrutiny. But a determined opposition forestalled any such move by Moily in both houses of legislature in Karnataka.

It is strange that a person of Veerappa Moily's stature and political experience should resort to such self-destructing tactics especially when a Supreme Court verdict was enforced on all states. Moily could neither win backward votes or could hold his flock together in the Congress. The decision of Supreme Court prevented him not only from increasing the reservation quota but also resulted in decreasing the prevalent 68 per cent reservation to 50 per cent. Dissidence within the party combined with failure on the reservation front inflicted a crushing defeat in the 1994 Assembly polls in Karnataka.

6.10 Tamil Nadu

On attainment of independence the then Madras Government passed a government order (revised) in November 1947. It stipulated that in a unit of 14 appointments, six (42.9%) were allocated to non-Brahmin Hindus, two (14.3%) each to Backward Hindus, Brahmins and SC's and one (7.1 per cent) each to Anglo Indians/Christians and Muslims (G.O. 3437 Public, 21st November 1947).

The Madras High Court and later the Supreme Court struck down the revised Government Order as ultra vires of the Constitution. The decision of High Court and Supreme Court caused great consternation in Madras. Leaders like E. V. Ramaswami Naicker firmly protested against the verdict and took out processions and endeavoured to call an all-party struggle for the reintroduction of the revised
The congress leaders got restive at the developments that followed the decision of the courts. On April 1951 the Madras Assembly carried a resolution moved by the Chief Minister. It authorised the government 'to adopt such measures as are necessary for admission to the government professional colleges and appointments in government services as will conduce to the welfare of all classes of citizens'. Armed with this resolution and the related proceedings supporting it, the Chief Minister and other ministers rushed to Delhi seeking an amendment to the Constitution.

The central government conceded the demands of the Madras government and the first amendment to the Constitution was enacted by incorporating Article 15(4) which empowered the state to make any special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally BCs of citizens and also for SC/ST notwithstanding the provisions of Articles 15(1) and 29(2) on June 1951. The State Government on enacting this amendment reintroduced reservation in both educational and employment with 15 percent for SC and ST and 25 percent for social and educationally BC, leaving the rest for open competition by the entire population. While the SC and ST were already listed, the BC were communities specified under the Madras Educational Rules and converts to Christianity from SC (G.O. 2432 Public 27 Sept 1951).

Although the fresh Government Order could assuage the feelings of the protestors, the Madras Provisional Backward, SC and Tribes Federation were far from satisfied. They demanded that reservations for BC SC and ST be fixed at 65% and to relax the qualification marks for a pass at the intermediate examinations.
and admission to educational institutions. The government found these demands impractical and refuse to comply to them.

The Vanniyar Community was much incensed at the lack of consideration of their demands shown by the Congress. Frustrated at their inability they decided to show their powers in contesting as independents in the 1949 elections to the district boards. The results were an eye opener to the Congress with regard to the influence that the Vanniyars were able to exert in the South Arcot district of Madras state. Similarly they formed an alliance with the toiling masses and formed the Tamil Nadu Toilers Party. The Tamil Nadu Toilers Party and Common Weal Party won 19 and 6 seats respectively in the 1952 Assembly elections. The Congress which was short of majority in the assembly wooed the two parties of the Vanniyars by offering the two stalwarts of the Vanniyar movement, M. A. Manikavelu Nayakar and S.S. Ramaswami Padayachi posts in the eight member cabinet. The Vanniyar movement thus petered off and the reservations continued as per G. O. of 1951.\textsuperscript{80}

The DMK lost the main plank of its ideology i.e., anti-Brahmanism since the Congress accommodated several backward leaders like Omandur Ramaswamy Reddiar as the first Chief Minister and later Kumara Swami Raja as CM and the illustrious Kamaraj who not only became the Chief Minister but also wielded immense clout as Congress president. As a result they tried to forge marriage of convenience first with Communist Party and later with the Brahmin dominated Swantantra Party. It also focused on issues like food shortage and poverty with the same fervour as they had advocated anti-Brahmanism. The imposition of Hindi was another issue which clicked well with the electorate. It also added shortage of food
grains also to the above issue. The DMK interpreted the introduction of Hindi as a sinister attempt by the center to reduce the importance of Tamil and also as a ploy to prevent the entry of South Indians into the Central services. The food shortage was portrayed as a failure on the part of Kamaraj who with his immense clout at the center as Congress president to secure sufficient food grains for Madras state. According to them he could not even prevail over the center to avoid the imposition of the Hindi language on Tamils. C. Subramaniam, the Central Food Minister, who also hailed from Madras was accused of failure to alleviate the food grain shortage in Madras. In 1967 the DMK led a grand anti congress coalition and registered a spectacular victory at the assembly polls in 1967.

The DMK ministry in fulfilment of its electoral promise appointed the Tamil Nadu First BCs Commission under A.N. Sattanathan in 1969. The commission submitted its report in 1970. In its report the commission had observed that just nine out of the numerous communities listed as backward, accounting for only about 11 per cent of the total BC population had cornered much of the benefits available to the entire BC population, viz., 37 percent of the non-gazetted and 48 per cent of the gazetted posts, 44 per cent of the engineering and 47 per cent of the medical college seats, and 34 per cent of scholarships. It was to prevent this ‘creaming effect’ of the reservation policy that the commission recommended an income limit of Rs. 9000. Following the recommendations of this commission, in 1971 the DMK ministry enhanced the BC reservations from 25 per cent to 31 per cent (against the recommended 33 per cent) and the SC-ST reservations to 18 per cent (against the recommended continuation of the existing 16 per cent).
However it refused to prescribe any income limit, lest it should incur the displeasure of the vested interests (Radhakrishnan 1989: 1265).

The AIADMK ministry led by M.G. Ramachandran ventured to implement the income ceiling of Rs. 9000 fixed by the Sattanathan Commission through a Government Order in July 1979. The DMK-DK combine took it as an excellent opportunity to revive its sagging morale and also to combat the personal charisma of MGR which was becoming a stumbling block to their rise to power. Realising the negative impact that his order has had on the Lok Sabha elections in January 1980 which ended in his defeat, the MGR government withdraw the controversial G.O and issued a fresh G.O. enhancing the reservation percentage from 31 percent to 50 percent.

The withdrawal of the order was challenged at the courts by two students who failed to get admission to professional colleges, and an aggrieved state government employee, and the management of a private educational institution which was compelled to implement the new measures challenged the constitutional validity of the two G.Os of February 1, 1980 giving the effect to the two MGR announcements of January 24, 1980. On October 15, 1982 the Supreme Court directed the Tamil Nadu govt. to appoint a commission to review the entire list of BCs after conducting an enumeration in a factual and scientific manner. Accordingly, M.G. Ramachandran appointed a commission in December 13, 1982 under the chairmanship of J.A. Ambasankar, a former chairman of the Public Service Commission with 21 members.
The J.A. Ambasankar commission Report was noted for the dissent of the majority members to it. They (the dissenters) i.e., 14 of the 21 members) made clear that the existing 67% reservation should continue to the backward communities who are eligible for it. This was in contrast to the chairman’s view who recommended 52% reservations for the BCs and the inclusion of 17 forward communities as BC and the deletion of 34 communities from the BC list. The commission also did not recommend any income criteria to avoid the 'creaming effect' of reservations. The report was submitted in February 1985. (Radhakrishnan, Ibid: 1268).

M.G. Ramachandran refused to table the report probably due to the fear that the commissions Chairman’s recommendation of deletion and inclusion and reduced percentage of reservations of BC would flare up another stir despite repeated pleas. Instead he issued a few G.O.’s which revealed to be a selective implementation of the recommendations like continuation of the existing percentage of 67% reservation, and also the inclusion of 29 more communities into the BC list without excluding anyone from the existing list. The commission, however, recommended compartmental reservations, that is grouping conveniently BC communities according to the degree of their backwardness and allowing representation out of the reserved quota to the several groups. The report was tabled only two years after its submission by the M. Karunanidhi government (Ibid.).

Vanniyar Sangam which was lying dormant raised its banner of revolt after the demise of M.G. Ramachandran and thereafter the declaration of President’s rule in the state. The Vanniyars demand separate reservation of 20% in state
services, educational institutions and 2% in central services exclusively for them. The state under the Presidents rule consented to the implementation of compartmental reservation pending the submission of a committee's report appointed to survey BC population and backwardness. This didn't pacify the Vanniyars who resumed their agitation with reviewed vigour (Radhakrishnan 1996: 128).

The DMK ministry which assumed charge after the January 1989 elections, stopped the survey in February 1989, and ordered compartmental reservations in the following month. This was partly in fulfilment of one of its poll promises and partly to outwit its adversary the Congress (1). Out of the overall 50 percent of backward class reservations for 201 communities accounting for an estimated 67 percent of the state's population, it set a part 20 percent for 39 communities listed as MBC within the Backward Class List and 68 communities listed as denotified tribes, together accounting for about 26 percent of the backward class population (Ibid.)

The Vanniyar leader Ramdas severally criticised and opposed the new scheme of compartmentalisation of reservation alleging it to be weighed highly unfavourable to the Vanniyar community. By expanding the list of MBC to 107 (i.e., 39 for MBC of 68 for denotified tribes) it would only deprive the benefits now being enjoyed by the Vanniyars substantially for it would cut into their benefits.

In order to secure a more acceptable percentage in MBC quota and also to avenge the betrayal earlier by the Congress and now by the DMK the Vanniyars floated a separate outfit called the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) in July 1989.
The PMK participated in elections for the first time in the November 1989 Assembly elections and managed to secure 5.82% of votes entitling it to a status of a recognised political party. Realising the growing influence of the PMK, several parties approached them for an alliance which was rejected outright by Ramdas. PMK instead forged alliances with certain minor parties like Republican Party of India (RPI) and communal outfits of Palani Baba. Even the Janata Dal was kept side after the keen interest was evinced at the initial stages by Ram Das towards joining it, when a few unacceptable demands made by him was rejected by the former. In the 1991 Lok Sabha polls PMK polled the third largest votes in 120 assembly segments.

"A contest between the parties espousing two distinct rhetorical styles, with associated differences in electoral coalition and programmes styles is (I) termed as empowerment populism and protection populism.

I use the term empowerment populism to refer to a style of political rhetoric that describes society as a conflict demanding greater privileges for out-groups on behalf of the people. By protection populism, on the other hand, I mean a rhetoric that emphasizes themes of vulnerability, offering to protect, ‘the weak’ and ‘truly needy’. Although they often exist in the same movement or rhetoric, there is a tension between the themes of empowerment and protection as vision of social PCiscine that allows them to be championed by rival parties under competitive conditions. This can occur either as an original movement splits, or when defensive elites use ‘sandwich tactics’ to outflank insurgent counter-elites by forming a coalition with the most disadvantaged."
The potential for 'sandwich coalitions' always exists because of vertical differentiation within the constituencies claimed by the rising social groups who typically articulate themes of empowerment populism, and because those with the greatest uncertainty and deprivation are likely to be more responsive to such measures as social insurance and the provision of basic needs. Sandwich tactics can be pursued in two ways: by seeking to target benefits towards 'the truly needy' or by substituting measures that provide for the needy in place of those who claim to shift power downward" (Swamy: 1998: 109-110).

The anti-Mandal agitation didn’t break out in Tamil Nadu in the same dimension as in the Northern States. The DMK government of Karunanidhi during its second tenure from January 1989 to January 1991 enthusiastically supported the implementation of Mandal Commission recommendations of the National Front of which his party too was a constituent. The Tamil Nadu Assembly also passed a resolution to this effect supporting the implementation of the report. If Tamil Nadu was complacent during the 1990-91 Mandal agitations, the reason for it is not far to seek: with about 80% of the state’s population already nestling under its protective umbrella, if the state’s 1980’s sudden and steep hike in reservation from 50% to 68% itself did not threaten it with any Bihar or Gujarat type caste war, the centre’s introduction of a mere 27% reservation could not have done it either”. (The Hindu 19-02-1995).

The AIADMK Govt. under J. Jayalalitha passed a resolution unanimously with other members of the legislative demanding 50% reservation. It said that
reservation should not be limited to central services alone but should also extend to educational institutions as well.

It was the Madras High Court which again stoked the dying embers of reservation issue when it ordered that reservation of 69% in educational institutions should only be implemented in 1993-94 and a ceiling of only 50% should be effected from 1994-95. The High Court pointedly said reservation was “a very sensitive, highly explosive and extremely delicate issue”. (Subramanian: 1993: 124). Dissatisfied with the High court verdict of effecting 50% from 1994-95 onwards only, an organisation Voice (consumer care council) challenged the order at the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ordered that the ceiling of 50% reservations in educational institution should be operational in 1993-94 instead of 1994-95.

However when the govt. pressed ahead with 69 percent reservation in 1993-94, itself in accordance with Madras High Court's verdict, the Supreme Court construed it a contempt of Court (Ibid.).

The Tamil Nadu Assembly after the issue of the above verdict by the Supreme Court passed a resolution on November 9, 1993 with the support of all parties which included AIADMK, the DMK, the Congress I, the CPI, CPI(M) and MGRADMK pressing the centre to amend the constitution for “the continuance of 69 percent in govt service and educational institutions for all time to come” (Subramanian 1993: 124). Jayalalitha also announced that the state would observe a bandh on November 16, 1993 to express the people's feelings on the issue. All the political parties expressed their support both for the resolution and the bandh. However, Karunanidhi, Vazhappadi Ramamurthy of the President of the TNCC (I).
CPI (M) and Leader of the opposition faulted Jayalalitha for not convening an all party meeting to discuss the issue before the assembly elections. (ibid.).

The Chief Minister Jayalalitha was accused of betrayal of the resolution moved by the Assembly for the protection of 69% reservation, when the govt. filed a reply at the Supreme Court on November 22, 1993 an “affidavit of compliance” to adhere to 50% ceiling fixed by the Court. This incensed every political party on the ground that they were not consulted on the matter before the affidavit of compliance was submitted to the Supreme Court. They refused to accompany her to the Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in order to persuade him to amend the constitution to retain the 69% reservation in Tamil Nadu. The opposition parties in fact doubted the sincerity of the Chief Minister in this matter. Karunanidhi even alleged that Jayalalitha was engaged in a 'double game' on this issue (Subramanian 1994: 32).

Jayalalitha succeeded in getting the presidential assent to the Tamil Nadu BCs, SC and ST (reservation of seats in educational institutions and of appointments or posts in the services under the state Bill) 1993 on July 19, 1994. The consent was granted after a delegation led by the Chief Minister Jayalalitha met the Prime Minister and requested him that the bill be included in the Ninth schedule of the Constitution after in became an act under to take it away from judicial scrutiny. It also demanded that the centre amend the Constitution to enable the state governments to vary the percentage of reservations depending on their population and local factors (Ibid).
The protest made against the amendment by the organisation Voice (consumer care) against the bill found its echo in the Madras High Court. Later the petition was transferred to the Supreme Court. Jayalalitha wreaked her vengeance on Vijayan, the chairman and trustee of the organisation (Voice) and also on Dr. M. Anandakrishnan by making physical assaults on them.87

Jayalalitha “success” in obtaining Presidential assent for the state's controversial reservation bill and the subsequent passage of the Constitution amendment bill by parliament providing for inclusion of the state Act in the Ninth schedule of the Constitution soon won for her the acclaim of not only her own party men but of the leaders of a few other parties of little or no consequence in the state. She was hailed as “Samooha Needhi Katha Veeraganai” (the brave lady who protected social justice) at a felicitation function in Madras. (Vishwanathan 1994:33).

6.11 Kerala

Kerala has been following a reservation policy which provided for 49.5% reservations for the SC/ST’s & OBCs. This policy has been continuing for several decades since independence except for a brief protest being raised here and there. In Kerala the BCs and forward Castes are very well organised and had been a force to reckon with for decades.

Even though the reservation policy did hamper the entry of forward castes into the state service sector, they were fairly satisfied with the open merit quota in the central service, which enabled several of their members to secure recruitment. The decision to implement the Mandal Commission dealt a lethal blow to the
forward castes. The two coalitions, the UDF and the then ruling LDF, had several supporters of both the forward and BC communities whom both the coalitions were wary to antagonize. The greatest rift occurred in the UDF whose major partner the Muslim League was a great votary of the Mandal Commission report. They refused to entertain any suggestion of inclusion of economic criterion, which to them would be at the disadvantage of BCs. For them it was not the jobs or income that would accrue by way of reservations, but the participation in administration that that was deemed as important.

Kunjali Kutty, state secretary of the Muslim League openly clashed with the Congress (I) leader K. Karunakaran on the issue of economic criterion in the reservation scheme. He alleged that there was practically no difference with regard to reservations between the Congress (I) and CPM for both favoured economic criteria. However, since both these coalitions had substantial number of members from BCs, who are also in favour of reservations on the basis of caste they should be prepared to polarise into a single unit, cutting across political affiliations. The moment these BCs join together and form a united front, the Muslim League would not be found wanting in giving leadership to it. He exhorted the majority of the BCs and minority communities to organise against the unholy alliance of Forward caste hegemonists and communal divisive forces. (Ashraf 1990: 7).

The declaration of the SNDP President with regard to the Ram Janma Bhoomi issue gave great inspiration to the League leaders. The SNDP President K.K. Vishwanathan severely condemned the B.J.P’s Ram Janma Bhoomi issue and even branded Lord Rama as a God of the forward castes. The League even
reminded their Hindu brethren that the main aim of the BJP was to foster communal violence. It pleaded to the BCs that they should unite forgetting their religious affinities. In these circumstances the League would be a warrior at the forefront in the fight for the issue, but no political games could be resorted to.

When the initial euphoria of V.P Singh’s Mandal commission report subsided, the Muslim League began to campaign against him personally and warned the masses not to fall into the trap laid by him. The League even branded V.P. Singh as a former member of the R.S.S. (Ashraf 1992:12)

The inner party conflicts over the Mandal issue and the Ram Janmabhoomi issue had its members caught in a fix and they could not evolve a common approach to the Mandal issue. The Muslim League’s divergent view also confused its predominant constituencies in North Kerala. The L D F scored a sweeping victory at the District council elections making great inroads in to the Congress strong hold of coastal Kerala and central Kerala to an extent and also into the League strong holds like Malappuram. Moreover the UDF’s almost pro-reservation posture minus economic criterion lost them the votes of the forward castes as well.

Enthused by the success at the District Council elections, the LDF government in Kerala decided to go in for elections to the assembly in 1991 forgoing almost a year of its government mandate simultaneously with that of the Lok Sabha polls. The UDF was wilting under pressures of inner contradictions. But the factors that contributed to the success of the LDF victory at the District Council polls were not everlasting. The Samvarana Samudaya Munnani, (SSM) a
coalition of proReservationist forces had not committed itself to any of the coalition parties. But the LDF was confident that their votes would eventually fall into their kitty.

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi had turned the attention of electorate from the reservation controversy. Many of the Latin Christians, who were beneficiaries of reservation policy, were completely sidelined by the sympathy factor that swept the nation in the wake of Rajiv’s assassination. The SSM were provoked at the derogatory comments made by Marxist veteran E.M.S. Namboodiripad about certain prominent leaders of the Ezhava Community who were the flag bearers of Ezhava Social reform movement.

The L D F did a damage controlling exercise by stopping all attacks of Ezhava casteist leaders and won the unconditional support of the SSM. It is doubtful whether this did succeed in pacifying the wounded sentiments of the Ezhava community as the L D F’s performance at the polls showed (Isaac and Kumar: 1991: 2702-03). The refusal of the LDF to accommodate the Muslim League led to a very uncomfortable position. The support the SSM had pledged to LDF made it difficult for League to continue in the SSM. They made a tactical escape from this trap by quitting the SSM.

It was in central Kerala that the caste polarisation was more evident. The silent anti-Mandal sentiment sweeping across the districts like Pathanamthitta, Idukki, Kottayam, and Ernakulam worked effectively in creating a loose solidarity between Nairs and Christians. Hence as far as Kerala was concerned Mandal
remained only a subject of political debate only. The Muslim League became wiser after its experience in the hands of LDF when the latter after utilising its clout at the District Council elections refused to accommodate them in the LDF coalition. Their return to the UDF not only strengthened it but reduced the SSM's strength on whom the LDF was leaning heavily upon (Kala Kaumudi 30/06/1991).

The too close identification of the LDF with SSM provoked alienation of some of the upper caste sympathisers of the LDF. Some of the Christian Bishops came out in public forums with pleas to vote in favour of UDF in the second leg of the campaign. With the exit of the IUML (Indian Union Muslim League) from the SSM and the neutralization of the Latin Catholics after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the SSM had virtually been reduced to its Ezhava base, most of whom even otherwise had been traditional supporters of the left. Thus the net gain of the LDF from its escapade from SSM is a doubtful issue (Isaac and Mohan Kumar 1991 : 2702-03).

6.12 West Bengal

The West Bengal Chief Minister Jyothi Basu had informed the CPI (M) central leadership that he will not implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission till the anomalies are removed. Basu reportedly told senior colleagues "that the commission's recommendations on the 27% job reservation for the BC was an absurd proposition as far as West Bengal was concerned". He said SC/ST and other minority interests are well protected in the state and any further concessions would naturally hamper others (The Telegraph 8/9/90). Although this
was in consonance with the CPI (M)'s view of reservations, it was diametrically, opposite to his personal views, which he had expressed in favour of reservation previously. According to the CPI(M) theoreticians, caste-based reservation policy tends to perpetuate narrow caste consciousness and therefore is a hindrance to the development of class consciousness. Such a policy is basically intended to serve the purpose of a bourgeoisie democracy. By generating inner conflicts among the toilers and splitting the unity of the oppressed class, the policy of reservation proves to be a stumbling block to the revolutionary class formation (Guru 1985:184).

According to the 1981 census, West Bengal has a total population of 54.6 million of which the SC population is 12 million and the ST population 3 million. Thus the SC constitutes 22 per cent and the ST component is about 6 per cent of the state's population (Bhattacharya 1997: 185).

West Bengal has reserved 15 per cent and 5 per cent seats in government services for SC and ST respectively. However these provisions were not adhered in most government establishments and in 1976 it was found that the SC/ST were not adequately represented. But the West Bengal government in their deposition to the Mandal Commission Report had opposed the idea of reservation of seats of BCs and had indeed suggested poverty and living standards to be made the measuring scale in determining backwardness.

There were attempts in West Bengal towards organizing the BCs and demanding reservations in government service. The political history of West Bengal is full of clashes between the Namasudras and other communities. The BCs
in West Bengal mainly constituted the largest segment of the rural population engaged in agricultural activities. The social dimension of the process of community transformation and various land reform measures however had their impact like other states, in West Bengal too in giving a new shape to a major section of the backward population. The impact was not homogeneous. During the fifties they improved their social and economic conditions, but the process of evolution of a separate social entity did not succeed. In later years, however, in they emerged as a comparatively new force in rural West Bengal which nourished an antagonistic attitude towards the social political base of the CPM (Kushry 1991:420).

It was in the late sixties that the leadership of Biplabi Bangla Congress had organized the convention of the Antayaja (low born) peasants and Namasudras in Calcutta. The powerful politician of 1967, the man who was instrumental in installing the first United Front Government in the state, Sushil Dhara was also the moving spirit behind this conference. In fact even at that time the smaller political parties in West Bengal had been banking on the support of the rural middle classes for their existence. They had demanded a certain percentage of reservations in the jobs. Primarily the political move was to consolidate the base of the party among the lower castes. The party could not hold the ground for long, since after 1969 the CPI(M) mounted a systematic attack on its social base and the party gave in (Ibid).

The rise of the left and radical politics has led to the forgoing of links with the rural masses for purposes of political mobilization. Even after the pre-independence days, the left parties have been active in mobilizing the peasantry
against the major issue of oppressive taxes. Sharing of common political values by the members of different castes has paved the ground for a “class” orientation among the rural masses. Hence battles are waged between classes and not castes, and the slogans are political and not parochial. (Bhattacharya: 1997:194).

Vehement protests were raised by the allies of the state government against the government’s decision not to implement the Mandal Report. They alleged that the upper castes were firmly entrenched both in the government and party cadres and hence the government was afraid of antagonising them. These upper castes have thwarted all efforts to provide participation to the backwards in the administration. An organisation called Mandal Commission Action Committee headed by a Senior Left Front Minister and Chairman of the State Forward Bloc, Bhakti Bhusan Mandal had emphatically claimed that at least 50 per cent of the total population of West Bengal belonged to the OBC. He then listed nearly 173 castes as belonging to OBC group. The castes belonging to OBCs are mainly engaged in agricultural production and/or as artisans. Their representation in education, employment and other walks of life were also negligible.

It is quite obvious that the CPI (M) leadership in a very tactful manner had been trying to maintain the status quo of the power structure, the power structure which had crystallised into a social structure. Any shift in its stand would jeopardize its social base. The decision making process in the CPI (M) is now controlled by rural middle class and their urban allies. By agreeing to accept the existence of OBC in West Bengal the CPI (M) would be forced to allow this section to participate in decision-making, of sharing power or shaping the destiny
of the country. Interestingly, while the CPI (M) in other states, particularly the Hindi States had been forcefully demanding implementation of the Mandal commission report and reservation, it is not ready to concede the same in West Bengal (Kushry: 1991:420).

6.13 Conclusion

Political parties are very hesitant to oppose reservation policy as such. There is a severe polarisation between the forward and backward caste members of the political parties. No party can exclusively depend on an issue permanently to derive political mileage. This was proved when the Justice Party and later DMK began to take up issues other than social justice and reservations and forged alliances with parties whom they had deemed earlier as their inveterate foes. Demography of an area should also be considered before reservations are implemented. Political parties have seized the opportunity in the Mandal Commission statement by V.P. Singh when he gave freedom to the states to decide upon the implementation of the Mandal formula in their respective states. When states like U.P. and Bihar decided to implement the report, Orissa, Gujarat and West Bengal refused to implement it in their states. West Bengal even made the astounding statement that BCs were non-existent in that state and hence the report could not be implemented there. In stark contrast, the LDF government headed by CPM in Kerala, which is far ahead in terms of social advancement has decided to implement the report in the state. Certain states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka had even violated the Supreme Court verdict of 50% ceiling in reservations. Tamil Nadu had also endeavoured to effect a constitutional amendment on this matter.
Political parties have therefore, tailored the reservation policy to suit their chances of victory at the polls. They have done a fine balancing act to humour both the BC and forward classes by not opposing reservation policy as such, and at the same time introducing an economic criterion. They have not endeavoured even to debate the reports of various commissions and also the reasons as to why the implementation of various other schemes of reservations have failed to improve the lot of the intended beneficiaries. They have also fought shy to the demand for the conduct of a caste based census to assess the progress made by various caste groups in the social, educational and economic spheres. Reservations after the initial euphoria in the wake of Mandal Commission Report has been relegated to political oblivion as it has not won the expected dividends for any the political party particularly the Janata Dal, the foremost and ardent champion of the Mandal Report.

1 In 1951, after the constitution was passed, the ‘communal G.Os of 1947 were struck down by the Madras High Court and thereafter, by the Supreme Court in two important decisions, namely Champakam Dorairajan versus the State of Madras in the case of educational institutions, as in Venkatramana versus the State of Madras in public services. These decisions resulted in agitations in Madras, notably the one led by Periyar E.V. Ramaswami Naicker. K. Kamaraj was the leader of the Congress party in the Madras State, although he was not yet the Chief Minister, and he played a major role in conveying the deep concern of the people of Tamil Nadu to Nehru. This was the background to the introduction of Article 15(4) in the constitution which permitted special measures for the benefit of socially and educationally backward classes in admission to educational institutions (Guhan 1991:48).

2 Predictably five out of ten of the commission members submitted their dissenting notes. Of the three who strongly opposed linking caste with backwardness and reservation in government service, one apprehended that far from freezing, reservations would strengthen caste and social divisions, retard social cohesion, and culminate in disaster. Another member feared that apart from injecting the caste virus into politics, reservations will help only the advanced sections among the backward. The third member held that while caste as a pathological condition of the society cannot be ignored, it should not be allowed to be used as a source for drawing benefits from the state.
In a volte face, in his letter forwarding the report, the chairman himself repudiated the commission’s work. Stating that the realisation that the remedies suggested were worse than the evil to combat dawned on him almost towards the end of the commission’s work, he asserted that he was definitely against reservations in government service for any community. He argued that the service was not meant for the servants but for the service of society as a whole and as such the administration must have the services of the best men in the land.

The memorandum on the commission’s report, laid before the parliament (along with the report) in September 1956 by G.B. Pant, Minister for Home Affairs, was highly critical. Among other things, it stated that for inquiry contemplated in Article 340, the commission had to find indisputable yardsticks by which social and educational backwardness could be measured, and that far from being unanimous, its report revealed considerable divergence of opinion.

When its efforts to devise ‘positive and workable criteria’ other than caste failed, in May 1961 the government of India decided against drawing up an all-India lists of OBCs and extending reservations in its service for any group other than the SCs and STs. Consequently, in August 1961 it informed the state governments that while they have the discretion to choose their own criteria, it would be better to apply economic tests (Radhakrishnan, p: 1990: 23 & 24).

3 This politically motivated decision was to counter the August 9 rally organized by the ousted Deputy Prime Minister Devlal. That is why the Congress denounced the government and the Prime Minister in strong words. The Congress Working Committee resolution assailed him for “betraying a degree of cynical opportunism, intellectual dishonesty and political malfeasance never before seen at the highest levels of government in the history of independent India”. (Muralidhar.R : 1990:21).

4 “We welcome it though it is a hypocritical and politically motivated decision. You have done what we could not for 10 long years though essentially to counter the threat posed by Devlal’s scheduled rally on August 9. You will have our unqualified support in the implementation of the report” said P. Shiv Shankar, the leader of the opposition in the Rajya Sabha, hours after the announcement by the Prime Minister in the Upper House. In fact Shiv Shankar went a step ahead and argued that without reservations in educational institutions the whole purpose of the report would be nullified. The Congress (I) leader pleaded for economic criteria within the 52 percent Other Backward Classes (OBC) groups and made out a case for reservations to minorities. In effect, he was for implementation of the report with minor modifications (Ibid.26).

5 Emboldened by the vociferous protests by the allies of the National Front against the decision of the government without consulting them and the success of the anti-reservationists in the capital, the Congress (I) floated its own outfit the Equality Front to win the support of university students.

The front called for a bandh on August 28. It flopped as the Delhi administration ordered closure of educational institutions. Significantly, the Congress (I) did not deny the prominently displayed press reports to the effect that the Equality Front
enjoyed the support of its student's wing. Confirmation of the report came in the next
two days as the Congress Working Committee (CWC) of the party met and rejected
the concept of reservations based only on caste. (Ibid.)

6 After eight hours of hectic deliberations the Congress Working Committee (CWC)
hammered out what has been christened the "Rajiv formula", a euphemism for the
application of economic criterion to improve upon the Mandal recommendations.
Quoting the Supreme Court judgments the CWC resolution sought to make out a case
that any definition of the backward classes cannot exclude Muslims, Christians, Parsis
or other religious minorities........... It proposed the exclusion from the Mandal list of
those fee-paying students in public schools, those in category A and B jobs,
professionals, income tax payers and those who own a specified extent of land or
property (Ibid. 27).

7 Resistance from within the party to the position it had adopted came to the fore at the
September 14 CWC meeting. Pradesh Congress (I) Committee presidents and the
Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka took the opportunity to lodge their
protest against statements of certain leaders in the party and urged Rajiv Gandhi to
clarify their position. They told the High Command that it was difficult to sell their
party line in the South. (Ibid.)

8 Party President Rajiv Gandhi had to concede in his three-hour speech in the Lok
Sabha that his party had committed mistakes with regard to the criteria for reservation
of jobs in Andhra Pradesh and several other states. "But I am not responsible for it.
Blame for what happened then cannot be laid at my doors. I was not in politics then",
he demurred, much to the amusement of the Treasury Benches (Ibid.)

9 The union cabinet that met on 24/9/1991 decided to go in for a package of reservations
with an economic criteria totalling 59.5%. The break up were as follows: 15%
reservations for scheduled castes and 7.5% for scheduled Tribes would remain
undisturbed; there would be 27% reservation for socially and economically backward
classes and 10% for the poor among the upward castes. In the opinion of the
government 40.5% of jobs would be open for general competition on merit and this
was "sizeable" (Times of India (New Delhi) 25/9/1991)

The Union Social Welfare Minister Sitaram Kesari announced on September 8, 1991,
the implementation with immediate effect of reservation of 27 percent jobs in the
central government services for the Socially and Economically Backward classes
excepting the "Creamy Layer" as per the recommendation of the Mandal Commission
(Muralidharan : 1993 : 34-35)

10 The government has decided to establish a National Backward Classes Finance and
Development Corporation to promote economic and developmental activities for the
benefit of backward classes. The corporation with an initial paid up capital of 100
crores and authorized share capital of 500 crores will assist individuals or groups of
individuals belonging to backward classes by way of loans and advances for
economically and financially viable schemes and projects. The assistance, however,
will be subject to income or economic criteria to be prescribed by the government
from time to time. The corporation is intended to promote self employment and other
ventures of backward classes and grant concessional finances in selected cases for
persons belonging to backward classes below the poverty line in collaboration with the ministries and departments at both the central and state levels to the extent of the budgetary assistance granted to the corporation. The corporation will also extend loans for pursuing general, professional, technical education or training at graduate and higher levels and assist in the upgradation of technical and entrepreneurial skills of backward classes for efficient management of production units. Other objectives of the corporation include assisting state level organizations dealing with backward classes by way of providing financial assistance and refinancing. The corporation will also act as an apex body for coordinating and monitoring the work of all corporations and boards (Time of India (New Delhi) 26/9/91).

11 If he (V.P. Singh) suffered any pique on account of Kesri’s crude attempt to steal the credit for BC reservations, he did not show it. He only showed a concern for softening the blow on those among the supposedly forward classes, who might perceive themselves as disadvantaged. A constitutional amendment should be enacted he said, to see that a 10 percent reservation in government employment is ensured for the economically backward among forward classes “... The Raja of Mandal” V.P. Singh announced that September 25 would be observed as victory day........” “Let the government bring a constitutional amendment and we will support it” (Ibid:35)

On the Jan Sandesh Yatra trail in Karnataka, BJP president L.K. Advani welcomed the decision, but said he would be truly happy only if reservations were to apply to all the disadvantaged irrespective of caste.

The Left parties in general were favourably disposed to the decision though the Communist Party of India felt the exemption of ‘creamy layer’ from the benefits of reservations was unwarranted (Ibid.)

12 The Narasimha Rao government had tried to move from a largely caste based policy to a more class oriented one by taking greater cognisance of economic factors. Politically, too, the government had tried to kill two birds with one stone; it had delivered on its election promise; the CPI(M)’s demand for the inclusion of economic criteria was accepted; the BJP’s accusation that the poorer members of the upper castes are being ignored by reserving an additional 10% for the economically backward sections who are not covered by other schemes; and lastly, the Janata Dal’s main platform was also hijacked. In one deft stroke, the congress government had thrown both pro- Mandal and anti-Mandalites into confusion. Sharad Yadav’s threat to fight tooth and nail “for the removal of all economic criteria” was reminiscent of his nakedly aggressive call for a caste war against those opposed to Mandal; it also clearly exposed his narrow sectarian interest. Yadav could not care less for the weaker sections of society; his worry was that the powerful Yadav community which he represents would find it more difficult to corner all the benefits since the genuine have notes will be given preference under the modified package (The Telegraph 27/9/91)

13 Devvijal regarded as a rustic did not seem to have any chance of making it to the post of Prime Minister. In fact, he himself deprecated any talk of such a possibility- at least in public. But some one else has chosen to don the mantle of challenger to V.P. Singh. Chandrasekhar had gone on record in a widely published interview that he would like to get into the Prime Ministers seat so as to be able to implement his ideas. The senior Janata Dal leader and founder president of the original Janata Party, which was briefly in power, had not expressed such sentiments in so explicit a fashion before (Sahay: 1990 : 18)
The fact that Devial had found a new ally in the Bahujan Samaj Party led by Kanshi Ram might also have added to the urgency to accept the Mandal report. The government's decision was not only sudden but also unilateral. It did not wait for the response of the state governments to whom the report had earlier been referred. The whole process was sharply different from the typical consensus style of V.P. Singh. (Burman : 1990: 5, 35).

V.P. Singh could not resist the temptation to use the Mandal Commission Report as a political weapon without bothering about the long-term consequences of succumbing to short term political expediency. By one master stroke of Mandal he planned to wean away the backward caste vote bank of Devial and to politically marginalise him. Secondly, he thought that this one step would divide the Hindu vote bank of the BJP and BC vote banks of the Congress and they would be for his keeps. He was aware that there would be some opposition, but was confident that no political party would be able to oppose him on this because of political consideration (Patriot, New Delhi) 26/12/1990

It is pointed out that V.P Singh was looking for some controversy to divert attention from the Ram Janmabhoomi issue and take the heat off it. He also calculated, it is said by opponents, the announcement of the implementation of the report would divide Hindus on Caste lines and thus weaken the Hinduva concept of the BJP. The BJP had cultivated a section of the OBCs as its vote bank in the name of Ram Janmabhoomi during the last general elections in November 1989. This announcement would weaken the BJP's electoral base and would make it less aggressive and finally V.P. Singh would be able to garner the OBC vote (who anyway constitute more than 50% of Indian Electorate) and thus emerge as a strong force in his own right, in the Indian power structure. He would then not have to depend on the support of the BJP (Engineer: 1991: 45-50).

If Devial's objective was to demonstrate that the "rural people" cared more for him than the V.P. Singh government, the Prime Minister on his part was anxious to take the wind out of the Haryana Patriarch's sail by showing how genuinely concerned he was about the interest of the weaker sections and not so much about the affluent elements of rural society. The bulk of the OBCs live in the rural areas, and such a bait thrown at them was expected to give V.P Singh a place in the hearts of the rural voters.

Parity for the rural people had been Devial's pet theme since the run up to the general elections in November 1989. He had been tirelessly articulating the slogan that the rural people must be given their due share in every field of activity- from representation in parliament and state legislature to the appointment of envoys overseas. He always carried in his pocket statistics about what the National Front Government had already done for the benefit of rural people, and claims full credit for the allocation of 50 percent of the funds in that year's budget for the rural areas.

The Devial prescription for rural uplift had struck the people's imagination. He built up a massive vote bank by forming an alliance of Ahirs, Jats, Gujjars and Rajputs (commonly referred to as the AJIGAR alliance) in Haryana and Western UP. None of these communities except Ahirs was however recognized as a backward class in the
area but they were all sold out on Devilal’s slogan of a bigger share of the caste cake for the rural people. Their cry has become so strident that V.P. Singh faced the risk of being accused of reneging on his promise if nothing concrete was done to show his government’s concern for the weaker sections.

But the Prime Minister hoped to gain a lot of political mileage from the reservation’s for OBCs who according to the Mandal Commission, constitute as much as 52 percent of India’s population. One immediate gain was the dent in Devilal’s AJGAR alliance. Ahirs, an OBC would no longer make common cause with Jats, Gujjars and Rajputs. Yadavas, who together with Kurmis and Koeris constitute the largest segment of the OBC population in Northern India, seem to have already lined themselves behind V.P. Singh.

The ambivalent stand of some of Devilal’s close Yadav proteges such as Sharad Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lallu Prasad Yadav in the controversy over Om Prakash Chautala gave the impression that they were no longer beholden to the Haryana patriarch. All these considerations must have weighed with the Prime Minister and his political advisers before the decision to redeem the National Front’s Pledge on the Mandal Commission report was announced in Parliament (Chakravarthy 1990: 24-26).

Jats incidentally did not figure in the backward classes list, and former Deputy Prime Minister Devilal had expressed his reservations about the Mandal report’s suggestion of caste based quota. In his characteristic way, Devilal first suggested economic criteria, then the inclusion of Jats in the BC list and thereafter job reservations for the rural people. And Tikait would not have a different view (Roy: 1990:32)

The ideological support for the move to cultivate the backward classes was provided by Dr. Lohia’s thesis which tried to create a new paradigm that sought to equate class conflict with caste contradiction. From 1967 onwards the backward castes have began to seriously challenge the higher citadels of power (Sachidananda: 1990:19)

After independence, because of abolition of Zamindari and conferral of ownership rights on various categories of tenants a new class of peasant-proprietors were born. This led to their aspiring for political power, commensurate with their numerical strength. Before 1967, their resentment against the dominance of Brahmin-Bania alliance in the congress was expressed by voting for independents and other small parties. Dr. Lohia was the first to realise the potential of OBCs and advocated them as the best means to dislodge the congress. His theory seemed to be proved correct in 1967, when the congress was defeated in nine states resulting in the formation of opposition governments in them [Patriot (New Delhi) 26/12/1990]

Chaudhary Charan Singh left the congress and formed the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) to represent agrarian interests. In his endeavour to form an anti- congress front, he was wholeheartedly supported by the middle class peasantry. Thus AJGAR was a counterfoil to Brahmin - SC - Muslim vote bank of the congress. Under Charan Singh’s stewardship AJGAR became a formidable political force, and coupled with other important factors, it was responsible for the opposition victories in 1977 and 1989 (Ibid).
Political mobilization of castes in India has undergone three phases. The first phase ended almost immediately after independence when the large scale mobilization of the upper caste (elite or twice born castes) was given a goodbye by the India National Congress in the wake of the rise of hitherto neglected middle castes. The latter were largely peasant or cultivating castes and represented the most amorphous and ambiguous category. The second phase of caste mobilization can be said to have ended when under Mrs. Gandhi’s leadership decided to change its strategy in favour of mobilization of the lower most stratum of the caste hierarchy along with some other weaker sections and the minorities like the Muslims (Kumar: 1990: 143, 144).

For Delhi University, the action on the Mandal Commission Report had been a ticket for trouble, putting it in the grip of unprecedented anti-reservations fever. Within three weeks, the capital had seen demonstrations, torch-light processions, traffic disruptions and mass boycott of classes. And remarkably, the movement had been both apolitical and leaderless through well orchestrated.

The demonstrations had been attended by increasing numbers of students- the candle light procession at Maurice Nagar on the main campus on August 14 had as many as 3000 participants. Even the so-called elitist colleges, known for “keeping away from trouble”, had jumped on the bandwagon. Also unprecedented is the support in the isolated south campus colleges of the University.

The driving force of the movement has been the “Anti-Mandal Commission Forum (AMCF)” spearheading the show from its “Kranti Chowk Headquarters” at the Maurice Nagar intersection inside Delhi University. Said an activist of the Forum: “what is remarkable about the movement is its spontaneity. Support has been forthcoming from the most unexpected quarters. University sanitary staff many of whom are belonging to the backward classes, are supporting the stir. On Independence Day, one of them unfurled the tri-colour at Kranti Chowk”

The peaceful agitationists had employed all methods of protest to catch the publics imagination and to get their message across- from making bonfires of their degrees to polishing shoes and cleaning cars around the prominent markets. They had gone around residential areas begging to fund their movement and collected over Rs. 80,000.

Not surprisingly, the agitation had taken a heavy toll of the students unions that dared to defy the popular sentiment. The President and the general secretary of the unions of both Jawaharlal Nehru University and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences resigned in the wake of the general body’s decision to throw in its lot with the agitating students.

But the agitation took a violent turn on August 24 when the police tried to thwart an attempt by about 10000 students to form a chain around Parliament House. The police fired about 50 teargas shells and resorted to lathi charge at the Boat Club grounds in which 300 were injured (Kalkur: 1990: 25).

At the October 8 Patna rally of the pro reservationists the tone and tenor of Union labour Minister Ram Vilas Paswan and Textiles Minister Sharad Yadav and Bihar
Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, which virtually amounted to a call to take up arms. Consider, for instance Paswan's call to the backward classes, the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes and the minorities to unite and fight for their rights. "It is not only a question of jobs", he said. "The era of Jagjivan Ram is over; now the era of Paswan has begun" Sharad Yadav drove home the message even more forcefully: "Beware of the Ram Rath Yatra crushing the Mandal Chariot.... You should be prepared, therefore, to sacrifice a thousand lives to save one Muslim, life" and he declared: "If one effigy of V.P. Singh is burnt, we will get one lakh additional votes". At another rally the following day, Sharad Yadav asked the audience to go back to the villages and crush the people who "have been oppressing you for centuries". Not to be outdone, Union Minister of state Subodh Kant Sahay warned that those who tried to stop the wheels of change would be crushed under it. (Upadhyaya: 1990: 24-25)

Three years had brought about a sea change in the views of Ram Vilas Paswan on reservations for Harijans and other backward classes in the government services. Speaking at a meeting on 12 December 1987 in his capacity as Dalit Sena President and Janata Party, leader in Benipath, a Brahmin dominated area of Madhubani district in north Bihar pleaded for amendment of the Constitution to end the present system of reservation for the Harijans and other Backward classes in the government services and replacing it by right to work for everybody. Inaugurating the Dalit Sena conference of the Mithila region 3 years later he said that the reservation system had failed to achieve its purpose and had created social tensions in the country. Paswan said that despite constitutional provisions and related laws, the government at the centre and the state had failed to protect the interests of the Harijans (Times of India (New Delhi) 15/9/1990).

According to Ram Vilas Paswan: "The talk of using the economic criterion is nonsensical for the simple reason that nearly 90 per cent of the people below the poverty line in the country are those who belong to the BCs and the SC's and tribes. Some have raised the issue of debarring from reservation BC families which have risen economically. The question will arise only when the SC/ST and the backward classes are able to fill their quota. As it is, in spite of more than 40 years of reservation for SC/STs, candidates of this group are able to fill only 8 per cent of their quota against the 22.5 per cent reserved for them. As and when the SC/STs and the backward classes come close to filling their quota, the question of debarring those no longer poor can be taken up (Vyas: 1990: 27).

Jagjivan Ram spoke of the crippling psychological effect when he said that permanent privileges "would make people think that the SC community is a community of incompetent and inferior people. Others have noted that Class-IV jobs the most that can be expected from reservations will not lead to social emancipation. Finally of course the malpractices that flow from the "Brahmanisation" of a select few defeat the ostensible purpose of reform. Two examples will suffice, some years later after partition, the Harchand Singh committee found that "influential SC bureaucrats and public men" in Punjab had brought holdings incredibly cheap and then disposed off their lands at exorbitant prices to non-scheduled caste persons". Secondly the Tata Institute of social sciences reported that 11.75% of Tamil Nadu's BC people had covered 37.3% of non gazetted posts and 48.2% of the gazetted posts to the detriment of their caste brethren (The Statesman, 29/9/1991).
What began as students agitation demanding the withdrawal of the Mandal Commission report had degenerated into a movement of the students by the political parties for dislodging V.P. Singh. However, on October 2, the Bharathiya Kisan Union (BKI) Supremo, Mahendra Singh Tikait, did in Delhi what V.P. Singh and all the law enforcement agencies could not: with one stroke broke up the 57 day long agitation.

The Boat club rally marked the culmination of the criminalisation of the movement, a process which had began soon after the second self immolation attempt near the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. The orgy of violence after the October 2 rally, which left three dead and over 20 injured, proved the proverbial last straw on the camel's back. For apart from giving the movement a severe jolt, it robbed the peaceful and democratic agitation of all its credibility and left the Anti-Mandal Commission Forum (AMCF), which has been spearheading the movement in the north, in disarray.

The last blow to the Forum came at the Boat Club rally. The inflammatory speech of Tikait set the tone for the proceedings. He exhorted the crowd to punish the people's representatives for not coming out against the reservation policy. "First go back to your districts and villages. Then ask your MP's and MLA's to resign. If they do not agree, douse them with Kerosene and set them ablaze", he bellowed.

The BKU chief called for the combination of the students' youthful exuberance with his experience to wreak vengeance on the government and to decide the strategy for a long battle.

The fact remains that hoodlums and anti-social elements who had infiltrated the crowd had come with the sole intention of causing violence. This was evident from the manner in which the mob after the rally, went around smashing window panes. Setting fire to water tankers, hijacking public and private vehicles and looting roadside kiosks.

But the students were quick to realise the mistake of having allowed the Kisan leader to hijack their movement. And to make amends, the activists of the forum attended the funeral of the constables killed in the violence near India gate. The AMCF in a unique gesture, donated Rs. 11000 to the family of the deceased.

In their desperation to forge wider alliances, the student leaders sought the assistance of Tikait who, in the eyes of many, epitomises also some of the most repressive trends in rural society. Its opposition to the Mandal report does not stem from the fear that merit would become a casualty or that Indian Nationalism would be fractured, but out of the anger that Jats do not qualify for reservations.

While Tikait led from the front, political parties and disgruntled Janata Dal leaders were playing their roles from behind the screen. It is alleged that former Deputy Prime Minister Deviahal distributed large sums of money in the villages to keep the anti-reservation flames alive. There are similar allegations about his son Om Prakash Chautala.
Jats by their hundreds came from Bharatpur in Rajasthan, the constituency of Vishwendra Singh who resigned his Lok Sabha seat in protest against the government decision. Vishwendra Singh a protégé of both Devilal and Tikait, had earlier been "conferred" the mantle of the leader of the agitation by the BKU supreme, a move which aroused considerable hostility among AMCF activists and other student groups. (Kalkur: 1990).

Murmurs of Protest in the Janata Dal on the report continued with both the pro and anti-Mandal sections equally ranged against each other. The general secretary of the National Front Parliamentary Party in the Lok Sabha, Harmohan Dhawan, accused the Prime Minister of taking a populist decision since the broad thrust of its economic policies raised questions about the "very sincerity of the Government". It's objection was not to the implementation of the Mandal report but to its selective implementation. Reforms to change "oppressive production" relations, reform of the educational system and setting up of financial and technical institutions to help the backwards should have been on top of the agenda of the government if it had the political will to implement the Mandal Report. Dhawan wondered if the government had the guts to take on the elite and the powerful national and multinational corporations. "It would have helped evolve more logical and effective mechanisms for pursuing the essential purpose of the uplift of the socially, educationally and economically backward communities, the only caste of the poor, irrespective of their religion and region".

Then there were anti-Mandal voices within the Janata Dal though not all of them had articulated their views in public. Prominent leaders of the Janata Dal such as Chandrashekhar and Devilal had on more than one occasion favoured reservations on the basis of economic criteria. Their statements to this effect immediately after V.P. Singh became Prime Minister caused serious embarrassment to the Janata Dal leadership even as an anti-reservation movement started in the Hindi belt against the decision of the National Front to extend political reservations for the scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes for another ten years. Later, Devilal campaigned for the inclusion of Jats, the community to which he belongs, in the list of backwards (Reddy: 1990:28)

It has been opposed by many in the ruling Janata Dal itself, not to speak of others, that without creating conditions for educating the OBCs it was futile offering them job quotas. For in the absence of education there simply will not be enough applicants except from the upper crust OBCs who are backward only in name (Roy: 1990:28)

The reference point was September 1990, when the virulent political backlash against Mandal in the northern belt prompted L.K. Advani into launching his infamous Rath Yatra to Ayodhya. With a certain political shrewdness Advani saw that one way of composing the repellant antagonisms Mandal had brought to the surface was to redirect the energies of the supposedly seamless ‘Hindu’ society towards demolishing (or supplanting) a Muslim place of worship in Ayodhya.

The Mandal verdict came at a time when the Hindutva forces were mobilising for another phase of confrontation at Ayodhya, and the government was going through the
motions of counselling restraint. For a while the possibility seemed open that the renewed momentum of Mandal might overturn the Mandal bandwagon (Muralidharan: 1992:17).

Even on the question of reservations while the Prime Minister has been saying again and again that there will be no dilution in the provision of reservations, he has announced so many exemptions. First he said reservations would not be applicable to the defence sector. Then came the clarification that they would not be imposed on states and would not be applicable to educational Institutions. Finally, the Prime Minister said reservations would not be applicable to promotions. (Reddy: 1990:32).

26 The choice of Murha in Madhepura district as the starting point was significant. It was in this village that Bindeshwari Prasad Mandal, author of the report recommending reservation of 27 percent reservation was born. And it lies in that part of Bihar where the backward-Dalit alliance clicked electorally and won a base for Janata Dal. The Mandal Rath began winding its way through Bihar and parts of Uttar Pradesh from August 5 to September 7. Named Mandal yatra, it was a last-ditched attempt by the Janata Dal to sell the message of social justice (Pande, S.K. 1992: 37).

The Janata Dal’s efforts to review the Mandal issue met with a lukewarm response. The public apathy witnessed towards the Mandal Yatra taken out by Sharad Yadav from Madhepura in Bihar to Delhi seemed to suggest that the issue of reservations for the backward classes was not one to attract wide popular allegiance. V.P. Singh himself seemed to recognize this reality when at a public meeting in Muzaffarnagar in Western U.P. he put out a guarded appeal to forget his party’s espousal of the Mandal cause and to lend strength to the party in its fight against the BJP and Congress (I) (Muralidharan: 1992:18).

The Mandal Yatra seemed to have sparked off quite a few other yatras. Congress leader N.D. Tiwari had launched a Vikas (development) Yatra. (Pande, 1992:38).

27 Yet there seemed little left in Mandal as an issue of mass mobilization after the 1991 elections. Once out of power, the Janata Dal went into a prolonged and agonized ritual of self destruction. And the BJP managed to keep up the religious fervour on the Mandal issue-provoking one confrontation after another with the institutions of democratic governance in its crusade to restitute a supposed historic wrong to the ‘Hindu’ Community (Muralidharan: 1992: 18).

28 Long before V.P. Singh consolidated the OBCs to counter the Congress (I) last year, the experiment, led by Lohia Socialists, has been tried in 1967 and 1977-with success on both occasions. But each time it proved to be a flash in the pan and could not be consecutively replicated. This suggested sufficiently that the political and social universe was wide enough to admit of considerations other than a mere caste consolidation (Frontline September 15-28, 1990: 28).

Populism can acquire a negative dimension when; the idea of social justice is reduced to political gimmick and no meaningful redistribution of resources and power actually takes place; when overblown histrionics becomes a substitute for well worked policies; when measures announced are seen as temporary palliatives to garner votes at times of election without any real intention to implement effective measures; when the interests of even larger groups of similarly disadvantaged people are overlooked
consistently and policies are desired to win over only those groups who have political clout; when the leadership lacks the ability to give creative direction to popular sentiments. If the leadership fails to changed the aspirations of their vote banks or support base in a way that goes beyond were symptomatic redressal of group, grievances towards effecting a more viable and healthy social and political balance, populism can assume very negative overtones (Kishwar: 1991:7).

Democratic populism has a logic of its own. A populist idea, once it is out in the open, feeds on itself building up into a cyclonic storm. Nobody can thwart it. Those who dare to resist receive severe punishment. The only way to deal with it is to keep away and stoically accept the destruction it causes in its wake. It will just wither away, when its fury is spent. India is not only the world’s most populous democracy. It is becoming increasingly and intensively populist. Populism has two kinds of manifestations in India. One is when a commanding leader resorts to populist causes to reorder the system and functioning of governance. In the process, the leader also enhances his hold over the people. The other is when a populist idea slips out of the hands of a leader who is not sure of his or her own base. In this second instance, the leader is not in a position to control or mould mass sentiments in relation to the idea. The idea goes berserk, acquires its own dynamics and goes on wreaking havoc on population is not always undesirable. It serves useful purposes, when it is, by design, employed to destroy or radically change ossified an adjust social, political and cultural values, to bring down oppressive hegemonies and to bring about a positive change in the political menu. But its destructive power is formidable when it appeals to the basest instincts of man, whips up mass hysteria and mass hatred and turns society around on to a regressive course (News Time: 2/10/1991).

Implementation of the recommendation was not high on the National Front’s agenda. It is mentioned only on page 27 of the 36 page English version of its election manifesto as one of the items in the chapter on “Social tasks”. Much higher on the list is the commitment to constitutional changes so as to include the right to work among the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution.

The right to work, on the other hand, finds mention on page 16 in the chapter on “Economic Tasks” under a bold sub-heading. The Mandal commission report was surely not one of the most talked about campaign issues (Chakravarthy: 1990:24).

The commission gave its report in 1980. It is possible that some castes identified as backward a decade back are no longer so backward. We are broadly in favour of the Mandal report but think that criteria of poverty should be taken into consideration. This is precisely why we have said in our election manifesto that while the Mandal report should be implemented the economically backward in other classes not covered by the SC, the ST and the OBC should also be considered. This will give a comprehensive picture and enable the government to carry the whole society with them. The way in which the Mandal Commission decision has been thrust has created an impression among a large number of students and unemployed youth that after this they are likely to be discriminated (against) or deprived of their rights. This is a good case mishandled by a bad advocate.
Our party is deadly opposed to any reservations on religious basis. We have already tasted enough bitter lessons in the shape of partition by adopting a policy of appeasement of minorities.

After the SC/ST if there is any case for reservation it should be on the economic basis. Application of the economic criterion would ensure that the benefit of reservations goes to the most deserving sections. A survey under Antyodaya by the Himachal government has revealed that 67 percent of people below the poverty line belonged to either the SC/ST or OBC. So ultimately even with the economic criterion the biggest beneficiaries would be those very sections which the government wants to help. We are also clear that the overall reservations should not exceed 50 percent. (Reddy: 1990:29-30).

31 On all these issues with the exception of Mandal commission, there was an endeavour towards a consensus. Ironically, no decision has sparked off such controversy as the implementation of the Mandal commission report. Till then the government had been adopting a procedure of going ahead only with those (pieces of) legislations or decisions on which there was at least a consensus between the ruling party and the supporting parties. Even on the Prasar Bharati Bill there were consultations till the last day of its passage. It was imperative on the part of the Prime Minister to have waited for the opinion of the supporting parties.

There was total confusion on the issue. Even in the all party meeting, the Prime Minister could not convince everybody as to why such a hasty step was taken without taking other political parties into confidence and creating a psychological atmosphere in which the Mandal commission recommendations could not have further complicated the matter.

As for the argument that the NF was only fulfilling its election manifesto commitment, we would like to remind the Prime Minister that they could not get an absolute verdict in favour of their own election manifesto. The NF government is a minority government formed with the support of the BJP and the left parties. The second argument relating to consensus is not correct. There was broader consensus on the inclusion of the right to work as a fundamental right. There is no controversy on this issue. Why didn’t the government fulfil this promise first. Had the Prime Minister and his two cabinet colleagues adopted an attitude of reconciliation rather than confrontation the situation could have been saved (Reddy: 1990:29)

32 The RSS reacted strongly to what it considered an attempt to exacerbate the internal divisions of the ‘Hindu Nation’. The front page of the Organiser of 26 August 1990, entitled “Raja’s Caste War”, is highly revealing in this respect. V.P. Singh threatens to achieve in one year what the British could not do in their 150 years long alien rule (----). He wants to undo the great task of uniting Hindu society from the days of Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswathi, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Hedgewar [--] what V.P. Singh through Mandalisation of the society intends to achieve is a division of Hindus on forward, backward and Harijan lines (Organiser: 26 August 1990:1) In fact, the Organiser criticized the policy of reservation itself. The politics of reservation
playing with the social set up encourages brain drain and sharpens caste divide (Ibid : 15)

The B.J.P could not condemn V.P. Singh’s project without the risk of alienating the OBC’s who comprise 52% of India’s population, but to endorse it would compromise its traditional support among the upper castes, since the administration had always been one of their private domains. Above all, it would imply acceptance of internal divisions among Hindus. The party reacted to the V.P. Singh’s decision by expressing approval of quotas based on economic criteria rather than on caste (Interview with L.K. Advani in Hindustan Times (Sunday supplement), 23 September 1990 and 3rd September 1990).

One of their (BJP) members, J.K. Jain who had held a seat in the Rajya Sabha since March 1990 began a fast over the issue. Not surprisingly this move was criticized by the party high command and Jain had to fall in line with the BJP’s official policy (National Mail 5 September 1990).

The anxiety of the BJP to end the anti-reservation stir was evident from the appeal of A. B Vajpayee, former President of the Party, to students to call off their agitation on the basis of clarifications issued by the Prime Minister. The clarification that Mandal is not to be imposed on the states, will not be applicable to educational institutions and promotions do not satisfy the two chief demands of the BJP, that reservations should not exceed 50 percent and that economic and not caste criteria should determine reservations. (Reddy: 1990:27)

“The Mandal episode clearly put pressure on me particularly in my constituency, New Delhi where these self immolations have taken place. Parents used to come daily to my place. Why are you supporting this government? Withdraw your support! I felt that withdrawing our support on the issue of Mandal would be of an enormous benefit to this government. I said, I agree with you that the government is behaving very badly, but will take action at the appropriate time”. On 20 September Advani and Madan Lal Khurana were attacked by students when they attempted to enter the burns ward of Safdarjung Hospital where Raju Goswami, a student of Delhi University, had just been admitted with 55% burns (Hindustan Times, 21 September 1990). The party leaders were told that unless something was done it would face serious consequences (Reddy: 1990:12).

As the talk of mid-term elections became louder and bolder, the party had plunged headlong to arouse the Hindu consciousness on the Rama Janmabhoomi issue. With the October 30 deadline for the construction of a Ram Mandir at the disputed site in Ayodhya fast approaching, the party could ill-afford a divided Hindu society. Party cadres felt that there was now little commonality left between a party that champions Hindu unity and a government that seeks to fragment Hindus on caste lines. Mandal at any cost cannot be allowed to overshadow the Mandir issue which, in the perception of the party, is the foundation for Ram Rajya. (Reddy: 1990-27).

On 12 September Advani announced his decision to undertake a Rath Yatra from 25 September to 30 October 1990 to mobilise public opinion and solicit its support (Interview with L.K. Advani in Hindustan Times (Sunday Supplement) 23rd September 1990, 2). Advani had apparently been thinking about this kind of
movement for several months. In June, when asked by the editor of Panchajanya what would be the attitude of the BJP towards the VHP’s Kar Seva, he had answered that the Ayodhya affair was likely to precipitate the greatest mass movement of India’s history. (Cited in B.J.P.,’s White Paper P:40) However, he admitted that the Mandal affair created a favourable context. (Hindustan Times, 21 September 1990).

The BJP led government has delivered with extreme alacrity on its campaign to confer the backward class status on the Jats of Rajasthan. It was a demand that had loomed large over the election campaign, though it’s precise impact is still debatable. Indications are that the BJP had succeeded in winning over a large section of the Jat community from their traditional allegiance to the Congress (I) by assuring them that the demand for backward class status would be met.

It (BJP) had under consideration a report by the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) dating back to November 1997, which had recommended that the Jats of Rajasthan did merit the benefits of the special protections available under the Mandal Commission recommendations. This was one of the many advisories submitted by the NCBC recommending the inclusion of 372 distinct communities in the BC list. The political motivation behind accepting the recommendation on the Rajasthan Jats alone has become obvious. The pace of the government deliberations could in each case be carefully calibrated to a calculation of the political dividends that could be earned from cultivating a particular community (Muralidhar: 1999: 95).

Everybody is asking us how being communists we can support reservations on caste criteria. Our answer is, in India caste is a major factor and one can never overlook it however much one may wish to do so. Theoretically we are not opposed to reservations on economic criteria. But a glance at the composition and structure of our administrative service reveals how loaded the system is against the backward communities. We feel that upper caste domination in various echelons of the administration is a major cause of the backwardness of the various castes listed by the Mandal commission. Ultimately one can apply the economic test to determine backwardness. All we say is that at least for the next ten years the criteria suggested by Mandal Commission should be adopted. Let us give the backward classes their due. Even among the upper castes, jobs have been monopolized by a section of them but nobody is talking of economic criteria there. Where is merit? Children from upper castes pay capitation fee and get medical seats. Nobody talks of merit there. The argument that reservations undermine efficiency does not hold water if one looks at the experience in the south. Reservations for BC have been in vogue there for decades now and perhaps some of the southern states are better managed than their Northern counterparts. Reservations are certainly not a total or even partial method to uplift the backward classes. They have to do something else. (Reddy: 1990:28)

Caste is a major factor though not the only factor in determining reservations. The Constitution has provided for reservations to economically and socially backward categories other than SC and ST’s. The basic philosophy behind the principle is that it was not enough to provide reservation to SC and ST and the list needs to be enlarged. People practicing certain occupations have remained backward; they have been victims of both economic and social oppression (Reddy: 1990 32).
A “Most Backward Classes Commission” set up under Chedi Lal Sathi in October 1975 in U.P had recommended classification of backward classes into three and separate quotas in government service for each. List A of the report, submitted in 1977, included landless labourers, unskilled workers, non-artisans and domestic servants with 17 per cent reservation. List B comprised marginal and small cultivators and it got 10 percent. The reservation recommended in educational institutions was the same. The Janata Party government led by Ram Naresh Yadav did not accept this formula based on economic status. He implemented a system of 15 percent for all the backward classes in 1978. (Roy, P.K: 1990:30).

Charan Singh remained an undisputed leader of the peasantry and backward classes in the entire U.P during the 1950's and 1960's as a Congress leader and later as a non-Congress leader till his death in 1987. Though the BC peasantry of eastern and central U.P usually supported the socialist parties, yet they had supported Charan Singh in his individual capacity, even when he was in the Congress Party. As the disintegration of the socialist movement in U.P. almost coincided with Charan Singh's exit from the Congress, the backward class were only left with the option of supporting Charan Singh's party Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) whom they had already been admiring. Charan Singh was accepted as a leader by the non Jat peasants in the eastern and central U.P apart from the Jats of western U.P. While he was a member of the Congress, he created separate base for himself among the BC peasantry in Central and Eastern U.P apart from the Jats in Western U.P. e.g. Yadavas, Kurmis, Koeris, etc. During the 1950's and 1960's he visited eastern and central U.P frequently and addressed meetings of the backward class peasantry. He appreciated the benefits accrued to them, of which he was the main architect, introduced by the Congress for them. Even when he was the Chief Minister of U.P., he consolidated his position as a leader of the BCs and peasantry. His attempts to carve out a base among the BCs exposed him to the allegation of the high caste Congress leadership of U.P., of favouring the BCs at the cost of high castes. Charan Singh on the other hand, accused them of favouring the high castes (Singh: 1992: 128-29 & 158-59, Hassan: 1989: 175-77 & 1998: 131. Brass 1983: 307 – 309). His differences with the Congress led to his defection from it at an appropriate time and to the formation of BKD (Bharatiya Kranti Dal) by him in 1969. Contrary to the Congress’ policies, he gave representation to the middle castes and backward classes e.g. Ahirs, Yadavas, Kurmis etc. in the allotment of tickets in the government headed by him, and as heads of his party at the district and state levels (Hassan: 1998: 131-32 & 1989: 191). He also continued to ally with the BC leadership in U.P and Bihar like Mulayam Singh Yadav, Ram Naresh Yadav and Karpoori Thakur. Charan Singh remained the undisputed leader of the BC peasantry in North India till his demise in 1987.

Charan Singh dominated the politics of BC and peasantry of U.P in a particular phase of peasant politics at a time, when there was no leader in the state from any other peasant community who could match his stature. In the absence of challenge to his leadership from any peasant leader from the BC couple with his policies and strategies, Charan was able to project himself as a leader of the BC peasantry like Yadavas, Kurmis, Lodhis etc.

Mean while, during the three decades after independence, there also emerged a new generation of leadership among the non-Jat peasant caste like Yadavas, benefiting
from the state policies, especially the land reforms, mainly abolition of landordism and green revolution. The vacuum created by Charan Singh’s death was filled up by the leaders belonging to the non-Jat peasant castes, mainly Yadavs. Leadership of Tikait suffered from caste dissensions and ‘hyper localism’ (Singh; 1992: 97-103). The epochal factors now favours Yadavs more than Jats (Singh: 2001: 29652-66).

The social solidarity forged in the course of Ayodhya movement was clearly frustrated by the controversy over Mandal. Mandal made visible existing divisions and tensions in Hindu society and expose the difficulties in forging Hindu unity. Why reinforcing alternative social allegiances, Mandal was able to partially offset the pull of a composite unified Hinduism. The problem was a particularly serious one for the BJP as the party had clearly made significant inroads among the OBCs in large parts of the state and could not afford to alienate them by opposing reservations. This process has been reinforced by the significant representations given to the OBCs which in turn has contributed to the dilution of brahmanical core of Hinduism. (Hassan; 1998 : 102, 103).

Reservations for OBCs placed the BJP in a dilemma. The party formally supported Mandal recommendations, but at the local level it encouraged upper castes to oppose it. Its more effective retaliation was a renewed attention to the liberation of Ram Jannamboomi temple in Ayodhya which along could ‘transcend class and caste barriers and force Hindu society to think and act as one’. (Organiser, 11 October 1990). The decision to launch a Rath yatra to Ayodhya at this juncture rapidly changed the political discourse from reservation to Hindu nationalism and Hindu unity. Fairly quickly, caste conflict turned into Hindu – Muslim polarisation followed by rioting in which Muslims were the main victims. (Ibid 103).

A pamphlet circulated in Khurja district of Western U.P exhorted the upper castes to unite against the divisive tactics of Mandal and government’s concession to minorities which were described as singularly exploitative of the upper castes (Choudhary Ameer Singh, "Sarkar Ke Stavarno ke virudh Shadyantra, Suvarna Hit Rakshak Dal, September 1990). The BJP accordingly assumed an overtly anti-Mandal stand in Western U.P but in eastern U.P where Mandal was popular it skirted the issue by focusing on the Ayodhya issue (Ibid)

BJP succeeded in weaning away the Kurmis, and Lodhs in central and eastern U.P and secured their support by increasing their presence in the party. As part of their strategy, it gave greater prominence to Kurmi and Lodh leaders, most conspicuously Vinay Katiyar from Faizabad and Kalyan Singh from Aligarh. The vertical divisions between Yadavs, Kurmis and Lodhs helped the BJP to stave off the challenge posed by the cohesion of backward castes under Mandal platform. (Ibid.)

While Brahmins and Rajputs (Chief among the so-called’ forward caste’s) are estimated to constitute only 16 percent of the plains population and OBCs approximately 37 per cent, in Uttarakhand, these figures are estimated at 80 percent and 2-3 percent, respectively. Further the OBC population of 2-3 percent is not distributed equally over the hill area, but is concentrated in the terai areas of Dehra Dun and Nainital districts. (Mawdsley 1996: 205)

The irony is that it is exactly in these two areas - government jobs and education are so important to the hill people. In the absence of almost any significant secondary or tertiary
sector employment locally other than in the terai areas of Dehra Dun and Nainital districts, government posts provide the bulk of salaried employment in the region and are therefore highly prized. In the villages I worked in, it was the goal of every family to get at least one male relative into a government job. This may be one reason why education is deemed to be so important in the hill districts, which have a high level of literacy compared to the plains. Moreover, the geographical constraints of the mountainous environment, together with the dominant socio-cultural pattern of small, relatively evenly-divided land holdings, has meant that the agro-forestry of the area generally provides only a subsistence livelihood. Under the increasing pressures of population growth and environmental degradation, migration from the hills has been growing, and migrant remittances play an essential role in the hill economy (Ibid).

The demand for a separate hill state comprising Kumaon and Garhwal was first formally proposed in 1952 by P.C. Joshi, the general secretary of the Communist Party of India, and its origins go back even earlier. Conferences were held in Ramnagar in 1966 and 1967 on the subject of administrative autonomy for the hill areas of U.P and in 1968 a demonstration was held at the Delhi boat club. In 1979 the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD) was formed, and in 1981 and 1982 UKD representatives met Indira Gandhi, the then prime minister. But while the idea of separate hill state had never been unpopular in the region, neither as it ever prompted mass support. However, there is evidence to suggest that this changed slowly, for example with the election of an UKD-MLA from Pithorgarh in 1980’s and early 1990s. Rallies were organised in 1986 and 1987 at the Kumaon and Garhwal commissions respectively and in September 1987 an Uttarakhand Bandh was called in the hills followed by a rally in Delhi in November 1987. In 1990 a UKD delegation met the Home minister and Prime Minister to press their demands (Ibid, 206-07).

The growing popularity of the demand was also indicated by its inclusion in the manifestos of various political parties like the BJP, Janata Dal, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and BSP and so on. Only two mainstream parties have opposed the ‘Uttarakhandis’ demands for their own Himalayan state-the CPI (M) and the Congress (I). The position of the Congress that the area needs ‘more development, not more politics’- something that the successful implementation of panchayat Raj would encourage. Congress’s opposition is based on its traditional hostility to the re-working of state boundaries and the creation of smaller federal units, fearing as it does a pandora’s box of similar demands that might follow (or be revitalized) were Uttarakhand to gain statehood. Uniquely, two UP state governments have passed resolutions in favour of a separate state for the hills: the BJP in April 1993 and the SP-BSP coalition in 1994. However, both have been accused of a lack of genuine commitment to the cause by their detractors. It is argued that the BJP resolution was a token effort made in order to help retain support won during the Ayodhya incidents, which by then was starting to wane. When the matter was brought to the Lok Sabha in 1993 only one BJP MP chose to be present and the matter was not taken up any further (Ibid: 207).

On June 27, 1994 Vishwanath Anand had been appointed Additional Chief Secretary exclusively in charge of the administrative and financial affairs of the region. Moves were also on to set up a separate Hill cadre in departments dealing with hill department (Ramakrishna: 1994 126)
The direct involvement of the UKD intensified the agitation; the party had been identified with the regional aspirations of the people since 1979. On August 2, 1994 the Dal organized an indefinite fast at the collectorate at Paurli Garhwal, which included prominent leaders such as the 92-year-old Ratnamani Bhatt and Inderman Bi Badoni (Ibid: 127). They listed their three main aims as: (1) to have the whole hill area excluded from the 27 per cent reservations for backward category (2) to ensure the strict implementation of an (often-promised) hill cadre; and (3) to protest against the parameters for the delimitation of the new panchayats in the hills. The reasoning was that a new state would be free to set its own OBC quotas, and caste lists of those who were eligible. Perhaps more importantly, not only would reservation quotas be more sensibly calculated, but host of other benefits would follow—mainly because a separate state would allow development policy to be designed, planned and administered for and within the hills. Their arrest by the police triggered massive protests in the hills, and it was at about this point that the nature of the agitations shifted, with the issue of reservations becoming subsumed beneath the powerful demand for statehood that swept through Garhwal and Kumaon. On September 1, 1994 in Khatima (Nainital), and September 2, 1994 in Musseuri (Dehra Dun) the police killed seven and six demonstrators respectively. These two incidents proved critical as the movement blew up into an open confrontation with the state apparatus (Mawdsley: 1996: 206).

According to student leaders in Rishikesh, the applications for the courses themselves indicated the danger of an “invasion from the plains”. Dhirendra Joshi, a student activist, told frontline that more than 1400 applications had come from the plains in the Government Degree College, Dehradun. “In the absence of a sizable OBC population in the hills nearly one third of the 2000 seats would have been cornered by the plains people, thus denying the hill people an opportunity to pursue higher education even in their own areas” Joshi said. The U K D leadership said not only were college admissions affected by the reservation policy, appointments to 25000 vacancies in 52 Hill development departments that employ some 75 000 people would also be dominated by “outsiders”. They said the government’s reservation policy would ensure that nearly 750 jobs went to the plains people. The policy would lead to a stream of job seekers making for the hills, and result in a significant shift in the demographic balance of the area, the UKD said. (Ramakrishnan: 1994 : 127).

The events of October 2, 1994 at Muzaffarnagar, when a couple of 100 buses were stopped on their way to a rally in Delhi, have become the most notorious so far. A CBI investigation found that as many as 19 Uttarakhandis died in the firing that followed, seven women were raped and 17 others were molested. The stopping of the buses itself was of debatable legality, and subsequent attempts by the state administration to play down the incident were seen by many hill people as further proof of their complicity in this brutal incident (Mawdsley: 1996: 206).

Representatives of the local media argued that this quota (Mandal – 27%), clubbed with 23 per cent reservations for the scheduled caste-scheduled tribe population, would reduce the opportunities for the numerically larger but socially and economically backward upper classes in the hills, and requested that the implementation of the 27 percent quota be reviewed. The Chief Minister retorted that a long as Uttarakhand remained part of U P all the laws and rules of the state would apply equally to these districts. Local press men walked out of the press conference in
protest (Ramakrishnan: 1994:127). Mulayam Singh claimed that “as far as educational institutions are concerned they (the hill people) already have reservations in the institutions in the plains: 4 percent in engineering colleges and 6 percent in medical colleges. In the vocational institutions in the hills, such as the polytechnics, they have 50 percent reservation. I suppose this is fair enough. Right now, the government is willing to grant 2 per cent more reservations for the hill people in all govt jobs, irrespective of hills-plains differences. This is apart from 10 percent reservation of the economically backward among upper castes”. (Ibid: 128) Mulayam Singh was targeted as responsible for their predicament, and has been particularly vilified since he had made certain disparaging and offensive comments about the hill people (he is reported to have said that he had no need of the hill people and that unless ‘they acted reasonably’ this they would be thrown out of the plains). (India Today, Oct 15 1994) (Mawdsley; 1996:207) Vinod Barthwal the national secretary of the Samajwadi party, publicity stated, “the on-going agitation in the hills was not for Uttarakhand state but was an agitation sponsored by the forces who do not want equality in society”. He went on to claim, “this agitation is proudly against reservations” (Himachal Times, Sept 11, 1994).

At no time were caste and regional tensions engineered more clearly than on September 13, 1994, when a state wide bandh in support of reservation was called by the Uttar Pradesh government itself. Everything in the hills remained obdurately open-in some places for longer than usual hours-and discounts were offered on goods by shop keepers. As the majority of the population were in favour of this act of defiance, no trouble followed. In the plains too the Bandh did not go uncontested. Anticipating violence, upper caste traders in districts like Gorakhpur and Kanpur announced that their traders’ associations would repair shopping establishments damaged by pro-reservationist demonstrators if they were kept open on the 13th. In Lucknow cash rewards were offered to anybody who worked to prevent the success of the bandh. The very call for the pro-reservation Bandh had aggravated caste sensibilities all over the state, and the upper castes in the plains had started perceiving the Uttarakhand agitation-which was more an expression of regional and developmental aspirations-as an extension of their own struggle against casteism. One of the most widely criticised features of the state bandh concerned the involvement of the police who in same places actually sided with the pro-reservationist demonstrators and helped to force the closure of shops attempting to defy the bandh (or allowed pro-reservationist demonstrators to do so unhindered, intimidating any opposition). The C P I (ML) said that the bandh demonstrated “the unprecedented use of state machinery in open collusion with the lumpens, belonging to the ruling combine” (Cited in Mawdsley: 1996:208).

The most despicable incident took place in Allahabad where a bid by pro-bandh activists to prevent lawyers from appearing in courts led by pro-bandh activists led to a free for all, which spread even to the Chief Justices Chamber. The police, a section of which had openly aligned themselves with supporters of the bandh, was found wanting in controlling the situation so much so that the chief justice sought the help of the Army through the Supreme Court Chief Justice. The central govt. immediately deployed the army, ending the chaos (Ramakrishnan: 1994:11).

A call for a counter bandh was given by the USS the umbrella organisation of various outfits associated with the movement. With this the hills regressed to the situation marked by total stoppage of governmental activity (Ramakrishnan: 1994:9).
At present only the 19 MLA's from the hill districts belongs to the Samajwadi party of the rest, 15 belongs to the BJP, one is independent and the Congress (I), the Janata Dal and the UKD have one each. All four MPs of the region belongs to the BJP. Thus were a separate state created Mulayam Singh would loose 18 members of the opposition in an assembly of 425, strengthening his position against the opposition parties, as well as securing more room to manoeuvre with his coalition partners (Mawdsley : 1996: 208)

The Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee (UPCC) executive passed a unanimous resolution that the Congress support for the ruling coalition should be withdrawn, and added a request to the central government that they go further and invoke Article 356 to dismiss the government. If support were not withdrawn, Tiwari warned, he would resign. By taking this stand Tiwari wanted to stop the drift of the forward castes to the BJP as well as benefit from the non-Yadav backward and dalit votes that could accrue to Congress (I) as a result of the anti-Yadav backlash and low and order situation in the state. (Ibid)

The Congress could not afford to be labelled as an 'upper-caste' party for supporting Tiwari and dismissing a pro-backward government. The view amongst Rao's supporters was that the dismissal of Mulayam Singh's government would send the wrong message to voters, particularly in the two states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, both of which were going to the polls "...the dismissal of the State government, or even the withdrawal of support could earn Congress (I) the tag of a brahmanical party, something not very desirable when about ten states are scheduled to go to the polls between November and March next" (Ibid.)

He (Laloo) argues that the apex Court in its judgement on the Mandal Commission Report had declared the job reservation scheme on the basis of economic backwardness and gender 'unconstitutional'. The court has upheld reservation in jobs only on "the basis of social and educational backwardness" as per the provisions of the constitution. Hence, he reasons continuing job reservation on the basis of economic backwardness, in the state was tantamount to a violation of the judgement given by the highest court of the land on the Mandal Report. However, he suggests that the Central government should bring about an amendment to the Constitution if it was willing to extend the job reservation facilities for the poor among the upper castes (Choudhary 1993: 1146)

Jagannath Mishra in a telegram to the Prime Minister said: "Your sudden decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report has sent shock waves in the country and in Bihar particularly. The reaction has been sharp and violent. This decision, whether you agree or not, needs a thorough reappraisal". (Upadhyaya: 1990:30)

Bihar is the only state in which the affluent Bania (trading community) is listed as backward State Health and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Raghunath Jha conceded that in Bihar even the Birlas could avail themselves of the facilities and job opportunities open to the backward castes. The Chief Minister, however, denied that Marwaris were listed among BCs in Bihar.

Bihar Assembly speaker Ghulam Sarwar, a leader of Muslims and probably the most seasoned and pragmatic leader in the State Janata Dal, did not rule out genuine
differences on the Mandal commission recommendations. "To be frank, I too have some reservations about it. There is none in the country, not to speak of political parties who would say that the underprivileged should not be given an opportunity to develop. I do not think that the Mandal commission is the last word on the subject and I would certainly like a national debate on the issue taking into account the economic criterion for determining backwardness". Sarwar said, as for Muslims, he wanted the entire community to be listed as backward (Upadhyaya: 1990: 30)

Yadav groups stopped the No. 4 Patna - Gaya train near the Parsa station and singled out members of the forward castes for attack. But what took the cake was the violence let loose by Yadavas on Brahmins in Madhepura district and villages in North Bihar. They first attacked the house of the public prosecutor, Amarendra Kumar Mishra, who along with his family members was beaten up. Then they singled out Brahmin households, including lawyers, doctors, and teachers, for attack, beating up and looting residents. They raided at least 50 houses, besides shops, and looted cash and valuables worth 60 lakhs. To cap it all, they pushed the Superintendent of Police of Madhepura, Bhavesh Thakur, a Brahmin under the car of the District Magistrate, Rajesh Gupta, at the helipad in the presence of the visiting Revenue Minister, Ram Bilas Singh (also a Yadav). Both his legs were crushed.

According to Jagannath Mishra, Leader of the Opposition in the assembly at least 20 Brahmin houses were looted in Lakhaha village while Brahmins in Saur village were beaten up and looted. In panic, many Brahmins have taken shelter across the border in Nepal and in neighbouring districts of Saharasa and Purnea which too have been sucked into the whirlpool of violence. (Upadhyaya: 1990: 26-27)

Jagannath Mishra criticised the hasty approval of the ordinance by the state cabinet on the ground that the verdict of the Supreme Court regarding the Mandal report had not been widely debated yet. He held that the amendment of the Karpoori Thakur formula on reservations was "untimely, irrational and against the verdict of the Supreme Court". He disparaged the Chief Minister for playing games with the MBCs and women on issue of reservations. The new formula he held were against the views of Ram Manohar Lohia who stood for special investment for women of all castes. In addition, he argued that the Mandal Commission recommendations were for the central services. The Chief Minister in his opinion is playing into the hands of "haves" among the backward castes and has done nothing for the depressed and most MBCs. Moreover the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee (BPCC - 1) vehemently criticised the state govt. for 'discriminating' against the women and resolved to oppose the striking down of 3 percent reservation in government jobs for the women belonging to all castes (Choudary: 1993: 1147.)

According to the Senior Janata Dal (Ajith Group) leader Ram Sunder Das, the Karpoori Thakur scheme was "more scientific and justifiable" in comparison with the Mandal Commission report in the present situation as it had job quotas for the poor among the upper castes and also for women. He clarified that neither he nor his party was against the Mandal report, however, the state govt had no right to implement the Mandal Commission report without constituting a commission to categorise the backward castes and identify, as per the directive of the Supreme Court for the purpose of exclusion, 'creamy layer' among the backwards (Hindustan Times, February 1, 1993)
The State President, the secretary and the general secretary of the party, Ajith Kumar Mehta, Harendranath Prasad and Ramaakal Singh reiterated their total commitment to the Mandal Commission Report. They asserted that the Karpoori formula was titled in favour of the upper castes. (Hindustan Times, (Patna) Feb 27, 1993)

In 1990, the reservation policy controversy was an issue of secondary importance during the election campaign in M.P. V.P. Singh's announcement about the Mandal Commission Report failed to provide a mobilisation of the OBCs from which the BJP might have suffered electorally. For one thing the Janata Dal was weak (it did not win a single seat in 1991); for another, the OBCs had little tradition of organisation, except in certain border districts where such influences had spread from UP. Undoubtedly, their fragmentation stunted feelings of caste solidarity. In 1931, with the exception of the Alias (or Yadavas) in Chattisgarh and Vindhy Pradesh, none of the BCs represented more than 5% of the population of four sub regions of Madhya Pradesh. Accordingly, in 1984 this state had the lowest proportion of MPs from the BCs of any state in India namely 5% (Frankel, F and Rao M.S : 1990: 423).

An OBC vote was observable only in some northern districts adjacent to Uttar Pradesh where in 1991 the Bahujan Samaj Party won one seat in Rewa. However, even in this area, the BJP tended to developed pockets of influence among the backward castes. This was achieved by establishing a 'Kisan Morcha' (Peasants Front) and 'Pichre Varg Morcha' (Front of the BC). The latter was set up under the chairmanship of Babulal Bhupur, a member of the Kushawaha jati. He once worked in a Bhopal textile mill and joined the R.S.S in 1946 and then the Jana Sangh in 1952. He was also the co-founder of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) (Interview with Babulal Bhupur, 13 November 1990, Bhopal) a strategy that was to prove electorally successful in the northern district of the state. Besides Uma Bharathi (a Lodhi active in the state BJP Kisan Morcha of which she was the Vice President) who was re-elected as the MP for Khajuraho, R.K. Kusumariya-a Kurni and former Jana Sanghi from Damoh who was President of the Kisan Morcha was elected M.P. for Damoh in 1991 ("Parliament of India, Tenth Lok Sabha who's who": 377).

In late 1991, the Sahu (Sahu's are oil pressers, they represent 4.2% of the states population according to the 1931 census) Samaj of Bhopal district held a convention at which the Union Minister of state for Finance, S. Potolukhe, declared that the Sahu Samaj was in favour of the full implementation of the Mandal Commission Report (National Mail, 23 December 1991). In early 1992, the 9th Annual Conference of Raipur district Sahu Sangh was inaugurated by the Minister of state for co-operation, Kripam Sahu and he declared that the number of MPs and MLA's from the community should be increased (National Mail 5 January 1992). Besides the Sahus, the Kurni - a peasant caste representing 2.6% of the states population - also became better organised in early 1990's, especially during election campaigns. In November 1993, the Kurni of Hoshangabad division held a big convention and pressed for candidates from their community to be given due priority in the allocation of tickets (National Mail 19 November 1993).

It is significant in this regard that Sita Ram Kesari, the Union Minister for Welfare who had appealed to the Supreme Court for a decision in favour of Mandal Commission Report was invited to canvass in Madhya Pradesh (see for instance, his
speech in Gwalior (Times of India, 27 Sept 1993). He came to Bhopal in early October for two day seminar on 'Liberation' and 'Rehabilitation of Scavengers'. He then pointed out that, "the Union Govt's decision to give 27% reservation for socially backward classes was yet another hint of revolution taking place in the country for social justice (National Mail 3 October, 1993)

Mahajan Commission was named after Ramji Mahajan a former state minister who in 1981 had been asked by Arjun Singh Govt to identify the needs of the OBCs in the state. Madhya Pradesh was then the only large state apart from West Bengal, which had never prepared a list of OBCs or taken any separate action for their upliftment (sic) (Report of the BCs Commission, New Delhi: Govt. of India 1980, First Part: 11) The Mahajan Report had been submitted in 1983. It identified 800 BCs (of which 24 were Muslims); that together represented 48.08% the states population. The report recommended the reservation of 35% of posts in the state administration for the BCs (Madhya Pradesh Rajya Picchra Varg Ayog - Antim Prativedan : Bhopal : Govt of Madhya Pradesh 1983: 461). The Arjun Singh govt. had implemented one recommendation for the provision of quotas for OBCs in technical Colleges and for the granting of scholarships but the former decision was contested in the courts which issued a stay order (Interview with R. Mahajan, 19 February 1994 Bhopal as quoted in Jeffrelot: 1996; 415).

In late 1992, Mahajan challenged Patwa to an open debate on his report (Statesman, (Delhi) 1, December 1992). During the 1993 election campaign, Madhav Rao Sindia and Arjun Singh demanded its implementation and the Congress (I) took full credit for having given effect to the Mandal Report. The party thus made a deliberate appeal to lower caste support. This was an astute move. First, there was no strong opponent projecting a similar image: the JD was weaker in Madhya Pradesh, than in the adjoining Hindi belt and the BSP was still relatively unknown there. Second, although OBCs were less organised in Madhya Pradesh than in Bihar or U.P, their level of political awareness had risen in the wake of Mandal affair (Hindustan Times, 4 November 1993).

The Congress (I) included in its list of candidates a record number of tickets (70) for members of the OBCs and SC and ST were given their due share respectively - 74 and 45 tickets. Brahmins were allotted 55, Rajputs 37, Baniyas 22 and Kayasthas 4. Candidates from the minority communities - Muslims, Christians and Sikhs - numbered 13 (Hindustan Times 4 November, 1993). During the campaign Arjun Singh let it be known that, were the Congress (I) to win power again, it would not appoint an upper caste Chief Minister (Times of India, 26 October 1993).

The BJP, however nominated almost as many OBC candidates as the Congress (I) in 1993. Of the candidates whose caste or tribe or community can be identified, besides 44 SC and 75 ST, we find 53 Brahmins, 27 Rajputs, 33 Baniyas, 11 Jains, 2 Khattris, 3 Kayasths. 2 Jats-considered as backwards in the Mahajan Report - 1, Maratha, 1 Muslim and 65 OBCs (Jeffrelot : 1996 : 415.)

The BJP did not present its OBC nominees as backward caste leaders. This was due largely to Hindu nationalist ideology: the insistence of the RSS and its offshoots on the desirability of emphasizing the Hindu sense of belonging to an organic community, the 'Hindu Nation' (Rashtra) rather than to particular castes. Second,
many low caste BJP members have joined the Hindu nationalist movement under the logic of sanskritisation whereby they seek to emulate high caste patterns of behaviour rather than showing pride in their low origins. According to Uma Bharati the acceptance of such an outlook has given the OBCs of the BJP, a 'Brahmin's mentality' (Interview with Uma Bharati 16 Feb 1994 as quoted in Jefforlot: 1996: 415).

Indeed, interviews with the BJP leaders from OBC revealed a certain reluctance to present themselves as low caste leaders. Babulal Gaur said he was an Ahir and not a Yadav, the term often used by the most politically conscious members of this caste in Hindi belt. He also stressed the special relationship that this caste of herdsmen entertained with Krishna-the cowherd deity—whereas Vaishnavaite folklore is not valued by the politically conscious 'Yadav'. Another BJP leader from a low caste, Bherulal Patidar (MLA from Mhow and Panchayat Minister in Patwa government) was reluctant to admit that he was a Kurmi: he preferred to present himself as a Patel, a name he associated with Gujarat's dominant caste (Interview with Bherulal Patidar, Bhopal, 17 February 1994 as quoted in Jefforlot: 1996: 415).

In fact, BJP leaders from the low caste attract little support from voters of the same social milieu. While the proportion of OBC candidates fielded by the BJP for the assembly elections increased, the proportion of the Party's MLA's from these castes fell from 27.2% in 1985 to 18.4% in 1993. Simultaneously, the share of upper caste MLA's was increasing slightly at 36.8%.

The BJP in Madhya Pradesh remained identified with the upper castes because the latter retained a tight hold on the party apparatus both at the local and state levels. In 1990 out of 39 presidents of BJP district units, 27 belonged to the upper castes, 9 to the OBCs and one to the scheduled tribes. The over representation of the upper castes is even more significant at the state level since, in 1991-93 out of 100 members of the states executive 60 were from the upper castes and only 13 from the OBCs (National Mail, 6 July 1991).

The 1993 election results prompted the BJP leaders to promote a large number of OBCs in the party apparatus. In Madhya Pradesh six of the fifteen senior positions in the BJP state executive went to members of the OBCs, the other places going to two Brahmans, one Kayastha one Jat, rather than the outgoing Chief Minister, Sunder Lal Patwa and Varma thus became leader of the opposition in legislative assembly. It also appointed Babulal Gaur, and Ahir as its Chief Whip and nominated Bherulal Patidar, a Kurmi, as its candidate for the post Deputy Speaker of the assembly (he was duly elected to the post). At the National level, Uma Bharat (a Lodh) was asked to head the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, the Party's youth organisation. Before her appointment, she had argued: 'We should change the image of the party as a party of those who sit and smoke in air-conditioned rooms. This may hurt some but we should go ahead with it. We have to go to the grass roots, to the Dalits. This party has become complacent after the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Kanshi Ram has woken us up. (National Mail, 16 December 1993).

The main advocate of the incorporation of more lower caste members at all levels of the party apparatus was opposed by some of his colleagues and by RSS leaders who objected in principle to any artificial transformation of the social order—generally seen as potentially harmonious—and did not wish to use caste criteria for appointments in
response to the pressures exerted by the Mandal commission. Sunder Singh Bhandari one of the BJP's Vice Presidents declared: 'we will keep social equilibrium in mind. It is an expansion programme and there is no question of being lopsided'. (National Mail, 26 December, 1993). More importantly, the general secretary of the RSS, H.V. Sheshadri, reacted to the SP-BSP propaganda in terms which showed that the organisation was not prepared to allow the BJP to appeal to notions of caste identity as a means of gathering support. 'Social justice can be rendered to the weaker sections of society only when the entire society is imbued with the spirit of oneness and internal harmony. Society is like a living body and its weak limb gets strengthened by the entire body, coming to its aid in every possible manner. And this becomes possible when the life force of the body remains active and powerful. The fire-force in the case of society is its vibrant awareness of its abiding oneness. That alone will result in a spirit of harmony among all its sections and ensuring the equality, dignity, security and justice, especially to its weaker parts. And this precisely is the path the Sangh has been pursuing through its Shakha technique of social reorganisation for the past 68 years (Organiser, 19 December 1993: 17). RSS leaders strongly criticized the programme of the SP and the BSP. From their point of view the interests of the low castes were not distinct from those of the nation as a whole. Sheshadri expounded their position in revealing terms : '.... in any confrontation with the rest of the society, the weaker sections always stand to lose. It is only with the goodwill and co-operation of the society that they can get the necessary opportunities to raise themselves up. The very concept of social justice implies recognition of equality, dignity and opportunity in every sphere of national life by entire society. And this is possible only when the society becomes imbued with the spirit of oneness and harmony among all sections just as a weak life force is quite active and ensures that the entire society goes out to continuously nurture that limit. This is exactly how the Hinduva life force works in the cause of our society' (Organises 5 December, 1995 p.7).

Subsequently, the 1994--95 state elections revealed that the BJP was anxious to nominate an OBC candidate wherever the arithmetic of the constituency made this choice relevant. If the selection of OBCs as candidates remains haphazard and does not lead to a systematic policy of recruiting them in due proportion into the higher echelons of the party at the national level as well as the state level the BJP may continue to be handicapped by the upper caste image which has restricted its expansion in the past (Jefferlot: 1996:536-554).

Further for category 1 (Most Backward), the "creamy layer" concept was done away with, and the quota was increased from 5 per cent to 7 percent. Yadavas, Gollas and their synonyms were shifted to category 1 which now lists 93 communities. Representatives of some communities-among them Yadavas, Gollas and Kurubas -staged angry demonstrations denouncing the April 20 government order which had then listed them under category 2 (More Backward) though they had been demanding to be listed under category 1 (Most Backward).

Category 2 (More Backward) and category 3 (Backward) were divided into two groups each-2A and 2B, and 3A and 3B. Category 2B comprised Muslims, Buddhists, converted Christians and Jettis, for whom there was a 6 per cent reservation; the rest of the communities hitherto under category 2 came under category 2A, with 20 per cent reservations. The quota for category 2 thus came down from 28 per cent to 26 per cent.
Category 3A, with a quota of 8 per cent, comprised Vokkaligas and their sub-castes, including Reddys, Hallikars, Gowdas, Kuchatigas, Heggades, Khannuas, Gounders and Kodavas; Category 3B, with an 11 per cent quota, comprised Veerashaiva Lingayats and the other communities hitherto listed under Category 3.

By listing Vokkaligas and Lingayats in separate sub-categories, the government met a long standing demand of the numerically fewer Vokkaligas who felt that the educationally advanced Lingayats would corner the quotas. It also amended the "creamy layer" list to include doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants, income tax consultants, dental surgeons, engineers and architects who are notasseses under income tax, wealth tax and sales tax for all categories. However, the creamy layer norm did not apply to SC and ST (Krishnaswamy: 1994: 143). The suggestion of the commission to exclude children of graduate parents did not find favour with the cabinet. The government felt that the graduates could be unemployed and hence needed protection. (Pinto: 1994: 227).

For the first time occupational groups regardless of caste were brought under the purview of reservation in accordance with the recommendation of the Chinnappa Reddy Commission. These include agricultural labour, marginal farmers with holdings of less than one hectare dry land, handloom weavers working for wages, construction workers, automobile drivers, conductors, cleaners, auto and cycle rickshaw drivers, employees in factories excluding supervisory and managerial staff and workers on daily wages in various menial occupations. The occupational groups were not altered by the modified G.O. (Ibid.)

It was Bangarappa's backward caste label that weighed in his favour at the time of his selection as Chief Minister. He comes from the Idiga (toody tapper) community and lost no opportunity in projecting himself as a champion of the cause of BCs.

Those communities condemned to backwardness by virtue of caste and poverty have every reason, at a generalised level, to feel a sense of belonging, confidence and courage, if they are represented by a Chief Minister who comes from the same background and who promises to speak for them. But if there were such expectations, Bangarappa not merely squandered a splendid opportunity to work for these deprived sections, he actually betrayed their hopes.

His performance as a self-proclaimed representative of the interests of the Backward classes is often contrasted with that of Karnataka's more illustrious Chief Ministers, Devaraj URS, considered the first and the only authentic spokesman for the backward classes in the state. He placed the question of the caste equation centre stage and actually altered it in favour of the BCs, SC's and ST. It was during his regime that the Land Reforms Act was passed, which conferred tenancy rights on thousands of poor and marginal farmers. He set up the First BCs Commission under L.G. Havannur which introduced a reservation system that anticipated the Mandal commission. The myth of the numerical supremacy of the upper caste Lingayat-Vokkaliga combine was disproved by the socio-economic surveys he commissioned.

In fact Bangarappa was never centrally involved with any socio-economic struggle of the Backward Classes not even when he was in the Socialist Party. The Kodagu
Satyagraha of the early 1950's, a Socialist Party led struggle in Shimoga district to confer tenancy rights mainly for the Idigas, may have influenced Bangarappa but his name is not amongst its leaders or heroes (Menon: 1992: 9 and 19).

Verappa Moily hails from the community of Nadaswaram Players. "My community" he says, "is really backward, nearer to the SC's". Ridiculing Bangarappa's backward credentials. Moily says that Bangarappa belongs to a community of 'exploiters' of society, a pointed reference to the liquor barons, that allegedly cushions his dispensation.

Moily also doubts Bangarappa's commitment to the emancipations of the BCs. The govt. has fought shy of taking a firm stand on the implementation of the recommendation of the Chinnappa Reddy Commission, the third BCs commission which submitted its report to the govt. in April 1990. He also accuses Bangarappa of having identified himself with the agitations against the report of the controversial Second BCs Commission headed by T.K. Venkataswamy. (Ramachandra C.M: 1992: 31-32).

After independence, the first organised demands were for protecting this G.O in the wake of a ruling of the Madras High Court in July 1950 that it was ultravires of the Constitution. Following a vigorous campaign by E.V. Ramaswami Naicker through his speeches, his party Dravida Kazhagam, and its organ Viduthalai, 14 August 1950 was observed as "Communal G.O Day", with strikes by students, hartal by merchants, "Communal G.O safeguard processions", and public meetings. Speaking on the occasion, Naicker declared his intention to launch an all party struggle for the reintroduction of the G.O. by restricting the rights and privileges of every community strictly according to its population (G.O. 231 Public (Confidential), 30 January 1951) (Radhakrishnan, p: 1996: 121).

It accused the govt. of working for advanced communities at the expense of the BCs and at the same time pretending to safeguard and advance the interests of the BCs. It requested the Chief Minister to increase the BCs reservations to 50 percent, to club the SC's, ST's and BCs as one category, for 65 percent reservations, and to treat a mere pass in intermediate examination as sufficient for admission to graduate courses. It warned him that failure to comply with its requests would have grave consequences for his party in the general elections which was about to take place. In another letter, A. Subramanian, Congress M.L.A. from Salem, requested him to allot the BCs at least 60 percent of the educational institution's admissions, and 75 percent of appointments, and threatened to walk out of the Congress Party along with other BC members if he failed to heed to this request. The govt. however, found both the requests inadmissible (G.O. 2659, Education, 6 October, 1951. (Radhakrishnan, p: 1996: 122-123).

With this both the parties ie, Toiler Party of S.S. Ramaswami Padayachi and the Common Weel Party of M.A. Manickavelu Naykar were dissolved and their members joined the Congress. (Rudolph and Rudolph: 1967: 52-54; Smith: 1963: 387-88). Though there were questions and resolutions for Vanniyars in particular, and BCs in general, the leadership of the Vanniyars gradually became moribund, and for quite sometime the Vanniyar movement, and for that matter the BCs movement in general, became dormant and the reservations introduced in the 1950's remained unchanged for the next two decades (Radhakrishnan, p: 1996: 123).
By this time two changes had altered the context in which the DMK had to compete. First, the redrawing of state boundaries along linguistic lines, compelled by the demands of Telugu speaking-Dravidians, left the DMK without a rationale for secession—the Tamil districts were considered too small to constitute a viable nation—but with a more culturally homogeneous political arena, in which the distinctly Tamil content of the DMK message would no longer be a handicap. Second, the rise of K. Kamaraj to the position of Congress leader and Chief Minister in the state largely defused the charge that Congress was a Brahmin vehicle. Kamaraj, a member of the formerly ‘backward’, but upwardly mobile Nadar community presided over a regime that was characterised both by extraordinarily successful efforts at industrial development, and some quite notable innovations in the area of social insurance. Additionally, he was able to capture in some part the mantle of Tamil regional pride and win support from the D.K. The DMK began to emphasize issues of poverty as much as anti-Brahminism, and in these films starred future Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran or MGR.

Contesting elections in 1957, the DMK rapidly established itself as a principal challenger to the Congress in the state. While contesting half the seats, the party grew to win over a quarter of the vote in 1962, while contesting over two-thirds of the seats. Furthermore, a DMK-Communist alliance won municipal power in the state’s two largest cities in 1959, while a DMK alliance with the Brahmin led Swantantra Party in 1962 demonstrated that it was willing to be quite pragmatic in its quest for power.

For the DMK to replace congress, it needed to undermine the latter’s claim to represent Tamil aspirations and the poor. Two events in 1965 and 1966 allowed this to happen. First in 1965, riots erupted in the state over the central govt’s decision to replace English entirely with Hindi for official purposes – and in examinations. Second and more importantly, the drought and crop failures of 1965-’66 caused widespread food shortages.

The political consequence of shortage require no explanation. A word on the salience of the language issue in Tamil Nadu, however, is in order. The impact of this decision on the job prospects of educated Tamils would have been devastating: along with one of the highest rates of literacy in the country, Tamil Nadu also had a wider gap between bilingualism in English and Hindi in favour of English than any other state (Swamy: 1996: 395). The state govt’s decision under Kamaraj’s successor Bhaktavatsalam to order the police to fire on the demonstrators leaving hundreds of middle class students dead, compelled a retraction by central govt, and permanently damaged the prestige of the Congress (Dasgupta: 1970: 236-37; Barnett: 1976: 131-4).

Ironically, the impact of these events were magnified by the prominent position occupied by leading congressmen in national politics. Kamaraj elevated to President of the National Congress Organisation in 1964, was the reputed King maker of the Congress party in the mid-1960’s; his rival, C. Subramanian, chosen by Indira Gandhi to serve as minister, was to become the architect of green revolution. That Kamaraj, who had demonstrated the power to choose who would be Prime Minister, was powerless to prevent a policy he knew would be anathema to his state only underscores the complexity of the state Congress in the debacle. That the union minister could not provide his own state with food heightened the party’s impotence.
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In 1967, the DMK joined a grand anti-congress coalition and campaigned on three issues—preserving English as an official language, increasing state autonomy in economic decision making and providing cheap rice. The rice issue was critical: the party's main plank was a promise to provide three measures of rice for one rupee, and DMK slogans mocked Kamaraj and Subramanian by name for their inability to provide their home state with food. The DMK alliance won in a landslide, even though the Congress vote fell only by 4 percentage points, and both Kamaraj and Subramanian lost their parliamentary seats (Swamy, R. 1998: 114-116).

From the beginning the identity sought to be projected was a party of all the oppressed castes including the SC. Again, right from its inception it was clearly articulated that the DMK would chart out a path independent of both DMK and AIADMK. Ramadas characterised Karunanidhi as a traitor of the Dravidian Movement” (The Independent June, 1991), and "betrayal of the LTTE and the Mandal causes........... (who)...." 'will only speak and write copiously on the Mandal issue and the people know too well that he will not fight for their cause'" (Aside, the Magazine of Madras, March 15, 1993, p: 23) (Suresh. V: 1992: 2317).

The current round of controversy erupted when Anna University Vice Chancellor Dr. M. Anandakrishnan announced on June 11, 1994 that his university would stick to 50 percent reservations in admissions for 1994 - 95. This was to comply with the Supreme Court orders “which were further confirmed by the Madras High Court order and legal opinion”, he said. The High Court Order he referred to was the one issued on July 27, 1993, in response to the Tamil Nadu govt’s petition following the Supreme Court’s ruling in the “Mandal Case” that the total reservations should not exceed 50 percent. It said that while 69 percent reservation, in force since 1980, could be followed for the academic year 1993-94, the ceiling of 50 percent should obtain from 1994-95.

The voice (consumer care) council, represented by its trustee and advocate K.M. Vijayan, challenged this in the Supreme Court which in its interim order on August 24, 1993 restrained the Tamil Nadu Government from reserving more than 50 percent seats for the BCs, S.C's and S.T's in professional colleges for 1993-94. When the state government went a head with 69 percent reservation on the basis of the High Court ruling, Vijayan moved a contempt petition in the Supreme Court. And the then Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary T.V. Venkataraman, on November 11, 1993, had to tender an ‘unconditional apology for the actions taken in violation of the orders of this Honourable Court by the state of Tamil Nadu and its officers/authorities’. Then followed the “affidavits of compliance” which were, however, kept a secret. The affidavit filed separately by the Director of Technical Education and the Secretary, Selection Committee, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Tamil Nadu govt, stated “that in making admissions subsequent to 5-11-1993, the ceiling of 50 percent reservation for SC/ST, MBC/BC stipulated by the order dated 24-8-1993 has been followed by reducing the reservation for Backward classes to 18.6 percent from 30 percent and for MBC to 12.4 percent and retaining the reservation for SC at 18 percent and for ST at 1 percent”.

The two officials also submitted that they had “complied with the directions” of the supreme court to create seven percent extra seats in govt. engineering colleges and six
percent extra seats for M.B.B.S and BDS courses in medical and dental colleges run by it and allotted "them exclusively to the open competition candidates strictly on the basis of merit".

It is this affidavit that Karunanidhi cites to embarrass Jayalalitha. His poser to Jayalalitha was "Do you have the guts to deny in a newspaper advertisement that your govt. has filed an affidavit before the Supreme Court that you will abide by the 50 percent reservation quota?" Jayalalitha has not replied to this question (Subramanian. T : 1994: 32.)

The affidavit, according to the opposition parties, was concealed from them. They were not informed about it either during the all-party meeting she convened on November 26, 1993 to discuss the move to pass the bill seeking to continue the 69 percent reservation or when it was passed by the assembly.

Says CPI State Secretary R. Nallakannu: "How can we accompany her to meet the Prime Minister when she has already given the undertaking to the Supreme Court? Will not the Prime Minister point to the undertaking and ask how the 69 percent reservation can be continued?" Political circles feel the situation would not have come to such a pass had the AIADMK govt taken effective follow-up action to get Presidential assent to the Bill (Subramanian T.S : 1994: 33)

"But at that time (when the Tamil Nadu assembly passed a resolution supporting the Mandal Commission recommendations), Jayalalitha gave interviews to 'The Hindu' and 'The Indian Express', demanding an economic yardstick for reservation for the BCs. When she has such a basic feeling against reservation, it is not surprising that she is playing a double game to cheat the people of Tamil Nadu".

Karunanidhi accused the state govt. of failing to anticipate Vijayan's appeal in the Supreme Court and file a caveat. "Therefore, the Supreme Court passed 'exparte' interim orders that the total reservation in Tamil Nadu should not exceed 50 percent. When Vijayan filed a contempt petition, the Jayalalitha government, instead of arguing against it, tendered an unconditional apology. Not only that, her government gave an affidavit of compliance that it will implement the 50 per cent reservation".

"In the two-page advertisement that Jayalalitha gave to newspapers to reply to opposition's allegations against her, she has argued that the reasons for the provision of more than 50 per cent reservation in Kashmir, Karnataka, and Arunachal Pradesh are different from those in Tamil Nadu. When she advances these reasons which a Supreme Court judge should do, it is clear that she has no sense of deep involvement in the issue. To confuse the situation further, the state cabinet has taken a decision to increase the number of seats in educational institutions. This is, in fact, a plan to allot less than 50 per cent seats for the B.C.S. and the Bill passed by the Assembly seeking to continue the 69 per cent reservation has also become subject to debate now" (I bid: 34).

"The reservation policy which helps the advancement of the Backward classes is a matter of social concern and is within the domain of the executive and interpretation of the Constitution of India should favour rather than hamper it", she (Jayalalitha) said (Subramanian T.S. 1994: 119)
But Vijayan, (39), paid the price for his grit. Early on July 21, as he was about to leave his house to fly to New Delhi to file his transfer application in the Supreme Court, he was beaten up by four goondas who lay in wait for him. Vijayan suffered multiple fractures on his hands and legs. On July 13, hoodlums, armed with knives threatened Dr. Anandakrishnan. But he escaped physical harm because they were confused about his identity. Despite a complaint being lodged with the police, no arrest has been made in connection with this attempted assault (Ibid: 120).

There is no question of agreeing to reservations on economic criteria as the basis, which would be tantamount to ignoring the BCs in any circumstances. By securing a job does it mean that everything has been gained? A fish vendor in our place earns three times that of the salary of an I.A.S. officer in a single day. Hence it is not a job or salary that a member of BC needs. What they want instead is participation in the administration. League will support only those who are willing to extend it. (Kalakaunudi : 1990 : 9).

In brief, the Muslim League’s political stand is this: “The BCs of both the coalition set up should unite disregarding their political affiliations. They should sever their ties with the coalitions and give rise to a new front.” “If the exploitation of the backward and downtrodden castes by certain people in the name of religion is to end, the former should be enlightened the BCs about their rights but also to unite against their exploitation. The aim of the Muslim League- a minoritie’s organisation is also that. (Ibid 8).

The ambivalence of the Congress (I) on the Ram Jánambhoomi – Babri Masjid dispute and the Mandal commission led to the disenchantment among its allies the Muslim League, the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Socialistic Republican Party (SRP) - and culminated in the departure of the Muslim League, a long time ally of the Congress (I) from the UDF fold. With the factional struggles and the resentment of the backward and minority communities (who stood to gain by Mandal Commission recommendations) taking their toll, the UDF became a cropper in the District Council Elections. Sensing the danger the Congress (I) has began wooing the League and even the Samvarana Samudaya Munnani (a coalition of 60 odd caste/communities of pro-reservationists) (Frontline: March 30 – April 12 1991:31).

The Southern districts have strong traditions of Ezhava Social Reform (ESRM) and are supposed to be areas of significant influence for Samvarana Samudaya Munnani (SSM). Initially, the LDF had adopted a more balanced position of supporting the communal reservation policy while at the same time sharply attacking the communal leaders of the backward castes. But this stance underwent change towards the last phase of the May campaign in response to a tragi-comic situation that arose out of allegedly derogatory comments of EMS Namboodiripad regarding the founders of Ezhava social Reform Movement. The occasion was a special issue of Desabhimani, the party daily, in honour of T. K. Madhavan, a leading Ezhava social reformer of the early decades of the century. The historic significance of T.K. Madhavan lay in the role he played in linking up the Ezhava Social Reform Movement, that had till then been confined to Sanskritisation reforms and struggles to remove caste grievances, with the larger national movement. The historical assessment by EMS of the leaders of the Ezhava social Reform Movement in the pre-T.K. Madhavan phase was taken out
of context and misinterpreted deliberately as if to imply insult to the pioneers and ultimately a sacrilegious insult to Sree Narayana Guru - the founder of Ezhava Social Reform Movement (Frontline: July 20 – August 2, 1991:96).

92 The Nair-Syrian Communities which has the largest number of skilled and educated youth were haunted with a fear that Mandal would permanently close their access to employment in central services and also in other states. This fear was converted into anxiety as a result of the controversial statements that was doing its rounds in the state. The I.DF could only create a few cleavages in these traditional vote banks of the Congress. But these cleavages were filled up by these communities themselves (Kala Kaumudi: 1991:9).