

Caste and Politics in a North Indian State: Emerging Trends

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Caste is the basis of Indian social stratification system. However, as a structural category it has not only maintained its core characteristics to a great extent but also shown dynamism by making several types of adjustments in a transitional society like India. A number of scholars have analysed the role of caste in the Indian political system, which transformed itself after independence in an effort to modernize the traditional Indian society with an assumption that the forces of modernization would gradually weaken it and finally, it will be replaced by an open class structure as happened in the case of Europe and other Western societies. But the social scientists (Srinivas 1956; Brass 1969; Kothari 1978) observed that the influence of caste in political processes increased day by day in post-independent India. Srinivas was the first, who observed the phenomenon and use of the term 'dominant caste' specifically with reference to a small locality or village or group of villages in his 1955 essay 'The social system of a Mysore Village' Srinivas mentioned that "The concept of the dominant caste is important for understanding intercaste relations in any local area." (Srinivas, 1987:77). Elaborating the concept in 1957, he uses the phrase 'locally' dominant and then adds, "Occasionally a caste is dominant in a group of neighbouring villages if not over a district or two, and in such cases, local dominance is linked with regional dominance" (Srinivas, 1987:96). As far as "local dominance" is concerned, there seems to be a direct link between domination and numerical preponderance. Large size of population, though, has another implication, that often a caste has numerical advantage when it also has a high degree of control over resources such as land at the village level. Thus, economic power and population size together produce patterns of local domination. Paul Brass (1973) in an empirical study of Western Uttar Pradesh observed a political alliance of four peasant castes, namely, Ahir, Jat, Gujar and Rajput, called as "AJGAR", was used by Charan Singh to create vote bank for his party and to break the monopoly of Indian National Congress. Later on, he included Muslims also in this alliance and harnessed his political crop in Western U.P. over a period of time which became a popular trend in Indian politics and a number of combinations and subversions were experimented in later years. Post-1990 scenario witnessed the polarization of voters on communal lines as well as on caste lines and still a dominant factor in the politics of Uttar Pradesh. Thus, caste plays very important role in the politics of India. Each and every political party use caste to

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fetch more and more votes in its fold. The regional parties use caste as a means to serve their political ends.

The present paper makes an attempt to understand the role of family and caste in political processes in Hardoi district of Uttar Pradesh over a period of five decades at three levels: first, at the level of parliament constituency (1962-2009); second, at the level of assembly constituency (1962-2012) and third, at the level of village Panchayat (2013). The study was undertaken in Hardoi district of Uttar Pradesh. Data were collected through primary as well as secondary sources, personal interviews were conducted with politicians and their family members and other key informants in the fields. At the lok shabha level two parliament constituency namely Hardoi [reserved] and Shahabad [unreserved] constituency were taken for study. At the assembly level three constituencies namely Hariyawan [reserved in 1974], Bilgram [unreserved] and Ahirori [reserved] were selected. The three village panchayat one each from these three assembly constituencies were taken for study. These were Hariyawan, Iknaura and Baksapur fall under Hariyawan, Bilgram and Ahirori constituencies respectively.

The Study Area

Hardoi district is part of Lucknow Commissionaire in Uttar Pradesh Province of India. It is situated in between 26-53 to 27-46 North Latitude and 79-41 to 80-46 East Longitude. Its north border touches Shahjahanpur & Lakhimpur Kheri districts, Lucknow (capital of U.P.) and Unnao are situated at south border, West borders touches Kanpur (Industrial City of U.P.) and Farrukhabad and on eastern border Gomati river separates the district from Sitapur. Nemisharayan the Pilgrim of Dwapar age is just 45 km away from district headquarter. The length of this district from north-west to southeast is 125.529 km and width from east to west is 74.83 km. District Hardoi comprises of 5 tehsils (Hardoi, Shahabad, Bilgram, Sandila & Sawayajpur), 19 blocks, 191 Nyay Panchayat, 1101 Gram Sabha & 1901 habited revenue villages. It also has 7 Nagar Palika Parishads & 6 Nagar Panchayats. Geographical area is 5947 sq. km. As per Census of India, 2011, population of the district is 4091380. Out of which Female are 1887116 & Male are 2204264.

Hardoi district has one full parliamentary constituency from the very begining i.e. Hardoi constituency comprised of five assembly constituencies, namely, Aihori, Hardoi, Bilgram, Mallawan and Sandila. Two other parliamentary constituted partly by Hardoi district, Shahabad-included Bawan, Pihani and Shahabad assembly constituencies and the Misirikh, includes only one assembly constituency from Hardoi district.

Family and Caste in Parliament Elections

Between 1962-1971 power struggle was mainly between two political parties, Congress and Janasangh at Hardoi (Reserved) constituency. This constituency was represented by Kinderlal, a Jatav leader of Congress party. While on Shahabad (Unreserved) constituency three different Rajput leaders- Yuvraj Datt (1962) and Jitendra Bahadur (1968) of Jansangh and Dharmagaj Singh (1971) of Congress were elected. In 1977, riding on the Janta wave, Lok Dal won both the seats: Hardoi by Parmailal (Pasi) and Shahabad by G. B. Singh (Rajput). However, in 1980 and 1984 elections, Hardoi Reserved seat was regained by Congress through Jatav candidates, Munnailal (Jatav) and Kinderlal (Jatav) respectively. However, Shahabad seat continued with Dharmgaj (Rajput) of Congress party. In 1989 Parmailal (Pasi) of Janta Dal snached Hardoi seat from Congress, while the Shahabad seat was retained by Dharmagaj (Rajput) of Congress. In 1990 re-polls, Chandram (Jatav) of Janta Dal won the Hardoi reserved seat. In 1991, Jaiprakash (Pasi) and Surendra Pal Pathak (Brahmin) of BJP won the Hardoi and Shahabad seats respectively. Although in 1996 elections, Jaiprakash (Pasi) of BJP was able to retained this seat but

Shahabad seat was lost to one Ilias Ajmi (Muslim) of BSP. In 1998, Usha Verma daughter-in-law of Parmailal (Pasi) won Hardoi reserved seat as a SP candidate and Shahabad seat was regained by BJP through a new Rajput leader Raghvendra. In the next three elections, this seat was retained by Pasi leader Usha Verma with an exception of 1999 when Jai Prakash [Pasi], a rebel of BJP, contested election as as a representative of AILK, formed by Naresh Agrawal when he left Congress. While Shahabad seat was captured by BSP Muslim candidate Ilias Ajmi and Daud Ahmad alternatively with an exception of 1998 when Raghvendra, a BJP Rajput candidate won on this seat.

It is clear from the above that up to 1990 on Hardoi reserved seat there was close contest between Congress whose Jatav candidates- Kinder Lal (in 1962, 1968, 1971 and 1984) and Manni Lal (in 1980) won the seat in 1962, while the Pasi candidate Parmailal who was a choice of opposition part, Lok Dal who represented this seat twice (in 1977 and 1989). In the repolls of 1990, Janta Dal retained Hardoi [reserved] seat which was vacated by Parmailal [Pasi] when he simultaneously won the *Lok Shabha* and *Vidhan Sabha* seats and Chand Ram, a Jatav candidate of Janta Dal with the support of Parmailal (who became Minister in the state cabinet). Since then, this reserved seat has been represented by candidates of Pasi castes, who have more than 25% voters in this constituency. This seat is now strong hold of Samajwadi party (SP) as a result of caste alliance between Pasi and Yadav castes as it is a reserved seat. On the other hand, in Shahabad constituency, where Rajput caste has a dominant position, Rajput candidates contineusly (from 1962 to 1989) represented this seat through various parties like Jansangh, Congress, and Lokdal. In 1991, riding on the Hindutva wave Surendra Pal Pathak of BJP won the Shahabad seat for the first time. However in 1996 election and thereafter this seat was captured by the BSP with an exception of 1998 when Raghvendra a Rajput candidate of BJP got success here. This suggests that after 1991 the combination of Muslim minorities and Dalit castes [MD] helped the BSP to win this seat.

Table 1: Family and Caste in Parliamentary Elections (1962- 2009)

Year	Hardoi			Shahabad		
	Name	Caste	Pol. Party	Name	Caste	Pol. Party
1962	Kinder Lal	Jatav	CONG	Yuvraj Dat	Rajput	Jan Sangh
1968	Kinder Lal	Jatav	CONG	J. Bahadur	Rajput	Jan Sangh
1971	Kinder Lal	Jatav	CONG	Dharmgaj	Rajput	CONG
1977	Parmail Lal	Pasi	LD	G B Singh	Rajput	LD
1980	Manni Lal	Jatav	CONG	Dharmgaj	Rajput	CONG
1984	Kinder Lal	Jatav	CONG	Dharmgaj	Rajput	CONG
1989	Parmail Lal	Pasi	JD	Dharmgaj	Rajput	CONG
1990	Chand Ram	Jatav	JD	-	-	-
1991	Jai Prakash	Pasi	BJP	S. Pathak	Brahmin	BJP
1996	Jai Prakash	Pasi	BJP	Ilias Ajmi	Muslim	BSP
1998	Usha Verma	Pasi	SP	Raghvendra	Rajput	BJP
1999	Jai Prakash	Pasi	AILK	D. Ahmad	Muslim	BSP
2004	Usha Verma	Pasi	SP	Ilias Ajmi	Muslim	BSP
2009	Usha Verma	Pasi	SP	D. Ahmad	Muslim	BSP

Caste in Assembly Elections

One of the prominent Rajput leaders [G.B.Singh], who belonged to Hariyawan village contested election from Hariyawan constituency till 1969 when this constituency declared as a reserved constituency. Then he shifted to the neighbouring assembly seat, namely, Bilgram in 1974 from where he or his brother got elected several times.

Vishram Singh Yadav who belonged to Iknaura Village in Bilgram constituency is another the local (Yadav) leader who after implementation of Mandal Commission report, emerged as one of the new obc leader in this area and elected twice [1993, 2002] from this constituency on SP ticket. But he got defeated in 1996 by G.B.Singh of BJP.

One of the prominent leader Parmai Lal belong to Baksapur village. Which is dalit dominated village. Parmai Lal and his family are very influential in the dalit politics of Hardoi district.

Table 1: Family and Caste in Assembly Elections (1962- 2012)

Year	Hariyawan			Bilgram			Ahirori (R)		
1962	P. Lal F3	Pasi	JS	Kala Rani	Brahmin	CONG	Parmai Lal F1 (PL)	Pasi	Cong
1967	G B Singh F2	Rajput	JS	Kala Rani	Brahmin	CONG	Munni Lal F4	Jatav	Cong
1969	S. Chand	Vaishya	CONG	Kala Rani	Brahmin	CONG	Parmai Lal F1	Pasi	INDEP
1974	Puran Lal F3	Pasi	JS	S B Singh F2	Rajput	JS	Munni Lal F4	Jatav	Cong
1977	C. Lal F3	Pasi	JP	S B Singh F2	Rajput	JP	Munni Lal F4	Jatav	Cong
1980	N. Lal F4	Jatav	Cong	H S Mishra	Brahmin	CONG	Parmai Lal F1	Pasi	BJP
1985	N. Lal F4	Jatav	Cong	H S Mishra	Brahmin	CONG	Parmai Lal F1	Pasi	LD
1989	B. Bihari F1	Pasi	JD	S B Singh F2	Rajput	BJP	Parmai Lal F1	Pasi	JD
1991	D. Ram F3	Pasi	BJP	S B Singh F2	Rajput	BJP	Parmai Lal F1	Pasi	JD
1993	C.Lal F3	Pasi	BSP	V Singh MI	Yadav	Sp	Jadu Rani F1 (Widow of PL)	Pasi	SP
1996	C. Lal F3	Pasi	BJP	S B Singh F2	Rajput	BJP	S. Prakash NL	Pasi	BSP
2002	A. Paswan F3	Pasi	BJP	V Singh	Yadav	SP	U. Verma F1 (Da in La1 PL)	Pasi	SP
2007	R Devi F1 (DaLa2 PL)	Pasi	BSP	Rajni Tiwari (NL/SE)	Brahmin	BSP	V. Verma (NL)	Pasi	BSP
2012	R Devi F1 (DaLa2 PL)	Pasi	SP	Rajni Tiwari (NL/SE)	Brahmin	BSP	S.Prakash (NL)	Pasi	SP

In the first phase [1962-1974] we can see a clear cut struggle for power between the major political parties Congress and Jansangh. in all the three assembly constituencies under study, namely, Ahirori (Reserved), Hariyawan and Bilgram. The Hariyawan constituency was represented by Jansangh in 1962 and 1967 by a Pasi and Rajput leader respectively. In 1969 this seat was captured by Congress candidate belonged to Vaishya caste [father of prominent leader Naresh Agrwal]. In Bilgram Congress candidate Kalarani [Brahmin] continually hold the seat. In Ahirori reserved constituency in 1962 Cogress won this seat through a Pasi leader Parmailal. However, in 1967 congress gave ticket to Jatav candidate Mannilal who defeated the rebel MLA Parmailal. In the next election (1969) Parmailal again elected as an independent candidate and retained his hold on this seat. However, in 1974 and 1977 elections he was again defeated by Congress candidate Mannilal [Jatav].

At Bilgram constituency S. B. Singh a Rajput leader belonged to G. B. Singh family of Hariyawan got elected as Jansangh/Janta Party ticket defeating the Congress rivals in 1974 and 1977. As Hariyawan constituency was reserved therefore Rajput family of Hariyawan shifted to Bilgram constituency. Therefore, Hariyawan and Ahirori both became reserved constituency from 1974 and power struggle at the level of assembly on these two seats was between Jatav and Pasi caste candidates. Among them Pasi candidate became more successful than the Jatav candidates representing different political parties. In 1991 election, Hariyawan and Bilgram constituencies were begged by BJP and Ahirori by Janta Dal. From 1993 onwards impact of Mandal Commission

Table 1: Caste in village panchayat election (2003)

Caste Category	Caste	Hariyawan		Iknaura		Baksapur	
		Voter %	No. of WM	Voter %	No. of WM	Voter %	No. of WM
General	Brahamin	63.60	10	33.03	03	22.80	
	Rajput	1.56	-	-	-	-	
	Vaishya	3.4	-	-	-	0.987	-
	Kayastha	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	68.56	10	33.03	03	23.87	0
OBC	Yadav	-	-	20.64	02	-	-
	Nai	2.56	-	-	-	0.359	-
	Kumhar	-	-	2.89	-	-	-
	Lohar	0.16	-	1.23	01	-	-
	Badhai	-	-	1.65	-	-	-
	Kahar	2.34	-	2.14	-	9.60	-
	Halwai	0.72	-	-	-	0.359	-
	Patwa	0.89	-	-	-	-	-
	Gadaria	0.11	-	-	-	32.32	04
	Teli	1.28	-	5.78	01	0.897	-
	Bhurji	1.78	-	1.65	01	-	-
	Mali	1.95	-	-	-	-	-
	Tamoli	2.06	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	13.85	0	35.98	05	43.54	05
SC	Dhobi	-	-	1.65	-	-	-
	Dhanuk	0.50	-	2.89	-	0.269	01
	Passi	11.92	01	-	-	9.69	02
	Total	12.42	01	4.54	0	9.96	03
Ex-Untouchables	Jatav	1.78	01	24.77	02	22.71	03
	Balmiki	1.17	-	0.825	01	-	-
	Total	2.95	01	25.59	03	22.71	03
Muslim		2.00	01	0.825	01	-	-
Total			13		12		11

can be observed in the Bilgram constituency. Vishram Singh Yadav who got elected twice on SP ticket. From 2007 onwards, the Brahmin leadership is retained in this constituency as a result of social engineering of BSP who gave tickets to Brahmins in many of Uttar Pradesh constituencies including Bilgram constituency. It is clear that in Hariyawan constituency and Ahirori constituency Pasis are dominant caste who are getting ticket from different political parties in order to seek political power.

Caste in Village Panchayat Elections

In the village Hariyawan, Brahmin constitute 63.60% of the total voters. Rajput and Vaisya have nominal representation in this village, OBC castes together constitute 13.5% voters of the total voters, Dhanuk and Pasi together constitute 12.42 %, Pasi alone have 11.92% of total voters, Jatav and Balmiki have 2.95% voters and the Muslim only 2% voter in the village panchayat. Of the 13 ward members, as many as ten (10) are Brahmins, one (01) Pasi, one [01] Jatav and one [01] Muslim. OBC have no representation in the village panchayat. Surprisingly, Rajput family which is highly political active at state and national level has no representation in village panchayat. *The political power is fully controlled by Brahmins who numerically dominated the most of the ward of the village panchayat.*

Iknaura village, from where Yadav leader Vishram Singh Yadav come, has 33.03% Brahmin voters, 35.98% OBC voters, about 13% SC voters and about 1% Muslim voters. OBC ward members occupied five [05] positions, [Yadav 02, Lohar 01, Teli 01 and Bhurji 01], Brahmins [03] positions and SC and Muslims 03 and 01 positions respectively. it is clear that *in this village panchayat different communities are represented the village power structure*.

In Baksapur village panchayat although Brahmins and Vaishya together constitute a little less than one-fourth of voters but they have no representation in the village panchayat. However the OBC castes who are numerically in dominant position with 43.54 % voters bagged 05 positions [Gadaria 04, and Nai 01]. However, SC who have about one-third of voters in the village have 06 seats in the village panchayat [Jatav 03, Pasi 02, and Dhanuk 01]. This village belongs to one of the prominent Pasi leader Parmailal whose family have been very active in state and national level politics since 1962.

In hariyawan village, the president of village panchayat is a Brahmin, in Iknaura, a Yadav and in Baksapur, a Gadaria. In Hariyawan power structure is still dominated by upper castes who have numerically dominant in the village. In Iknaura village, OBC [Yadav] dominate the scenario, and Baksapur village, was always a reserved village panchayat and. the family of Parmailal was dominating but recently this village panchayat became unreserved and the leadership shifted to Gadaria caste i.e a shift of power from Dalit caste to OBC caste.

Conclusion

1. The dominance of upper caste leadership has been significantly challenged by the OBC, Dalit and Muslim leaders who have made a very solid shaft in the politics of U.P. Implementation of Mandal Commission Report on the one hand and the rise of Hindutva through Ram Mandir issue on the other, resulted in the polarization of Dalits and OBC castes between BSP and SP and religious polarization of Muslims on communal lines against BJP led the Muslims for tactical voting in favour SP/BSP/Congress which gave rise to a new dynamics in politics of U.P.

2. It is not only caste which plays an important role in Indian politics but it is also family, which became important in state and national level politics. It is evident from the data that

family members of Parmailal [Pasi] and G B Singh [Rajput], Mannilal [Jatav] gained power by using their family resources.

3. Religion is also an important factor in polarization of votes particularly if a candidate of their religion is contesting elections or if their votes matters in defeating the candidate of BJP In any constituency.
4. For proper understanding of the role of caste in Indian politics the analysis at the level of family, clan, kinship network should also be taken into account. The role of larger caste organization spread over the region may also be analysed to understand the dynamics of power structure.

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