Rethinking State Politics in India
Contents

List of Tables and Charts ix
Preface and Acknowledgements xiii

Introduction — Rethinking State Politics in India: Regions within Regions
Ashutosh Kumar 1

Part I: United Colours of New States

1. Rethinking ‘Regional Developmental Imbalances’; Spatial Versus the Socio-political ‘Region’: The Case of Tribals in Jharkhand
   Amit Prakash 31

2. Constitution of a Region: A Study of Chhattisgarh
   Dharmendra Kumar 76

3. The Creation of a Region: Politics of Identity and Development in Uttarakhand
   Pampa Mukherjee 107

Part II: Quest for Territorial Homeland

4. Regions within Region and their Movements in Karnataka: Nuances, Claims and Ambiguities
   Muzaffar Assadi 131

5. Backwardness and Political Articulation of Backwardness in the North Bengal Region of West Bengal
   Arun K. Jana 153

6. Assertion of a Region: Exploring the Demand for Telangana
   Rama Rao Bonagani 197
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Region, Caste and Politics of ‘Reverse Discrimination’: The Case of Harit Pradesh</td>
<td>Jagpal Singh</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Regions Within but Democracy Without: A Study of India’s North-east</td>
<td>Samir Kumar Das</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Politics of Autonomy in a Comparative Perspective: Punjab and Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>Ashutosh Kumar</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Garv Se Kahon Hum Lingayat Hain! Caste Associations and Identity Politics in Maharashtra</td>
<td>Rajeshwari Deshpande</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Emergence of Dalit Organisations in Tamil Nadu: Causes, Forms of Assertion and Impact on the State Politics of Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Neeru Sharma Mehra</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Affirmative Action, Group Rights and Democracy: The Mala–Madiga Conflict in Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>Sudha Pai</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Caste and Marginality in Punjab: Looking for Regional Specificities</td>
<td>Ronki Ram</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part III: Caste and Politics of Marginality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Subregions, Identity and the Nature of Political Competition in Rajasthan</td>
<td>Sanjay Lodha</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Regions within Regions — Negotiating Political Spaces: A Case Study of Karnataka</td>
<td>Sandeep Shastri</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part V: Politics of Public Policy

   Ashok K. Pankaj

Note on the Editor
Notes on Contributors
Index
List of Tables and Charts

Tables

1.1 Demography of ST Population in Jharkhand 42
1.2 Break-up of MPCE by Broad Groups of Non-food Items Separately for each Social Group in Rural Areas 45
1.3 Break-up of MPCE by Broad Groups of Food Items Separately for each Social Group in Urban Areas 46
1.4 Literacy in Jharkhand, 2001 (Per cent) 48
1.5 Schools in Jharkhand 52
1.6 District-wise Number of Teachers and Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) by Type in Jharkhand, 2002–2003 53
1.7 Enrolment of Scheduled Tribes in Primary Education in Jharkhand 54
1.8 Work Participation Rate in Jharkhand, 2001 58
1.9 Estimates of Birth Rate, Death Rate, Natural Growth Rate and Infant Mortality Rate in Jharkhand, 2002 61
1.10 District-wise Land Utilisation in Jharkhand, 1997–98 (Per cent) 64
1.11 Forest Cover in Jharkhand, 2001 and 2003 (sq. km) 67
1.12 Destruction of Forest Area for Developmental Projects in Jharkhand, 1980–2003 69
1.13 Tribals Displaced from 1950–90 (in 10 million) 71

2.1 States with FDI-approved Support 95

3.1 Geographical Indicators 110

6.1 Districts of Andhra Pradesh (Region-wise Distribution) 200
6.2 Number of Primary Schools and Teachers (Region-wise Distribution) 201
6.3 Government Allopathic Medical Facilities (Region-wise Break-up) 202
6.4 Chief Ministers Ruled in AP from 1956 to February 2010 (Region-wise Distribution) 207
6.5 Karimnagar Lok Sabha By-election Results (Held on 4 December 2006) 212

11.2 Electoral Alliances on the Eve of 2001 State Assembly Elections in Tamil Nadu 344
11.3 Electoral Alliances in 2006 Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections 345
11.4 Voter Participation Rates in Tamil Nadu in Parliamentary Elections 348
11.5 Tamil Nadu 2009 Lok Sabha Election Results 349

12.1 Broad Categorisation of the SCs — Group Population 373
14.1 Geo-cultural Division of Rajasthan 402
14.2 Distribution of the Population by Languages 403
14.3 Distribution of Languages by Geographical Region and Former States 403
14.4 Major Castes/Tribes and their Regional Dispersion 406
14.5 Administrative Divisions, Districts and Subregions of Rajasthan 414
14.6 Distribution of Respondents by Castes and Subregions (Per cent) 415
14.7 Distribution of Respondents by Locality and Subregions (Per cent) 416
14.8 Distribution of Respondents by Land Occupation and Subregions (Per cent) 418
14.9 Distribution of Respondents by Occupation Categories and Subregions (Per cent) 419
14.10 Distribution of Respondents by Monthly Family Income and Subregions (Per cent) 420
14.11 Distribution of Respondents by Vote and Subregion (Per cent) 423
14.12 Distribution of Respondents by Vote and Caste (Per cent) 425
14.13 Distribution of Respondents by Opinion on Type of Government (Per cent) 426

15.1 Caste and Religious Composition of the State of Karnataka 434

Charts

2.1 Types of Collieries and the Land they Occupy 88
2.2 Reduction in Workforce in Bhilai Steel Plant 96
3.1 Road Transport 123
Preface and Acknowledgements

The idea of putting together this volume was first conceived while attending a three-day workshop organised in January 2003 by the Indian School of Political Economy, Pune in collaboration with the Department of Politics, University of Pune and CSDS-Lokniti, in which the state papers, using the data from National Election Studies, were presented by Lokniti Network members teaching in different Indian universities. The overall feeling among the paper presenters and experts, including D. L. Sheth, Yogendra Yadav, Suhas Palshikar, Peter deSouza and Nikant Rath, was to move beyond state as a unit of analysis for the study of electoral politics and focus more on regions within a state and underline their specificities in a comparative mode in order to understand the larger forces and long-term changes taking place.

The project to employ intra-state or inter-state regional perspective to take up a broader study of micro-level mechanisms, which have been shaping political actions and processes of mobilisation and development at the local level, finally took concrete shape in the form of a conference, attended by many co-travellers in the Lokniti network, held in March 2007 at the Department of Political Science, Panjab University. The conference was funded from the seminar grant of the University Grants Commission’s ASIHSS Programme. The ICSSR regional centre, as usual, provided excellent hospitality and institutional infrastructure to the participants. I would like to thank the UGC and Northwest Regional Centre, ICSSR. I would also like to record my profound gratitude to the contributors who not only allowed me to edit their articles but also agreed to revise them repeatedly first at my request and then on the basis of the detailed comments made by an anonymous reviewer. Special thanks go to Professors Sudha Pai and Ashok K. Pankaj who could not actually attend the conference but readily offered their articles on request. Over the years, a special bond has developed among us all state politics wallahs, meeting each other frequently during conferences and project workshops, sharing ideas through e-mail.
A colleague in the department, Dr Kailash K. K., has been intimately associated with the volume — in organising the conference, coordinating with the participants, presenting a paper, and also preparing abstracts of some of the article. Over the years, he has become more a dear friend than merely an accomplished fellow traveller in the arena of Indian politics. I am also grateful to my two other colleagues Dr Ronki Ram and Dr Pampa Mukherjee for not only contributing articles for the volume but also encouraging me in the endeavour. Professor Sanjay Chaturvedi, Dr Deepak K. Singh, Dr Navjot and Ms Janaki Srinivasan, all dear colleagues in the department, have always been supportive in creating a congenial environment in the department for academic pursuits. Professor Bhupinder Brar, the ‘Bhishmapitamah’ of the department, has been the guiding force for all of us. While collecting reading material to write the Introduction for the volume, I received valuable help from Paramjit Singh, the office superintendent of the UGC-SAP and ASIHSS-assisted departmental library. This is also a befitting occasion to recall with immense pride the rich legacy that our department, amongst the oldest and finest in the country, has enjoyed over decades in the form of seminal contributions made in the discipline of state politics, especially by Professors T. R. Sharma, P. S. Verma and late Pradeep Kumar. I would be failing in my duty if I do not thank the students at the department who opted for the course on state politics for continued and productive engagements I have had with them in the classroom and outside.

I wish to thank the editorial board of the *Economic and Political Weekly*, especially Rammanohar Reddy, for providing me space and for constructive suggestions on the articles I have published in the journal. My two articles in the volume draw heavily from the articles published in the journal in recent years.

I also wish to place on record my appreciation of the keen interest shown by Routledge, New Delhi in this volume and am thankful to the Routledge team for their suggestions, support and extremely efficient and friendly handling of the manuscript.

Finally, I must thank my family — my wife Vibha and children Ishita and Siddharth — for being a constant source of great support and sustenance.

I dedicate the volume to my parents who gave their all to us children without asking anything in return.
Recent India has been witness to the onset of the democratic processes that have resulted in the reconfiguration of its politics and economy. Among these processes, most significant has been the assertion of identity politics. There have been struggles around the assertiveness and conflicting claims of the identity groups, and of struggles amongst them, often fought out on lines of region, religion, language (even dialect), caste and community. These struggles have found expressions in the changed mode of electoral representation that has brought the local/regional into focus with the hitherto politically dormant groups and regions finding voices. Emergence of a more genuinely representative democracy has led to the sharpening of the line of distinction between or among the identity groups and the regions.

The process has received an impetus with the introduction of the new economic policies as the marginal groups as well as the peripheral regions increasingly feel left out with the centre gradually withdrawing from the social and economic sector and market economy privileging the privileged, be it the social groups or the regions.\(^1\) Coastal states, linguistic ‘minority’ states, mineral rich states along with the high income ‘progressive’ states have benefited much more from the flow of foreign as well as indigenous private investment in contrast to the ‘laggard’ states having peripheral locations, disturbed law and order situation, poor economic and social infrastructure, unmanageable disparate territory and huge population lacking in terms of cultural capital, more often than not, belonging to linguistic ‘majority’ (Kurian 2000; Ahluwalia 2000; Kohli 2006; Sengupta and Kumar 2008). Regional inequalities within the states in terms of income and consumption have been widening. Inter-state as well as intra-state disparities have grown

---

\(^1\) Few peripheral regions, which are the hotspots of economic reform, are in the throes of the people’s movement, as the locals feel they are being taken for a ride by both the government and the multinationals in the name of development.
faster in the post-reforms period.\(^2\) What may be called the ‘secession of the rich’,\(^3\) even the rich states, attracting huge private investments and registering impressive growth, have started resenting the continued dependence of relatively underdeveloped states on the central revenues transferred to them. While the relatively developed states complain of ‘reverse’ discrimination, the peripheral regions of some of these states complain of being victim of ‘internal colonialism’.

The above processes have significantly contributed to the regionalisation of polity with the regional states emerging as the prime arenas where politics and economy actually unfold.\(^4\) There has been a marked increase in the capacity of the states to influence their own development performance as the idea of ‘shared sovereignty’ takes over (Bagchi 2008: 45). Development or not, it is now the state level vernacular elites, more often than not belonging to the hitherto dormant identity groups in post-Mandal India, who influence or make the critical policy decisions and whose choices actually affect economic and political happenings in their respective states and also at the centre while participating in the coalition governments that have become regular feature in the last seven Lok Sabha elections. This has led to the decline of the politics of patronage, prevalent during the ‘Congress system’. Regional/state level parties now negotiate with the dominant coalition-making national party for crucial portfolios that allows them to bring in investments in their regions or they simply

\(^2\) Calling the post-reform period ‘a period of growth with inequality’, Nagaraj has observed that the so-called growth of the Indian economy ‘has favoured urban India, organised sector, richer states and property owners, against rural India, unorganised sector, poorer states and wage earners ... India’s growth process during the last two decades does not seem to have been a virtuous one — it has polarised the economy’ (Nagaraj 2000: 2831).

\(^3\) ‘If the growth prospects of the nation get tied to the degree of success in enticing direct foreign investments, then the richer regions feel that they would be better placed in this regard if they acted on their own, unencumbered by the burden of belonging to the same country as the poor, violent, crime-infested regions’ (Patnaik 2000: 153).

\(^4\) In electoral terms, there have been two indicators that stand out among others, in the context of the regionalisation argument. One, the representation of the state-level parties in the legislative bodies has increased to the level that it appears that the national polity is little more than the aggregation of the regional. Two, the national parties have increasingly adopted state-specific electoral campaigns and policies.
bargain for the better financial allocation for their own states/regions in return of their political support even when they impart outside support. The electorates, therefore, do not hesitate any longer to vote for the parties pursuing aggressive regional agenda for fear of neglect of their region.

A study of the micro-level mechanisms, which are shaping political actions and processes of mobilisation at local level, has therefore now become imperative for an understanding of the internal dynamics of Indian politics and economy as well as for drawing the theoretical conclusions on a larger canvas. There has been a growing realisation that it is at the state level that the ‘future analyses of Indian politics must concentrate’ (Chibber and Nooruddin 1999).

Greater level of recognition of state as the primary unit of analysis has led to the emergence of state politics as an autonomous discipline, whose study is now being considered essential for a nuanced understanding of Indian politics. Ironically, the newfound exalted status of the discipline is in sharp contrast to its earlier dismal state not long ago when it was treated merely as an appendage of the discipline of Indian politics (read ‘national politics’).

The lack of autonomy of the discipline of state politics at the time could be primarily attributed to three factors.

First, within the grand comparative analytical framework developed by the liberal schools of political modernisation and political development to study the developing societies that dominated the ‘third world’ political theory, the newly independent nation states were considered as the prime movers in terms of economy and politics and therefore were taken as the fundamental units of analysis. In the quest of reaching about a general theory that would have near universal application (recall stage theory of growth), the constituent units within the nation state and their historical specificities were completely ignored. Quite a few Indian political theorists, under the spell of the American Political Science Association, followed suit. As for the Marxist writings on Indian politics, it remained under the spell of neo-Marxist critique in the form of underdevelopment/dependency/world systems that again undertook the ‘post-colonial state’ as the unit of analysis (Chatterjee 2010: 6–7).

Second, due to the prevalence of what used to be called the ‘Congress system’, the politics and economy (refer the development planning model) at the state level at the time was very much guided by the ‘dominant centre’, with the ‘high command’ pulling the key
strings of power. State politics thus appeared merely as ‘a poor copy’ of the politics unfolding at the national level.

Third, in the then euphoria of ‘Nehruvian era’, when the whole emphasis was on achieving ‘institution building/ state building/ nation-building’ under the leadership of a nationalist and modernising state elite that commanded tremendous degree of confidence and legitimacy, it was inevitable that politics at the state level would be studied from the ‘national perspective’ even if at the cost of missing the ‘esoteric details’ concerning the regional states (Yadav and Palshikar 2006). Arguably, there was an all-pervading feeling shared by the intelligentsia of the time that ‘too much attention to state affairs’ was a ‘mark of parochial attachments’.

The defining moment for the discipline came in the form of the general elections held in 1967 which marked the beginning of the veering away of different states, at different points of time and through different ways, from the ‘Congress system’ (Kothari 1970). The grudging recognition of the states, once considered the bane of Indian unity, as the ‘mainstay of India’s democracy and the crucial building block of the Indian nation’ (Mitra 2006: 46), also facilitated the emergence of state politics as a discipline in its own right. Consequently, the next two decades that followed saw the publication of the volumes on state politics edited by Weiner (1968), Narain (1976), Wood (1984) and Frankel and Rao (1990).

Falling in to what one may consider now as belonging to somewhat ‘outmoded’ genre of writings, the first three edited volumes, mentioned above, included state-specific articles that were basically focused on enumerating the determinants of the state level political dynamics in great empirical details. For the scholars contributing to these volumes, regional states provided more or less self-contained universe (called ‘microcosm’ as well as ‘macrocosm’ by Weiner 1968: 4) within which their politics (mainly electoral) were conducted and analysed. Based on state-specific empirical details about the political history, the politico-administrative structure, changing patterns of political participation, the nature of party system and the performance of the political regimes; the articles presented descriptive analyses of the nature and dynamics of the political processes in the particular states. Employing a political

---

5 Significantly, Weiner justified the need to undertake ‘political research’ on Indian states by suggesting that it was at the state level that the ‘conflicts among castes, religious groups, tribes, and linguistic groups and factions are played out’ and which hampers efforts ‘to modernize’ (Weiner 1968: 6).
sociological approach, which was hugely inspired by the modernisation theory literature, the articles essentially privileged the ‘political’ while relatively ignoring the ‘economic’.

The two volumes edited by Rao and Frankel, however, belonged to a somewhat different genre, much more in tune with the then emergent trend in the study of state politics, as the articles focused on the historical patterns of political transformation taking place in particular states. The varying relationship between caste and class in the states, especially in terms of land question, came up in several articles for theoretical inquiries while trying to unravel the problematic of ‘the decline of dominance’ of the traditional elites in the rural hinterlands. Limiting their analysis to a specific state, the articles in the two volumes could not explore the variation in intensity of the caste-based cleavage structures across the states as the other backward caste (OBC)/middle peasant caste coalition had emerged more powerfully in some states in comparison to other states, especially in the northern Indian states at the time of writing those articles. About the pattern of politicisation and mobilisation of the peasant and the OBC castes across the regional states of India, an edited volume by Omvedt (1982) again has state-specific articles that fail to take advantage of systematic comparative analysis.

In tenor with the then prevailing trend, all the edited volumes, mentioned above and others, contained articles that focused on one state. There was hardly any effort on the part of the contributors to use their state-specific studies for building up a larger argument about the emergent nature of Indian politics across the states. Almost all of them studiously avoided employing a comparative inter-state framework or developing a theoretical framework for their empirical analyses.6

---

6 The volume edited by John Wood (1984) did have a comparative article by Roderick Church. Based on a study of the emergent caste politics of the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat, Church came up with an argument that is relevant even today. He argued that at the time, among the different landowning twice-born upper castes, the farming middle/intermediate castes, the landless agricultural as well as the service and artisan lower castes and the Scheduled Castes, it was the lower castes, numerically weak and dispersed and sandwiched between the middle and the ex-untouchable castes which were facing resistance and even an attempt at co-option of their leadership by the upper and middle ‘dominant’ castes whenever they sought a larger share in political processes. Church argued, with a sense of prescience, that the ‘lower castes are the last stratum to be brought into politics’ (Church 1984: 231).
How can one explain the marked reluctance on the part of the political analysts to employ the comparative framework while undertaking the study of state politics? The ‘segmented nature of polity’ and variegated nature of society besides extreme fluidity in the nature of state politics were often cited as the two main reasons as to why the advantages of comparative studies across the states could not be adequately explored (Pai 2000: 2). Also, compared to national politics, local politics was considered as limited in nature. Commonalities, if any, discernable in the nature of emerging trends in the state politics, were ignored as only the distinctive features received attention.

Attempts to employ comparative method in the arena of state politics could gain some momentum as late as in the late 1980s. Kohli (1987), one of the earliest comparativists, argued that India constituted a ‘laboratory for comparative political analysis’ in the sense that despite having many states with quite diverse politics, the fact remains that these states are within the same ‘framework of Indian federalism’ and therefore present ideal type conditions for ‘controlled experiments’.

The burgeoning literature that has come up on the subject since then can broadly be categorised into three categories. The first category would include studies that focus in depth on a single state, but use the concrete analysis to underpin larger theoretical arguments that can be applied elsewhere in India, something that was not attempted earlier. Most of these studies, however, are not comparative in nature. The writings that stand out include those of Singh (1992), Subramanian (1999), Hasan (1998), Baruah (1999), Kumar (2000a), Behera (2001), Prakash (2002), Jaffrelot (2003) and Kudaisya (2006).

Studies on the nature of electoral politics at the state level based on CSDS–Lokniti-conducted national election studies (NES) survey data would fall into second category. These ‘theoretically sensitive studies’ are distinguishable from most of the writings on state electoral politics, which are either in the genre of ‘mindless empiricism’ or are in the

---

7 Writing in the late 1970s, Narain referred to the fact that we had ‘to deal here not with one pattern but with several patterns of state politics which (were) emerging, if at all, through none too steady pull and swing of politics at the central and state levels’ (Narain 1976: xvi).
form of ‘impressionistic theorisations’ (Nigam and Yadav 1999). These academic efforts have been enabling in the sense that they aim at an understanding of the larger forces and long-term changes taking place in the state party system and electoral politics during the ‘third phase of democratisation in India’ (Palshikar 2004: 1478).

A reading of the state-specific articles in this genre, written by the Lokniti network members for Economic and Political Weekly, reveal not only the basic determinants of electoral politics in the state like the demographic composition and nature of ethnic/communal/caste cleavages as well as other socio-political cleavages like the regional, rural–urban and caste–class linkages, but also present an analysis of the electoral outcomes highlighting differences in major issues raised in manifestos, emergent trends, alliance formations, seat adjustments, selection of candidates and campaigns and so on. The survey data helps the authors explain the opinions and attitudes of the electorates having different age, sex, caste, community, and class and education profiles. Going beyond merely the journalistic task of ‘counting the votes’/‘profiling the electoral behaviour’/‘assessing the gain of shift in support base’/‘predicting future political reconfigurations/realignments’, these articles do refer to the critical questions like: Did the voters have any real choice? Did the electoral politics have a real impact over public policies in relations to the substantive social and economic issues?

---

8 Refer two special issues of Economic and Political Weekly: one on the ‘National Election Study 2004’, 39 (51), 18–24 December 2004 and the other on ‘State Parties, National Ambitions’, 39 (14 & 15), 3–9 April 2004. Some of these articles have been included in an anthology of political parties (deSouza and Sridharan 2006) and in an edited volume that includes updated and revised versions of the articles along with three general articles providing the context of the analysis of state politics in India (Shastri et al. 2009). Economic and Political Weekly, in a special volume on the state elections, 2007–2008, published a set of state-specific commentaries on the Assembly elections accompanied by an article by Yogendra Yadav and Suhas Palishkar that sets the context and provides an overview for comparative analysis (XLIV [6], 7–13 February 2009).

9 Some of the key information and analysis from the CSDS-NES data collection and surveys, in particular, appeared in a special issue of the Journal of Indian School of Political Economy, XV (1 & 2), 2003.
The articles mentioned above, written over a period of one and half decades and covering different state elections, confirm the extreme fluidity in the nature of electoral permutations and combinations that come to assume power at the central or state levels. They, however, also reveal that despite the region-specific nature of electoral politics and the emergence of distinct identities, emerging trends in Indian politics do reveal certain commonalities across the country, i.e., presence of electoral regions either as historically constituted or merely administrative ones; the emergence of electoral bipolarities; and the politicisation and mobilisation of the ‘old, received, but hitherto dormant identities’ (Kumar 2003: 3146).

Besides the state specific commentaries, there are also other important volumes/articles which do attempt to develop a coherent and a systematic theoretical framework based on NES data to make sense of the nature of electoral democracy in India (Yadav 1996; Chibber 1999; Mitra and Singh 1999; Palshikar 2004; Suri 2005; Yadav and Palshikar 2006, 2008, 2009; Heath et al. 2006; Varshney 2007). In the same Lokniti genre of studies falls the volumes edited by Hansen and Jaffrelot (2001) and Roy and Wallace (2003 and 2007).

In the third category would fall the studies that employ the inter-state comparative method to look for the commonalities and differences in the politics of two or more comparable states, and then armed with their findings, reflect and theorise on a broader canvass. These studies are based on the assumption that the regional states in India ‘provide an ideal environment for the purpose of a comparative analysis, provided that the units are autonomous and homogeneous for the purpose of the study and the cases are selected in a manner that minimizes biases. Most of the literature in this category takes up the research questions related to one thematic area like the issue of governance or ethnicity and select purposely (and not randomly) the states as the sampling units to keep the study focused and also make comparison possible. The writings, based on inter-state comparative approach that have come up since the momentous decade

---

10 While emphasising the autonomy of state politics from national politics, Yadav and Palshikar (2008: 14–22) present a ‘preliminary frame’ for inter-state comparative analysis by presenting the critical issues for enquiry in the form of what they call the ‘ten theses’ on state politics in India.

The widely acclaimed volume on state politics edited by Jenkins (2004), falls in the above genre of the studies, as the volume includes articles that employ the two-state comparative method to take up four sets of thematic areas, namely, economic policy making (Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu; West Bengal and Gujarat); subaltern

---

11 Atul Kohli undertook an extensive field-based research to gauge the effectiveness of different party regimes in undertaking the anti-poverty measures. Based on the principle of purposive selection, Kohli selected three case studies where poverty alleviation policies had achieved the maximum (West Bengal governed by the Left Front) or the minimum success (Uttar Pradesh governed by the Janata coalition), and the third one that fell into the middle category (Karnataka governed by the Congress with Devraj Urs as the Chief Minister). The difference of the ‘regional distributive outcomes’ in terms of pro-poor measures were ‘function of the regime controlling political power’, as party-dominated regimes in India ‘closely reflects the nature of the ruling political party. The ideology, organisation and class alliances underlying a party dominated regime are then of considerable consequence’ (Kohli 1987: 10).

12 Like Kohli, Harriss also employed a comparative framework to take up a policy study seeking to explain differential poverty reducing performance across states. For the purpose, Harriss revisited the state-specific articles in the Frankel and Rao volume after a gap of a decade to show as to how the differences in terms of balance of caste/class power and also in terms of the party systems in different states influence the policy process and the performance of the states. He argued that that in the states where the ‘power of the locally dominant castes/classes has been challenged to a great extent’ or where ‘stable, relatively well-institutionalized parties compete for their votes’ have done comparatively better in terms of poverty reduction (Harriss 1999: 3367–3376).

13 Varshney (2002) combines an inter-state focus with an advocacy of taking up city as his unit of analysis for the study of communal riots involving the Hindus and the Muslims as he argues that the communal riots are urban phenomena in India. In the following years, Brass (2003) and Wilkinson (2004) also analysed episodes of ethnic violence in post-colonial India using city as the unit of their analyses. While Varshney had worked with three sets of paired cities, Brass took only one city and Wilkinson cities/constituencies for their field studies.

14 Jenkins, while making a comparative study of the politics of economic reforms in the states of Rajasthan and Maharashtra, offers valuable insights in the political management of the reform process by virtue of employing India’s federal
politicisation (Bihar and Orissa; Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan); civic engagement (Kerala and Uttar Pradesh); and political leadership studies (Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu). Picking up threads from Kohli’s notion of India as a ‘laboratory of democracy’, Jenkins refers to the ‘robust form of federalism’ that enables the political analysts

structure as an institutional framework for a quasi-laboratory of competing policies and as an enabling structure aiming at providing incentives for policy innovation.

In her study of the politics of economic policy in the ‘large and multileveled polity’, Sinha focuses on the ‘dominant puzzle’ of the ‘failed developmental state’ in India, namely as to why despite supposedly following a uniform developmental trajectory marked by uniform central policy interventions and regulations under the development planning model for so long, whose remnants are still visible, the regional states in India have come to reveal very different developmental outcomes. More intriguingly, why there has been an uneven regional pattern of investment flow in those regional states even where historical and economic explanations might suggest convergence (she selects Gujarat and West Bengal as case studies). Why has West Bengal, unlike Gujarat (and Tamil Nadu that had none of the initial advantages), failed to attract a higher share of investment on the basis of its initial strengths as a private capital-intensive state? The explanation, Sinha suggests, lies in the form of the differing ‘institutional and political capacities’ of the states. See Sinha (2004 and 2005).

Subrata K. Mitra (2006: 43). In another instance of purposive sampling Mitra, for his comparative study that aimed at measuring the level of governance in India, selected six states from the ‘four corners of India’ as the research sites where either the level of governance was perceived as low (Punjab and Bihar), high (West Bengal and Maharashtra) or the ones that fell into the middle category (Tamil Nadu and Gujarat).

Desai, while using a two-state comparative perspective, raises the question as to why despite being ruled by the same left parties, Kerala has experienced much better success than Bengal in bringing about most substantive anti-poverty reforms. The explanation, she suggests, after comparing the historical state legacies, the role of the left-party formation and mode of insertion in civil society in the two states, is that Kerala has fared better due to its relative advantage in terms of greater ‘strength of subordinate class mobilization and associationalism combined with a strong left presence, both parliamentary as well as extra-parliamentary’.

A formulation which would have wider implication for development studies in a vibrant democracy like India, Desai argues, is that a ‘dynamic, synergistic relationship between parties and movements’ can only ‘sift political power in ways that substantially reduce poverty or achieve comprehensive development’ (Desai 2007: 19, 23).
to undertake a comparative analysis of the politics of India’s ‘29 mini democracies’ that have ‘almost identical institutional infrastructures’ and that operate under similar ‘economic policy framework and the legal protections enshrined in the Indian constitution’. Desai, another comparativist, also views India as an ‘ideal ground for comparative analysis’ as it holds ‘constant certain factors such as its position in the sphere of international relations, geography, ecology, religion and early political formations’ which, in turn, provide ‘a range of variations in key social, political and economic pre-conditions and outcomes’ in its different regional states (Desai 2007: 22–23).

**Assertion of Regions within Regions**

Notwithstanding the impressive range of studies on state politics that have come up in the last decade, there has been a dearth of literature that focuses on the regions within the states or employs an intra-state or inter-state regional perspective in a comparative mode. This is despite the fact that cultural heterogeneity of the regions within the states over the years has been sharpened as a result of the unevenness of development and unequal access to political power in a centralised federal political economy (Sathyamurthy 2000: 33).

As a consequence, India’s federal ideology has registered a marked shift as regional identity, culture and geographical difference now appear to be better recognised as a valid basis for administrative division and political representation. No wonder then that the recent decades have been witness to the assertion of well defined geographically, culturally and historically constituted distinct regions that have emerged within the states, showing sharpened ethnic/communal/caste as well as other social-political cleavages like the regional and rural-urban ones.

The newly found assertion of the regions received an impetus in the wake of the creation of the three new states of Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand carved out from the parent states of Madhya Pradesh, Madhyapradesh,

---

18 While asked to prioritise their loyalty in the NES conducted by CSDS-Lokniti in 1996 and 1999, 53.4 and 50.7 per cent of the respondents respectively expressed their first loyalty to region rather than to India whereas only 21.0 and 21.4 per cent respectively put their loyalty first to India than to region.

19 Interestingly, there are a few studies that compare the politics of the specific regions in India with that of a region of another country, mainly focusing on the identity-based politics (Bose 1999).
Uttar Pradesh\textsuperscript{20} and Bihar respectively in November 2000 (Jayal 2000; Krishna 2000; Kumar 2000a).\textsuperscript{21} Significantly, this new wave of reorganisation was supported by all parties, in particular, by the two parties with nearly all-India presence, i.e. the Congress and the BJP, which could be attributed to the interests of the two parties in the highly competitive political environment, marked by the declining ability of any one party to win power at the centre on its own in the last seven general elections and also the concomitant rise of regional/state level parties in the ‘post-Congress polity’ reflecting the regional concerns about language, cultural identity, political autonomy and economic development. What also helped the cause was the fact that ‘ethnic communities in the three new states were unconnected with foreign enemies or cross border nationalities’ (Chadda 2002: 46–47).

The qualitative shift in the thinking about the territorially of a region is visible in the way demand for a ‘homeland of one’s own’ has become a ‘permissible’ issue for party agendas creating a new ‘field of opportunities’ for regions demanding statehood (Mawdsley 2005). Debates over territorial reorganisation have re-entered ‘mainstream’ political discussion after remaining a taboo for a long period, especially during the centralising and personalising leadership that took over after Nehru when assertions of regional identity were essentially viewed with suspicion and were stigmatised as parochial, chauvinist and even anti-national. Arguably, such apprehension is not evident in the Constitution which provides for a great degree of flexibility given to the Parliament under Article 3 to decide the bases on which new states are to be created, i.e., geography, demography, administrative convenience, language, ethnicity (read tribalism) or culture. Such constitutional flexibility has not only allowed for the accommodation

\textsuperscript{20} Holding the creation of Uttarakhand as a positive step, Kudaisya has gone to the extent of suggesting further break-up of UP into regional states as due to its self-image of being ‘a buffer to contain the linguistic principle as the basis for statehood’, the state has ‘failed to develop a regional identity of its own’ (Kudaisya 2006: 411–14).

\textsuperscript{21} Significantly Ambedkar, one of the architects of the Indian Constitution, had long argued in favour of the creation of present day Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh in his writings. Ambedkar’s consistent support for the creation of new states emanated from ‘his democratic impulse to accord political and cultural recognition to the term region, otherwise defined predominantly in a geographical spatial sense’ (Sarangi 2006: 151).
of regional aspirations in the past but has also provided an incentive for ongoing political projects aimed at looking for the exit options for the regions within regions.

Apart from much greater acceptance of the ‘demos-enabling’ feature of the Constitution (Stepan 2001: 315–61), yet another kind of shift is visible in the way the new states are now being proposed on the grounds of good governance and development rather than on the language principle that has, ostensibly, guided state formation in the past (Brass 1994). Even the dialect communities have been asking for their own state while underlining the cultural and literary distinctiveness and richness of the dialect.

In a changed mode of electoral representation that has ushered in the ‘third wave of democracy’, newer and smaller states are also being viewed as more suited to provide for better representation of the electorates’ preferences in the composition of government as when they are part of the same state, the smaller regions’ electorates tend to vote strategically to elect representatives with preferences more closely aligned to the bigger region. The electorates no longer have to make a trade-off.

With the centre agreeing in principle to consider the demand for the creation of a separate Telangana state in December 2009, old and new demands for redrawing the boundaries of the states have been coming up thick and fast with increased intensity including those of Coorg in Karnataka, Mithilanchal in Bihar, Saurashtra in Gujarat, Gorkhaland and Kamtapur in West Bengal, Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Saurashtra in Gujarat, and then Harit Pradesh, Poorvanachal, Braj Pradesh and Awadh Pradesh in Uttar Pradesh, Maru Pradesh in Rajasthan, Bhojpur comprising areas of eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh, Bundelkhand comprising areas of UP and MP, and a Greater Cooch Behar state out of the parts of Assam and West Bengal.

Under the emerging political landscape, there has been an imperative need to analyse the politics and economy of these newly assertive regions as they aspire to emerge in the near future as the arena where the political and economic choices and decisions would be made and unmade. Taking up the regions within the states as a distinctive analytical category and employing a comparative method for in-depth analysis would thus ensure that the ‘smaller’ but significant pictures/narratives are not lost amidst the larger ones as happened not long ago within the discipline of Indian politics.
A Methodological Note

As a note of caution, for a comparativist, the task of comparing disparate political phenomena represented by the mushrooming regions in a complex diverse society like India would not be easy. Adopting a highly localised approach to bring out regional distinctiveness invariably involves the in-depth study of an entire range of factors that make a political situation in the way it exists. To avoid oversimplified generalisation, a comparativist working on India would do well to undertake concrete analysis of specific situations in two or more regions that are highly localised and issue-specific (say the regional movements demanding separate statehood in different parts of India) and then look for the differences and not merely adding up the similarities. In a major advantage of employing a region-based approach, it would not only enable the comparativists to re-frame the whole debate but to interrogate the cogency of conventional formulations, often derived from an analysis that took the regional state as the unit of analysis.

As regions within the states, to re-emphasise, are not merely politico-administrative instituted constructs but are also imagined or constituted, among others, in historical, geographic, economic, sociological or cultural terms, any meaningful comparative study of the regions would naturally straddle the disciplinary boundaries of social sciences. An amalgamation of political sociological and political economy approaches would thus encourage social analysts from different disciplines and not merely from political science to unravel the complexity of the emergent nature of regional politics.

About the Volume

This volume has been inspired by the idea mentioned above to attempt micro studies of the politics and economy of the states/regions in terms of their specificities. With the focus on the twin issues of identity and development that are often signifiers of the unravelling politics in the federal polity, the articles in the volume make a concerted attempt to look at and also beyond the states by exploring the particularities of the regions within these states in a comparative mode from the vantage point of democratic politics as it unfurls in recent India. The same agenda guides the articles that employ two-state comparative framework.
The first three articles in the volume take up the study of the three newly created states of Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh. The three states have been products of the identity-based regional movements for separate statehood masking their heterogeneity primarily due to the shared nature of popular perception about their ethno-cultural and geographical marginalities — Uttarakhand because of its mountainous topography and pahari identity, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh because of their large tribal population. The three states, despite being rich in terms of natural resources, were also victims of the neglect and discrimination by their parent states’ governments and the state elites belonging to other regions of their parent states. The three articles underline the critical need to take into consideration, while formulating developmental policies, the complex reality of the process of identity formation and the continued and growing presence of the regions within what was supposed to be a culturally homogeneous territorial homeland of the agitating masses.

Seeking an alternative assessment of developmental imbalances, Amit Prakash, in his article on Jharkhand, argues for a critical need to undertake a socio-political redefinition of a ‘region’ rather than relying on the traditional spatial/geographical definitions. Based on an analysis of the available datasets for the tribal population in Jharkhand, Prakash observes that despite concerted public policy efforts for ‘development’ of the tribal population spanning over more than half a century, for the tribal community, realisation of right to socio-economic development remains still a distant dream. Part of the reason behind such abysmal levels of development outputs, he suggests, is privileging the spatial definition of the region, which conceals gross disparities at the local level in the realisation of these goals.

Besides, the spatial definition of the region also leads to a rather homogenised development policy in which the socio-cultural requirements of the different social groups concerned have found no space. For instance, the questions of rights to land, forest, displacement and rehabilitation (in addition to the issues of literacy, health and employment) are central elements for the realisation of the socio-economic rights of the tribal community but the mainstream development theory considers violations of rights to land, water, forests and displacement as costs of ‘development’. The essential characteristics of a particular socio-cultural societal group have come under threat. This, in turn, poses a challenge to the legitimacy of the state, hence defeating part of the purpose of ‘development’.
The need to rethink the notion of region at a theoretical level recurs in the article on Chhattisgarh by Dharmendra Kumar. His article suggests that a region is not a static but a dynamic entity, which tends to constantly evolve and whose forms change in accordance with the human activities. These evolutions are a dialectical product of the socio-geographical reality and its interactions with material processes (such as those related to modernity and most recently to globalisation), under whose influence the region becomes a concrete reality at a particular historical juncture. In this way, region gets integrated with its own socio-geographical specificities. Such integration may also lead to the beginning of a movement politics of resistance and stretch a thread of integration at that level as has happened with Chhattisgarh with the arrival of the global capital in the region. While referring to the working-class movements in Chhattisgarh, Kumar suggests that the specificities of a region may result in development of a common ground for transformative politics with radical potential in the region.

The limitation of the policies of development also figures in the third article of this section. Pampa Mukherjee, in her article, traces the movement for the separate statehood of Uttarakhand to the historical experiences of discrimination and exploitation of the local pahari communities by the parent state of Uttar Pradesh. The neglect of the hilly regions of Kumaon and Garhwal helped in bridging the divide of mutual conflict and hostility between the people of the two regions and prepared the ground for a concerted movement for Uttarakhand.

Mukherjee’s essay is divided into three parts. The first part introduces the region and while doing so also provides the backdrop in which assertion of regional identity took place in Uttarakhand region. In this context, she refers to the stark insensitivity and neglect to this hilly region displayed by policy planners. The second part deals with the movement politics for separate statehood, which created an appropriate environment for the forging of a common Uttarakhandi identity. This identity, in turn, was instrumental in crystallising the idea of a separate state at the popular level. Drawing upon her study of the Uttarakhand movement, Mukherjee, in the third part of her article, suggests that demands for statehood in various regions of India indicate a growing political consciousness and assertion of hitherto marginalised and discriminated sections of the population for autonomous political space to articulate the needs and concerns of their respective regions.
The second section of the volume includes the articles that refer to the regions that have been witness to the identity based demands for separate statehood/territorial homeland or autonomy, as mentioned above. Region-specific articles are complemented with a two-state comparative article that takes up an analysis of the politics of autonomy in the two borderland states of Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir.

A reading of the region-specific articles reveal as to how there has been a shift in the bases of demands for the separate statehood in recent India. Once based primarily on the cultural–linguistic basis, now the mobilisation and subsequent assertion of an identity group for separate statehood or grant of regional autonomy emerges out of the aspiration for greater share in political and economic powers in a resource-scarce economy. Despite the democratic promise on the contrary, cultural heterogeneity of the regions within the states over the years has been sharpened as a result of the non-fulfilment of the federal promise of evenness of development and equal access to political power. In this context, we can add that colonial patterns have not only persisted but have got intensified in post-colonial India. The trend has received an impetus under new economic policies that put one state against another and even one region against another within a state clamouring for investments in a competitive mode.

While referring to the separatist/subregional movements in different parts of Karnataka, their social composition, nature and the larger politics, the cultural nuances and differences among them, Muzaffar Assadi, in his article, focuses mainly on the movement for separate statehood for Coorg in the Kodagu region. In a comparative mode, Assadi argues that the demand for separate statehood for Coorg draws from the meta-narratives of history and contemporary political economy of binary oppositions of development and deprivation. He refers in this context to the contradictions prompted by the changes in the local economy due to the process of globalisation and also the self-articulation of the Coorgis as a culturally dislocated and de-ethnicised category.

The argument that the regional imbalance in terms of development and sharing of political power triggers on the demand for a separate political space occurs in Arun K. Jana’s article. Jana refers to the ethnic demand for separate statehood in the regions of Gorkhaland in the predominantly hill district of Darjeeling and the concurrent demand for a separate state of Kamtapur comprising of the six northern districts in
the plains of North Bengal. He attributes it to the economic neglect of the indigenous communities of the North Bengal region, which enables local ethnic organisations like the Gorkha National Liberation Front, the two factions of the Kamtapur People’s Party and, more recently, the Greater Coochbehar People’s Association to mobilise the people around the separate statehood agenda.

The local resentment, Jana argues, gets exacerbated also because of three other reasons. First, it is because of the difference in terms of language and culture between the marginal indigenous ethnic groups and the dominant Bengali settler community. Indigenous ethnic groups are marginal also in social terms as they largely belong to the category of Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Second, the erosion of democracy due to the usage of the aggressive tactics for capturing and controlling institutions within the region by the CPM led Left Front has further alienated the indigenous groups. Moreover, the left has moved away from class politics, the politics that brought it to power in the state in 1977. Third, the absence of an organised kind of opposition that can aggregate and articulate the interests and demands of these disparate ethnic groups in the formal legislative forum has pushed the people towards the movement politics bordering on violence, which is gaining in terms of stridency.

Rama Rao Bonagani, in his article, evaluates and analyses the role of socio-economic, cultural and political factors, which have rekindled the demand for separate statehood in the Telangana region in Andhra Pradesh. He refers to the process of economic reform undertaken in recent years that has accentuated the process of regionalisation of identity politics in a relatively underdeveloped Telangana, as regional imbalances increase with investments going to the prosperous coastal Andhra region. Significantly, the statehood demand is also entwined with the popular demand for the redressal of the social and cultural grievances of the people like the rewriting of a separate history of the region so that the cultural distinctiveness of the region may be recognised. The political opportunism resorted to by the parties for short-term electoral gains, especially in the present era of coalition politics, has been another contributory factor.

The uniqueness of the movement for separate statehood for Harit Pradesh, as Jagpal Singh argues in his article, lies in the fact that unlike the other regions in Uttar Pradesh, namely Bundelkhand, Poorvanachal and Ruhelkhand, from where similar demands for separate statehood keep cropping up intermittently, it is not the underdevelopment but
the comparative prosperity of the region that is being projected as the basis for the region being a victim of ‘reverse discrimination’/‘internal colonialism’ at the hands of the successive state governments. The movement’s leadership claims that the north-western region is not only being neglected but, what is worse, its resources are being exploited for the betterment of the other regions of the state. The movement has received an impetus as the region grapples with its own set of agrarian and social crises that can respectively be attributed to the implementation of the WTO regime and the assertion of the subalterns against the dominance of the Jat landed peasantry. Ironically, in the absence of a visible mass movement, it is the electoral factor that gives a semblance of hope at the moment to the protagonists of the movement like Ajit Singh, leader of the Rashtriya Lok Dal.

Writing in the context of India’s northeast region, consisting of the ‘seven sisters’ states (and now joined by Sikkim), Samir Kumar Das situates identities in the newly emergent terrain of democratic politics in India and discusses the question with particular reference to the ongoing demand for the creation of linguistic states like Bodoland in the region. In order to push his argument, Das refers to what he calls a democratic paradox, namely, while identity plays a role in broadening the country’s democratic base and making it part of the public agenda of rights by way of trying to disperse the hegemony of identity of the constituent states, it too has its own limits, especially when it comes to the question of reproducing and sustaining democracy. For one cannot stick to one’s identity beyond the threshold while seeking democracy and justice.

It follows that identity politics is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of democracy building although there is no denying that continuous non-recognition of injustice and deficit of democracy only create and complicate problems for it. Das shows as to how the social divisions based on such identities as gender and ethnicity have been getting incorporated into the public agenda of rights and justice in the struggle against the accretion of identities, aided and facilitated by the linguistic reorganisation of states growing apace in the northeast region since the early 1960s.

Taking up the issue of identity politics in a comparative manner in the two neighbouring borderland states of Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, Ashutosh Kumar suggests that the assertion of identity politics based on religion or ethnicity, particularly in conjunction with territorial bases, has erroneously long been considered as posing a threat to the
Indian nation state. The reckless pursuit of the ‘hegemonised’ and ‘homogenised’ politics by the centralising and personalising political class in India, which refuses to acknowledge and accommodate the competing national and quasi-national identities and their demands, has been largely responsible for the politics of autonomy/azadi in the two states in recent times. As to why the movement in Kashmir continues unabated and Punjab remains ‘peaceful’ but disgruntled, Kumar attributes it to the kind of lopsided politics, pursued by the political class in ‘dealing’ with the autonomist/secessionist movements. It is a politics that is characterised by resort to coercion, economic populism, ad hoc-ism and cooperation (read co-option) with the ‘nationalist’ leadership (often locally discredited) in the form of accords, which are doomed to fail.

The third part of the volume refers to articles that take up identity politics in relation to caste politics in a particular region within a state or across states.

Reflecting on post-Mandal India, Rajeshwari Deshpande takes note of the rise and assertion of many new caste organisations representing numerically weak or hitherto dormant castes in state politics. She draws her evidence from her study of the nature of organisations of the ‘Lingayat’ caste in select towns of south Maharashtra and north Karnataka regions. Her article argues that Lingayat caste associations have gradually acquired a complex social identity as they oscillate between being a separate sect detached from Brahminical Hinduism and claiming the status of a dominant caste within the established caste hierarchy. The caste as a social group is differently placed in the political context of the two regions. It is in the context of these regional variations and also in the context of the complex social identity of the group that the Lingayat caste associations try to develop their own politics at the local level.

Deshpande’s account of the region-specific politics in the two neighbouring states reveals aspects of the changing role of caste associations that have wider implications. Her article provides insights into how a caste, both as a social and a political category, gets contextualised in the prism of the region, the various strategies that caste groups adopt for their effective mobilisation in the emergent competitive regional party systems and also how the changing political and social context at the regional level introduces serious limitations on caste-based identity politics. Two sets of larger issues are latent in the discussion carried out in the article. While an understanding of the
working of the caste associations gives us an opportunity to revisit the debates about the contemporary location of caste and its interaction with politics, at another level, it also raises important issues about the complex nature of patterns of identity politics shaping up across states and their regions.

In her article on the politics of the Dalit organisations in Tamil Nadu, Neeru Mehra primarily focuses on three related themes: the emergence of a separate Dalit consciousness and identity as distinct from the Dravidian identity; the form of assertion by Dalits in the state and their relation to the electoral politics; and the impact of the emergent Dalit organisations on state level politics.

Mehra underlines the fact that the caste system in Tamil Nadu has region-specific distinctive features. The varna system, for instance, is not relevant in Tamil Nadu as there is negligible presence of intermediate castes such as the Kammas and Reddis in the Andhra Pradesh or the Vokkaliggas and the Lingayats in Karnataka. As a result, the caste hierarchy in the state is very steep in the sense that the social distance between the Brahmins and the untouchable castes has traditionally been very wide. In a state where untouchability in its most virulent form has been a widespread phenomenon since the 8th century AD, recent decades have witnessed an upsurge of democratic consciousness among the Panchamas, as the Dalits are called, who have been critiquing the colonial construction of Dravidian identity on the plank of the non-Brahmanism. Mehra argues that non-Brahmanism as such was not aimed at the destruction of the caste system but was essentially a struggle for political power among the various social groups, which is still continuing and is reflected in the shifting contours of the party system.

With the increasing consciousness and changes in the configuration of the caste relations, both in the north and south Tamil Nadu regions Dalit self-assertion has taken varied forms, leading to greater caste conflict. In the domain of electoral politics, a two-fold phenomenon has manifested itself, which is fragmenting the state level party system. The first is the emergence in the late 1980s of the lower backwards led by the Vanniyars who have carved out a non-Brahmin identity distinct from the upper backwards, leading to the formation of the PMK. The second is the emergence of the large number of Dalit organisations, some of which now seem to be coalescing towards the formation of the party under the leadership of Krishnaswamy.
The democratic upsurge among the Dalits as a result of the widening and deepening of democracy has not only resulted into them taking on the upper and middle castes but also fighting it out among themselves. Sudha Pai’s article, grounded in Andhra Pradesh, refers to the conflict between the Malas and the Madigas — two Dalit caste groups — over the sharing of the benefits of the governmental affirmative policies outcomes, and the demand by the latter that they should be provided separate quotas to safeguard their interests.

The Malas are found to a greater degree in the Circars or seven coastal districts that experienced colonial rule as part of the Madras Presidency, while the Madigas are more numerous in the nine Telangana districts that were part of the erstwhile Princely state of Hyderabad. In four districts of Rayalseema region, the proportion of both groups is about the same. The regional unevenness has relevance in Dalit politics. The Dalits of the coastal areas have experienced a number of social reform movements such as the non-Brahmin, Adi-Andhra, Christian missionary reform, rationalist and nationalist movements and as a result are ahead of the Dalits of Telangana. Significantly, the relative advance has acquired a caste dimension also as it is the Malas within the coastal districts and not the Madigas who have really benefited from colonial policy and activities of social reformers in the region and from ruling class politics of patronage and co-option after independence.

The Andhra case study, Pai argues, shows how the social and economic contexts in which the policies are implemented determine their impact. Contrary to the expectation of the constitution makers of India, who thought of creating a civil society by extending substantial citizenship rights to a vast section of historically deprived and marginalised groups, inequality of opportunities and ascriptive identities have failed to disappear. In actual practice, Pai suggests, these identities have become more marked with the appearance of new social and economic divisions between Dalits and non-Dalits and also among the marginal groups. The removal of discrimination and exclusion through equalisation of opportunities, the principle on which affirmative actions were envisaged, are no longer significant today. Social groups are more into demanding division and extension of specific quotas to smaller groups.

Ronki Ram, in his article, has also made an attempt to bring out the regional specificities of the caste system in the context of Punjab while arguing that caste, though prevalent throughout the country,
has never been monolithic and unilinear in its practice as every region has its specific and unique characteristics that closely impact upon its socio-political and economic structures. What distinguishes the Doaba, Malwa and Majha regions of Punjab from other parts of India, Ram argues, are three-fold: first, the material factor of the caste-based discriminations in Punjab as against the purity–pollution syndrome that prevails in other parts of India. Second, Punjab is distinguished from other regions due to the near complete landlessness among the Dalits and the ‘absolute monopoly’ of the Jats (a dominant peasant caste) on the agricultural lands in the state. Third, the social measurement scale in Punjab is not based on the purity/pollution principle of Brahminical orthodoxy. Instead, it is based on the landholding, martial strength and allegiance to Sikhism, a comparatively new reformist religion that openly challenges the rituals and dogmatic traditions of Hinduism and Islam.

What connect the Dalits of Punjab having different religious allegiance to their counterparts in other regions of India is their continued marginality and also the beginning of their resistance against the structures of social oppression and economic deprivations. The spread of deras in recent times across the three regions, especially in Doaba and Malwa, should be viewed in this context.

The fourth part of the volume includes the articles that refer to the state electoral politics in India while emphasising the regional specificities of the politics of identity based contestation and representation. The common argument in these articles is that the states are essentially ‘instituted regions’ and not the ‘natural regions’, comprising of the numerous regions having their distinctive historical specificities, which continue to influence the political attitudes, party politics and electoral outcomes even in the modern times of ‘democratic upsurge’. In a way, the electoral politics has accentuated regional consciousness combining with other identities like caste and religion.

Sanjay Lodha’s article argues that Rajasthan is an artificially created geographic entity comprising of as many as nine regions rooted primarily to their traditional identities as princely states dating back to the colonial era. These regions retain their distinctiveness in terms of their social and developmental profiles. Drawing on the CSDS-NES data, Lodha argues that these regional identities still impinge upon the people’s perception about the political issues and also largely influence the nature of electoral competition and electorate’s choice in the state.
Karnataka, since its inception, has been witness to as many as nine Lok Sabha elections and seven Assembly elections, each one ushering in a new trend and triggering off a series of political developments of far reaching political significance. Sandeep Shastri, in his article, refers to a clear caste matrix, which impacts upon the nature of political competition and the expression of political choices across the regions in the state, namely, Old Mysore region, Hyderabad-Karnataka region, Bombay-Karnataka region and Coorg. Such a study enables us to understand the nature of political competition and the expression of political choices across its regions. Presenting empirical evidence, Shastri argues that the nature of electoral verdicts in Karnataka come across as a by-product of the regions-specific trends at the time especially in the form of the social coalitions that emerge in a particular region and the nature of the electoral context (bipolar or tri-polar) in the regions.

The fifth and last part of the volume includes an article that refers to the politics of the economic policies and their outcomes in the context of specific states.

Despite having experienced similar economic and demographic development features in the pre-reform period (pre-1991), Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, the two states of India have witnessed divergent trends in the post-reform period. Why? Ashok K. Pankaj, in his comparative article, attributes it to the different political (policy) responses to (reforms in) governance and development by the anti-reform regime of the RJD in Bihar and the reform-friendly Congress government of Digvijay Singh in Madhya Pradesh.

Pankaj argues that the RJD’s attitude towards reform was conditioned by its ideological and political positions, its regional character, political agenda of governance, political–electoral constituency consisting largely of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Dalits, Muslims and the poor, absence of popular pressure and weak and divided opposition. On the other hand, economic and governance related reforms in Madhya Pradesh were facilitated by a political regime (the Congress), which had to work under the leadership and policy guidelines of the pro-reform central authority of the party (high command). Moreover, the then Congress regime was also under constraint to reform under pressure from a strong opposition that was supportive of the new economic policies. It helped the process that the state unit of Congress was desperately trying to regain its Dalit and OBCs vote banks by attractive packages.
Introduction

Summing Up

A reading of the articles included in the volume enable us to go beyond states and look at the regions within the states as distinctive categories for an in-depth study of the democratic politics of identity and development that is unfolding at the state levels. It is our argument that such micro-studies aimed at capturing the nuances, though somewhat challenging in nature, would further enrich the discipline of state politics in India.

References


Part I

United Colours of New States
Rethinking ‘Regional Developmental Imbalances’; Spatial Versus the Socio-political ‘Region’: The Case of Tribals in Jharkhand

Amit Prakash

The central thesis of most analyses of State politics in India seems to revolve around the idea of plurality and diversity — in terms of regions, religions, culture, languages, premises of political mobilisation, identities and, not least, ‘levels of development’. Also central to a large number of writings on the issue is the idea of ‘development’ as a central defining feature of the political economy landscape of India. Thus, while one set of what is seen to be a central feature celebrates diversity and plurality, the second (and often much more dominant) factor — that of development — stresses uniformity and homogenisation.

This article seeks to analyse this paradox with the help of empirical datasets from Jharkhand and argues that the latter — homogenising notion of development — is perhaps ill-suited to an analysis of the dynamics of Indian politics, contoured as it is on geographical and political boundaries or ‘regions’ while much of the ‘real’ politics follows a socio-political trajectory, be it caste, identity, religion or, indeed, ‘region’.

The first section proposes some conceptual concerns of the article; the second section presents empirical datasets from Jharkhand; while the third section offers generalisations by way of conclusion.

1

The Development Discourse and Challenges

The meaning, content and objectives of ‘development’ are a matter of increasingly intense debate in the social sciences. This term can
and has been used to refer to a wide variety of processes in the socio-political sphere: qualitative change; development as an activity aimed at improvement; in an evaluative sense to denote progress; or to refer to the degree of progress in realising a particular version of capitalist system.¹

The idea of development can be traced to at least the advent of capitalism in the 15th and 16th centuries, as also to the ‘advent of industrial capitalism in the late eighteenth century’, inspiring thinkers such as Condorcet and Kant to ‘conceive of a “universal history” which would disclose the cumulative pattern and meaning of it all.’² However, Hegel and Marx were the decisive innovators who can be seen as ‘true originators of development theory’.³

In the contemporary sense, what is seen as ‘development’ is of a much more recent origin: the body of literature that emerged in the post-World War era primarily concerned itself with the question of rebuilding Europe from its war-time devastation as also finding instrumentalities of transforming the economies of western Europe and making them more productive. With decolonisation, a part of this concern was also directed at transformation of former colonies into modern and vibrant economies.⁴ This literature essentially views development as being initiated in 1945 with the establishment of Bretton Woods institutions and offers a unilinear trajectory of growth of the paradigm comprising of ‘economic growth and modernisation theories, … theories of “underdevelopment”, … neo-liberalism and

---


³ Ibid.

the Washington consensus’. 5 Three features marked this paradigm of development:

1. essentialisation of developing countries and their populations as homogenous;
2. unconditional belief in the concept of progress and in the ‘marketability’ of society; and
3. importance of the (nation) state as an analytical frame of reference along with political and scientific confidence posed in its role for achieving such progress. 6

Important critiques from postcolonial studies, gendered perspectives and subaltern approaches along with alternative visions of ‘development’ have, over the past three decades, significantly pluralised this discourse of development. Rooted in the increasing disenchantment with the trajectory of growth-led development, which viewed inequity, adverse environmental and social impacts of such development and the resultant homogenisation as the costs of development, a number of robust critiques have emerged since the decade of 1970s. Starting with Ivan Illich’s 7 critique of the school system, there emerged a series of incisive analysis of the notion, process and outcomes of the development paradigm. This literature, which is collectively called post-development theory, 8 is often seen as ‘a radical reaction to the dilemmas of development’. 9 This set of literature, ‘drawing inspiration from the discursive turn in the social sciences and local and indigenous knowledge’, aspires to ‘move away from the centring of economic relations’, thereby offering a wider critique of development. 10

---

literature, in addition of a plurality of approach to development, have been issues of rights, justice, gendered development and equity. It is here that the case of the tribals in Jharkhand links up to offer an alternative meaning to ‘region’, defined in terms of socio-political rights rather than in spatial/geographical regions.

Such rethinking of the ‘region’ must be premised on the following concerns:

1. The idea that ‘development’ is merely a matter of correct modelling and can be seen in terms of imbalances between geographical or spatial regions is evocative of the modernisation theory-led paradigm put forward by the Princeton school theorists. In this paradigm, it was argued that societal groups would benefit equally from the fruits of development — an argument that has been found unsubstantiated all over the world. On the contrary, evidence suggests that it is possible that a particular region may develop (in terms of various economic indicators) but significant societal groups within the region may not benefit from such processes.

2. Mainstream development literature often locates such developmental imbalances as the ‘root cause’ of identity mobilisation in the mainstream development literature. The kernel of identity, however, is not located in the developmental imbalances but in the socio-political and cultural processes of the relevant societal group. Hence, the stress on a socio-political redefinition of the ‘region’.

3. Besides, much of political contestation at the state level in India seems to take the shape and form of politics of identity. The premises, boundaries, self-definitions and mode of articulation of such politics of identity may vary from region to region and case to case but there seems to be almost no serious contestation of the political space (with the state as well as with other similarly politically articulate groups) that is not rooted in (and often articulated through) the lens of politics of identity. Further, ‘development’ is often used as an additional ground for such

---

11 The range of politics of identity in India is wide: linguistic movements in the many parts of India during the late 1950s–1970s; the numerous ethnic identities in the north-eastern parts of the country; the Dalit assertion of north India; various
politics of identity — another imperative for redefining the ‘region’ in socio-political terms rather than the spatial.

4. The main issues in the question of development, as the post-development theory shows, are not merely those of the economic growth and development but of ensuring equity and justice in a participative framework for all sections of the socio-political landscape.

This concern becomes even more important when a historically marginalised section of the population such as the tribal communities is analysed.

The next part of this section offers some conceptual anchors to analyse the question of developmental imbalances before examining the empirical evidence from Jharkhand.

**Theoretical Anchors: Liberal State and the Discourse of Autonomy**

The fundamental principles of liberal democracies — basic individual civil rights and political rights — ‘are well-articulated both in the actual functioning of Western liberal democracies and in the tradition of Western political theory’. However, ‘it is difficult to define the basic features of a liberal-democratic approach to managing ethnocultural diversity’, including the myth of ‘ethno-cultural neutrality’ of the state. This myth lies at the roots of the inability of the modern rationalist liberal state in dealing with the diverse claims of rights placed before it by highly mobilised identities premised on cultural

---

factors and demanding autonomy. The state has responded in a rather ad hoc fashion with responses which cover the entire spectrum, ranging from conceding minority cultural rights to outright denial of all such claims.

‘The emergence of ethnicity and minority rights on the political theory mainstream agenda can be traced back to John Rawls writings on pluralism and consensus as the essence of liberal democratic thinking’, which created a large literature engaging with the liberalism–communitarian divide. Autonomy of the individual was pitted against the arguments in favour of ‘a broader communal socialisation in a historically rooted culture’ as necessary precondition for such individualism.\(^{13}\) This led to debates about the necessity and mechanisms to accommodate communitarian claims into broader liberal political theory.

Amongst other things, the attention of scholars has been focussed on the claims that ethnic identities (such as tribes) lay on the state and the political process, which in turn structures the debates within political theory. These claims may be classified into three sets:

1. claims of special rights from the government: special representation rights, devolution and national self-determination;
2. claims of special rights to seek accommodation of a variety of cultural practices: exemption rights and cultural rights leading to special status to disadvantaged communities including affirmative action programmes; and
3. demands that are not claims to rights but to collective esteem: symbolism of flags, names, public holidays, national anthems, educational curricula, and public funds for cultural activities, among others.\(^{14}\)

While debates continue about the appropriateness of granting the rights being claimed by the articulated ethnic identities, distinction is

---


also made between rights that may be granted to ‘national identities’ and ethnic identities. Theorists have argued that while ‘national’ identities may be granted special status, smaller ethnic identities can only be granted rights that enable them to integrate with the mainstream on fair terms. This global debate is founded on the central premise of the liberal state wherein the political process should be premised on interests, free association and ideology and all groups claiming rights on any other basis are somehow less ‘legitimate’.

While consensus amongst theorists on these issues is still a long way away, the local reality has been of a consistent growth in ethnic (mostly but not by any means tribal) politics — both at the national as well as at international levels. This has led to the demolition of the notion that with increasing modernisation and communication, more particularistic identities would eventually be eroded or would be submerged into national identities. In fact, ‘instead of abandoning their traditional ethnic identities in the quest for socio-economic and political equality’, ethnic groups ‘have retained them along the way, even when they have made it to the top — ethnicity continues to be an important and meaningful source of identity for millions of people in the world’. 

This pattern seems to have intensified in the era of increasing global integration. In fact, ‘as globalised modernity challenged all societies, the forces of reaction gathered … [in] opposition to globalisation was largely parochial …’

Amongst the many consequences of this pattern of political mobilisation has been that the political process must grapple with a wide variety of demands on the liberal state, many of which militate against the liberal state, premised as it is on individual rights. The states have adopted a wide variety of responses to these demands — from repression to co-option and the entire spectrum in between.

What is of interest to the politics of ethnic identity articulation, however, is the fact that most modern states operate a diverse set of

---

15 This has had a significant impact on the conception of liberal state as well as liberal-democratic politics.


equalising policies such as ‘affirmative action’ or ‘protective discrimination’, located in the global discourse on development and modernisation, especially when these policies have failed to prevent ethnic identity articulation. Further, most of these articulated identities demand ‘autonomy’ — a term with a connotation that is as fluid in the academic literature as in the popular political discourse.

Being subject to the ‘affirmative action’ of the state, the development argument becomes central to the politics of identity. Thus, there exists a paradox with respect to most identity articulations: almost all ascriptive ethnic identities require a ‘rational’ argument of socio-economic deprivation as an added premise for their articulation.

In view of this discussion, any effort at rethinking the ‘region’ in socio-political terms must pay close attention to the question of rights of the societal group or identity in question so as to go beyond the limitation of mainstream development theory and integrate some of the concerns articulated by the post-development discourse.

Reconstruction of the idea of a ‘region’ in these terms will enable an analytical anchor on the questions of equity and justice in a way that a spatial or geographical delineation of a region cannot afford. Besides, such an approach will enable the analytical framework to engage with spatially dispersed socio-political groups, as is the case in Jharkhand.

A Socio-political Construction of ‘Region’ and Development Imbalance

In light of the above discussion of socio-cultural rights, identity articulation and the role of development therein, the argument for the rethinking of a region in socio-political terms rather than spatial-geographical terms requires a delineation of rights in a new way. Such delineation must include both the socio-economic as well the ‘development-deficit’ dimensions. To evaluate the efficacy of such redefinition of the ‘region’, the substantive content of the rights of the tribal population in Jharkhand may be operationalised as follows:

---

18 In fact, in some cases, these very policies of affirmative action may be responsible for encouraging a swifter identity articulation.

19 For instance, P. N. S. Surin, a former bureaucrat with a long experience of administration and a tribal himself listed tribal rights to include: 1. right to land; 2. customary forest rights; 3. cultural and religious rights; and 4. educational rights (interview with P. N. S. Surin at his residence in Ranchi on 22 February 2006).
1. Right to preservation of their socio-cultural distinctiveness
2. Right to socio-economic development

The first covers a set of tribal rights, which invoke the liberal notion of rights and multicultural politics, fundamental rights and human rights. The local political contestation for the realisation of these sets of tribal rights is normally expressed in demands for administrative autonomy (including the right to self-determination), right to special representation, the right to special culturally-oriented affirmative programmes and often, demands (not necessarily claims) for collective esteem: symbolism of flags, names, public holidays, national anthems, public funds for cultural activities, educational curricula, etc.

The second set of tribal rights straddles the framework of right to development and various international articulations about socio-economic rights. This set of rights lays a claim on the state for adequate public policy mechanisms for ensuring that the members of the tribal societal groups are able to claim the same level of socio-economic development as the rest of the population. Many aspects of these sets of rights are rooted in an ‘original settler’ argument by the tribal populations and hence claim an overriding right to the resources of the region.

The two sets of rights enumerated above are not exclusive to each other. It can be argued that one set of tribal rights is meaningless without the other. In fact, two are closely linked with the help of 1. politics of development and identity and 2. claims for structures for participation in decision-making (for instance, local governance).

This framework will be utilised to assess the status of tribal rights in Jharkhand — the newest state of the Indian Union — whose creation was premised on tribal identity and arguably, is the fruition of some of the tribal rights claim on the Indian state. The creation of a separate state of Jharkhand was seen to provide due recognition to the tribal identity being articulated in the region and also laid the foundation for a more vigorous ‘developmental’ effort aimed at the tribal population.

While this aspect of tribal rights are central in any analysis of the tribal right to socio-economic development, it must be kept in mind that these arguments often become essentialist. See John R. Bowen, ‘Should We Have a Universal Concept of “Indigenous Rights”: Ethnicity and Essentialism in the Twenty-First Century’, Anthropology Today, 16 (4): 12–16, August 2000.

of this resource-rich but poverty-stricken part of the country. Thus, the issue of rights of the tribal population is inextricably linked to the question of development. The next section therefore evaluates the status of socio-economic rights of the tribal population Jharkhand with a view to demonstrating the developmental imbalances that are more social–political than spatial–geographical in nature.

II

Status of Tribal Rights in Jharkhand: Right to Socio-economic Development

Focus on a spatio-geographical definition of ‘development’ and its imbalances in state structures is of such a proportion that it is not easy to analyse the status of socio-economic development of the tribal population of Jharkhand. The main reason is that detailed datasets for tribal population are largely absent. For most indicators of socio-economic development, particularly for issues such as forests, land and water, there is no dataset available classified by STs (Scheduled Tribes), only totals for geographical districts are available. This article has therefore used these datasets and has tried to arrive at some analytical deductions with correlation with available ST datasets.

Demography

All rights are inherently politically contestable. And in any democratic system, political contestation is, apart from other factors, a function of

---

22 See, for instance, the debates on the Bihar Reorganisation Bill, 2000 (which created the state of Jharkhand) on its introduction in Lok Sabha on 25 July 2000 and follow-up discussions in the Lok Sabha on 2 August 2000. There was a general consensus amongst the members that ‘development’ was the main issue left to be realised after the state, recognising the Jharkhandi identity, was created (Lok Sabha Debates, XIII Lok Sabha, 25 July 2000 and 2 August 2000).

23 The discussion about tribal population in India has largely followed the government categorisation of Scheduled Tribes (STs), under which 212 tribes have been declared STs by presidential order under Article 342. This study has adopted this categorisation in use by the governmental agencies as well as social scientists and the terms ‘tribe’, ‘tribal’ and ‘STs’ have been used synonymously. See Ghanshayam Shah, Social Movements in India: A Review of Literature, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004.
the demographic patterns of a society. Therein lies the rationale for some focus on the demographics of Jharkhand.

The first and most important issue for the tribal population of Jharkhand is that the STs accounted for only a little more than a quarter of the total population of the state in the year 2001 when the latest Census was conducted. In fact, the proportion of ST population in the State (the Jharkhand region of Bihar until the year 2001) has shown a long-term declining trend.\(^{24}\)

The democratic contestation for tribal rights must therefore account for the majority of the population of the region, which is not of tribal origin. This fact also lays down the limits of the possible as far as the tribal rights are concerned.

As far as the tribal population in the state is concerned, Table 1.1 shows that they are widely dispersed over all districts of the state and are a majority in only three districts: Gumla, Lohardagga and West Singhbhum. While there is no reason to believe that democratic politics in these districts follows a homogenous tribal orientation (there being multiple denominational and other socio-economic cleavages between and within tribes), the chances of tribal rights-based contestation in the rest of the districts are even more remote.

It is in the context of the above demographic background that one must remember that in Jharkhand, poverty is rather acute with ‘[m]ore than 56.8 per cent of population living below poverty line (as against 36 per cent for India in 1996–97).’ Besides, the ‘lack of road connectivity in more than 60 per cent of the villages, 54 per cent literacy rate (42 per-cent in tribal sub-plan area that includes 112 blocks in Jharkhand, spread in 11 districts out of 22) and 85 per cent of villages having no electricity’.\(^{25}\) In such a scenario, the worst sufferers of a developmental deficit are the tribal populations of the State — seriously undermining the realisation of their right to development and also impacting their socio-cultural rights.

One of the standard methods for an overall assessment of the wellbeing of the ST population of the state and the status of realisation of their right to development by the ST population of the state is to compare the consumption levels with rest of the population.

---

\(^{24}\) See Amit Prakash, \textit{Jharkhand}, op. cit., especially chapters 4, 5 and 6.

### Table 1.1: Demography of ST Population in Jharkhand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST population</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Sex ratio</th>
<th>% ST population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>6,500,014</td>
<td>3,267,181</td>
<td>3,232,833</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>587,054</td>
<td>298,779</td>
<td>288,275</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garhwa</td>
<td>158,959</td>
<td>81,605</td>
<td>77,354</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>157,274</td>
<td>80,686</td>
<td>76,588</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1,685</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamu</td>
<td>392,325</td>
<td>199,311</td>
<td>193,014</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>388,428</td>
<td>197,302</td>
<td>191,126</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>3,897</td>
<td>2,009</td>
<td>1,888</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatra</td>
<td>30,384</td>
<td>15,571</td>
<td>14,813</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>30,169</td>
<td>15,455</td>
<td>14,714</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>268,333</td>
<td>136,409</td>
<td>131,924</td>
<td>967</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>214,028</td>
<td>108,477</td>
<td>105,551</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>54,305</td>
<td>27,932</td>
<td>26,373</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodarma</td>
<td>4,067</td>
<td>2,153</td>
<td>1,914</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>3,576</td>
<td>1,899</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>184,469</td>
<td>94,005</td>
<td>90,464</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>183,298</td>
<td>93,430</td>
<td>89,868</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1,171</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>1037</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deoghar</td>
<td>142,717</td>
<td>72,780</td>
<td>69,937</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>139,443</td>
<td>70,962</td>
<td>68,481</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>3,274</td>
<td>1,818</td>
<td>1,456</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godda</td>
<td>247,538</td>
<td>124,716</td>
<td>122,822</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>245,899</td>
<td>123,822</td>
<td>122,077</td>
<td>986</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1,639</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Total Percent</td>
<td>Rural Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahibganj</td>
<td>270,423</td>
<td>135,222</td>
<td>135,201</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>266,017</td>
<td>132,817</td>
<td>133,200</td>
<td>1003</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,406</td>
<td>2,405</td>
<td>2,001</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakaur</td>
<td>312,838</td>
<td>157,777</td>
<td>155,061</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>310,470</td>
<td>156,598</td>
<td>153,872</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,368</td>
<td>1,179</td>
<td>1,189</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumka</td>
<td>701,903</td>
<td>352,306</td>
<td>349,597</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>695,473</td>
<td>348,995</td>
<td>346,478</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6,430</td>
<td>3,311</td>
<td>3,119</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanbad</td>
<td>202,729</td>
<td>103,100</td>
<td>99,629</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>170,727</td>
<td>86,227</td>
<td>84,500</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32,002</td>
<td>16,873</td>
<td>15,129</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>218,600</td>
<td>112,184</td>
<td>106,416</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>163,164</td>
<td>83,499</td>
<td>79,665</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55,436</td>
<td>28,685</td>
<td>26,751</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td>1,164,624</td>
<td>585,582</td>
<td>579,042</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>964,242</td>
<td>484,797</td>
<td>479,445</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200,382</td>
<td>100,785</td>
<td>99,597</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohardaga</td>
<td>203,053</td>
<td>101,888</td>
<td>101,165</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>192,074</td>
<td>96,554</td>
<td>95,520</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10,979</td>
<td>5,334</td>
<td>5,645</td>
<td>1058</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumla</td>
<td>920,597</td>
<td>459,243</td>
<td>461,354</td>
<td>1005</td>
<td>68.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>893,661</td>
<td>445,985</td>
<td>447,676</td>
<td>1004</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26,936</td>
<td>13,258</td>
<td>13,678</td>
<td>1032</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Singhbhun</td>
<td>1,111,322</td>
<td>553,903</td>
<td>557,419</td>
<td>1006</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,042,435</td>
<td>518,577</td>
<td>523,858</td>
<td>1010</td>
<td>60.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>68,887</td>
<td>35,326</td>
<td>33,561</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Singhbhun</td>
<td>552,187</td>
<td>278,205</td>
<td>273,982</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>439,636</td>
<td>221,099</td>
<td>218,537</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>112,551</td>
<td>57,106</td>
<td>55,445</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 2001, PCA.
While such data for Jharkhand state is still to be computed, some data is available for the erstwhile state of Bihar. Since more than 90 per cent of the ST population of the undivided State of Bihar resided in the erstwhile Jharkhand region, the data for ST population of Bihar can safely be projected to apply to the majority of the ST population in the present state of Jharkhand.

Even a brief perusal of Tables 1.2 and 1.3 on patterns of consumption shows that the expenditure on articles of consumption by the ST population in Bihar was lowest amongst all the social groups surveyed. As far as the rural ST populations were concerned, the 55th round of the National Sample Survey (NSS) conducted in 1999–2000 showed that the ST population’s consumption expenditure on non-food items in rural areas was about a fifth lower than the average for all social groups. Similarly, expenditure by ST populations on food in urban areas was about 10 per cent lower than average for all social classes, except that of Scheduled Castes.

These two sets of figures underline the centrality of focusing on securing the access of the ST populations to the fruits of development and their socio-economic rights. This access not only outlines the degree of success in realisation of tribal rights in Jharkhand but also stresses the participation (or lack thereof) of the ST populations in the processes of development — an activity that the state has taken upon itself to ensure for the STs.

**Literacy**

Literacy is a central component in realising all the developmental as well as socio-cultural rights of the STs in Jharkhand. Apart from being a central component of tribal rights, the right to education has also been legislated for all citizens of India, STs included. Any violation of this right for the ST population of Jharkhand is thus a double jeopardy for the tribes of the State.

While primary education in Jharkhand including that of the ST population has progressed reasonably well over the past decades, there is still vast ground to be covered. The delivery of literacy and primary and secondary education is abysmal. While the progress of literacy

---

26 The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21A into the Fundamental Rights chapter of the Constitution, which provides that 'The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.'
Table 1.2: Break-up of MPCE by Broad Groups of Non-food Items Separately for each Social Group in Rural Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social group</th>
<th>Pan, tobacco &amp; intoxicants</th>
<th>Fuel &amp; light</th>
<th>Clothing</th>
<th>Footwear</th>
<th>Misc goods &amp; services</th>
<th>Durable goods</th>
<th>Non-food total</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Clothing (Second-hand)</th>
<th>Durable goods (Second-hand)</th>
<th>No. of sample households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>25.26</td>
<td>19.07</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>40.56</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>106.91</td>
<td>337.40</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td>27.73</td>
<td>21.80</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>42.36</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>110.22</td>
<td>331.02</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Backward Classes</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>25.28</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>56.67</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>126.73</td>
<td>384.96</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>3598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>30.47</td>
<td>32.23</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>79.99</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>162.55</td>
<td>458.20</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Recorded</td>
<td>9.54</td>
<td>27.58</td>
<td>26.90</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>67.66</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>144.03</td>
<td>428.17</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Social Groups</td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>28.53</td>
<td>25.51</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>57.24</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>129.10</td>
<td>385.09</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>7311</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1.3: Break-up of MPCE by Broad Groups of Food Items Separately for each Social Group in Urban Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social group</th>
<th>Cereals</th>
<th>Gram</th>
<th>Cereal substitutes</th>
<th>Milk &amp; milk products</th>
<th>Pulses &amp; products</th>
<th>Edible oil</th>
<th>Meat, egg, &amp; fish</th>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Fruits (fresh)</th>
<th>Fruits (dry)</th>
<th>Sugar</th>
<th>Salt</th>
<th>Spices</th>
<th>Beverages, refreshment etc.</th>
<th>Food total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
<td>120.33</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>16.36</td>
<td>34.13</td>
<td>20.38</td>
<td>22.53</td>
<td>36.46</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>8.23</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>11.99</td>
<td>30.17</td>
<td>310.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
<td>125.39</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>15.45</td>
<td>22.95</td>
<td>17.32</td>
<td>18.58</td>
<td>35.24</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>10.24</td>
<td>18.57</td>
<td>277.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Backward Classes</td>
<td>125.54</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>18.28</td>
<td>36.22</td>
<td>18.71</td>
<td>15.70</td>
<td>36.92</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>10.15</td>
<td>25.43</td>
<td>304.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>134.46</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>24.29</td>
<td>74.12</td>
<td>29.01</td>
<td>25.34</td>
<td>44.95</td>
<td>13.23</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>13.54</td>
<td>45.05</td>
<td>427.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Recorded</td>
<td>120.03</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>14.82</td>
<td>21.67</td>
<td>15.97</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>37.51</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>10.21</td>
<td>11.43</td>
<td>255.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Social Groups</td>
<td>128.31</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>19.92</td>
<td>47.70</td>
<td>22.23</td>
<td>19.81</td>
<td>39.49</td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>11.45</td>
<td>31.70</td>
<td>344.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**MPCE:** Monthly Per Capita Expenditure.
and education amongst the ST population of the state are plagued by many structural issues, the main problems that hinder delivery of primary education in Jharkhand are rural impoverishment, particularly amongst STs, very low levels of literacy and use of the non-mother tongue (Hindi) as medium of instruction.\footnote{Kumar Rana and Samantak Das, ‘Primary Education in Jharkhand’, \textit{Economic and Political Weekly}, 13 March 2004, p. 1176.}

The impact of these and other issues in the delivery of literacy for the ST population of Jharkhand is also evident in the gaps for literacy figures for the ST population in general and those of the ST women in particular. The literacy gap for the ST population was quite large, particularly for ST women (Table 1.4). The overall literacy rate of the ST population in Jharkhand in 2001 was a mere 40.7 per cent compared with 53.6 per cent for all the population of Jharkhand. More importantly, the literacy rate for ST women in Jharkhand was only 27 per cent compared with almost 39 per cent for Jharkhand. As can be expected, the literacy attainments of ST population as well as ST women in rural areas of Jharkhand were poorer than those in urban areas (Table 1.4).

In must be noted that those districts where the ST population had a demographic dominance — Gumla, Lohardagga and West Singhbhum — there seems to be some correlation between the numerical presence of STs in the district and higher literacy attainments. Here it must also be underlined that these districts are also the ones which have a long history of missionary activity, one of the effects of which may have been a higher level of educational attainments by the ST.

Clearly, the rights of the tribal population were far from being realised as far as access of literacy and education for ST population in Jharkhand was concerned. The gap between the literacy attainments of the ST population and the State and district averages was rather large, even after more than half a century of concerted development effort. The picture becomes even grimmer when the focus is on the literacy rates of ST women.

Confronted with such a grim picture, the availability and access to educational infrastructure becomes central in the realisation of the right to education for the ST population of Jharkhand. In order to assess the infrastructure in place, attention should briefly be paid to the schools in Jharkhand, particularly in the districts with numerical majority of the tribal populations.

---

\footnote{Kumar Rana and Samantak Das, ‘Primary Education in Jharkhand’, \textit{Economic and Political Weekly}, 13 March 2004, p. 1176.}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th></th>
<th>ST population</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garhwa*</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>61.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamu</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatra*</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>69.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodarma*</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>61.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deoghar</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godda</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahibganj</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakaur*</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumka</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanbad</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Table 1.4 Continued)*
(Table 1.4 Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th></th>
<th>ST population</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bokaro*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohardaga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Singhbhum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Singhbhum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001, PCA.
As Table 1.5 shows, the largest numbers of schools were in Ranchi district, the State capital. The district with the largest proportion of ST population — Gumla, with 1,458 schools — was at number 13 of the 22 districts of the State. Further, as far as education guarantee schools (EGS) were concerned, Gumla had only 780 such schools — about half the total number of such schools in the capital, Ranchi.

West Singhbhum, the district with the second largest proportion of ST population, was at the seventh place as far as total number of schools were concerned but at number 13 in terms of the total number of EGS schools. Lohardagga figured at the last but one in terms of total number of schools and at number 19 in terms of EGS schools.

It can therefore be surmised that as far as the realisation of the ST population’s right to education is concerned, the fact that the ST population has access to a lower number of schools is not a very heartening picture. The low level of public policy prioritisation which these lower numbers of schools reflect is also a matter of concern as far was tribal rights are concerned.

The absence of adequate infrastructure for realisation of the right to education for the tribal population of Jharkhand is, however, not underlined by the teacher–pupil ratio in the districts of the State, as delineated in Table 1.6. Ghumla district has a substantially lower average pupil–teacher ratio in the primary schools of the district while at the middle school level, the ratio was in accordance with the State averages, as was the case at secondary school level. Similar patterns can be noticed for the other two district with ST majority — West Singhbhum and Lohardagga. The pupil–teacher ratios for both these districts was either lower than or around the State averages.

It must be noted here that these averages mask a few important issues which might undermine the right to education of the ST population. The better averages for ST-majority districts may simply be a function of lower enrolment or demand for primary education. Else, it could be a function of the fact that such schools are not sufficiently dense on the ground, leading to serious problems of access for the pupils. Further, it is also possible that pupils drop out before completing their schooling, a scenario which would be supported by the high persistence of illiteracy in these districts.

To examine such issues, Table 1.7 delineates the enrolment rates for the ST population and the GER for the total population for the districts of Jharkhand. Gumla, the district with the highest proportion of ST population, presents a case of a declining enrolment rate for
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total no. of govt. primary schools</th>
<th>Total no. of govt. upper primary schools</th>
<th>No. of primary schools under DPEP (NPS)</th>
<th>Total no. of EGS centres</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>16,840</td>
<td>3,911</td>
<td>1,020</td>
<td>15,316</td>
<td>37,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td>1,424</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>1,527</td>
<td>3,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>1,237</td>
<td>170</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>2,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumka</td>
<td>1,236</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>1,047</td>
<td>2,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>1,308</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>2,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamu</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>222</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,158</td>
<td>2,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Singhbhum</td>
<td>1,142</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>2,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Singhbhum</td>
<td>1,138</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>2,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanbad</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>262</td>
<td></td>
<td>900</td>
<td>2,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatra</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>1,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deoghar</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>161</td>
<td></td>
<td>809</td>
<td>1,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saraikela</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>175</td>
<td></td>
<td>668</td>
<td>1,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
<td>670</td>
<td>1,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumla</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
<td>780</td>
<td>1,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahibganj</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
<td>765</td>
<td>1,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godda</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>173</td>
<td></td>
<td>389</td>
<td>1,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garhwa</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>152</td>
<td></td>
<td>536</td>
<td>1,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lathehar</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
<td>552</td>
<td>1,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamtara</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td>266</td>
<td>936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakur</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
<td>245</td>
<td>907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simdega</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td>319</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohardagga</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td>282</td>
<td>581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koderma</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.6: District-wise Number of Teachers and Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) by Type in Jharkhand, 2002–2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Secondary/H. sec.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koderma</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deoghar</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatra</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garhwa</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamu</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamtara</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanbad</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumka</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohardaga</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakur</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sareikela and Kharsawan</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latehar</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Singhbhum</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahibaganj</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumla</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simdega</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godda</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Singhbhum</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India.

*As on 30 September 2002.

the ST pupils. While about two-thirds of the ST pupils were enrolled in primary education during the year 2002–2003, the figures declined marginally during 2003–2004. This pattern of declining enrolment of ST pupils continued for the year 2004–2005 by which time only 67.5 per cent of the pupils were enrolled. This pattern is also consistent with the GERs for the total population of the district, which shows a rising trend. From 39.7 per cent in 2002–2003 to 50 per cent in 2003–2004, the GER for the total population of Gumla rose to 61.8 per cent in 2004–2005. This pattern, read with the declining enrolment rates for STs, indicates that not only were fewer pupils from the STs being enrolled, overall there was a rising trend of pupils not joining school at the right age and/or a substantially large proportion failing
Table 1.7: Enrolment of Scheduled Tribes in Primary Education in Jharkhand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>ST enrolment (percentage)</th>
<th>Total population GER*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhatar</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deoghar</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanbad</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumka</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garhwa</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godda</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumla</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamtara</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodarma</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latehar</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohardaga</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakur</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamu</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Singhbum</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Singhbum</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahibganj</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saraikela Kharsawan</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simdega</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Gross Enrolment Ratio.
to pass their respective grades. Similar patterns can be noticed for Lohardagga in which the enrolment rate for ST pupils declined from 72.2 per cent in 2002–2003 to 58.1 per cent in 2003–2004 and to only 58.2 per cent in 2004–2005. Simultaneously, the GERs were rising from 66.4 per cent in the first year to 95.8 per cent in the second year to a high 107.1 per cent in the year 2004–2005. West Singhbhum, as in many other indicators, was slightly better off compared with the two other districts with large proportions of ST population. While the enrolment rate for the year 2002–2003 was low at only 63.1 per cent, the same figure for the year 2003–2004 rose to slightly more than three-fourths of the pupils but declined marginally to 74.4 per cent for the year 2004–2005. The GER for the total population of West Singhbhum district, on the other hand, shows a rising trend but the pattern is much less steep than the other two districts. While the GER for the entire population of the district was 30.6 per cent in 2002–2003, the same figure rose to 50.2 per cent in 2003–2004 and 52.4 per cent for the year 2004–2005. Clearly, the primary education picture of West Singhbhum was much better than the other two districts.

In light of this discussion, it can be surmised that the realisation of right to education by the tribal population of Jharkhand is a far way off. The quicker this can be achieved the more likelihood of rest of the tribal rights in Jharkhand to bear fruit.

**Socio-economic Status**

Socio-economic development has emerged as a central component of tribal rights. The discursive literature on tribal rights and right to development stresses the importance of achieving a betterment in living standards of living for the tribal population, in which the degree to which these populations can participate in the process

---

28 Gross Enrolment Rate is the total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year and is widely used to show the general level of participation in a given level of education. It indicates the capacity of the education system to enrol students of a particular age group. While a high GER generally indicates a high degree of participation, whether the pupils belong to the official age group or not, GER can be over 100 per cent due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged pupils/students because of early or late entrants and grade repetition. In this case, a rigorous interpretation of GER needs additional information to assess the extent of repetition, late entrants, etc.
of socio-economic development is a central variable. In the case of Jharkhand, as has been noted earlier, an inextricable link has already been established between tribal rights, identity articulation and the process of development. Thus, it is crucial to make an assessment of the degree of success achieved in ensuring participation of STs in the process of socio-economic development as well as the outcome indicators of such participation. In addition, such participation is also contingent upon the access to infrastructure for development.

**Employment**

One of the most important indicators in the realisation of socio-economic rights of the tribal population of any State is the degree of participation in productive economic activity. The degree of participation of the ST community in work is a good proxy for both socio-economic empowerment as well as a central factor influencing many of the other parameters of right to development such as literacy and education, consumption (which is related to the issue of nutrition and wellbeing), health attainments, etc.

As far as the work participation of the STs in Jharkhand was concerned, the picture is not very rosy. While the State averages for work partition was 37 per cent in 2001, the same average for ST population in Jharkhand was 46 per cent. This gap is significant because when read with poorer literacy and consumption figures, it would indicate poorly paid work or working in the fields, which have poor scope of productivity. Thus higher work participation may not necessarily indicate more productive employment. This view is bolstered when the urban–rural divide in work participation is taken into account. The ST population report a significantly higher work participation rate (50 per cent) compared with the State averages (41 per cent).

This higher work participation in rural areas in Jharkhand would mean toiling in fields with little or no infrastructural support and/or participating in lowly remunerative traditional livelihood strategies such as foraging for food or gathering and selling non-timber forest produce. It would not be fair to classify these activities as productive employment on account of the low returns as well as the well-entrenched network of non-ST contractors and traders in all parts of Jharkhand, who purchase there traditional produce at rates which preclude any fair returns to the tribal communities.

Turning to the urban work participation, the ST population reported a work participation rate of 34 per cent compared with a marginally
lower 32 per cent for the State averages. The near equal work participation by STs and all communities in urban areas hide the disparities in which most STs are engaged in low-paid, unskilled labour in urban areas.\textsuperscript{29}

The poorer rate of literacy, education and skills required for modern industry and commerce amongst the STs preclude any higher paying employment for them, a fact that was one of the central factors in mobilisation and blockading of transporting of minerals from the region by students’ organisations like the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) during the late 1980s and 1990s.\textsuperscript{30} As far as the districts in Jharkhand with numerical dominance of tribal populations is concerned, similar patterns are noticeable (Table 1.8).

\textbf{Health Patterns}

Along with literacy, which impacts employability, access to quality health facilities, leading to improvements in quality of life and well-being, is another important facet of the realisation of tribal rights. The centrality of health indicators such as birth rate, infant mortality and death rates in analysing the status of access to health by the tribal population cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, such data for STs is unavailable as are the district-wise figures. Consequently, one is constrained to focus upon the State averages, correlating them to other available indicators to assess the status of health facilities for the tribal population.

A perusal of Table 1.9 shows that birth rate in Jharkhand closely follows the national average although the rate of decline is lower than the national average, primarily owing to no decline in the rural birth rate. On the other hand, the death rate for Jharkhand has risen during

\textsuperscript{29} Due care should be taken while interpreting the work participation rates owing to the constantly changing definitions of ‘work’ in the censuses as well as the low threshold level in classifying any individual as a ‘worker’. For the 2001 Census, the scope of the definition of work was expanded to include production of milk for domestic consumption. In the 1991 Census, cultivation of certain crops even for self-consumption was treated as economics activity. The scope of the term ‘cultivation’ was expanded in the 2001 Census to include certain other crops such as tobacco, fruit, all types of flowers, roots and tubers, potatoes, chillies, turmeric, pepper, cardamom, all types of vegetables, fodder crops etc. This meant that activities related to production of all the above mentioned crops for domestic consumption has been classified under plantation in the Census of India, 2001.

\textsuperscript{30} See Amit Prakash, \textit{Jharkhand}, op. cit.
Table 1.8: Work Participation Rate in Jharkhand, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ST population</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garhwa*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatra*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodarma*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deoghar</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Godda</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sahibganj</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pakaur</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dumka</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dhanbad</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bokaro</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 1.8 Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ST population</th>
<th>Total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi Total</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohardaga Total</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumla Total</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Singhbhum Total</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Singhbhum Total</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001, PCA.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Birth rate</th>
<th>Death rate</th>
<th>Natural growth rate</th>
<th>Infant mortality rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand, 2002</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand, 2003</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India, 2002*</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India, 2003*</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Excludes Nagaland (rural) due to part receipt of returns.

Note: Infant mortality rates for smaller States and Union Territories are based on a three-year period — 2001–2003.
2002 and 2003, while there has been a small decline in the national death rate figures for the same period. This rise in death rate for Jharkhand is due to rise in rural death rates. Keeping in mind the fact that the demography tables presented earlier show that more than 90 per cent of the ST population reside in rural areas, this rise in death rate would impact the ST population. This is particularly in view of the weak economic status of tribals in Jharkhand, as evidenced in consumption and employment patterns.

The same pattern is also evident in the infant mortality patterns for Jharkhand. While the national infant mortality figures have shown a decline over the two years delineated above, the same figures for Jharkhand have been constant with a marginal rise for urban areas and a marginal decline for rural areas. Natural growth rates for Jharkhand have therefore shown a sharper decline than the national average; led by a decline in rural natural growth rates but a rise in the same figures for urban areas.

**Land and Forests**

Land has been a central question in the contestation for rights in most parts of the country, tribal areas included. In Jharkhand, access and control over land has a number of dimensions: as security of livelihood, as an anchor for social and political identity articulation, as a focus of contestation of tribal rights, a source of strength to contest and counter the state’s initiatives at homogenising development, and so on. Besides, land acquires an added dimension in tribal Jharkhand — both economic and socio-cultural — by virtue of the fact that a large proportion of land is afforested and acts as a central facet of the tribals’ livelihood as well as is at the centre of much of their socio-cultural life. ‘The long association of the tribes with the forests and their lower levels of socio-economic development have resulted in a higher dependence of tribals on forests for a livelihood than other population groups.’

The centrality of land in the socio-cultural conscious of the tribal society of Jharkhand is attested to by the fact that the tribal revolts of the 19th century, to which much of contemporary identity articulation traces itself, was primarily rooted in the colonial state’s efforts at extraction of revenue. While a number

---

of interpretations can be drawn about the root cause of these revolts, scholars largely agree that the primary reasons behind the revolts were agrarian. Further, the issues of acquisition of land by the state ‘in public interest’, thereby not only threatening the tribals’ livelihood and socio-cultural autonomy but also creating the misery of displacement and social fracture, adds another dimension in the questions of land and forests in Jharkhand. Therefore, some focus on these issues is central in an analysis of the status of tribal rights in Jharkhand.

One of the most important issues in Jharkhand is that of alienation of tribal land. Historically, law has disallowed alienation of tribal land since the colonial times under the Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act and the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act. However, transfers do happen but owing to the illegality of the transfer, no reliable estimates are available about the scale of the issue. There are two kinds of cases of transfer of tribal land, as was discovered in interview with various actors in the State. First, where the transfer is merely informal. The land continues to be de jure property of the tribal individual but de facto ownership is transferred to a purchaser on receipt of due consideration. The informal and non-legal nature of these transfers makes it difficult to assess the scale and intensity of the issue. The second kind of transfer of tribal land is between individuals of tribal origin, which captures the changing nature of tribal society. The latest published estimates available for such transfers are dated 1974, making it of little use for contemporary analysis.

Table 1.10 delineates the proportion of land area under various uses in Jharkhand. This table not only provides an overview of the utilisation of the total land areas of Jharkhand but also underlines the centrality of forest in the economic patterns of the State.

At the State level, a mere 9.9 per cent of the total land area was under non-agricultural use while forests comprised more than 29 per cent. This proportion of land under forests was larger than the net sown area of the State, which stood at about 23 per cent. These figures are in consonance with the hilly terrain of the State as well as the dependence of vast tribal populations of the State on forest produce.

---

## Table 1.10: District-wise Land Utilisation in Jharkhand, 1997–98 (Per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Geographical area (hectares)</th>
<th>Area under non-agricultural uses</th>
<th>Forest area</th>
<th>Barren &amp; uncultivable land</th>
<th>Permanent pastures &amp; other grazing lands</th>
<th>Land under misc. trees &amp; groves</th>
<th>Cultivable waste land</th>
<th>Fallow land other than current fallows</th>
<th>Current fallows</th>
<th>Net area sown (NAS)</th>
<th>Area sown more than once</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dumka</td>
<td>55,8199</td>
<td>11.27</td>
<td>11.27</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>12.42</td>
<td>15.53</td>
<td>29.47</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godda</td>
<td>23,1840</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>13.51</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>14.70</td>
<td>19.54</td>
<td>33.29</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deoghar</td>
<td>24,8133</td>
<td>11.13</td>
<td>13.96</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>13.27</td>
<td>16.65</td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahibganj</td>
<td>20,1754</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>21.19</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td>23.78</td>
<td>22.85</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakur</td>
<td>18,1699</td>
<td>11.15</td>
<td>11.44</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>21.18</td>
<td>33.74</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>60,4629</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>43.94</td>
<td>8.96</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>9.42</td>
<td>10.58</td>
<td>16.20</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodarma</td>
<td>13,0202</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>42.42</td>
<td>11.36</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>7.99</td>
<td>13.21</td>
<td>13.56</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatra</td>
<td>37,5520</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>60.40</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>7.55</td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td>12.54</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>49,3223</td>
<td>8.08</td>
<td>32.12</td>
<td>7.83</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>11.31</td>
<td>14.78</td>
<td>17.41</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>28,8976</td>
<td>17.85</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>12.02</td>
<td>18.70</td>
<td>12.55</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanbad</td>
<td>20,4162</td>
<td>24.06</td>
<td>9.27</td>
<td>15.96</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>15.08</td>
<td>18.49</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td>75,8247</td>
<td>10.95</td>
<td>20.99</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>16.24</td>
<td>33.19</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohardaga</td>
<td>15,3618</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>28.88</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>11.35</td>
<td>12.45</td>
<td>30.05</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumla</td>
<td>91,0553</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>15.06</td>
<td>7.37</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>12.33</td>
<td>22.47</td>
<td>29.02</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Singbhum</td>
<td>55,6691</td>
<td>28.59</td>
<td>22.06</td>
<td>7.57</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>7.87</td>
<td>11.56</td>
<td>16.40</td>
<td>14.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Singbhum</td>
<td>79,9933</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>40.44</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>25.09</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamu</td>
<td>84,3897</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>43.23</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>9.33</td>
<td>15.82</td>
<td>17.37</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garhwa</td>
<td>42,8823</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>44.58</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>9.44</td>
<td>18.41</td>
<td>14.71</td>
<td>5.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>797,0081</td>
<td>9.89</td>
<td>29.27</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>9.78</td>
<td>15.22</td>
<td>22.68</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Totals may not tally due to rounding up of percentages.
This dependence of tribals (as well as some non-tribals) on forest resources is also highlighted by the fact that a mere 3.27 per cent of the land area was sown more than once. This data, when analysed in light of the majority of populations being resident in rural areas, points to poor levels of agricultural development in the State. Since tribals mostly reside in rural areas, this poor agricultural profile cannot but have a significant impact on the realisation of their rights by the tribal populations of the State. This deduction is also buttressed by an analysis of the data for the districts in which the ST population were in numerical majority. Gumla, where the ST population was largest in proportion, had only about 15 per cent of the total land area under forests while the net sown area was at about 29 per cent. However, the area sown more than once was a mere 0.83 per cent of the land area. Together, these figures describe a situation in which the rural population, particularly tribals, have poor scope of carrying out productive agriculture, leading to greater dependence on forests. The forests, however, have also been dwindling to about half of the State average, which would seriously compromise their ability to generate a reasonable livelihood. Thus, one of the central components of tribal rights is under serious threat in Gumla.

Lohardagga, on the other hand, roughly follows the State averages with a slightly lower land area under forests and under more than one crop but a little higher net sown area. West Singhbhum shows a substantially higher area under forest cover at 40.4 per cent as also a higher net sown area of about 25 per cent. Area sown more than once was also about 3 per cent, which was close to the State average.

The discussion above, besides highlighting the risks to the livelihood patterns of the tribals in Jharkhand, also underlines the centrality of the forests, both in terms of the large land area under forests as well as its impact on livelihood. In fact, a number of scholars have argued that the depletion of forests over the past few years has had a severe impact on livelihood of tribal communities. Focusing on the Bihror tribe of Jharkhand, Firdos has argued that ‘degradation of forest cover has uprooted Biihors from their traditional source of livelihood and brought in instability in their economic activities … they have not been able to adopt agriculture … Insecure livelihood have compelled them to move out of the districts with diminishing traditional economic activity’ with the result that ‘their population is getting redistributed’.35

---

35 Suhel Firdos, op. cit., p. 778.
Clearly, such patterns of change in forest cover undermine not only the autonomy of socio-economic processes of tribal life in Jharkhand but also seriously impact the security of livelihood of the tribals. Since both land and forests are an integral part of any contextualised definition of tribal rights, the pattern discussed above diluted their rights.

The changes in forest cover in Jharkhand offers a mixed picture. While on the one hand overall forest cover in Jharkhand showed a positive change over the period 2001–2003, the total area under dense forests showed a small decline from 11,787 sq. km to 11,035 sq. km. This decline will also affect the availability of forest produce, which, as was argued earlier, is central to the preservation and realisation of socio-cultural as well as economic rights of the tribal population. On the other hand, the forest area classified as ‘open forests’ rose from 10,850 sq. km in 2001 to 11,035 sq. km in 2003. This increase also indicates a depletion of forest cover as the classification used here connotes a lower density of forest.

As far as the three tribal majority districts were concerned, Gumla showed a small net increase in forest cover of about 0.8 per cent in 2003 over the figures for 2001. Dense forests recorded a decline from 1,231 sq. km to 1,161 sq. km while open forests rose from 1,255 sq. km to 1,402 sq. km, reflecting a net decline in forest cover in the district.

Lohardagga, on the other hand, recorded a decline of total forest cover by 2.75 per cent in the year 2003 over the figures for the year 2001. This decline was for both dense forests as well as open forests (Table 1.11). This district was thus doubly disadvantaged on account of depletion of dense forest cover as well as open forest cover. This pattern will but have serious negative implications for tribal rights in the district. West Singhbhum similarly followed the pattern noticed in Gumla wherein there was a depletion of area under dense forest cover.

Classification of forest areas, with their intricate connotations of access rights for various sections of tribal population as well as utilisation of resources from reserved, protected and open forests, is another area of serious contestation in Jharkhand. This issue is not a focus of this study and hence the scheme of classification used here is that developed by the Forest Survey of India is as follows: very dense Forest: all lands with canopy density over 70 per cent; moderately dense forest: all lands with canopy density between 40 per cent and 70 per cent; open forest: all lands with canopy density between 10–40 per cent; scrub: all lands with poor tree growth mainly of small or stunted trees having canopy density less than 10 per cent; mangrove: salt tolerant forest ecosystem found mainly in tropical and subtropical inter-tidal regions; and non-forest: any area not included in the above classes (State of Forest Report 2003, New Delhi, n.d., Box 1.1).
## Table 1.11: Forest Cover in Jharkhand, 2001 and 2003 (sq. km)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total geog. area</th>
<th>Forest cover 2001</th>
<th>Forest cover 2003</th>
<th>Change in forest cover (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dense forest</td>
<td>Open forest</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bokaro</td>
<td>1,929</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatra</td>
<td>3,732</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>1,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deoghar (T)</td>
<td>2,479</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanbad</td>
<td>2,996</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumka</td>
<td>6,212</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garhwa</td>
<td>4,092</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>1,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>4,963</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godda</td>
<td>2,110</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumla (T)</td>
<td>9,077</td>
<td>1,231</td>
<td>1,255</td>
<td>2,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>5,998</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>1,253</td>
<td>2,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodarma</td>
<td>1,435</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohardaga (T)</td>
<td>1,491</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>557</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 1.11 Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total area</th>
<th>Dense forest</th>
<th>Open forest</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Dense forest</th>
<th>Open forest</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Change in forest cover (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pakaur (T)</td>
<td>1,571</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>18.71</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>17.95</td>
<td>-0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamu (T)</td>
<td>8,657</td>
<td>2,616</td>
<td>1,244</td>
<td>3,860</td>
<td>44.59</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>1,261</td>
<td>3,561</td>
<td>41.13</td>
<td>-3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Singhbhum (T)</td>
<td>9,907</td>
<td>2,103</td>
<td>1,624</td>
<td>3,727</td>
<td>37.62</td>
<td>2,044</td>
<td>1,767</td>
<td>3,811</td>
<td>38.47</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Singhbhum (T)</td>
<td>3,533</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>25.05</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>26.13</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi (T)</td>
<td>7,698</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>1,732</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>1,875</td>
<td>24.36</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahibganj</td>
<td>1,834</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>30.04</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>31.95</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>79,714</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,787</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,850</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,637</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.40</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,681</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,035</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,716</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.50</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.10</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


T: Tribal. *: Includes ‘Very Dense’ and ‘Moderately Dense’ Forests.
cover but a rise in the area under open forests. More land was thus under thin forest cover, reflecting a net decline in quality forests in the district.

While commercial exploitation and growing human activity is one reason for the depletion and undermining of forests in Jharkhand, large developmental projects are also a major cause. Such projects, apart from causing displacement of (mostly tribal) population, significantly impact the total area under forests. While detailed data for this process is unavailable, the overall trend is delineated in Table 1.12.

Centrality of the issue of destruction of forests for developmental projects, particularly with reference to the tribal population in India’s public discourse about tribals, is attested to by the fact that the matter was raised in the Parliament in 2003. It must be mentioned here that detailed information is not forthcoming in public records. The total number of projects involving destruction of forest areas for developmental projects in Jharkhand and the area diverted for the period 1980–2003 is delineated in Table 1.12. Although the proportions expressed in this table are not unreasonably large, two factors should be kept in mind while interpreting this data. First, intensive exploitation of mineral wealth of the State is at least 200 years old and a large number of projects (many of which involved destruction of large forests areas) were already in place by the time India gained independence. Second, many of the projects which saw large-scale destruction of forests and displacement of population were started before the 1980 date covered by the above table. For instance, the Koel Karo hydel project was started in the 1970s and protests and activism over environmental and social costs have continued since.

Displacement and Rehabilitation

As has been a running theme in the above analysis of tribal rights, the issue of displacement (and aligned issue of rehabilitation) is a crucial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of cases</th>
<th>Area diverted (in ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>10,358</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 395, answered on 5 December 2003.
facet of much of the critical developmental discourse. This issue also acquires additional salience in light of the centrality of land and habitat to the preservation and protection of tribal heritage and culture, which in turn is central to the social and political identity of the tribals. Therefore alternatives should be explored to not displace the tribal population at all and, if it is inevitable, the decisions regarding displacement should be arrived at after informed consultation with the affected community. Further, resettlement of the displaced persons should be efficient and within the same socio-cultural region (to avoid the possibility of social alienation and fracture of communities), and compensation be fair and swift.

Clearly, the issue of displacement is one of the most important factors affecting the rights of the tribal communities in Jharkhand. However, dependable datasets on the extent and nature of displacement in Jharkhand, particularly those of tribal population, are largely absent. Competing claims are put forth by the state and the affected persons/their organisations. Of the few scientific studies conducted on the issue in Jharkhand, the one by Alexius Ekka is noteworthy. It estimates that more than 154,600 acres of land was acquired for projects between 1951 and 1995, which is about 8 per cent of total land area of Jharkhand. This land was primarily acquired for mining and hydroelectric projects and displaced at least 1,503,017 persons, of which about 41 per cent were tribals. Only a third of these were resettled, in many cases only nominally.37

Other authors have estimated a much higher figure (see Table 1.13), of which about three-quarters are yet to be settled. In the absence of any concrete empirically generated figures, the best we have are contested estimates from the government and tribal activists. The fuzziness about size of the problem notwithstanding, most scholars agree that sufficiently large numbers of population in Jharkhand, particularly tribal population, have been displaced without sufficient attention to their rehabilitation, seriously undermining their rights.

Further, the impact of such displacement is not limited to the physical displacement but has important impact of forced loss of livelihood, problems in adjustment of skill sets and social fracture amongst communities. Therefore, ‘the process that begins with the announcement of the project and continues long after the people have

37 Alexius Ekka and Mohammed Asif, ‘Development Induced Displacement and Rehabilitation in Jharkhand, 1951 to 1995: A Database on its Extent and Nature’ (mimeo), New Delhi, 2000, p. 134.
lost their livelihood’ … It ‘cannot be limited to the narrow concept of physical ouster from the old habitat’. Such displacement has an added effect of marginalising the already weak sections of society, who are not even consulted, let alone asked to participate in the decision making about the project which would displace them. Further, the cost-benefit analysis of the value of land acquired for ‘public purposes’ is based on the market value of land and fails to factor in the non-monetised livelihood avenues that marginalised sections such as the tribals lose. Besides, the absence of formal property relations amongst many sections of the tribal populations ensures that the meagre compensations, whenever they are actually provided, do not accrue to the displaced and often, the most vulnerable sections of the populations. Needless to add, the benefits that are purported to flow to the displaced populations due to the projects are often doubtful and often accrue only to the elite in the local communities, tribals included.

Further, the tribal populations are at far greater risk (compared with for instance, Dalits) owing to their relative isolation from external economy and greater dependence on their local environment (for instance, dependence on non-timber forest produce) for their livelihood. More often than not, the ‘situation of women is worse than that of men. Tribal women, for example, depend on the NTFP more than men do since it is their responsibility to ensure the regular supply of food, fodder, fuel and water. They are less literate than men’ owing to which avenues of alternate employment are quite limited and therefore ‘continue in the informal sector’ that is often poorly paid and

---

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., pp. 135–37.
without infrastructural support mechanisms. Impoverishment as well as environmental destruction is often the only end result of project related displacement.

In addition to livelihood and economic opportunities-related issues, the tribals of Jharkhand also face acute fallout of displacement in terms of loss of a social identity. As mentioned earlier, much of the tribal livelihood, economy and socio-cultural system is rooted in their traditional habitat, forests and land. In addition, the communal ownership of land, often prevalent amongst the tribal populations of Jharkhand, anchors their socio-cultural life and existence. Displacement thus imperils their socio-cultural identity, a fact that perhaps cannot be taken care of by better rehabilitation efforts. ‘The tribals are the powerless lot in this system [of exploitation of natural resources in which large-scale displacement happens] that monopolises resources in favour of a small minority. They are only one more dispensable commodity’. 41

Apart from severely impacting tribal livelihood issues, displacement of people to find space for various projects has also led to numerous clashes between persons protesting against displacement and the state’s law enforcement agencies. The cases are too many to list and analyse 42 but the assertion of their right to residence in any area of their choice on the part of the tribals have often clashed with the state and industry’s objectives of maximising exploitation of natural resources in Jharkhand. This clash has often led to a situation in which the state has used both violence as well as institutional coercion. The net result of this process has been gross violation of the rights of the tribals in which they have often lost their land, liberty, livelihood and sometimes even their life. 43

---

40 Ibid., p. 139.
42 For some of the details see ‘Massacres of Adivasis: A Preliminary Report’, Economic and Political Weekly, 3 March 2001, which provides a narrative of the background and recent events in the long-drawn protest against the Koel Karo hydel power project, which has witnessed more than three decades of sustained activism against displacement as also raises significant issues about the benefits of large ‘developmental’ schemes.
43 For instance, the tribal communities of Kalinganagar, Orissa contested the government’s decision to allot 2,400 acres of their land to a corporate for
A central issue in this complex set of questions is that of participation of the tribal population in the decisions about allotment of tribal lands for various activities. Despite ‘Constitutional safeguards and affirmed powers under PESA and SPTA of tribal people to veto the land transfer, the government did not attempt to invite “participation” of the people while leasing out raiyat lands …’ In fact, there was no prior informed consent of the affected tribal population and process utilised amounted to ‘cheating/ betraying/ luring the tribals …’ and was ‘perfectly wrong interpretation of the “participation”’.44 Any protest that was witnessed was suppressed by the use of police. Further, Minz shows that as far as the Koel Karo hydel project is concerned, only a small proportion of displaced persons have actually received compensation and only about half of those receiving compensation have actually invested in purchase of land. In fact, his figures show that amongst the few who have received compensation, overall, only 4.61 per cent of the total amount received was spent on purchase of land while 39.41 per cent was spent on current and miscellaneous expenses.45

III

Conclusions

This article began with an argument for the critical need to rethink the spatial/geographical definitions of a ‘region’, to provide the basis of an alternative assessment of developmental imbalances. The conceptual anchors offered in the first section thus advocate a socio-political redefinition of a ‘region’, which would enable us to take onboard the post-development critique of mainstream development theory as well as constructively engage with the issues of equity, rights and justice that the contemporary developmental process has been unable to deliver.

establishment of a steel plant. The tribals, protesting their displacement and fearing inadequate compensation and rehabilitation measures, assembled to prevent the bulldozers from destroying their houses and taking over their lands on 2 January 2006. Through a contested narrative of events, what is clear is that police opened fire, killing 12 tribal protesters. While this particular event occurred in the neighbouring state of Orissa, countless similar incidents of a smaller and less reported nature have occurred in Jharkhand as well.


45 Sunil Minz, Ab Yum Mujhe Nahin Rok Sakta (Now Death Cannot Stop Me) (mimeo), Ranchi, 2000, p. 126.
A limited analysis of the available (partial) datasets for the tribal population in Jharkhand in the preceding section underlines that despite concerted public policy efforts for ‘development’ of the tribal population spanning over half-century, the realisation of right to socio-economic development of the tribals is still a distant dream.

Part of the reason behind such abysmal levels of development outputs is the spatial definition of the region, which conceals the gross disparities in the realisation of these goals. Besides, the spatial definition of the region has also led to a rather homogenised development policy in which the socio-cultural requirements of the social groups concerned have found no space. For instance, in Jharkhand, the questions of rights to land, forest, displacement and rehabilitation (in addition to issues of literacy, health and employment) are central elements for the realisation of the socio-economic rights of the tribal population. The mainstream development theory, however, considers such violations of rights to land, water, forests and displacement as the costs of ‘development’. In the process, the essential characteristics of a particular socio-cultural societal group are under threat. This generates challenges to the legitimacy of the state, hence defeating part of the purpose of ‘development’.

References


Tribal Land Rights and Industrial Accountability: Case of Mining in Dumka District of Jharkhand. 2004. New Delhi: PRIA.
Constitution of a Region: A Study of Chhattisgarh

Dharmendra Kumar

Despite all the claims of virtual and real unification or the so-called virtual and real borderlessness of the world by globalisation processes, the socio-geographical reality is still unevenly structured. Different regions contribute differently in the constitution of global totality both at the level of world market system and cycle of struggles. Therefore, region is still significant, both as an epistemological category in comprehending the socio-geographical and historical reality, and as a unit of ‘militant particularism’. By being such a unit, a region contributes significantly in the whole process of social struggle or transformative politics. Therefore, it is necessary to conceptualise the location of a region in the structured totality and its role in the generation of a dynamic for historical processes.

This article aims at understanding this role with reference to Chhattisgarh region. This requires an understanding of the historical and geographical specificities of the region. These specificities have generated specific processes which have constantly constituted and reconstituted this region. Here, these processes of constitution and reconstitution are understood with reference to the process of capital formation and resistance against it. But before coming to the process of constitution of region it is necessary to have a working definition of region.

What is Region?

The political discourse of regionalism, particularly in India, is represented by two kinds of studies: one, the study of identity politics and

---

1 David Harvey has used this phrase borrowing from Raymond Williams’ writings. By this, he refers to local movements which have resonance at national and international level. For details see Harvey (1996).
two, the study of regions as nationalities. In both these studies, it is argued that a region represents some specific social and anthropological characteristics and thus has a specific identity and that the rights associated with preservation of these specificities should be protected. In this article, it would be argued that a region is not static but a dynamic entity which passes through a process of constant evolution. Region is not merely a set of some topographical forms such as mountains, rivers jungles and so on, but a total space which takes specific forms through interactions of human societies in the course of human history. Therefore, the meaning of a region is constantly altered. For example, mines are not mines until human beings unearth them and develop them for their usages. After the development of mining activities a region does not remain the same region. Further, its meaning transforms with the development of industrialisation. Thus human society, by acting upon its natural surroundings, gives specific material forms to a region. Hence, a region is a material form developed out of a dialectical relationship between nature and human beings. Therefore, in order to understand a region it is necessary to reckon with the processes of human interactions as well as its natural specificities.

In a capitalist society, a region becomes a part of the unevenly developed world market with its own locational specificities. Thus, a region should be understood with reference to the processes of its integration and differentiation into the world market through the extension of various circuits of capital. In this way, it can be seen that region may be differentially included at different levels, i.e., at the level of commodity capital, productive capital and money capital. That is to say, a region can be included in the total social capital as specified roles in the circuits of money capital, commodity capital and productive capital.

This process of integration of a region is mediated by certain institutions such as the state. The state, through its political and economic framework, enforces the process differentiation and integration of a region into the world market. In this process, it determines the specific

---

2 Karl Marx, in *Capital*, vol. II has discussed the three circuits of capital: money capital, commodity capital and productive capital. These three circuits are three forms which capital takes in the process of self expansion and its realisation as social capital. In this process, all three circuits embrace a specific portion of social and spatial reality. A particular region plays an important role in this regard.
role for a region. Here, it should also be emphasised that integration of a region into the world market through the state does not essentially mean inclusion of a region in terms of the destination of global money or finance capital. This may also be through a process of exclusion from investment destination, as it may be relatively less lucrative. But in spite of this exclusion at the level of investment, a region may be integrated at other levels such as at the level of consumption or at the level of the labour market. Thus a region, through this process of integration and exclusion, performs specific role in the reproduction of total social capital.

The production and reproduction of total social capital along this process of self expansion and accumulation of capital is also conditioned by the level of social struggle against this process. A region contributes significantly in this regard. This depends upon the level of contradictions in the region and communication and relationships with the struggles of other regions. In this way, a region has a specific role or a militant particularistic role in the global cycle of struggle.

Thus, a region is always in process. This process can be determined by both the changes from within as its form may change by the political and economic development, or through the process of capital accumulation in the given region and changes from without as the circuits of capital emanating from some different spatial location intervenes into this region on the one hand and the level of contradiction and cycle of struggles on the other. Therefore, it can be said that a region is spatially embedded but its spatiality constantly keeps on changing. Hence, it should be comprehended with reference to the changing processes of its spatiality.

**Chhattisgarh Region: A Study**

The meanings of Chhattisgarh region and regions within Chhattisgarh have changed in the various phases of history. That is to say, its significance both with reference to the world market and the global cycle of struggle have altered substantially in different phases of history. Therefore, the study of Chhattisgarh region has been carried out in four sections — Chhattisgarh: A Geographical Profile; Chhattisgarh: An Interaction with Modernity; Chhattisgarh: Development of Capitalism and Chhattisgarh in the Process of Globalisation: Further Development of Capitalism. The last three are periods of different phases of capitalism in this region.
Chhattisgarh: A Geographical Profile

Chhattisgarh came into being on 1 November 2000. It was carved out as a separate state from the map of Indian union by the Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2000 comprising 16 districts of Madhya Pradesh. Geographically, Chhattisgarh is located at the latitude $17^\circ46'\ N$ to $24^\circ5'\ N$ and longitude $80^\circ15'\ E$ to $84^\circ20'\ E$ with an area of 135,133 sq. km. This area is constituted of two kinds of landscapes — hilly and plain. The northern part, constituted of the districts of Surguja, Jashpur, Bilaspur, Korba and Raigarh, is mainly an extension of the Chhota Nagpur plateau while the southern part, constituted of Dantewada, Bastar and Kanker, is associated with the Deccan Plateau. Sandwiched between these two hilly regions are the fertile plains, the rice bowl of central Chhattisgarh also known as the Khalsa region.

44 per cent of Chhattisgarh is covered by forests which comprise 12 per cent of the total forest area of India. The forests are of tropical, deciduous and moist variety rich in resources like teak, sal, mahua, tendu, saja, bija and other useful timber trees. The hilly regions of Chhattisgarh are rich in mineral wealth, with 28 varieties of the major minerals including rich reserves of coal, iron, limestone, dolomite, bauxite and tin. Some of its areas, like Manipur in Raipur district and Tokpal in Bastar district, are probable diamond centres. The land area of Chhattisgarh is made up of the Kudappa era’s limestone.

The plains of Chhattisgarh are fertile, covering with gross crop area of 5,327,000 hectares. Although Chhattisgarh is famous for rice, other crops such as wheat, maize, jowar, barley, kodo-kutki, gram, lakh and groundnut are also produced. Though it is rich in water resources as it has rivers like the Mahanadi, other rivers such as the Shivnath, Hasdo, Mand, Eb, Pary, Jonk, Kelo, Udanti, and Sukha, etc. in central Chhattisgarh, and Godavari and Rihand in northern Chhattisgarh, the region is largely dependent upon the monsoon for its irrigation. Only 19.58 per cent of the gross cropped area is gross irrigated area. The average rainfall is 1292.1 mm.

These geographical specificities attracted the attentions of people in different phases of history for different reasons. The section below is a discussion of interaction of this region with the outer world in different phases.
Chhattisgarh: An Interaction with Modernity

In Chhattisgarh, though the process of capital formation started in the post-independence period, modernity was introduced in this region in the colonial period. The introduction of modernity prepared the groundwork for capitalism in the form of the development of the politico-legal structure on the one hand, and integration of this region into a broader capitalist framework which has been referred to in this study as world market on the other.

Modernity was introduced into Chhattisgarh through the setting up of the colonial regime in the region. Therefore, in order to understand the development of modernity here it is necessary to have a brief sketch of the history of Chhattisgarh. Hence, what follows is a discussion of the history of Chhattisgarh.

In inscriptions, literary works and foreigners’ travelogues, Chhattisgarh is referred to as Dakshin (South) Kosal. How it became Chhattisgarh is a disputed issue among historians. Some associate it with the 36 forts in this area, some with the 36 houses, while others like C. W. Wills argue that ‘in the 10th century AD a powerful Rajput family ruled at Tripuri near Jabalpur, Issuing from this kingdom of Chedi (also known as Kalchuri dynasty) a scion of the royal house by the name Kalingraja, settled about the year 1000 AD, at Tuman, a site at present marked only by a few ruins in the north east of the erstwhile Laphazamidari of The Bilaspur district. His grandson Ratanraja founded Ratanpur Which continued as the capital of a large part of the country now known as Chhattisgarh. This Rajput family called themselves the Haihaya dynasty. This dynasty continued ruling Chhattisgarh for six centuries about the 14th century it split into parts, the elder branch continued at Ratanpur, while the younger settled in semi-independent state at Raipur. At the end of 16th century it acknowledged the suzerainty of the Mughals, in Bastar, in the middle ages, Chalukya dynasty established its rule. The first Chalukya ruler was Annmdev, who established the dynasty in Bastar in 1320.’

1 Though modernity and the emergence of capitalism are discussed here as separate sections, these are parts of the same process of the development of relations of capital. These are discussed here as two interrelated stages of development of capitalism in this region.


The Marathas attacked Chhattisgarh in 1741 and destroyed the Haihaya power. In 1745 AD, after conquering the region, they deposed Raghunathsinghji, the last surviving member of the Ratanpur house. In 1758, the Marathas finally annexed Chhattisgarh; it came directly under Maratha rule and Bimbaji Bhonsle was appointed the rule. After the death of Bimbaji Bhonsle, the Marathas adopted the *suba* system. The Maratha rule was a period of unrest and misrule. There was large-scale loot and plunder by the Maratha army. The Maratha officials were openly surrendering the interests of the region to the British. In 1854, Chhattisgarh came under British rule; when the province of Nagpur lapsed to the British government, Chhattisgarh was formed into a deputy commissionership with its headquarters at Raipur.

Before the advent of the British, Chhattisgarh passed through the hands of various dynasties and rulers. During the rule of these dynasties the condition of the masses was wretched as they were primarily dependent on monsoon-based agriculture and the region suffered from frequent droughts. What added to their injuries was the regular loots organised earlier by the Pindaris and later by the Marathas. There was complete disorder as there was no court of appeal. Therefore, there was a mass contempt against the Marathas, the predecessors of the British. Hence the masses, unlike in other parts of the country, welcomed the British rule as the rule of law.

Chhattisgarh, particularly Bastar region, has witnessed protests particularly by tribals against the British rule from the late 18th century through the 19th century to the first few decades of the 20th century. Some of these tribal revolts were localised while others were more widespread. Geographically too, the rebellions were not centred in one region; in some of them, the precipitating factors were immediate and local in nature and in some the revolt took its time to brew. However, the central narrative of these rebellions remained largely common and unchanged. All the rebellions were focused and asserted the traditionally inalienable right of the tribals on the local resources land and forests. Often, the mobilisation was around the issues of...
tradition, culture and the tribal way of life. The rebellions were also protests against an alien system of governance and an alien political, economic and social order that had been forced upon them by the British. Although they predominantly took place in Bastar, they were spread across the various tribal areas of Chhattisgarh as well. The key rebellions were: the Halba rebellion (1774–79), Bhopalpatnam Struggle (1795), Paralkot rebellion (1825), Tarapur rebellion (1842–54), Maria rebellion (1842–63), Koi revolt (1859), Muria rebellion (1876), Rani rebellion (1878–82) and Bhumkal (1910).

Nevertheless, the British ultimately became successful in establishing their rule over this area. This was necessary for the establishment of general domination over Indian territory. As Sundar says, ‘the colonial situation meant that the primary impulse for the extension of administrative did not come from the changing exigencies of local society but from the colonial authorities’ perception of the necessary to govern’.

The setting up of the colonial administration helped the British in integrating the Indian territory under one colonial administrative framework. However, this integration was carried out in a particular manner in accordance with the specificities of the localities. This included the reservation of forests. Sundar compares it with the original accumulation process of ‘enclosures or struggles over the commons in Britain’. As Thompson says, unlike England where ‘capitalist notations of property rights arose out of the long material processes of agrarian change’, in English colonies it was law, which became an instrument of reorganising (or disorganising) alien agrarian modes of production and, occasionally, of revolutionising the material base.

Thus, the integration of Chhattisgarh under the framework of colonial capitalism was quite clear through the establishment of administrative framework and introduction of western rules and laws. This was also carried out through measures like reservation and thus statisation of forests, survey and settlement patterns and the introduction of a new educational pattern. Further, the colonial system also introduced the wage pattern in the construction or repairing of

---

9 Ibid.
10 Sundar (1997: 5).
11 Ibid.
A Study of Chhattisgarh

In addition, a source of integration was through the market system. As Sundar, explaining the conditions of forest produce in Bastar region in the colonial period, says: ‘Despite the overall subsistence character of the economy, the existence of a capitalist frameworks evident in the purchase of NTFPs (non-timber forest produce). In the colonial period, the prices of myrobalan and wages paid for its collection were linked to prices in the London market.’

Chhattisgarh: Development of Capitalism

This part of the article is a discussion of the emergence and development of capitalism in Chhattisgarh region. In this context, it has been argued that capitalism in Chhattisgarh has not developed on the basis of the accumulation of this region. It is a kind of grafted capitalism based on the planning of the postcolonial state. The only industry based on the indigenous cotton production was BNC Cotton Mill set up in 1862 in Raj Nandgaon. A jute mill was also set up at Raigarh but the source of its raw material was not located in this region. The point to be argued here is despite these two industries, the region was based on agrarian relations and its capitalist development was yet to start in the post-independence period.

As the development of capitalism in Chhattisgarh has been grafted by the development planning of the Indian state, it is necessary to understand the nature of the development strategy of the Indian state in the postcolonial period. The postcolonial Indian economy can be characterised by two features: one the planned economic development under the leadership of Indian state and two, the focus on industrial development.

However, the Planning Commission was set up in 1950 and the first industrial policy resolution was announced in 1956. Its roots can be traced to the Bombay plan authored by the National Planning Committee of the Indian National Congress set up in 1938. Although this committee was constituted of various sections of society such as ‘industrialists, financiers, economists, professors and scientists as well as representatives of the Trade Union Congress and the Village Industries Associations’, yet the dominant ethos of this plan was

14 Ibid., pp. 6–7.
capitalist development. ‘The role of the Indian state was seen especially as that of a midwife-cum-nurse for Indian monopoly capitalism.’\(^{16}\) This policy, focusing upon the special role of the state, designed a strategy conducive to the development of capitalism. For this purpose, the role of the state was seen as cooperating through managing those areas which would have been otherwise difficult for private business. Public investment was directed towards transport, communication and other overhead sectors. It also advocated that public sector units should be sold off to the private sector after a time lag.\(^{17}\) Thus, the Bombay plan advocated state interventionist policies which were in consonance with then dominant Keynesian policies. A similar kind of proposal was prepared by Indian capitalists such as P. Thakurdas, J. R. D. Tata, G. D. Birla and others, which also emphasises government intervention and control.\(^{18}\) 

On the other hand, the leftist groups which Nehru called the ‘communist and near communist left’,\(^{19}\) also focused upon state interventionist policies which they perceived as essential for the struggle against imperialism. For the left, the state’s intervention or the proactive role of the state was also necessary for measures like land reform and curbing of monopolist tendencies. Besides, another feature of the development planning of the Indian state was the focus on industrial development, particularly upon heavy or large-scale industries. As Industrial Policy Resolution 1956 mentions:

> ‘The Government of India set out in their Resolution dated the 6th April 1948, the policy which they proposed to pursue in the industrial field. The Resolution emphasised the importance to the economy of securing a continuous increase in production and its equitable distribution, and pointed out that the State must play of progressively active role in the development of industries.’\(^{20}\)

Again, this was to be carried out under the leadership of the state. This was quite clear in the Nehru–Mahalanobis model emerged in an emphatic manner in the Second Five Year Plan. At the same time, the Mahalanobis model also argued that ‘production and investment of basic intermediate goods like iron and steel should expand and more

---

\(^{16}\) Patnaik (1998).
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{18}\) Thakurdas et al. (1944–45).
\(^{19}\) Nehru, op. cit.
\(^{20}\) Industrial Policy Resolution, 30 April 1956.
and more their output should be used to produce capital goods for the capital goods sector, i.e. for heavy industries. This can also be seen as in concordance with the Keynesian–Fordist policies.

Thus, the role of organisation and the development of capitalism were assumed by the Indian state. The form it took was the Keynesian–Fordist form which focused on the development of mass production and mass consumption on the one hand and a promise for full employment on the other. This model decided to set up enterprises spatially in those areas where raw materials and workforce was abundantly available. In Chhattisgarh, this resulted in the setting up of an iron and steel plant in 1957 in Bhilai. The capital for this plant was managed in collaboration with the Soviet Union. The raw materials for it were available in near by iron mines. Another plant was a thermal power plant in Korba in 1954. The raw material for this plant was available in the nearby coalmines.

Before coming to other industries set up in this area it is relevant to discuss the implications of the setting up of these plants in this area. In fact, the setting up of a major industrial unit in a region, particularly in a capitalistically under developed area, introduces significant transformations. These transformations can be observed at two levels: one, at the level of general capitalist development and two, at the level of structure of labour. At the level of capitalist development it induces the development of industries directly or indirectly based on the major plant. This includes the ancillary industries based on not only the products but also the scrap and residue of the major plant which the major plant necessarily releases, for example, iron ingot and wiring plant in the regions associated with Bhilai Steel Plant.

In addition to this, the major plant also inspires the setting up of plants which supply some necessary ingredients, for example, ferro alloys for steel plants. Further, the increased employment and thereby the purchasing power generate demands for new goods. These increased demands also lead to opening up new production units. Not only that, it also orients the agrarian sector to produce for the market. Hence, the setting up of a major plant in a region develops an industrial hub or an industrial conurbation. This conglomeration of industries remains more or less dependent over the major plant (steel plant and thermal power plant in this region).

---

On the other hand, the development of an industrial hub or conurbation introduces significant alteration in the structure of labour. First, the demand for workers increases in the region, not only in the organised sector but also in the unorganised sector in the form of contract workers, coolies, drivers and other forms of daily wage workers. This growing demand for workers constantly requires a pool of workers readily available for the industrial zone. This follows a process of primitive accumulation or separation or dissociation of workers from their pre-capitalist means of production. This is carried out through both direct and indirect processes which orient the workforce engaged in artisanship, forest dwellings and subsistence farming or in other agrarian sectors to become the industrial labour. Second, it creates in-migration of workers in this region from neighbouring areas.

Returning to the industrial development in Chhattisgarh, it can be seen that there developed two industrial hubs: one, the Bhilai–Raipur conurbation and two, the Korba–Bilaspur conurbation. The former was centred around Bhilai Steel Plant and the latter around Korba Thermal Power Station. Apart from these two plants, the other industries in Chhattisgarh such as the cement industry also flourished as this region had a good stock of limestone. The first cement plant was set up at Jamul in 1965. The other cement plants are at Durg, Raigarh, Mandhar, Baikunth, Bhatapara, Tilda, Gopalnagar, Akaltara, Bhupdeopur and so on. In 1965, an aluminium factory, BALCO, was set up near by Bilaspur. In addition, an industry based on the indigenous product, rice mill, has also developed in this area. However, the development of these industries was not directly dependent over the two big industries of iron and steel, and thermal power generation development of these industrial developments also took place in and around these two industrial hubs. Therefore, these industrial hubs deserve some treatment in detail; hence, what follows is a description of these two conurbations.

**Raipur–Bhilai Conurbation**

The iron and steel industry in India is over 125 years old. India is the tenth largest producer of crude steel in the world with a production of 24 million tonnes and investment of ₹ 1,000 billion. The first steel plant was set up by the Iron Work Company at Kulti in 1870. However, large-scale production got underway only when the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) was set up at Jamshedpur in 1907. The Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) was set up at Bumpur in
1919. The first unit in the public sector, now known as Visveswaraya Iron & Steel Limited (VISL), began production at Bhadravati in 1923. After independence, three integrated steel plants were set up in the public sector at Bilai, Durgapur and Rourkela with 1 million tonne capacity followed by Bokaro and Visakhapatnam.

Bhilai Steel Plant was based on the Indo–Soviet Agreement on Techno-economic Collaboration. Bhilai has its own captive mines spread over 10,929.80 acres — the Rajhara group of mines which is situated 85 km south-west of Bhilai. The production started on 4 February 1959. Its production capacity has been expanded in two phases: first, to the 2.5 metric tonnes phase completed in 1967 and two, to the 4 metric tonnes phase completed in 1988.

In the course of these developments, Bhilai Steel Plant also led to the creation of a network of ancillary industries in the form of rolling mills, engineering products, wiring factories, ferro-alloy labs and so on. This led to the development of various industrial growth centres. The Industrial Growth Centre in Ural, in Raipur city, is spread over 815 ha. It has around 60 medium and large-scale industries, and 550 small-scale industries. Investments in Ural are over ₹ 400 crore, and it provides employment to over 16,000 people. Siltara Growth Centre, 13 km from Raipur has an area of 1,260 ha out of which 400 ha are available for allotment. There are three medium and large-scale enterprises and nine small-scale industries. A power-generating unit in the private sector has also established its operations here. About ₹ 700 crore have been invested in this centre, which employs 1,500 people. Borai Industrial Area in Durg District has two medium and large-scale and 27 small-scale enterprises.

Korba–Bilaspur Conurbation

Coal has been the basis for the development of the Korba–Bilaspur conurbation. The reserves of coal found in this area are responsible for the establishment of world renowned collieries and power stations. Coal is present in all the important streams that are found in the highlands north of Korba and Uproda area (north of 22º45” latitude). It is estimated that the coal reserves are spread over an area of 155 sq. km. The composition of coal found in this area is 4.5–7.47 per cent moisture to 27.9–39.27 per cent volatile matter, 34.1–47.71 per cent fixed carbon and 11.2–31.61 per cent ash approximately. South Eastern Coal Fields Ltd, which is a subsidiary of Coal India Ltd, a Government of India undertaking with a strength of 11,400
officers and staff, produces about 3 crore MT coal per year in Korba. At some places, there are solid layers of sandstone above the layers of coal, which enables underground mining. Apart from open cast mining, underground mining is also carried out at Korba. It has been found from the surveys carried out that the coal found in this area can be classified as ‘A’ category coke (‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘F’ grades). The coal deposits found in this area are comparatively free from stones and rocks.

Coal deposits were found here during a survey conducted during the British rule. Coal production started in the 1950s and became the base for the development of the city. Two collieries — Korba Ramsagar collier No. 1 & 2 were started in Korba area around 1955–56, during the First Five Year Plan; the production started in December 1957. After a year, in 1958, production commenced from Korba Ramsagar colliery No. 3 & 4. At present, coal is being produced from 12 mines. ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘F’ grade coal is being produced from these mines. Out of these 12 mines, 7 are underground and five are open cast mines. The Gevra Mines in this area are Asia’s largest open mine (see Chart 2.1).

**Chart 2.1: Types of Collieries and the Land they Occupy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. no.</th>
<th>Name of colliery</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Land taken on lease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Korba</td>
<td>Underground</td>
<td>1,708.90 hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Banki,Surakachhar, Balgi</td>
<td>Underground</td>
<td>4,957 hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Raigamar</td>
<td>Underground</td>
<td>3,486.50 hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Manikpur</td>
<td>Open Cast</td>
<td>2,105 hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dhelwadi and Singhali</td>
<td>Underground</td>
<td>1,693 hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kusmunda</td>
<td>Open Cast</td>
<td>1,672 hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Laxman</td>
<td>Open Cast</td>
<td>525 hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gevra</td>
<td>Open Cast</td>
<td>2,340 hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Dipka</td>
<td>Open Cast</td>
<td>3,140 hectare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Statistics, Chhattisgarh Government.

Coal mining and its huge deposits in this area has led to the establishment of various plants such as NTPC Korba Super (power plant of the National Thermal Power Corporation Limited), capacity — 2,100 MW; Thermal Power Station, CSEB (East) — Korba Super Thermal Power Station (thermal power plant of the Chhattisgarh State Electricity Board), capacity — 440 MW; CSEB (West) — Hasdeo Thermal Power Station (thermal power plant of the Chhattisgarh State Electricity Board), capacity — 840 MW; SECL (Coal Mines) — South Eastern Coalfields Limited; public sector coal mines of Coal
India (production — 35 million tonnes/annum); 12 mines in Korba; BCPP — Balco Captive Power Plant (thermal power plant of BALCO), capacity — 270 MW; IBP Explosives Factory, capacity — 25,000 MT/annum; and the Minimata Hasdeo Project.

Bharat Aluminium Co. Ltd., BALCO, is located at a distance of 10 km from the main city. It was established on 27 November 1965. However, production started only from March 1974. This was the first public sector company in the country producing aluminium. It also has its own captive thermal power plant of 270 MW capacity near KSTPS (NTPC). The thermal power plant was set up to meet BALCO’s power requirements. It is operated by the National Thermal Power Corporation Ltd (NTPC). The BALCO plant produces 1,00,000 MT aluminium per year for which 4 lakh MT bauxite is required. The bauxite requirement is made up from the Phutka Hills in Korba and the bauxite mines in Amarkantak. NIDC, India and M/S Chemo Complex, Hungary have provided the technical expertise for the aluminium plant. BALCO has produced, for the first time in the country, a seamless aluminium tube of 6” diameter for irrigation purposes.

The development of these two industrial hubs has significantly altered the socio-geographical landscape of this region. On the one hand, it started a process of exploration and exploitation of natural resources as raw material and on the other, it introduced significant transformations in both the nature of work and complexion of workforce (a large number of workers had arrived from neighbouring states). Hence, the development of capitalism in Chhattisgarh in the post-independence period led to the constitution of this region in a new way.

**Chhattisgarh in Globalisation Period: Further Development of Capitalism**

The previous section was an analysis of the development of a specific kind of capitalism in Chhattisgarh. It was argued that capitalism in Chhattisgarh was grafted by Indian state planning and took place because of the existence of huge reserves of minerals in this area on the one hand and cheap labour on the other. However, this region was not previously untouched by capitalism as modernity had already been introduced by the institutions of the colonial state. In fact, the development of the colonial era had provided a base for the development of this phase of capitalism. This grafted development
of capitalism on the one hand and the groundwork provided by the colonial state on the other led to the emergence of specific forms of capital–labour relationship and working-class politics.

This capital–labour relationship was reshaped in the post-1991 period when the Indian state officially accepted the policies of globalisation. Along with these policies of globalisation, another factor which influenced the reconstitution of the socio-geographical landscape was the creation of the new state of Chhattisgarh in November 2000 by the Indian state. In this part of the article, the reconstitution of Chhattisgarh region will be discussed with reference to these two developments.

Creation of New State of Chhattisgarh

The policies of globalised capitalism were supervised and implemented by the new state of Chhattisgarh which was carved out from the map of the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. Therefore, it is relevant to briefly discuss the processes of creation of Chhattisgarh. In this context it can be noted that although the creation of Chhattisgarh state was not the product of a strong people’s movement, the demand for it was periodically raised from the first quarter of the 20th century. In a span of almost 80 years, there appeared several twists and turns in the demand for a separate Chhattisgarh state.

In this context, two kinds of demand for a new state can be identified. One, the demand from the local elite who sought more privileges through the geographical redistribution and setting up of a politico-administrative unit and two, the demand from the nationality movement focusing upon the identity demands and self rule of the downtrodden sections of the region. The former was raised by the local elite and government officials who were facing difficulties because of the distance from the politico-administrative centre in Bhopal while the later was voiced by the workers’ leader, Shankar Guha Niyogi. Niyogi articulated his views in a paper titled ‘Chhattisgarh and the National Question’, which he read at a seminar organised by the Andhra Pradesh Radical Student Union in August 1981 on the nationality question in India. Unfortunately, the former became the dominant force in the creation of the new state. But this movement too was not very powerful and persuasive. As a result, it could not give a radically different shape and direction to the policies of the state and therefore what dominated the politics of the separate state were the petty interests of the elite and the electoral arithmetic of the
two major parties — the Congress and the BJP — broadly within the policy framework of the Indian state. Before discussing its impact on the constitution of Chhattisgarh, it is necessary to briefly discuss the history of the demands of a separate Chhattisgarh movement.

The demand for recognition of Chhattisgarh as a separate state was first raised in the early 1920s by the Raipur Congress unit in 1924, at the meeting of the Raipur district Congress. A similar demand was brought up after independence in the Nagpur Assembly of the state, which was then called Madhya Bharat. A State Reorganisation Committee was set up in 1954. The demand for a separate state of Chhattisgarh was also brought up in this committee. But the demand was later rejected by the commission as the prosperity in Chhattisgarh could compensate for some impoverished regions of Madhya Pradesh. Also, demands for a separate state were marginalised in the 1950s because Ravishankar Shukla from Chhattisgarh had become Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh.

In the mid-1960s, Khubchand Baghel, a Congress (I) Rajya Sabha member, launched the Chhattisgarh Bhratri (brotherhood) Sangh, at a time when no leader was in favour of a separate state. Baghel, as a member of the erstwhile Central Provinces (CP) and Berar Assembly, demanded statehood for the region. Pyarelal Singh, a freedom fighter and a leader of the opposition in the erstwhile CP and Berar Assembly, also raised the demand. Under the leadership of leaders such as Pawan Diwan, Chandulal Chandrakar and Ajit Jogi, efforts were made to develop a Chhattisgarh All Party Manch, which was later converted into the Chhattisgarh Asmita Sangathanand and last, into the Chhattisgarh Rajya Sangarsh Morcha.

There were other similar efforts of formation of morchas (fronts) and organisations but none of them were backed by larger mass support. Sociologically, the demand for a separate state may be traced to the need felt by the ex-Malgujas (communities of rich peasants, who held the jagirdari rights to collect land revenue on behalf of the Maratha and British rulers) to become numerically powerful under a new state. The ex-Malgujas mainly comprise Brahmins and Kurmis. Baghel was a Kurmi, and those who were at the forefront of the movement were ex-Malgujas. The landless labourers and poor peasants were apparently not excited about the formation of Chhattisgarh state.\(^{22}\)

\(^{22}\) Venkatesan (2000).
What ultimately mattered was the political arithmetic in Indian parliamentary politics. BJP leader A. B. Vajpayee promised statehood for Chhattisgarh if the voters elected BJP candidates to all the 11 seats. BJP candidates were elected from seven constituencies. In the 1999 elections, Vajpayee repeated the promise and held the Congress (I) responsible for bringing down the government before the Bill could be passed in Parliament. The result was good: the BJP won eight seats.

The second kind of demand which was raised by Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha leader Shankar Guha Niyogi centred around the nationality question and had its base in the working masses. Niyogi defined the meaning of ‘Chhattisgarhi’ as one who earns bread in this region. But this movement was mainly located in Raipur region and particularly among the workers of Bhilai Steel Plant and its mines. At the same time, the movement got a severe jolt after the murder of Shankar Guha Niyogi in 1990. However Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha as an organisation of workers survived but could not become a force in the separate state movement.

Thus, being led by upper-caste leaders of parliamentary politics mainly from central Chhattisgarh, the separate state movement and further, the creation of Chhattisgarh state could not develop an alternative politics. State governments, both the Congress government of Ajit Jogi and the BJP government of Raman Singh, worked in consonance with the general character of the Indian state.

The Process of Globalisation

Processes of globalisation have been mediated by the specific policies of the state. These policies are designed to work in concordance with the trends of global capital or world market. This is more evident in the context of Chhattisgarh where capitalism has developed under the direct surveillance of the Indian state. Two things can be noted in this regard. One, the policy level changes show clear resemblance of the global trends of neoliberal policies. There is a clear shift from Keynesian demand side economics to supply side economics. A clear-cut shift can be observed from the developmental discourse to market discourse of capitalism. Every institution is judged on the basis of cost-benefit analysis and from the perspective of market. Two, which is derived from one, is that the drive to reduce the production cost has prompted a drastic reduction in workforce. The resultist policies like the VRS and the golden handshake and consequently a rapid increase in unemployment.
India’s experiment with globalisation started with the official acceptance of the policies of structural adjustment after 1991 when the Congress government was sworn in under the leadership of Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister and Manmohan Singh as Finance Minister. This official acceptance redefined the role of foreign capital or the extension of global capital. This transformed role of foreign capital induced restructuring in the processes and the spatial dynamics of capitalism.

But before coming to this restructuring, it is necessary to understand the policies of the Indian state as regards globalisation. In 1991, the Indian economy faced a serious balance of payment crisis. Foreign debt had reached a figure of 100 billion and the existing foreign exchange reserve appeared incapable of the repayment of 1981 IMF loan. What made the situation more difficult were commercial borrowings and their maturation at different periods. Besides, the Gulf War of 1990, the stoppage of the inflow of $2–3 billion of foreign exchange and the imposition of heavy cost of airlifting made the situation more precarious. As a consequence, India’s credit rating went down, the opportunity of obtaining fresh loans from international commercial banks appeared closed and speculative capital started moving away from India to the safer havens of East Asia.23

Here, it should be pointed out that this crisis was not due to the bad performance of the Indian economy. The years immediately preceding this crisis exhibited a higher rate of growth of around 5.5 per cent, which was far better in comparison with the Hindu rate of growth of around 3.5 per cent. The industrial growth rate during the 1980s was 8.5 per cent. Therefore, the crisis was not because of the inherent structure of the economy but because of the specific policies adopted by the Indian state in the 1980s. As Das Gupta points out, ‘(T)he main reason for all these was the desire by the government to produce “white goods” for the middle class, and to permit the Indian companies to take foreign commercial loans (which jumped from ₹1 billion to 26 billion in a matter of five years) for this purpose guaranteed by the Reserve Bank of India.’24

Nevertheless, this crisis provided the ground for the development of a general consensus among the various factions of the Indian ruling class that India had no option other than the introduction of

---

A structural adjustment programme known as the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1991. In fact, the pressures for such an introduction were generated by the general trends of global capital or the world market. However, the ‘government tried to maintain the fiction that the NEP was an indigenous, prompted by the economic understanding of the government of the day of the feasible options confronting the country, and not brought about by external pressure. Later when the similarities between the Indian NEP and adjustment package implemented globally under the Fund-Bank direction the world over became glaringly apparent, it was claimed, rather ingeniously, that such similarity was accidental, both the Indian government and the Fund-Bank establishment having independently reached the same conclusions.’ Such a claim satisfied the nationalist sentiments and helped to counter opposition allegations of ‘sell outs’.

The point to be argued is that the Indian economy had to act in consonance with the trends of global capital. Globally free trade or neoliberalism was gaining currency and demand side economics was being replaced by supply side economics; the Keynesian framework and protectionist policies were on decline. Here, it should be pointed out that the emphasis on the marketist policies was not new in the Indian economic discourse. The marketist arguments were first put forward against the Mahalonabis strategy of import substitution and protection to Indian industries. The arguments were put forward by economists like Cohen, Singh and Bhagwati and Desai. Their role model was East Asian development. But it was not accepted until the 1990s, as the dominant trend of world capital was towards Keynesian economics.

So far as Chhattisgarh was concerned, globalisation had made two kinds of impacts. First, this area did not get any substantial investment of foreign capital. That is to say, the area was largely excluded by global capital (Table 2.1) Second, despite this exclusion by globalisation as the area of foreign direct investment, the area was clearly included in the world market, if indirectly. The impact of the world market can be observed in terms of pressure of reducing the cost price of the goods produced in this area on the one hand and the

25 Ibid., p. 185.
28 Singh (1964).
29 Bhagwati and Desai (1970).
Table 2.1: States with FDI-approved Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>No. of approval</th>
<th>FDI approved (₹ in million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Tech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>1,049</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>3,959</td>
<td>1,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>2,152</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andaman &amp; Nicobar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandigarh</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dadra &amp; Nagar Haveli</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>1,951</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakshadweep</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daman &amp; Diu</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (state not indicated)</td>
<td>5,815</td>
<td>2,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAND TOTAL</td>
<td>21,926</td>
<td>7,039</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Increase/Decrease in FDI approvals on account of Change in Location.
impulsion to adopt neoliberal policies such as privatisation of public sector units, reduction in welfarist measures and government subsidies on agriculture on the other.

This lack of arrival of big capital was one of the greatest problems the ruling classes of Chhattisgarh were facing. Chhattisgarh was on the lookout for massive inflow of capital. For this purpose, the Chhattisgarh administration offered all sorts of relaxations and attractions for private capital. This has been quite evident in the steel industry in Chhattisgarh, particularly after 2005. Before discussing the impact of these efforts to invitation of investments it is important to recall the policies specific to the period of globalisation, particularly liberalisation, privatisation and reduction in welfare measures.

Globalisation, particularly the policies of liberalisation, had increased the level of competition. In order to compete in the open market, companies had to restructure their production process. This followed the processes of reduction of workforce, casualisation and contractualisation, and flexibilisation of labour. In the first year of its implementation, 1998, SAIL could reduce its workforce by 5,975. The biggest reduction, of 13,670 persons, was made in 1999. In the VRS implemented in 2001, SAIL trimmed its workforce by 6,510 employees. In Bhilai Steel Plant, by June 2002, 5,800 persons had left, followed by 5,000 from Rourkela Steel Plant, 4,600 from Durgapur Steel Plant and 3,500 from Bokaro Steel Plant. Further, companies decided to pare 10,000 workers every year and achieve the target of retrenching 70,000 workers by 2005. However, against this target of shedding 10,000 employees in 2001–2002, the company separated 6,510 employees and the figure for the current financial year stood at about 3,850 till October. In April 2004, a fresh proposal from the company was mooted, aiming at the reduction of 36,000 employees.

The gradual reduction in workforce in Bhilai Steel Plant can be observed in the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of employees</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>57,613</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>15,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>55,975</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>49,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>54,663</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>48,361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>53,620</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>42,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>52,730</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>38,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Information provided by the personnel department of Bhilai Steel Plant.
Contractualisation and Casualisation: There has been a general trend towards contractualisation and casualisation in the period after globalisation. Organisations hive off various functions to different private contractors. These contractors employ workers on daily wage or as casual workers. The argument behind this runs that in the present scenario of globalisation and competition, employers need operational flexibility in order to respond quickly to changes in the market, innovate technologically and deal efficiently with ups and downs in the flow of work. ‘Casual workers’ is in a sense a broad term that may encompass disparate groups of workers who have little in common other than being regarded by their employers as a pool of labour to be drawn on when required and dispensed with when not.\(^{30}\)

Reacting on the demands of contract workers. A Bhilai Steel Plant official justified it as the central government’s directives. Ashok Singhal, spokesman of Bhilai Steel Plant, said, ‘Now their demand is to regularise them. However, in 1997 SAIL received a directive from the government of India to rationalise the manpower. If we regularise the DPR workers then the manpower would jump up by more than 1,000. This is a policy decision which has to be taken at the higher level.’\(^{31}\) It should be mentioned that contractualisation is a soft route of retrenchment or an effort to reduce the expenses over workers’ salary. These workers are not only de-regularised, they are also de-unionised by the same process. In Bhilai itself, close to 1,044 jobs have been de-regularised.

But the greatest benefit that management, particularly in the public sector unit, sees is evasion of labour laws. In fact, casualised workers are never considered as workers of the company as they are not at the muster roll of company feels free to avoid labour laws. At the same time, casual workers are largely unorganised; therefore they do not demand protection of labour laws. Bhilai Steel Plant has also hived off various departments to different firms. However, the hived-off power plant has gone to BHEL and NTPC, public sector units; workers of the new organisation would not be treated as workers of the Bhilai Steel Plant. This would divide the workers’ strength. Other areas which have gone in for contractualisation are mainly areas of construction activities.

\(^{30}\) Gotheskar (2000).
Privatisation: The impact of privatisation in Chhattisgarh appeared prominently in Bilaspur conurbation. Bharat Aluminium Company Ltd (BALCO) sold 51 per cent of its shares to Sterlite Industries on 2 March 2001. BALCO, set up in 1965 at Korba in Madhya Pradesh, an area which is now under the state of Chhattisgarh, manufactures aluminium rods and semi-fabricated products. In 1984 it took over a sick unit in Bidhanbag, West Bengal. The Korba plant has bauxite mines, an aluminium refinery, a smelter, a fabrication unit and a 270 MW power plant, which meets a substantial part of the unit’s power requirement. BALCO and NALCO are strategic industries since aluminium and its alloys are crucial for defence and space applications. BALCO has developed special alloys for the Indian defence and space programme, which are on the list of items under the missile technology control regime and the nuclear suppliers group sanctions imposed on India by the US and other advanced countries. The transfer of such strategic industry to private hands is a mystery in itself.

BALCO’s profits started falling steadily from ₹ 163 crore in 1996–97 to ₹ 25 crore in 2000–2001. With this pretext of declining rate of profit, the Indian government decided to invest its 51 per cent share. The share was sold to Sterlite Industries at a price of ₹ 551.5 crore. The workers were apprehensive about their future as the company’s reputation was not very good. The company was accused of its involvement in several malpractices. For instance, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) formally declared Sterlite guilty in the famous insider trading scam of 1998 and barred it from accessing the capital market for two years. The company’s credibility has also been questioned on environmental grounds. It runs a highly polluting copper smelter at Tuticorin, at the tip of Tamil Nadu coast, in an ecologically sensitive zone. The experts appointed by the Tamil Nadu government confirmed the pollution caused by the plant was above the permissible level and the Madras High Court also passed strictures against Sterlite Industries for flouting the environment norms.

BALCO went on indefinite strike from 3 March 2001. The resistance was such that Sterlite was unable to take physical possession of the plant for several days. Sterlite’s managing director, S. C. Krishnan, reached the plant only on 8 March. Here, the state mediated in a different way. On 7 March, the Supreme Court, hearing an urgent application filed by the Union government, directed the Chattisgarh government to protect the workers and officers of the plant who wished to resume work. The strike continued for 6–7 days.
The workers formed a BALCO Bachao Sanyukta Abhiyan Samiti (Joint Committee for the Defence of BALCO), a front of various trade unions under the leadership of INTUC leader Brahma Simgh. It comprised trade unions such as Bharat Aluminium Mazdoor Sangha (INTUC), Aluminum Employees Union (AITUC), Madhya Pradesh Aluminum Mazdoor Panchayat and Balco Shramik Sangha (HMS), National Aluminum Mazdoor Sangha (NLO), Balco Karmachari Sangha (BMS), Bharat Aluminium Employees Union as well as trade unions affiliated to CITU.

Besides the Nijikaran Virodhi Sanyukta Sangharsh Samiti (Joint Committee for Struggle Against Privatisation), a mass movement was also initiated by political parties including the Congress and the CPI (M); mass organisations of students, youth, women, the Adivasi Parishad and local chambers of commerce and business supported the struggle and dharna programme of the workers. Rail roko agitation, mass rallies and meetings were held in various parts of Chhattisgarh. Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Ajit Jogi also s one such meeting on 5 March 2001 and declared his all-out support to the anti-privatisation struggle. On 16 March 2001, the trade unions gave the call of Chhattisgarh Mahabandh, which was backed by the state government. The bandh was a great success. On 19 April 2001, various unions working among the 20,000 coal workers struck work in support of the BALCO struggle. Women workers of BALCO staged a dharna in front of the office of Disinvestment Minister Arun Shourie on 10 April 2001 in New Delhi.

67 days later, on 8 May, the BALCO Bachao Sanyukta Abhiyan Samiti leadership abandoned opposition to the sale and pushed through a return to work. The workers were told that the privatisation would be settled through a petition to a regional court to be heard on 17 July. The trade unions accepted a court-brokered agreement with the new Sterlite management that the would be paid two months wages and there would be no retrenchment or victimisation.

Along with these major steps there were several instances of closure of private companies, particularly ancillary industries, which left thousands of workers without jobs. In this regard, e can observe that in the areas which are associated with Bhilai Steel Plant in the form of ancillary industries, Bhilai and Urla (Veergaon) are the worst-affected areas. Half of the re-rolling mills are closed and most of the ferro labs are closed. This has taken place because of cheap supply of these goods by foreign companies on the one hand and changes
in the focus of industrial policies on the other. In this regard, it can be seen that cheaper ingots and ferro alloys are supplied in the Indian market from the erstwhile Soviet countries and South African countries respectively. As to change in government policies, it can be pointed out that earlier, for the promotion of small-scale industries, the Bhilai Steel Plant used to sell scrap at a throwaway price while now, under its turnaround strategy, it has started auctioning this scrap material.

The impact of these closures is massive and direct on the working-class masses in the form of massive unemployment. Migrant workers who had come here for work have either shifted to other industrial locations or returned to their native places. Here, it should also be pointed out that the policy of employment freeze has also increased the numbers of pauperised workers ready to work on low wages. In Bhilai in 1999, there were 26 private and one government-run Industrial Training Institutes (ITI). As most of its trainees were locally absorbed either in the Bhilai Steel Plant or in other industries, most of the private colleges were closed because of lack of applicants. It should be pointed out that Bhilai Steel Plant introduced the policy of multi-skilling. When this researcher visited Jamul, a workers’ colony, women had gathered at Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha’s office complaining about rowdiness and goondagardi by certain youths engaged in the liquor business. The matter was settled by CMM activists. But the most striking feature was that these youths were trained ITI products.

Besides, the privatisation took some other forms such as commodification of nature: natural sources are commodified and sold to private owners who in response charge price for these natural resources which were freely available to the masses. As discussed earlier, these processes of privatisation are part of the process of globalisation; an example of this can be found in Chhattisgarh in the form of a government decision to privatise Sheonath river. Here it should be added that privatisation of Sheonath river was also an emotionally charged political issue because in India rivers are worshipped as deities.

For more than a decade, the state government had drawn water from the Sheonath river to supply factories in the Borai industrial zone. But in 1998, the state faced a severe financial crunch and was unable to either build new tanks or repair old rusty pipelines to ensure an uninterrupted supply of water. Desperate for water, the factories

32 Based on this researcher’s investigation.
began digging wells at an alarming rate. Under India’s ‘build–own–
operate–transfer’ programme designed for privatising infrastructure
projects, the government invited Kailash Soni’s company, Radius
Water Limited, to supply water for the next 22 years.

As with such projects, the state-owned Chhattisgarh State Industrial
Development Corporation (CSIDC) signed a ‘take-or-pay’ contract,
under which full payment of 4 MLD is guaranteed to the company
even if the off-take of water is below this. Since the industrial estate
has very few industries at present and there is little likelihood of more
industries coming in soon, the CSIDC has been shelling out huge
money to Radius Water for nothing in return. The irony is that the
availability of water at the Radius anicut has been guaranteed by the
state government by way of assured release from an upstream dam. As
if this was not enough, the money to build the project was advanced
by the CSIDC to Radius. The rationale of privatisation was that the
public agency did not have money to build the project.\(^{33}\)

Since the dam has come up, the villagers who used to fish in the
river, used the river ghats for bathing, took water from the river for
growing vegetables and small crops and depended on the river for
other needs no longer have any rights to the same. It now depends
entirely on the discretion of Soni. He has used this to prevent villagers
access to the river. One of the important occupations affected is the
sand mining from the riverbed which the villagers used to carry out in
their small boats. ‘People’s rights over common natural resources are
slowly slipping to the market,’ said Gautam Bandopadhyaya of River
Valley Agitation, a group that mobilises people living along riverbanks
to resist privatisation efforts. ‘Industry’s needs for water are becoming
a priority over people’s needs.’ Now the high water level and denial of
access makes it impossible. Local people have lost their livelihood and
access in the stretch of 23 km upstream. Meanwhile, 16 villages have
been affected downstream as the company has stored the water.

The resentment against such privatisation led to upsurge of
widespread movement by people’s organisations, unions, leftist groups,
study and research groups. As a result, the Chhattisgarh Government
decided to cancel the contract in April 2003. The agreement signed
with the company was to be terminated within the legal framework and
compensation paid for the remaining part of the 22-year contract after
the Law Department and the Advocate General gave their opinion.

\(^{33}\text{Dharmadhikari (2002).}\)
Capital inflow and its Problems

As discussed above, the state was providing all sorts of relaxations and invitations to private capital. Chhattisgarh region has observed the inflow of private capital particularly in the area of steel industries in Bastar, which are being posed as a panacea for the ills of Chhattisgarh. ‘These three projects hold the key to bringing an industrial revolution in the state’s most poverty-hit tribal regions. We have to ensure that these projects take shape as early as possible, hopefully by year end,’ Singh told IANS in an interview at his official residence. He was referring to Tata Steel, Essar Steel and the Indian Farmers Fertilisers Cooperative Ltd (IFFCO) that signed separate deals with the state government in June 2005.

But these industrial developments create difficult situations for the tribals, who are mainly forest dwellers, as they essentially lead to large-scale displacement and create pollution which causes serious damage. According to a CSE report titled ‘Rich Lands, Poor People — Is Sustainable Mining Possible’, ‘Pollution of water resources and degradation of forests topped by large scale land acquisition have badly affected the state’s large tribal population. Almost 40 percent of Chhattisgarh’s tribals have been displaced by mining and industrial projects.’ Around 60,000 people were displaced in Chitrakut, Bastar just beside the area’s largest waterfall on the Indravati river.

A government committee on land reform has described the industrialisation drive in Chhattisgarh’s iron-ore rich Bastar, Dantewada and Bijapur districts as the ‘biggest grab of tribal lands after Columbus’. The committee’s observations are based on the move to displace 350,000 tribals from these districts for setting up steel and power plants with a total investment of ₹ 20,000 crore. The committee on State Agrarian Relations and Unfinished Task of Land Reforms said, ‘This open declared war will go down as the biggest land grab ever … the drama being scripted by Tata Steel and Essar Steel who wanted 7 villages or thereabouts, each to mine the richest lode of iron ore available in India.’ ‘Villages sitting on tons of iron ore are effectively de-peopled and available for the highest bidder … Both Essar Steel and Tata Steel are willing to take over the empty landscape and manage the mines,’ the committee stated in its report. The report was submitted

---

34 Hindustan Times, 31 October 2009.
35 Ibid.
to Rural Development Minister C. P. Joshi, who then referred it to the National Land Reform Council headed by the Prime Minister.

Tata Steel and Essar Steel are set to mine iron ore in the region to feed their upcoming integrated steel plants in the tribal-dominated Bastar, which is spread over 40,000 sq. km and is vastly underdeveloped. Tata Steel would require about 2,044 hectare of land for setting up the 5.5 million tonnes per annum green-field integrated steel plant in Lohandiguda of Bastar district. The company inked a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chhattisgarh government in June 2005 for the project. In all, 1,707 families from 10 villages would be affected from the project that would pull an investment of about Rs 20,000 crore in the state.

However, these displaced and dispossessed tribals are added in the pool of industrial labour. But these efforts of Chhattisgarh state have not gone unprotected. Although other organisations like the Ekta Parishad, Bharat Jan Andolan, Communist Party of India, Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Mahasabha, an umbrella organisation of tribal groups, are working in this area, the most violent protest has been from the Naxalite movement which was present in this region. The Maoist movement has had a presence in the southernmost district of Chhattisgarh, Dantewada, since the 1980s. This grew out of the trade union movement in the Bailadila mines, from where iron-ore production had begun in 1968 by the National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC), with Japanese funding.

The state responded to this through repressive measures such the projects like 'Operation Greenhunt', deploying paramilitary forces and by allegedly creating organisations like the Salwa Judum (hereafter SJ). The committee on State Agrarian Relations and Unfinished Task of Land Reforms said, ‘The traders, contractors and miners waiting for a successful result of their strategy are behind the Salwa Judum. The first financiers of the Salwa Judum were Tata and Essar in the quest for peace.’

The SJ is an armed and organised outfit whose exact origin is controversial. The state government describes it as a spontaneous people’s movement against the Naxalites. But the movement has often been linked to the personal anti-Naxalite campaigns of current opposition Congress leader in the Vidhan Sabha (and former CPI MLA) Mahendra Karma, who led a ‘Jan Jagran’ (people’s awakening) campaign against

36 Ibid.
Naxalism in the 1990s. What is clear is that from June 2005, the state government, encouraged by Mahendra Karma, began to sponsor the Salwa Judum movement against Naxalism by training and arming tribal youth who are known as ‘special police officers’. On the other hand, civil society and human right activists blame it as an organisation backed and funded by Chhattisgarh state.

Whatever may be the origin of the SJ, it is increasing difficulties for the tribals. In the midst of terror created by the SJ, paramilitary forces and Naxal outfits, the tribals are forced to leave this area and take shelter in the refugee camps of the neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh and Orrissa. The Government of Chhattisgarh admits that since the start of the SJ in 2005, 644 villages of district Dantewada, whose overwhelmingly adivasi population is about 350,000, have been emptied out.

According to Shaswati Das, a civil liberty activist, ‘Tribals in the Khammam district along the Andhra Pradesh–Chhattisgarh border have set up temporary shelters in the forests but live in constant fear that Salwa Judum activists would find them and attack or that the state police or forest officials would evict them from their settlements.’

‘There are consistent threats from the forest department, the police and the local people. The forest department considers them encroachers, police treat them as supporters of the Naxalites, and the local people see them as threats to their livelihood.’

Thus, policies of globalisation enthusiastically supported by Chhattisgarh state have created a new environment for contradictions between capital and labour. These contradictions and the policies of the state government have reconstituted the region of Chhattisgarh in a new way.

**Conclusion**

Thus a region is always in process, a process of constitution and reconstitution. This process of constitution is not only determined by the factors internal to it but also by the politics and processes of capital. These processes, particularly in the period after the emergence of
capitalism, have been discussed above in three different historical phases. Capitalism and the working class struggle determine the structures and shapes of each other differently in different phases of history; these structures and shapes are also influenced by the natural and social geography of a particular region.

**References**


Recent years have witnessed an upsurge in studies on the issues of regionalism and regional movements in the context of the working of the federal democracy in India. These studies seek to unravel the process whereby the regions emerge with geographical, cultural and political spaces getting sharpened and defined in terms of collective identities as democracy gets rooted in a decentralising India (Majeed 1984; Kumar 2000a; Prakash 2001; Jenkins 2004).

The year 2000 remains a watershed year in the above context. It not only witnessed the redrawing of the internal map of India with the creation of three new states — Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh — but also signalled the shifting bases of the demand for the separate statehood. The remapping of India’s federal polity after a gap of two decades was a consequence of prolonged movement by the people of these areas for territorial autonomy based on administrative efficiency and developmental concerns rather than merely on the bases

---

1 The state of Uttarakhand was carved out of the larger state of Uttar Pradesh while Jharkhand and Chattisgarh were initially parts of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh respectively. Chattisgarh was formed on 1 November 2000 followed by Uttarakhand and Jharkhand, which were formed on 8 and 15 November respectively.

It may be noted that though there exists significant differences in the histories of these regions, they have also shared some historical commonalities in the construction of their regional identities, in the vocabularies of protest and resistance that they have employed and exhibited. For instance, all these three states experienced severe ‘economic backwardness’ and had a shared collective experience of regional exploitation by the parent states (Mawdsley 1996: 41).
of language, culture and ethnicity, which had defined state formations in the early years of independence.\textsuperscript{2}

Over the years, in fact, most of the debates and tensions regarding state reorganisation have been due to an overarching assumption that regions can be identified neatly and clearly whether they are based on language, culture, religion, history or any other criteria. This article, in this context, argues that regions are fluid entities, that regional identities evolve and undergo change and it is in this sense that they are context bound. Reflecting on the formation of the Uttarakhand region, the article traces its formation to its administrative and developmental neglect by the parent state of Uttar Pradesh; this was visible in the manner of execution of several governmental projects.

The creation of Uttarakhand was a culmination of the negation of the lived memory and collective experiences of regional exploitation and development neglect by local pahari communities over decades, which eventually found articulation in the form of a mass movement based on regional mobilisation\textsuperscript{3} for an autonomous political space. In this context, the article also looks at the formation of a distinctive Uttarakhandi identity in which Kumaonis and Garhwalis, the two pahari communities belonging to the distinct regions of Kumaon and Garhwal, who otherwise had a long historical trajectory of mutual conflict and hostility, coming together to assert their common concern for a separate state.

The article is divided into three sections. The first section introduces the region and in doing so also provides a background to the articulation

\textsuperscript{2} This marks a distinctive a shift in federal division and political representation whereby regional identity, geographical difference and culture came to accepted and recognised as a valid criteria for state formation and political representation. It may also be recalled that in the first round of the state’s reorganisation (1950s and 1960s), the states were created on the basis of linguistic principle and the last state reorganised in this regard was the state of Punjab in 1966. The states were created thereafter on the basis of ethnic consideration like Meghalaya or there were others which were made full-fledged states from being centrally administered units like Goa, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh. The second phase of regional movements in Vidharbha, Telangana and Marathwada in the 1970s and 1980s was linked to economic deprivation.

\textsuperscript{3} It may be mentioned here that activists avoided calling the movement a ‘regional movement’ as they ascribed to an all-encompassing integral vision for the state. For them it was just not a creation of yet another state but a state of their dreams, a model state which would protect the Himalayan ecology and the perennial source of water to the Ganges plains (Kumar 2001a: 4693).
and assertion of regional identity in Uttarakhand. It discusses various policies undertaken by the Indian state, which not only demonstrates a history of neglect but also displays a stark insensitivity in policy planning and development as far as this hilly region is concerned. The second section deals with the Uttarakhand Movement, which created an appropriate environment for the forging of a common Uttarakhandi identity, which was instrumental in crystallising the idea of a separate state at the popular level. It also argues that demands for statehood in various regions of India indicate a growing political consciousness and assertion of hitherto marginalised sections of the population for autonomous political space to articulate the needs and concerns of their respective regions as democracy gets widened and deepened. The third section reflects on the state and nature of development after its formation.

Introducing the Region

The hill state of Uttarakhand, which came into existence on 8–9 November 2000, was a result of a people’s movement predicated on the idea of development. The major cause of discontentment with the parent state of Uttar Pradesh was regarding the nature of development policies that were implemented in the hills, meant primarily for the plain areas and leading to uneven regional development (Kumar 2000a; Mawdsley 1996, 1999). Geographically three mountainous areas — Tibet in the north, Himachal Pradesh in the east and Nepal in the west, border the new state. It has two administrative divisions — Kumaon and Garhwal — and at present there are 13 districts in the new state. Of these 13 districts, four districts (Nainital, Haridwar, Pithoragarh and Nainital falling under Kumaon division and Chamoli, Dehradun, Pauri Garhwal, Tehri Garhwal and Uttarkashi under Garhwal division. Between 1996 and 1998, these districts were reorganised to create four more districts, namely Udham Singh Nagar, Champawat and Bageshwar in Kumaon division and Rudraprayag in Garhwal division. After the state was formed, the district of Haridwar was added (Bora 2000: 37).

4 The state was initially named Uttaranchal, much against the sentiment of local people. However, on 13 October 2006, the new bill renaming the state to Uttarakhand was passed, which was the original demand of the movement for a separate state in the region. In January 2007, the name of the state was officially changed to Uttarakhand.

5 Before the formation of the state there were only eight districts — Almora, Pithoragarh and Nainital falling under Kumaon division and Chamoli, Dehradun, Pauri Garhwal, Tehri Garhwal and Uttarkashi under Garhwal division. Between 1996 and 1998, these districts were reorganised to create four more districts, namely Udham Singh Nagar, Champawat and Bageshwar in Kumaon division and Rudraprayag in Garhwal division. After the state was formed, the district of Haridwar was added (Bora 2000: 37).
Dehradun and Udham Singh Nagar) have large areas in the plains, whereas the other nine districts comprise the hill region of the state. The state is further split into subdivisions and development blocks. There are also other socio-economic categories and subregions within Uttarakhand which have distinct identities of their own — Jaunsar Bawar, Terain and the Doon valley.

Table 3.1: Geographical Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Uttarakhand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total geographical area</td>
<td>3,287,240</td>
<td>53,483 (1.63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area under forest (sq. km.)</td>
<td>765,210</td>
<td>34,651 (4.53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area under agriculture (ha)</td>
<td>183,016,000</td>
<td>5,671,704 (3.10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area under irrigation (%)</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual rainfall (mm)</td>
<td>14321</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Figures in parentheses are the % share of India.

The population of Uttarakhand is predominantly rural which is approximately around 98 per cent.\(^6\) Agriculture is the predominant economic activity and three-quarters of the landholdings belong to sub-marginal or marginal categories of farmers, with an average of 0.37 hectare of land in each category. Land distribution is relatively equal, cases of land holdings of over 2 hectare are relatively rare and there are relatively very few who are landless. Due to small size of landholdings and lack of appropriate irrigation facilities that are conducive to mountain topography, agricultural production remains low except in the terai regions (foothills) like Udham Singh Nagar. The level of urbanisation is extremely low in most hill districts and there was absence of any significant industrial or service activity till the formation of the state. Except for Dehradun, Haridwar and Nainital, the rest of the districts are predominantly rural with less than 10 per cent urbanisation. All these factors have contributed to high levels of migration from the region. Often described as ‘money order economy’, employment still remains a crucial issue for the state government.

Uttarakhand, despite being a ‘small state’, enjoys certain advantages over its other neighbouring states. While three-fourth of its population

---

\(^6\) The total population of the state is 53,483 of which 52,686.23 are rural and only 796.77 are urban. Refer to Census of India 2001: 3.
lives in rural areas, according to the 2001 census, it has a relatively higher percentage of urban population in comparison to its neighbouring states like Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. Another promising demographic feature of the state is the high literacy rate, especially among females. The state also has a high literacy rate of 72 percentages which is better than many regions in the country. In terms of social indicators like low infant mortality rate, it fares better than others. As far as economic indicators are concerned, it has higher per capita gross state domestic product than its parent state Uttar Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir.

Collectively known as paharis, Kumaonis and Garhwalis share a common cultural tradition, even though they have their own distinct dialects (Mawdsley 1999). As far as caste composition is concerned, it is predominantly dominated by the Hindu\textsuperscript{7} upper castes (Brahmins and Rajputs form 70 per cent of the population). Other Backward Castes (OBCs) constitute only a small percentage of the total population (2–4 per cent). There has been a strong resentment in the state against implementation of 27 per cent reservation for OBCs in government jobs, which eventually was a key factor that triggered the mass movement for regional autonomy in 1994.

**A History of Neglect**

According to the studies on the region (Rangan 1996; Mawdsley 1999; Kumar 2000a), one can trace a trajectory of neglect, which this region experienced, to the early years of independence. In fact, there have been several occasions and instances in the past which reflected not only an attitude of bias and neglect but also ignorance on the part of the central leadership for the region in policy making and governance. Rangan, in her study, narrates that this aspect became quite glaring during the first and second national Five Year Plans (1951–55: 56–60, respectively), in which the benefits of development initiatives rarely benefitted the Himalayan districts of undivided Uttar Pradesh. In fact, during the First Five Year Plan the region was not covered under any developmental schemes both by the centre and by the state government of Uttar Pradesh, of which it was a part earlier (Mehta 1996: 181). There were very few community

\*\*\footnote{According to the 2001 Census, Hindus form 85 per cent of the population, Muslims 12 per cent and Christians, Buddhists, Jains and others together constitute about 0.5 per cent.}
development programmes whose major concern was to ensure basic infrastructure and encourage formation of village level cooperatives to enhance production of cottage and village industries (Khan and Tripathi 1976). Even efforts made by the Uttar Pradesh government towards land reforms did not have any visible impact and eventually ended up imposing statutory ceilings on land ownership and lands distribution. ‘Government lands which were either previously cleared or were declared as wasteland and denuded were distributed as plots to the lower castes and landless households. The consequence of such an arrangement was that it encouraged private forest owners in the hill regions to quickly strip their forests of all valuable resources before they were acquired by the Uttar Pradesh state government, leading to the degeneration of vast stretch of forestlands in the region’ (Rangan 1996: 212–13).

Yet another incident, which had a detrimental impact on this mountainous region in undivided Uttar Pradesh, was due to the border war between India, China and Pakistan in the 1960s (1962–65), which coincided with the Third Five Year Plan period. Though the region had not itself been involved in the conflict, the Government of India wanted to secure more tightly all its territory bordering Tibet and it became a national security zone demanding establishment of army depots and construction of new roads all along the Himalayan frontier. For Uttarakhand this, then, apparently entailed a programme of rapid economic development. As the road-building project started, lumbering operations escalated as the roads brought remote forests into easier reach. Towns grew as workers arrived from the plains. People in the region, however, did not benefit much from this development, though they were meant to. Construction work was assigned to contractors from the plains, who brought with them skilled and semi-skilled labourers and the locals were hired only for manual jobs at a paltry sum (Rangan 1996, 2000).

With the transfer of a large chunk of state land and forests to the Indian government for defence purposes, the local communities were restricted from any access to the forests and forest products on which they were earlier dependent for their livelihoods. Moreover, as a result of the war, the Indo–Tibetan border was closed down, leading to the immediate halt of trans-Himalayan trade. The immediate impact of this was again borne by the communities which were dependent on trade for their income and livelihood and in the absence of any economic alternative, the situation became even worse (Rawat 1983, 1989; Rangan 1996, 2000).
Politics of Identity and Development in Uttarkhand

Rangan further argues that ‘economic marginality, which the region experienced due to the cumulative impact of border wars, closure of trans-Himalayan trade and the stark absence of investible surplus was further accelerated with the implementation of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969–73), particularly with the implementation of forestry policies. The plan gave the State forest Department de facto authority over all forested and open lands owned by states, including forested and wasteland controlled by revenue departments. The purpose was to meet the timber requirements of the industry by encouraging plantation of fast-growing species (Government of India 1976). Under the new system, the forest department discouraged extraction of all forms of small-scale commodity extraction of forest resources and more importantly, it was difficult for small-scale local extractors to compete the forest department auctions which were very high due to market demand for timber and other forest resources. This excluded a vast section of small-scale extractors from forestry activities, who were gradually dominated and replaced by merchants and traders from outside the region who had the capacity to mobilise finance through their links in the capital and credit market’ (Rangan 1996).

All these factors, according to Rangan (1996), resulted in further economic marginalisation of the region. The situation was further compounded due to the nature of policy planning undertaken in the years following independence. A series of natural disasters witnessed between 1971 and 1972 further created losses. Heavy monsoons during this period not only caused flood and landslides but also damaged terraced cultivation extensively; the situation was further worsened due to lack of financial assistance from the state and central governments. Despite consistent demands made by the people to the state government to provide immediate financial compensation to the flood-affected victims and ensure development assistance in the Himalayan districts, not much was done due to financial constraints of the government and its inefficient administration. All such incidences over a period of time created a deep-seated resentment against the government which reached new heights during 1973 when the Uttar Pradesh government rejected a petition submitted by the Dasholi Gram

---

8 During the period between 1950 and 1969, the demand for timber and other produce increased at an average rate of 8 per cent per annum (UP Forest Department 1989).
Swaraj Mandal, a cooperative of local artisans in the Chamoli district of eastern Garhwal, to increase allotment of ash trees for the manufacture of agricultural implements. In its place, the contract was given in favour of a sports goods factory, which had purchased rights from the Forest Department to extract 400 ash trees from nearby Reserved Forests (Bahuguna 1981; Guha 1989). This led to a wide-scale protest against the Forest Department and communities threatened to stall all extractive operations if their demands were not addressed. In fact, the incidence generated such wide mass resentment against the Forest Department and the state government that it eventually catapulted into a people’s movement fighting against the developmental policies of a hegemonic state and thus the much known Chipko Movement was born (Rangan 1996, 2000: 152).

What, therefore, can be conveniently inferred and argued from the above discussion is that this evidence of internal colonialism, systematic exploitation and developmental neglect of the region both by the Indian state and by the parent state of Uttar Pradesh have been largely responsible for the economic backwardness of the hill areas. The region, which has been exploited time and again in the name of serving ‘national’ needs above local interests, also highlights the cultural and geographical difference between the people of the hills and the plains — the maidan (plain) versus the pahar (hills) (Mawdsley 1999; Rangan 1996). This difference and distance between the two regions is reflected in the attitude and understanding of the plain region-based decision makers (politicians, planners and bureaucrats) in conceiving and formulating policies and programmes for the hill region. Jayal argues that, even today, the political discourse of the region is marked by the shared and collective experiences of belonging to the pahar (hills), highlighting a stark opposition to that of the maidan (plains) (Jayal 2000b: 1). It would, however, be interesting to understand as to how the demand for a separate state led to the construction of a united Uttarakhandi identity, transcending the differences between the two cultural communities — the Garhwalis and the Kumaonis — and the tensions between the paharis and the maidanis.

The protests in the region came to be popularly known as chipko, which in the local language means to hug, to cling because of the method employed by the people in which they hugged the trees to prevent them from felling by the forest contractors.
The desire and aspiration of the local people that the hill region of the undivided Uttar Pradesh, now known as Uttarakhand, to be administered separately from the plains areas and be treated as a distinct political entity is not merely a postcolonial phenomena and can be traced back to the colonial period. In fact, it was in the 1938 for the first time that the demand for a separate state was raised in the Srinagar (Garhwal) session of the Congress.\textsuperscript{10} With independence approaching, this was felt to be necessary by the political leadership from the erstwhile princely state of Tehri Garhwal, the British ruling the eastern half of the region, to raise the issue that the hills should be separated from the plains.\textsuperscript{11} It was at a public meeting at the terai town of Haldwani in the summer of 1946 that the demand for a separate state of Uttarakhand was first sharply articulated by its main spokesperson Badridutt Pande, a lawyer by training and a political activist by commitment, who had earlier led movements in defence of peasants’ right to the forests and against beggary or forced labour in the hills. These demands were, however, sidelined and eventually Kumaon and British Garhwal were merged with the new state of Uttar Pradesh in 1947, followed by Tehri Garhwal in 1949 (Bhatkoti 1987; Mawdsley 1999; Kumar 2000a).

The entire history of India’s post-independence phase has been marked by evidence of articulation and expression of struggle and resistance for autonomy in the region. The long process of the formation of Uttarakhand state, however, not only witnessed several twists

\textsuperscript{10} Jawaharlal Nehru envisaged the need for an autonomous administrative set-up for the region on 6 May 1938 in the Srinagar session of the Congress. It, however, shelved as other national priorities took precedence.

\textsuperscript{11} It may be mentioned here that the two main ruling dynasties in the hill region were displaced by the numerous Gurkha invasions during the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Rawat 1989). However, the British defeated the Gurkhas in 1815 and annexed the eastern part of the region, present-day Kumaon and what was then known as British Garhwal. The main interest of the British was to control the trade routes to Tibet. The western half was given back to the son of the previous ruler and came to be recognised as the princely state of Tehri Garhwal. Till 1891, British Garhwal was ruled as a non-regulatory province because of its distinct geography and culture. Thereafter, it was merged with the United Provinces of Awadh and Agra (Mawdsley 1999).
and turns but also encountered numerous obstacles. In the years following independence, P. C. Joshi, a member of the undivided Communist Party of India and a veteran political leader from the region, again raised the issue in 1952. It was argued that since the region had experienced extreme backwardness and deprivation and also due to its distinct geographical conditions and unique cultural tradition, it deserved special attention and hence should be separated from the larger state of Uttar Pradesh. A memorandum to the effect was then sent to Nehru who forwarded it to the State Reorganisation Commission. The proposal was, however, rejected by Nehru in 1955 on the grounds that any encouragement to any such demands would encourage the development of ‘subnationalities’. He considered language as the basis of redrawing the federal map of India. The decision regarding division of large states like Uttar Pradesh was, however, not unanimous and there were dissenting voices within the Commission. It was K. M. Pannicker, one of the members of the JVP Committee, who put his note of dissent on the state of Uttar Pradesh in an appendix of the 1955 report. His argument was that due to its vast geographical terrain, it would not be possible for the state’s administrative machinery to provide effective governance and address the issue of development to diverse regions within the state uniformly; hence it should be divided. Moreover, he argued, due to its numerical strength in the Parliament in terms of more number of seats, the state would have undue influence over the central politics’ (Mawdsley 2002: 40). The proposal for a separate state did not go to the SRC due to lack of political support from local and national leaders and also due to the absence of popular support for the very idea of a new state. Such opposition to Pannicker’s view by Nehru and other senior leadership from the state and the centre also reflected undaunted reliance, optimism and faith among the nationalist leadership in centralised

---

12 K. M. Pannicker pointed out that 230,000 government employees would find it difficult to administer 63,000,000 people, which constituted one-sixth of the total population at that time (Government of India 1955).

13 For details see Government of India, Report of the State Reorganisations Commission.

14 It may be mentioned here that the three chief ministers from the region, namely, G. B. Pant, H. N. Bahuguna and N. D. Tiwari, had opposed the formation of the state while in power. Pant, in fact, had argued against the separation on the grounds that since the region had no industries and jobs, it would be better to be a part of Uttar Pradesh (Rau 1981; Mawdsley 1999).
development and planning in addressing geographical, cultural and linguistic diversities of large states.

The debate and discussion regarding a separate hill state continued throughout the period of the 1960s and 1970s, though such engagements with the issue were confined and restricted to the elite urban groups and hardly had any support from the majority of the hill people from rural areas (Mawdsley 1998, 1999). That there was a distinct lack of awareness particularly among the rural population is apparent from a newspaper report (Himachal Times, 5 June 1993) in which the local unit of the Communist Party of India (CPI) admitted this fact. Moreover as Pradeep Kumar rightly argues, the region has always showed centripetal tendencies which was in tune with the political culture of the Hindi heartland.\(^\text{15}\) It was with the formation of the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD),\(^\text{16}\) the only regional party of the Uttarakhand Himalayas, that the popular mobilisation in support of the idea for a separate state gradually started gaining some stray visibility. During the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s it was witnessed that the issue, for the first time, was adopted by a number of mainstream national political parties including the Congress, BJP, Samajwadi and BSP and in fact the political interest displayed by these parties provided the necessary momentum to this movement during 1993.\(^\text{17}\) It may, however, be argued here that it was with the emergence of the BJP that the strong nationalist sentiments which the region always displaced and the relatively new regional sentiments were reconciled. This was due to certain advantages which the party enjoyed — its strong opposition against Mandalisation, its stress on

---

\(^\text{15}\) It is argued that this tendency made the construction of a regional identity in Uttarakahand a very difficult task. Overwhelming representation of the region both in the armed forces and in Hindu sacred places kept the hills firmly integrated in the ‘mainstream political culture’ which paradoxically sees itself as the centre of Indian nationalism. See Kumar (2001c).

\(^\text{16}\) Uttarakhand Kranti Dal was founded on 25 July 1979 under the Chairmanship of D. D. Pant, former Vice Chancellor, Kumaon University. Its main agenda was to fight for a separate state composed of the hill districts of undivided Uttar Pradesh. It had its first electoral success in 1980 in which Jaswant Singh Bisht won a Legislative Assembly seat and then again in 1986 when Kashi Singh was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly from Didihat, Pithoragarh.

\(^\text{17}\) In 1991, the BJP government passed a resolution in the UP assembly in support of Uttarakhand (Uttaranchal) state; the same was again passed by the Samajwadi–BSP government in 1994 and by the BSP–BJP government in 1997.
‘nationalism’ and its anti-Mulayam stance — which helped the party to exploit the local sentiments and gain hold of the movement. However, such interests in the region by these parties were guided primarily by their concern to appease their coalition partners and mark their presence in the politics of the region. It may be mentioned here that till 1994, the demand for a separate state was primarily based on the argument that Uttar Pradesh was too large a territory for effective administration and there was an absence of an independent valid claim regarding the inherent desirability of a hill state (Jayal 2000b).

The struggle for a separate state of Uttarakhand acquired its much known and familiar political form in 1994 when the Samajwadi party’s government in Uttar Pradesh decided to impose the recommendations of the Mandal Commission in the region (Jayal 2000b: 4311). The immediate cause for this was a police firing on agitators protesting against this legislation, which promised 27 per cent reservations to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) who only constituted 2 per cent of the total population in the region. This was in addition to the already existing 15 per cent reservation to Schedule Castes (SCs) and 7.5 per cent to Scheduled Tribes (STs); this together brought the total reservation quota to 50 per cent, leaving the rest 50 per cent to compete with the high-caste candidates in the open category. As OBCs constitute only a small percentage of the population in the region, the substantive gains of the reservation policy would go to the backward classes from other parts of Uttar Pradesh. This led to strong resentment, fear and anxiety among the local pahari people that if the legislation were to be implemented, it would exclude the non-OBC majority in the hill region from competing in government jobs. It would also deprive a large majority of the region from acquiring economic and social mobility through education and government jobs. Hence, the attempt to implement the recommendations of Mandal Commission by the Mulayam Singh government, the then Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh turned out to be provocative as the region had long been a victim of unemployment, including the educated unemployed segment of the population.18 Further, in the absence of industries and with limited

---

18 The unemployment statistics of the region during this period give an insight of the scale of migration due to unemployment. It was estimated that approximately 70,000 young people registered themselves with the Employment Exchange while the total employment generation capacity in the organised sector was only up to 3,000 jobs (Planning Commission 1993; Jayal 2000b: fn. 1).
options in other sectors, the implementation of the new reservation policy would adversely impact the hill people in an already constrained economy. It created a deep-seated anxiety, particularly amongst the youth, that they would not only be excluded from the employment opportunities with the implementation of this legislation but that it would also encourage and facilitate the non-paharis, mostly outsiders from the plains, to eat into their already meagre share.

The anti-reservation protests in the context of the movement remained important on three counts. One, it further consolidated the existing perception of neglect and exploitation in the collective memories of the local pahari people which sharpened the differences between them and the outsiders. Two, this recognition of commonality was instrumental in forging a common Uttarakhandi identity among Garhwalis and Kumaonis. Neerja Gopal argues that it was possible to subsume the independent cultural identity of the Garhwali or the Kumaoni in the new identity of the Uttarakhandi because rather than representing any primordial affiliation, it essentially had a shared element, e.g., the specificity of belonging to the mountains, the distinctiveness of mountain society (Jayal 2000b: 4311). However, it is important to underline the fact that there is a difference between the pahari and the Uttarakhandi identity. Antje Linkenbach in his study mentions that ‘the Uttarakhandi identity is a new political identity adopted and embraced by mainly those who had deep intellectual commitment and involvement in the autonomy struggle. This new construction of a distinct regional identity’ was all encompassing and also included the non-paharis. For example, people belonging to Bania, Jain and Punjabi communities who had migrated to the hill region long back and were engaged in small-scale business and trading now consider themselves also as Uttarakhandis. Since these communities did not have original roots in the region, for long they only enjoyed a limited sense of belonging and it was the autonomy struggle for a separate statehood which was instrumental in providing them with a positive regional identity. This political construction of a subnational identity in Uttarakhand helped crystallise the idea of

---

19 Caste was not a cause or an issue in the construction of a regional identity in Uttarakhand; at the same time, the miniscule presence of OBCs in the hills in an upper-caste dominated region inadvertently became an issue of regional mobilisation (Kumar 2001: 3).

an autonomous political space and greater political representation within the existing Indian federal structure. Finally, the event and the reservation issue marked a distinctive shift in the orientation of the movement from an anti-reservation struggle to a mass movement (Jan Andolan) for a separate state (Mawdsley 1996).

According to Mawdsley, this shift was linked to two critical aspects which resurfaced during the mass agitation. While there was a strong perception in the region that the parent state of Uttar Pradesh was still exploiting it, it was also felt that over the last two decades the region had started receiving a larger inflow of ‘development’ funds both from the state and the central governments. The articulation of their grievance now centred on the understanding that economic and development marginalisation of the hills was due to the absence of appropriate understanding of plains-based bureaucrats and policy makers of the development needs and concerns of the hill people. The only solution, therefore, rested in the creation of a hill state to be administered by the hill people. Moreover, it was argued that since the region had a negligible presence in the politics of the state, accounting for merely 4 per cent of the state’s population, the only way to ensure a stronger political voice and a greater political representation both at the centre and the (new) state was by creating a separate state. The core concern of the movement in the later years thus shifted to capturing political power in the self-defined cultural region within Uttar Pradesh. It demonstrates the capture and manipulation of state power, state patronage and state resources and contrary to the earlier environmental movements in the region like the Chipko, which critiqued and rejected the developmental and interventionist state, the objective of this regional struggle was to capture and not reject the state and state power. This is not to suggest that the movement did not have confrontation with the state, which is apparent from the events of 1994, but it was gradually directed towards appropriating

21 The 1994 Kaushik Report stated that comparatively low number of MLAs in the region was one of the major grievances heard by the Committee. In 1994 it had 19 MLAs (309,157 people per MLA) and 4 MPs (1,468,596 people per MP).

22 It may be mentioned here that there was absolute non-interference of political parties within the movement when it took off in 1994. This distrust was the consequence of years of political neglect, betrayal and exclusion that the region experienced by both the centre and the state. In fact to keep it non-political, the Uttarakhand Samyukt Sangarsh Samiti (USSS), for example, was set up as a
political and administrative power\textsuperscript{22} rather than opposing it (Mawdsley 1998: 5).

The study of the movement in Uttarakhand highlights the following features of the movement: One, the struggle for the separate state which continued for more than seven decades underlined the importance of development and asserted the need to control local resources, both in terms of traditional rights to \textit{jal}, jungle and \textit{jameen} and in terms of modern commercial opportunities. Two, the movement was spontaneous, non-violent and non-political when it started in 1994. It was later, due to the compulsions and dynamics of electoral democracy, that people voted for a political party so that it could formally represent the region and pass the bill in the central and state legislature for a separate state. Three, even though driven primarily by economic concerns, it was instrumental in the political construction of a larger regional Uttarakhandi identity. Four, women have been at the forefront of the movement for a separate state and many of them were even victims of rape and molestation in the Muzaffarnagar incident of 1994. Five, though it was in essence a regional movement, it tend to remain pro-centre rather than regionalist. The political culture of the Hindi heartland has always remained distinctively centripetal and this element also influenced the political practices and orientations of the hill people. This perhaps also explains the apparent lack of popular faith in Uttarakhand Kranti Dal,\textsuperscript{23} the only genuine regional party, in the elections of 1996 and 1998 and overt and strong preference for a national party, particularly the BJP\textsuperscript{24} (Kumar 2000).

\textsuperscript{22} Non-political umbrella organisation; it gave a clarion call to all party leaders and members to abandon their political affiliation and united with the group for a larger regional cause (women, students, ex-servicemen, NGOs, etc.). It was only later, when the movement became a victim of factionalism, that mainstream political parties gained mileage, especially the Bharatiya Janata Party.

\textsuperscript{23} The UKD failed to mark its presence in the region due to a number of factors like stark absence of organisational ability leading to factionalism within the party, absence of grassroots workers and most importantly, its regional flavour in an area, which always displayed national sentiments. All these went against the party, which was totally sidelined at a time when BJP was enjoying massive electoral gains (Kumar 2001c).

\textsuperscript{24} The BJP’s strong emphasis on ‘nationalism’, its strong opposition to Mandalisation of the polity, its anti-Mulayam position in UP politics and its emergence as a party at the national level trying to fill up the vacuum political space created by the rapid and continuous withdrawal of the Congress — all these factors helped the BJP to gradually appropriate the movement (Kumar 2001a).
Development in the New State: Dividends of Division

The creation of Uttarakhand marks an end to the seven-decade long struggle for political autonomy by the people of the region. It was after a long interval of nearly two and half decades that the three new states were carved out of an existing state. The ease with which the reorganisation of the states took place shows that the partition anxiety about Balkanisation of the country has finally been laid to rest. Another thing that is important in this context is to reiterate the fact that it was existential issues like education, employment, transportation, infrastructural facilities that defined the tenor of the movement rather than ethnicity or ideology. A great challenge before the successive governments of the new state, therefore, has been to translate these aspirations and dreams of the people into concrete reality and to ensure a participatory and people-centred sustainable development in the region. Perhaps the biggest challenge before a decade-old state is as to how to integrate the local, indigenous aspirations of the hill people with the conventional, mainstream notion of development. It may be mentioned here that any development in a hilly terrain cannot afford to involve random application of the dominant developmental models, strategies and concepts that have been conceived in the plains. Further, any discourse on development which does recognise geographical and as well as the economic and social particularities of different ecological zones within the hill areas will fail to balance the present and future requirements of the region.

It may be mentioned here that along with the concern for economic development (and not merely growth), the aim of the new state is to reduce regional disparity, gain access to social equality, provide equal economic opportunity across class and region and in the process ensure greater political recognition of marginalised communities of a peripheral region. Given this context,

---

25 The last state which was formed before Uttarakhand was Meghalaya, created out of the Jayanti, Garo and Khasi Hills of the then Assam state in mid 1970s.

26 Such concerns have also been articulated by the former Chief Minister B. C. Khanduri at the first Uttarakhand Sustainable Summit (USDS) 2008, in which he stated categorically that the ‘state needs a people friendly and rural oriented development model that does not disrupt the life of masses and the livelihoods of the rural population’. For details see http://www.khabarexpress.com/1906/2008/Khanduri-calls-for-sustainable-development-and natural resource management-for Uttarakhand.
this section reflects on the nature of development in the new state, the extent to which it has been able to define a road map for itself, while realising the fact that it is not even a decade old.

As has already been mentioned, assertion of the region for separate statehood was on the issue of development; the geographical disparity between the hills and plains is one of the most critical factors even after its formation. This in further reflected in terms of inter-district inequality particularly in infrastructure including roads, electricity and irrigation, which finally leads to inequality in terms of income and livelihood between the hills and the plains. In order to bring about inclusive growth in the region, the first Chief Minister of the state, Narayan Dutt Tiwari, in his address to the National Development Council stated, ‘the creation and strengthening of infrastructure and a new set up of governance in the initial years is the most important sine qua non for attaining objectives of all round development’ (Tiwari 2002). In tune with such concerns, the state invested in infrastructure, health, education, horticulture and tourism. In fact, the state has been keen to build 28,513.02 km of rail network, according to reports by Uttarakhand government and the Government of India (2006–2007).

### Chart 3.1: Road Transport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Year/Period</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motor Roads Maintained by PWD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) National Highways</td>
<td>2006–2007</td>
<td>km</td>
<td>1,328.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) State Highways</td>
<td>2006–2007</td>
<td>km</td>
<td>1,553.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Major District Roads</td>
<td>2006–2007</td>
<td>km</td>
<td>579.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Other District Roads</td>
<td>2006–2007</td>
<td>km</td>
<td>6,723.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) Rural Roads</td>
<td>2006–2007</td>
<td>km</td>
<td>7,250.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vi) L. V. Roads</td>
<td>2006–2007</td>
<td>km</td>
<td>1,994.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://ua.nic.in](http://ua.nic.in).

However, difficult terrain has proved to be a major constraint in the creation of adequate infrastructure especially for rural road connection. While the state government has been able to generate 3316.5/MU of electricity, the hill districts of the region, which have a large number of villages, still face great paucity in terms of supply and usage.

In the last nine and half years of its existence, economic development has taken a big leap in the state. It is one of the fastest growing economies in northern India, along with Chandigarh and Haryana, according to the Confederation of Indian Industries. It has also
achieved a 9.31 per cent of growth in Gross Domestic Product and ranks third in the country after Gujarat (11.05 per cent) and Bihar (11.03 per cent) in the past five years.\(^\text{27}\) Within a short period, there has been a great increase in percentage contribution of the secondary sector in Uttarakhand. The increase in growth rates of Uttarakhand along with two other states, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand, is also due to some extent that these states could better focus on region specific issues and problems.

The industrial policy 2003, even though it had a very ambitious and bold vision, pushing the region towards strong industrial growth by attracting foreign direct investment, creating industrial hubs and offering a viable environment for private investment, concentrated most of these in the plains of Rudrapur, Sitarganj, Pantnagar and Haridwar. Critics argue that the benefits of development did not reach the hilly and mountainous areas. However, this is not to ignore the fact that the state is hardly a decade old and it is only justified for a ‘small state’ to take time to put things in order; more importantly, there are structural limitations in introducing mainstream industrialisation in the hilly terrain.

One of the biggest challenges for the new state is to ensure inclusive and integrated growth in the region so that the hills and plains areas are taken together in the path of growth and development. In order to address this issue, the state introduced a new hill industrial policy in 2008. According to the former Chief Minister Khanduri, the main objective of the policy is to promote economic development of the hilly and remote areas of the state where industrial process could not take place — The government has tried to addressed the gaps in the earlier policies by classifying the remote and hilly areas of the state into Group A and Group B, with more incentives in the former, i.e., in the new policy.\(^\text{28}\) It is expected that with an integrated hill industrial policy, employment avenues for the youth, which till date remains the major concern of the region, will open up. While analysing Uttarakhand’s economic performance in different sectors one cannot ignore the contribution of public infrastructure.

\(^{27}\) The national GDP growth rate is 8.45 per cent.

\(^{28}\) Category A includes all of the area of districts in Pithoragarh, Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Champavat, Rudraprayag. Category B includes all of the area of districts of Pauri Garhwal, Tehri, Almora, Bhageshwar, Dehradun except Vikas Nagar, Doiwala, Sahaspur and Rajpur Development Blocks and Nainital, except Haldwani and Ram Nagar development blocks.
In Lieu of Conclusion

Given the high expectations of the local people, it is rather difficult for the state, which is a decade old, to address all concerns within a span of 10 years as far as development of the region is concerned. One cannot deny the inter-regional disparities which have sharpened as most of the developmental activities are concentrated in the plains and the plains districts are far ahead in development indicators. For example, while the GDP has increased by 9.31 per cent and the manufacturing sector has expanded, the primary sector has shrunk. With industries flocking to the region there are more than three lakh jobs but it is again restricted to the plains. The hill regions also have low infrastructure development and employment avenues. Given these inter-regional development disparities, the impact it would have on maidani/pahari identities needs to be investigated — Will it get further sharpened or the larger Uttarakhandi identity will be able to subsume such differences? The critical issue of Gairsain, the proposed capital of the new state which still lurks in uncertainty — will it manage to hold together the Kumaonis and the Garhwalis or would it further redefine the boundaries between them on this and other developmental concerns? There are no immediate answers to such questions but they are nonetheless important in understanding how regional identities are shaped by numerous factors. They are not static entities; they evolve and undergo change and in some senses they too, like a region, are context bound and are thus fluid.

References


Politics of Identity and Development in Uttarkhand ▲ 127


Part II

Quest for Territorial Homeland
Regions within Region and their Movements in Karnataka: Nuances, Claims and Ambiguities

MUZAFFAR ASSADI

Regionalism has possibly remained the most compelling force in Indian politics after independence. It has brought in multiple demands, conflicts, and even contradictions on Indian politics. This explains the presence of a considerable number of studies on regionalism. Early studies, such as the one carried out by Weiner in Punjab, tried to analyse the politics of rightism so as to checkmate the politics of the ‘other’, particularly in the context of the Hindu Mahasabha’s attempt to oppose the politics of the Sikhs. There are other studies focusing on the reason for the growth of linguistic movements, movements for a separate state, subregional movements, ethnic movements as a part of regionalism, treating the separatist movement as part of the nationalist movement or nationalist question, and part of pressure-building tactics to realise democratic demands. Now there are other studies which are related to different issues in different regions: these include the emergence of new social movements in different states, emergence of caste and ethnic identity, on the agrarian structure,

---

1 Bhattacharya (2005).
2 Weiner (1962).
3 Karat (1973); Rao (1982); Gupte (1989).
5 Dubey (1972).
6 Roy (1978).
7 Baruah (1999).
9 Brass (1997).
10 Jaffrelot (2003).
and, most recently, studies focusing on the growing resistance to globalisation in different regions.\textsuperscript{11} Most studies have viewed separatism/regionalism/subregionalism differently: these include a fallout of the nationalist movement, historical injustice, a reaction to superimposition of dominant culture mediating through language (Hindi),\textsuperscript{12} strengthening the Indian state and its democratic apparatus.\textsuperscript{13} It is also viewed as part of retrieving ethnic identity or creating one. It is even analysed as part of the reaction to ‘India’s formal(ly) federal, but actually centralised governmental structure’.\textsuperscript{14}

What is missing, however, in these discourses, including in the intellectual debate, is a clear-cut focus on Karnataka — this is where the amnesia which is part of intellectual discourse is apparent. In the imagination too Karnataka is often relegated to the background, though in recent years Bangalore is receiving more focus than Karnataka. This is primarily because there are certain ‘assumptions’ about Karnataka: Karnataka is a ‘cohesive society’, it has nothing to offer both at the intellectual or theoretical levels, historically Karnataka has not made much dent unlike other states such as Bengal or Punjab, Karnataka never witnessed any militant struggle nor forcible nationalist movement and so on. All these ideas overlook the fact that Karnataka also witnessed certain struggles which, however, have not been documented properly or placed at the all-India level for larger discourse. These struggles are peasant struggles beginning from the colonial period,\textsuperscript{15} tribal struggles, environmental movements and so on. Although there are studies on caste,\textsuperscript{16} communalism,\textsuperscript{17} politics,\textsuperscript{18} social movements\textsuperscript{19} and land structure, the separatist/regional movement, particularly the history of the emergence of the struggle in Karnataka, has received scant focus in academic discussion. Questions such as what are the nuances of this struggle, is it a part of nationality movement or is it part of readjusting

\textsuperscript{11} Mittlemen (2004).
\textsuperscript{12} Ram (1968).
\textsuperscript{13} Chapman (2003).
\textsuperscript{14} Baruah (1999).
\textsuperscript{15} Nagar peasant uprising of 1830, South Kanaka struggle of 1800, Irwin Canal struggle of 1930, struggle led by Boodibasavappa.
\textsuperscript{16} Charesley and Karantha (1998).
\textsuperscript{18} Manor (1977).
\textsuperscript{19} Assadi (1994: 212–27).
the regions and so on have never been adequately debated. There are one or two studies focusing on the separatist movement in Coorg but they are not comprehensive.  

Coorg and Regionalism

‘Kodagu Rajya Namma Atma Gaurava’ (Kodagu state is our prestige), ‘Karnataka Sarakara Innu Saaku, Kodagu Sarakara Innomme Beku’ (enough of Karnataka government, we need once again Kodagu government), ‘Kodagu Katnatakada Sampattu Srushtisuva Coloniyalla’ (Kodagu is not a colony for generating prosperity) are some of the recurring slogans that sum up the issues of identity, regionalism and demand for separate statehood/autonomous region in Karnataka in recent years. This demand is now coming from the picturesque, tiny district of Coorg or Kodagu region located in the south-western part of Karnataka.

This is not the first time that such a claim for separate statehood/autonomous region has been made in Coorg. It dates back to the year 1927 when the local leadership advanced it before the Simon Commission. In the postcolonial period the Kodagu Ekikarana Samiti put forward this demand, couching it in terms of opposing the ‘colonial attitude of Karnataka’ or ‘celebration of Rajyotsava day’. Nonetheless, this movement cannot simply be understood or explained in terms of the binary oppositions prosperity/deprivation but also as a part of the contradictions prompted by changes in the economy due to the process of globalisation on the one hand, and the defining of Coorgis over the years as a culturally dislocated and de-ethnicised category on the other. The Coorgis are looked upon as a people who practice certain social values and codes and have a distinct social structure and specific culture. Hereditary land, mainly jamma land, becomes important for this self-definition, which includes the larger issues of culture and ethnicity. In the process of self-definition, a large number of categories that have been living in Coorg for generations together and have adopted the Coorgi language have been excluded and have been treated or reduced to the ‘other’.

---

21 Ibid.
22 ‘Voice of Kodagu’, 13 November and 31 October 1991. This movement is now led by the Coorg National Council (it was earlier christened as the Kodagu Rajya Mukti Morcha.)
The history of Coorg or Kodagu, the term derived from ‘kodimandal’ or ‘kudu’ meaning ‘steep’ or ‘hill’, is shrouded in mystery. There are no less than 17 theories about the Coorgis and Coorg. One particular theory locates them as the original inhabitants of the land belonging to the martial Kshatriya clan but depending on agriculture, a contradiction in terms. Other theories treat them as outsiders belonging to the north-western region of India having roots in the famous Mohanjedaro civilisation; Indo-Scythian in origin and Dravidian in race. A recent theory tries to link the Coorgis to the foot-soldiers of Alexander the Great; descendents of pre-Christian Greeks; or pre-Muslim Kurds. It is also argued that the Coorgis originated from the area of Asia Minor, the Caucasian Mountains, northern and central Iran and Afghanistan on the basis of their dress code, appearance and celebration of festivals. These theories are important because they provide spaces for a larger debate on ‘self-definition of the Coorgis’ and also about their origin: do they belong to Coorg or not, or can they be construed as ‘aborigines’ or ‘settlers’ — this binary opposition has ultimately translated into a vibrant discourse on the larger self of the community.

The Coorg National Council (CNC), which is now spearheading the movement, was formed in the year 1991. To begin with, it was christened as the Liberation Warriors of Kodagu State (LIWAKS). Subsequently, LIWAKS was rechristened as Kodagu Rajya Mukti Morch (KRMM). Its arguments and discourses received concrete shape in the Madikeri Declaration of 22 November 1996. H. D. Deve Gowda, the then prime minister of India, declared in 1996 that Uttarakhand would soon be granted statehood; this gave a further boost to this movement. During this time the then KRMM launched a signature and awareness campaign in different places such as Gonikoppa (2 February 1997), Napoklu (17 April 1997) and Somawarpet (19 May 1997) and organized a programme to promote the need for small states. It is also a member of the National Federation for Small States (NFSS), a Delhi-based organisation.

The present-day CNC’s demand for Coorg Autonomous Region from its earlier demand for a separate statehood combines the metanarratives of history and contemporary political economy in

---

23 Ponappa (1997).
24 CNC, ‘Letter to The Hon’ble President of India, on CODAVA LAND QUESTION — DELHI CHALO programme’, 24 October 2008
binary oppositions of development and deprivation.\textsuperscript{25} With regard to the former, two phases are discernible in the discourse of the movement, pre-1956 and post-1956. In the first phase the arguments or discourses centred around certain issues: historically Coorg was an independent, autonomous and separate province during the medieval and British period; that Coorg had the distinction of having separate political institutions like provincial legislature and a legislative assembly till the amalgamation of the state with Karnataka in 1956; that Coorg lost its status of being a ‘C’ state with the amalgamation; that Coorg had the distinction of being a ‘model to the whole country by its peaceful, happy and idealistic governance’; and, finally, that Coorg had a ‘model village republican system’. In fact, the ‘imagined’ construction of ‘historical autonomy’ is untenable because Coorg, throughout history, was ruled by outsiders and had little autonomy: it was more of a buffer state, be it under the Pandyas, Gangas, Kadambas, Muslim rulers or even the British.

The second phase, post-1956, is the history of exploitation, deprivation and appropriation particularly by outsiders: that with the amalgamation, the status of Coorg has now been reduced to the level of a district; that Coorg, despite pumping a huge amount of money to the state exchequer in the form of income tax (around ₹ 600 crore) has been denied the fruits of development (only ₹ 10 crore is being spent) mainly on infrastructure, medical facilities and schools. The facts that are being put forward by the protagonists of separate territorial homeland for the Coorgis are that there is not a single law, medical or engineering college or university, or a green bench of the High Court, to save the greens. Coorg has also been denied the benefit of Cauvery water even though River Cauvery originates in Coorg. It is also being argued that the government is systematically mistreating Coorg by way of shifting major officers from Coorg and that the development ventures in Coorg have been reduced to the inauguration of plywood factories, construction of dams, arrack distilleries, red light resorts and atomic energy plants, which ultimately means more exploitation of Coorg; that the politics of affirmative action is systematically displacing Coorgis both in politics and in administration; that the permission granted to MNCs and outsiders has further sharpened the exploitation of nature, economy and coffee plantations. Coorg alone contributed more than

\textsuperscript{25} Kodagu Desha, 21 November 1997; KRMM Pamphlet, 1997.
40 per cent of the earnings. Finally, the state of Karnataka is treating Coorg as a colony. Some of these arguments are genuine, especially that of lack of infrastructure facilities in the midst of prosperity. This is discernible in the fact that Coorg is the only district whose growth rate is below the state average (5 per cent); net area irrigated is least (3,947 hectare); the number of industries/factories is the smallest (28); the number of schools/colleges are few. At the same time it is also a fact that per capita income is the highest (₹ 10,810 at current prices); the literacy rate is second to Dakshina Kannada (first being Bangalore, 68.35 per cent); and that Coorg produces the largest amount of coffee. While most of these observations are correct, in all fairness, we cannot accept some of the economic arguments that the movement for autonomy made. One such argument is apparent in its analysis of poverty level in Coorg. The CNC is now arguing that despite the so-called prosperity, nearly 60 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. In fact, this argument is untenable if we refer to the Human Development Report. The latter has identified that in Coorg 20.73 per cent population lives below the poverty line.

The first question that the movement for the autonomy confronted was with regard to the definition of aborigines in Coorg. It thinks that Coorgis are the aborigines of the region. This is the reason why the region is constructed in terms of ‘culturally pure, aborigine categories’. Those who do not qualify to such a definition are treated and termed as ‘others’. It is here that one has to locate the contradiction emerging. The tribals who have been agitating against the state have not been treated as part of self-defined Coorgis. This is due to the fact that the social bases of the Autonomous Movement, particularly the coffee planters in the final analysis, constitute the primary contradiction of the tribals. In fact, its analysis of region and culture also creates large number of ‘others’. There are more than 17 communities that speak Coorgi language which, however, does not mean that linguistic Coorgis are placed at par with the so-called ethnic/aborigine Coorgis: Amma Kodavas, Heggedes, Ayiris, Madivalas, Medas and Kavadis, among others. ‘Heggedes are not admitted to community with the

---

Coorgis, in whose presence they are allowed to sit only on the floor.¹²⁸ Even castes like the Ayiri are not treated as pure Coorgis, some of them are treated as ‘others’ or outside the realm of ‘Coorgis’. Jamma Mopillas — Muslim converts — are no more treated as Coorgis, even though at one particular point of time they also participated in all the important festivals — Hutteri, Kaveri, Sankramana and Kalimurta. They are now treated as ‘others’. Nonetheless, Coorgis follow a social hereditary system of takka, nanda takka and desha takka mainly to oversee ‘offences against social customs, non-attendance at public feast, drunkenness and adultery’. Other systems like arua (one who knows) and karana (ancestral worship) are also observed by the Coorgis. In that context, communities that participate in the three major festivals follow or observe social hereditary principles, wear kupasas (long coat) with waist knife (odikatti) during marriage or other ceremonies and have some amount of jamma lands are treated as Coorgis. This argument is further strengthened with the claim that many of the linguistic categories had roots outside Coorg — the Heggedes, Ayiris, Mopillas and Kavadis, among others, were from Malabar/Kerala, Medas and Lingayats from other parts of Karnataka. That is why the Lingayats, Vokkaligas, Tulu Gowdas, Christians, Jamma Mopillas, Mali, and Chettiars, despite the fact that they have been living in Coorg for generations together, do not qualify as Coorgis in the larger cultural arguments of the Coorg Autonomous Movement. At the same time, an abstract notion of ‘cultural threat’ is produced and reproduced by pointing out that ethnic Coorgis now constitute a minority in Coorg and that Coorg is becoming a ‘de-culturalised province’ with the influx of ‘outsiders’. This is argued on the basis that Onam, the festival of Kerala, is an official holiday; slaughter of cows is being allowed; temples have been neglected and are losing their name and fame; there is a disregard for sacred festivals; and, finally, local shrines are going bankrupt. Nonetheless, these cultural arguments/discourses are made from within, but not from without, except that when a reference was/is made to the multinationals or western capital entering in the forms of resorts the arguments filter down to ecology, environment and land grabbing rather than culture.

It is interesting to note that Coorgis were the first to adopt western culture at home and in their everyday life, thanks to the colonial

¹²⁸ *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Mysore and Coorg*, Calcutta, 1908.
administration. The migration of a large chunk of Coorgis to cities like Bangalore, Chennai, Mysore, Mumbai and Mangalore brought tremendous changes in the cultural framework. A kind of ‘cultural implosion’ can be seen with modernity, globalisation and the larger market operating in Coorg — the sales of cars, television sets, clothes and luxury property has increased phenomenally in recent years. Here lies the paradox of Coorgi culture — modern culture is superimposed on traditionalism. However, the former has not become an issue among the Coorgis and at the same time it is not an agenda with the Autonomous Movement, although the ‘cultural implosion’ is apparent.

However, the argument of ‘de-culturalisation’ from within has also created one more narrative, that of ‘de-ethinicisation’; the latter has emerged due to the amendment to the Land Reforms Act 1995 on the one hand, and ‘alienation’ of hereditary jamma lands on the other. Among all the tenurial practices or land systems, mainly batamanya (lands given to Brahmins), sarvamanya (lands given for religious ceremonies), gaudumbali (service inams), umbali (for meritorious service), math lands (lands of the temples), naimannu (for the service rendered) and jamma; the last, jamma lands, have historically bridged the ethnic identities of the Coorgis. This is because the jamma lands, which once were given to the Coorgis for services rendered to the state either for suppressing the revolts (1834, 1857) or for military service and even for bitti chakari (service without remuneration), had some specific characteristics: that jamma lands could not be sold, mortgaged, alienated or sublet in any way; the land had to be held in vokka (joint family); that land had to be perpetuated and a woman could not hold the land unless she provided an ‘efficient substitute among the male members’ of the family. The amendment to the act has allowed the alienation of jamma lands (after getting the consent of all the family members). The Madikeri Declaration states: ‘Taking advantage of the amendment to the Land Reforms act which came into effect in 1995 the officers have become puppets in the hands of the “resort mafia” and have converted extensive agricultural lands of

Coorg for non-agricultural purposes. Because of this about 60 per cent of the plantation of the Coorg is now the property of the Keralites, Chettiars, of Marwadis of North India, ‘the original inhabitants of the Coorg are “endangered species”’. Pertinently, this ‘de-ethnicisation’ is not a new phenomenon; it started much earlier because of migration of Coorgis to different places for jobs, for settlement, for buying property in distant places.

One cannot, however, overlook the influence of the larger market in accentuating the Coorg Autonomous Movement. Coorg has emerged as one of the important centres for coffee, thanks to the colonial rulers. But the market that the colonialists created had limited space for the planters to operate autonomously. Interestingly, the coffee plantations, while interlinking plantations with the larger market, created two or multiple social formations at the grassroots level: on the one side it allowed the operation of chengulli or unattached free labour and on the other it provided spaces for khayam (permanent labour), bhoomi jammadalu or perpetual bonded labour in the plantation economy. Most of the labourers had come from the backward castes, including scheduled tribes from distant places. Overcoming the internal exploitation is not the primary agenda of the Autonomous Movement, neither is the case of planters. Planters are concerned about the growing demands of the labouring class for implementing labour acts, more wages, fixed labour hours, bonus, housing facilities and medical facilities.

Nonetheless, the direct intervention of the planters with the larger global market, in which the majority are Coorgis, Mopillas and Chettiars, could not have become a possibility without the policy of free sale quota (FSQ) by the Indian state as part of liberalisation policies during the 1990s. Until then, the market as well as prices were decided and determined by the Coffee Board and it did not create autonomous spaces for the planters to enter into the larger market. With the globalisation of the economy and FSQ contradictions have sharpened between Coorgis and non-Coorgis, especially between the self-defined and non-self-defined categories, for capturing a larger market and for reclaiming lost identity. We cannot deny the fact that these contradictions might even filter down to the lower level, mainly against those who are doing petty business such as hoteliers, lime/orange and timber merchants. In fact, globalisation has further strengthened the Coorg Autonomous Movement, especially with the volatile economy slowly and steadily threatening the social bases as
well as class identity of the big planters. This is the reason why the movement is demanding an exclusive Coorg Autonomous Region within the Indian federal system at par with Darjeeling in West Bengal and Ladakh in Jammu & Kashmir.\textsuperscript{30} It is also reflected in the way the movement is now opposing the Hydel project (Barapole) for the reason that it would further affect the economy of the social categories. Third, its agitation politics has remained within the Gandhian framework, although it has not vouched Gandhian principles: these strategies include withholding taxes to the state, non-cooperation, jail bharo, Delhi and Bangalore chalo, observing bandh and so on. Most important is the fact that the politics of the CNC has gone beyond national boundaries to form the Global Kodava Friendship Association to highlight the demands of the autonomous region.\textsuperscript{31}

Finally, it is true that globalisation has not only exacerbated separatist/regional tendencies but also fuelled a new Hindutva movement. The crisis of the economy has brought social categories belonging to or supporting the new Hindutva and the separatist movement for close collaboration on different issues. For example, the new Hindutva’s political manifestation, such as the BJP’s support for small states, found common ground for both to come together. Incidentally, both derive from as well as have common social bases. This is the reason why Hindutva has made strong inroads in this region.

**Separatist Movement in Northern Karnataka Region**

Unlike in the Coorg region, in the north Karnataka region the demand for a separate state is not made on the basis of cultural identities or practices or on the basis of constructing its exclusive identity vis-à-vis the ‘other’. Interestingly, north Karnataka is the first region, which saw the emancipation of the Dalits as well as the backward classes through the Lingayat Movement during the early medieval period, known also as the Bhakti Movement that began with Basavanna, who contested the claims of Brahminical hegemony. Incidentally, the


\textsuperscript{31} They include L. G. Havanoor, Balveer Arora, T. K. Oommen, M. N. Panini, Abdul Kalam and Jayanti Shetty (*The Hindu*, 15 February 2005).
movement ended up as a religion and established similar structures as that of the Brahmins in due course. However, the social bases of the Lingayat or Veerashaiva Movement in the final analysis rested among the dominant castes such as Lingayats. The latter, in due course of time, not only established their hegemony over the politics but also the land. In the latter case, more than creating an emancipatory category, it has created a feudal structure. This is the reason why this region remained historically backward. Second, north Karnataka cannot be viewed as having a single or uniform historical process of development. This is because of the fact that north Karnataka is spread across different regions. In fact, north Karnataka reflects two kinds of regions: one advanced which largely belongs to Old Bombay Presidency area and two, a largely backward region, which obviously belongs to the old Hyderabad Karnataka region. Although colonial intervention brought certain changes both at the grassroots as well as at the political levels in the Old Presidency area, however, Hyderabad region continued to remain backward as the old princely state of Hyderabad believed in superimposing a top-down feudal authority structure.

In northern Karnataka, which is comprised of eight districts, there are multiple forms of separatist movements. In other words, regions within the region have been expressing separatist demands. Although economic backwardness and the subsequent marginalisation of the region have been taken up as the larger issues for a separate state, there are differences within each region. The separatism in north Karnataka has been expressed through what is called ‘symbols of grievances’. At the same time the separatist movement derived its argument from the nationalist movement too, particularly using the idiom of non-violence.

Nonetheless, the symbols of grievances are expressed in multiple issues and forms: they are apparent in their demand to oppose the ‘delay in establishing a bench of Karnataka High Court and South-Western Railway Zones’ headquarters in Dharwad–Hubli Region, inordinate delay in completion of Upper Krishna Project, delay in sanctioning irrigation projects for North Karnataka, closure of Hubli Airport, Industrial sickness in northern region of the state, Gauge conversion of Bijapur-Gadag Railway lines, establishing the regional

---

33 *The Deccan Herald*, 8 September 2004; *The Hindu*, 20 April 2009.
office of the Cotton Corporation of India and Food Corporation of India’. Further, their demands include ‘setting aside 50 per cent of the budget every year till the formation of the separate state, implementation of the M. D. Nanjundappa Committee report in retrospective, creating job opportunities for youths of the region and stringent action against those who uses language and culture of the region in films and TV serials in a funny way’.

Despite all these claims, the movement in the ultimate analysis has been reduced to demand High Court Bench in two different places; this has created two forms of movement: one centred around the Old Presidency area demanding High Court Bench in Hubli region and another in Gulbarga. Interestingly, these two movements have floated their own flag, map, etc., nonetheless, they are supported and nurtured by the lawyers. Although the separatist movement has formed what is called North Karnataka Separate State Struggle Committee (NKSSSC), that does not mean that there is uncritical support for it. Interestingly, when lawyers of the Hubli–Dharwar region went on to demand a separate state, the Gulbarga region, particularly because of the inherent threat of losing identity once the separate state becomes a reality, opposed the same. This is apparent in the following:

‘The exploitation by the people of Bombay Karnataka region would worsen if Hyderabad Karnataka joined hands with them. In the final analysis issues of regional backwardness are sidelined — this is where the contradiction within the movement can be observed.’

**Regions within Region**

All these do not mean the absence of any conflict/contradiction within the region. This is apparent in the Old Bombay Presidency region. Here, the regionalism has given rise to multi-layered regional conflicts. This is reflected in Belgaum, a district that once belonged to the Bombay Presidency area. Here the regional identity is reflected in the contestation over two important issues: one, the issue of merging Belgaum and the surrounding 814 villages with Maharashtra for the simple reason that it has a large number of Marathi speakers.

---

35 *Deccan Herald*, op. cit.
and two, the issue of language, both in the schools as well as in the municipal corporation. When the Belgaum Municipal Corporation adopted a resolution demanding the integration of parts of Belgaum with Maharashtra, the state government dismissed the civic body. In fact, this is not a new demand either. The Maharashtra Ekikarna Samiti spearheads this demand. Whenever this committee gets the majority in the council, it adopts the resolution favouring the merger of Marathi-speaking areas in Maharashtra. Frequently, this conflict is treated as a ‘border dispute’, however, one cannot negate the fact that regional identity is the primary concern here.

There are two claims in this issue: one, Karnataka claims that the ‘border or region’ issue is a dead\textsuperscript{38} one or it cannot be revoked on the grounds that the Mahajan Committee which was constituted in 1967 had rejected the claims of Maharashtra. The Committee also rejected the claim of over 814 villages in the Uttara Kannada district including the claim over Karwar city on the grounds that Konkani, the language spoken by the majority of the population, is a dialect of Marathi. Interestingly, the Commission made a recommendation of transfer of Nippani town and 40 villages around it to Maharashtra. Of the 516 villages in seven taluks claimed by the then Mysore state, Maharashtra itself had conceded that 260 of them were Kannada villages and therefore transferable to Mysore. The Commission recommended the transfer of 247 of them to Mysore.

This particular politics is not complete. Even in Karwar region, a slow but steady demand is growing to merge Konkani-speaking areas with Goa. Goa Konkani Rajya Ekikakaran Manch (GKREM), which came into existence in the recent past, is spearheading the movement and is demanding the merger of three taluks — Karwar, Joida and Haliyal — of Karnataka with Goa. More than cultural arguments, the argument about the language has been dominating the movement.

The third region, which has created the contestation between the two states is Kasaragod district in Kerala.\textsuperscript{39} Karnataka always contested that Kasaragod region historically belonged to Karnataka. In this case, the Mahajan Commission had then recommended that 71 villages to ‘the north of the Payaswini and Chandragiri rivers’ be given to Karnataka. These two have remained a flash point between the two states.

\textsuperscript{38} The Hindu, 21 May 2008.

\textsuperscript{39} The Hindu, 3 October 2006.
The crux of this region lies in the ‘homeland doctrine’. The States Reorganisation Commission headed by Justice Fazl Ali (Senior) and consisting of Hridaynath Kunzru and K. M. Panikkar had in 1955 observed: ‘We cannot too strongly emphasise the dangerous character of this doctrine, especially from the point of view of our national unity. If any section of people living in one State is encouraged to look upon another State as its true home land and protector on the sole ground of language, then this would cut at the very root of the national idea.’ Justice Mahajan cited this approvingly in his report.

Winning the election is seen or often viewed as barometers to regionalism. In fact, the Mahajan Commission rejected such an idea on the grounds: ‘I do not think that the election results are conclusive on this point. Different considerations weigh with the voters at the time of the election and these are well known. In these elections the Congress did not join issue with the Samithi on the basis of language.’

**Separatism in the Coastal Belt**

Another region in Karnataka is also slowly but steadily making claims that it has been neglected over the years is the coastal district. Although the demand for a separate Tulu Nadu or Tulu Rajya is now gaining momentum, particularly after the 1990s, the claims are made on the grounds of ‘relative discrimination’ and ‘historical injustices’. Some of the arguments that the Coorg Movement made also echoed in this context: ‘Tulu language had a history of 2,500 years. Though Tulu had its own script, the Kannada rulers had suppressed it. For so many years, we had co-operated with Karnataka. Tuluvas have been deceived by the so-called Kannada rulers.’ The movement is trying to construct an identity through Tulu language and culture. This is apparent in the following:

Tulu language is one of the five Dravidian languages of South India (Pancha-Dravidian Bhasha in addition to Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam). The four major languages spoken today are dominantly spoken in their respective states (Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, ...
Karnataka and Kerala), whereas Tulu is spoken in a small niche mainly in coastal Karnataka and Northern Kerala (in Kasaragod district). About 2.5 million people speak Tulu and call it their mother tongue. Tulu Nadu is a region where multiple languages are spoken. While Kannada is the official state language, different ethnic communities in Tulu Nadu speak different languages. Tulu, derived from proto-Dravidian, is the predominant language spoken by Hindus of various castes and by the Jains. Kankanasthas and Catholics speak Konkani, which is derived from Indo-Aryan language. Muslims speak a language of their own that is derived from Tulu as well as Malayalam. There are about 24 Dravidian languages recognized by linguists. Of these the five languages in the South developed into major languages. Tulu is the only developed language that has not received the respect it is due. However, Tulu language with its near extinct script has been generating more and more enthusiasm amongst the linguists, as it is now believed that it is one of the oldest Dravidian languages in India.

This Tulu Rajya comprised of the northern part of Kerala (upstream Chandragiri river), Dakshina Kannada and parts of Udupi district. In fact, Dakshina Kannada/Udupi is one of the fastest modernising districts. It is one of the highly developed districts too; in the case of human development it stands first in matters of health, education and literacy rates (75 per cent), lower dropout rates (13.1 per cent) and transport; even the poverty level is very less (6.68 per cent). Here the regionalism is reflected both in the matters of retaining the Tuluva identity, the latter is cultural, and also of a language. These issues are clubbed together in larger demands such as the neglect of the Mangalore–Bangalore railway, irrigation, watershed development and drinking water projects, the poor condition of national highways, major district roads, fisheries roads, state highways and public works department roads. The separatist movement led by Tulu Rajya Horata Samiti argues that ‘after Independence, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts did not get any major irrigation or drinking water projects, even though were the top revenue earners for the State Government. But when it came to Government grants, they stood no chance’. There is an opposition to Bangalore-centric development at the cost of the coastal district. Interestingly, the separatist movement also made note

---

43 [http://in.groups.yahoo.com/group/jaitulunad/](http://in.groups.yahoo.com/group/jaitulunad/).

44 *The Hindu*, 13 August 2006. This movement is now supported by poet Kayyara Kinnaha Rai and M. P. Ramanna Rai.
of the differences growing between Dakshina Kannada and Bangalore-centric development. It is true that DK has the highest percentage of literates, has and a large number of educational institutions and technocrats; however, the argument that they have not been employed properly is again and again reproduced. The separatist movement is also opposed to the influx of global capital mediating through different industrial sectors on the grounds that this will dislocate or deterritorilise the local population and that it will further marginalise the already marginalised, displacing, particularly, the cultural practices of the population. Adding to this, the separatist movement has come out with other demands, which include 80 per cent jobs/posts for Tulu-speaking people being provided by companies setting up units in the district. If such people lacked the necessary skills, the companies should train them. The government should create Tulu minority quota seats to recruit Tulu-speaking people in government departments. The banks should reserve posts for Tulu-speaking people. This movement traces the origin for a separate state to the reorganisation period, likewise the Coorg Movement. The demand for a Tulu state existed during the period of reorganisation of states. Later, when districts were formed, and when Kodagu became a district, the local people here had raised the statehood issue. When Kodavas demanded statehood a few years ago, the Tulu statehood issue was raised again.

The decade of globalisation has given enough space for a separate state in coastal belt. This is due to the fact that globalisation is being pursued as a larger threat to the identity of the local population. Unlike the Coorg, the separatist movement is yet to construct the larger argument about the ‘other’. Nonetheless, it has become mute to the ongoing communalisation of the coastal belt. Second, unlike Coorg, the social bases of the separatist movement have not come from Hindutva, although both the separatist as well as the Hindutva forces oppose global capital; however, there are differences in their approach. For example, the separatist movement opposes the global capital as it has the potentiality to erase the identities of subalterns. On the contrary, Hindutva opposes it as it has the danger of eliminating indigenous capitalism, particularly that practiced by supporters of Hindutva.

---

45 The Hindu, 6 July 2006; The Hindu, 5 September 2006.
It is in this context the preservation of cultural identity has become most important. This is apparent when it is demanded to include Tulu in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. This is argued on the ground that Tulu is a spoken language of the region and that ‘Tulu was one of the languages cited in the list of official languages of several universities in Canada, United States, Australia and some countries in Europe’. Second, it is also reflected in the rechristening the district as Tulu Nadu or to include Tulu language as one of the optional languages at the primary level. The separatist movement never claims that it is a nationality question, nor has the movement has taken a militant form. This is the reason why state politics is indifferent to the ongoing struggle.

**Bangalore and Contestation**

Other than these regions, there are times when the region is contested for the reason that it has now become the centre of a ‘cultural salad’. For example, even the state capital was once contested on the grounds that it is no more represents the exclusive interest of Kannadigas, or it is no more the cultural centre of Kannadigas; rather, it is now a salad of Tamil culture, Telugu culture, jazz culture. In fact, there was a demand to make the state capital a union territory in order to safeguard the interests of the linguistic minorities. This echoes the demand once made by the Andhraites in Tamil Nadu about the then Madras. They demanded, in the late 1950s, that Madras should be made the capital of the Telugu region as it had a predominant presence of Telugu population. Bangalore region is now gradually becoming the centre of contention.

**Dalits and Separatism**

There are times when social categories also constructed as an argument in favour of a separate state. This came from Dalits in Karnataka. Although this movement or the voice for such a demand has not been made vociferously, one cannot overlook the presence of such a demand. Their main grievance centres around the successive governments’ failure to address the constitutional rights of the Dalits. This

---

includes ‘cancel GO restricting reservation in promotions to SC/STs immediately, protect the interests of Dalits. Instead of helping the Dalits, who have been oppressed for ages together, to come to the mainstream, they argue, the government had failed to ensure that all the Constitutional rights of the Dalits were protected. Besides, it had also failed to prevent atrocities on Dalits.’

### Contesting the Separatism/Region

Regionalism also creates opposition; especially when the social classes that the regional movement creates exclude different social categories and thereby fail to become a comprehensive social movement, the conflict become apparent. One such counter movement is apparent once again in the Coorg region. The Kodagu Praja Vedike contested for a separate state is on the grounds that the separatist movement led by the CNC (Coorg National Council) represents the ‘voice of one particular community’. This is the reason why it justified the resolution adopted by the popular institutions such as zilla panchayat as genuine. Second, other organisations too opposed the separatism. One such association is the Kodava Hegde Samaj that represents the Kodava Hegdes who are one of the 20 original inhabitants of Kodagu. Its opposition was on the grounds of increasing distance after the growth of the separatist movement — the separatist movement ‘cannot represent the will of the population’.

---


50 In one of its resolutions adopted in 2005 the organisation demanded the following, ‘demanding political representation to the Kodava Hegdes; dropping the Barapole Hydel Power Project and laying of a synthetic turf for hockey in the district’. See *Deccan Herald*, 14 May 2005.

51 This is being questioned by the CNC in a statement stating that

The exultation of the group called Kodagu Praja Vedike over the resolution passed by the Zilla Panchayat, against the statehood demand of Coorg National Council and its supporters is not justified, simply because the instant decision taken by an elected ZP member cannot be equated to the decision of the mass of people he or she represents. The statement of the Praja Vedike that the opinion of all the ZP members can be considered as the opinion of all the people of the district is ridiculous. The immediate question that arises here is, what about the persons who had voted against
State Politics and the Separatism/Regional Movement

However, the state reacted differently: One, it did not respond to the separatist movement initially for the reason that movement was not strong enough to alter the political landscape of Karnataka and two, the movement had no effect on the state politics and it was not militant either. All these have created multiple problems for state politics, one of which is that the separatist movement in a way had created spaces for Hindutva to grow in some of the regions, particularly in Coorg and Old Hyderabad/Old Bombay Presidency areas. The ultra-rightist Hindutva is now slowly appropriating these regions, which are historically known for syncretism/cultural pluralism. This has led to an increasing number of communal riots in these regions. These regions have helped the political manifestation of Hindutva, particularly the BJP, to make its dent in the state politics.

This movement brought multiple politics to the centre: the state often agreed to the demands of the separatist movement. This is apparent in the case of Hyderabad region as well as in Coorg. Although initially

the candidate who won in the elections? The candidate might have won with a majority of votes, but there may be candidates who would have won only with a single vote margin. In such cases, fifty percent of the population will definitely be against the sudden decision the ZP member may take without consulting the subjects he represents and vice versa. Moreover, when the politicians can hop parties in the name of change of ideals and policies, the fickle-minded voter can definitely change his or her mind after voting for or against a candidate. Conducting an opinion poll of the general public on each and every issue is needed here, but it is impossible due to the magnitude of the populace and the exorbitant expenditure involved in the gigantic exercise. This is of course, a drawback of democracy, particularly in India, which proudly claims to be the largest democracy in the world. Well, haven’t Union Governments been uprooted by merely a single vote? Yes, in a democracy, every single vote matters, since it is the people’s rule and not of a few politicians who happen to be in power, grabbed intentionally or thrust upon them accidentally. With the unscientific method of assigning caste-wise reservations and the rampant malpractices that take place during polls, not to mention the ignorance, confusion and general resentment among voters, the whole election process becomes a gamble where capability is not at all the criterion. If the Prajavedike really considers the decision of the people as the ultimate decision, is it prepared for a mock referendum? (Coffee Land News, 6 January 2007).
the centre viewed the above movements as weak, in recent times it has become very apprehensive of the fallout of these movements, which had the potentiality to alter the political arithmetic of the state too; in some places it was led and supported by the dominant caste. This is one of the reasons why the state politics preferred truncated movements, as that would dilute any further threat to it.

Further, it is true that the presence of different separatist tendencies have led to the creation of new social coalitions which are gradually taking root. This is very much apparent in north Karnataka where the dominant caste, the Lingayats, have joined hands with the upper caste, particularly the Brahmans, to form what is called LIBRA (Lingayats and Brahmans), a political coalition of social groups, although this social/political coalition is transitory. In the coastal belt it has created conditions for 4Bs — Bunts, Brahmans, Banias and Billavas. In the Coorg region it has created the acronym COLiB — Coorgis, Lingayats and Brahmans. This has a larger implication on state politics too. All these are slowly shrinking the democratic/secular spaces.

Finally, regionalism, which is being expressed through the movement for separate statehood, has created new demands: demands for recognising the rights of the indigenous population and providing primacy to the issues of culture and land relations. It has also brought demands to rework the governance in favour of the disadvantaged groups or the regions than metropolitan cities. It has increased the ‘tension’ as well as ‘contradiction’ not only between regions but also among social categories. These ‘contradictions’ have manifested in different forms: demanding more economic resources to economically backward regions; shift in the paradigm of development; and contradiction between ‘self-defined categories’ and the ‘others’.

References


———. 2008. ‘Letter to The Hon’ble President of India, on Codava Land Question — Delhi Chalo Programme’. 24 October.


5

Backwardness and Political Articulation of Backwardness in the North Bengal Region of West Bengal

ARUN K. JANA

Introduction

Studies on contemporary West Bengal can be broadly classified into two categories. The first of its kind deals with the nature and pattern of domination of the CPI (M) in the state since 1977. Several attempts had been made to see how this domination was built in the state by the party and how it is maintained. The second category of studies analyse the policies that the CPI (M)-led Left Front government had pursued and its impact on different sections of the society in the state. Studies of the first kind are understandable and spring from the fact that in West Bengal there is a clear domination of the party, which is reflected first, from the massive electoral victories of the party since 1977 and second, from the huge organisational set-up of the party which it has built at the state level.¹ The studies of the second kind, however, are of much more significance to us though they suffer from the problem of repetition. The performance and non-performance of the Left Front government have become more important since the question of substantive democracy have assumed importance. Assessments had been made on the performance of the Left Front Government in the state. The success or failure of the policies pursued have become a subject of research and debate for the academia. Hence, much has been written on the subject.

¹ The domination of the party seems to be fast coming to an end and this can be said particularly after the reverses that it suffered in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections and the assembly by-elections in the state.
Among the studies of the second kind two distinct subcategories exist. There are those who are uncritical of the Left Front in power and put forward a highly glorified vision of its performance in the state. Kohli, who had written extensively on the Left Front regime in 1998, arrived at the conclusion that West Bengal has been relatively well governed since 1977 (Kohli 1998). Nossiter (1988) also found that the policies of the CPI (M)-led government in the state have met with success, though to him, the ‘Left Front’s record in the urban and industrial sector has been far less satisfactory’. As a result the CPI (M) to him is ‘very secure in the rural areas and most urban areas’ (Nossiter 1988: 196). These studies primarily focus on the rural policies of the CPI (M)-led government. Kohli (1987), Lieten (1990, 1992), Webster (1992), Harriss (1993) and others focused on the policies in the agrarian sector and the resultant structural and institutional changes which took place in the sector. Kohli, in a well-received study, analysed the rural red panchayats, which have become the fulcrum of policy implementation for the Left Front government in the agrarian sector. He analysed the fate of anti-poverty policies pursued and concluded that a well-organised, parliamentary communist regime in West Bengal has successfully initiated programmes of redistribution.

Similarly, Webster investigated the ‘extent to which the state government has been successful in pursuing the programme’s aims of increasing political participation in local government institutions and in introducing a decentralised system of development planning in the agrarian sector ... Specifically directed at improving the socio-economic condition of the rural poor’ (Webster 1992: 1). Harriss appreciated the redistribution programmes and its impact but cautioned that ‘redistribution alone offers no solution to the agrarian problem of Bengal’ (Harriss 1983: 51 quoted in Harriss 1993: 1238). Lieten (1990, 1992, 2003) is the most vocal of the protagonists regarding land reform measures. He argued that the West Bengal countryside has witnessed a number of positive departures since the Left Front Government assumed office. He provides three different indices in support of his argument. The indices to him are: the increase in agrarian production and in rural employment; the halting of the process of de-peasanisation; and the reversal of the process of polarisation and pauperisation (Lieten 2003: 93–97).

There are others who appreciate the impact of the land reform measures but only in a relative sense. For example, Ghosh argues that compared to other states in India, West Bengal’s record of
implementation of land reforms programme (LRP) has been the most impressive (Ghosh 2000). In the third category are those who give almost unqualified credit to the Left Front government for the implementation of land reforms in the state.

There is in fact a growing literature that is critical of the Left Front regime. It notes that the Left Front had done nothing substantial after it acquired power in the state in 1977. Mullick (1993), for example, made a scratching criticism of the CPI (M)’s development policies. He concluded that the Left Front ‘was a dismal failure’ it should no ‘longer be a matter of debate’. To him, the nature of the failure has taken three forms: 1. transformational development reforms that failed to achieve their objectives; 2. non-policies which merely continued the status quo or followed Congress precedents; and 3. regressive policies which were more elitist than the Congress policies (1993: 213). Ghosh also presents a similar picture of the scenario of the land reforms measures that is lauded as a success by the government. To him, as of December 1995, 1.24 million acres of vested land was vested and 994,000 acres of this vested land was distributed. So far as bargadars (sharecroppers) are concerned, 1.468 million were recorded (see Ghosh, 2000).

Sengupta and Gazdar similarly argue that only half of the land distribution was carried out under the Left Front government, while the remaining land had already been distributed by previous governments (1998). Williams similarly found that ‘land reforms appear to be of less political importance in the villages today. With over 30 percent of the villagers employing casual agricultural labourers, the CPI (M’s) hesitancy in actively politicising this issue is perhaps understandable for reasons of its electoral survival. Whatever the political calculations involved, the CPI (M) development aims of changing the balance of class forces in the countryside appears to be progressing, but not in the manner originally anticipated by the party’s leadership’ (1999: 248). Singha Roy notes that ‘the issue of land reforms is gradually becoming less and less politically important in rural West Bengal since there is not much land left to be distributed. Land distribution programmes benefited only a limited section of the peasant society, big landowners are gradually included in the Left political party folds and the ULF government is also opening up for liberalization and is in the process of drawing a new agricultural policy’ (2004). This focus of the academia on the rural-oriented policies is well understood considering that the bulk of the policies of the government till recently were directed at improving the conditions of the rural poor through redistributive programmes.
The studies, though rich, suffer from the problem of repetition since most of them examine the nature and impact of the government policies. Second, the studies focus less on the industrial sector and more on the policies related to rural development and the rural sector. This is understandable considering the fact that much of the policies of the Left Front throughout the years were directed towards the rural sector and less on the urban-industrial sector. The urban-industrial sector found prominence only recently which also generated much criticism and debate in recent years. Let us not go into the details of these studies. In this article, we shall make an attempt to look at backwardness in the North Bengal region of the state and how forces that are opposed to the CPI (M) and the Left Front articulate this backwardness politically. We will see that backwardness in the region if not directly but in an indirect manner has led to the emergence and development of forces that mobilise on ethnic lines. We contend that these forces are rooted in economic backwardness of the region, which is primarily agricultural. We assert that the backwardness of the region is the backdrop for the growth of ethnic parties and politics.

Backwardness in North Bengal had affected different ethnic groups adversely in the region in varying degrees, which is the cause of resentment among them. The prominent forces that articulate backwardness in the form of identity politics are: the Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMM) which has marginalised the once dominant Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF); the two factions of the Kamtapur People’s Party (KPP); the Greater Cooch Behar People’s Association (GCPA); and the Greater Cooch Behar Democratic Party (GCDP) and the Adivasi Vikas Parishad.

The resentment against backwardness gets exacerbated and takes the form of ethnic politics principally because of three other reasons. First, it is because of the presence of ethnic groups that are linguistically and culturally different from the dominant one who are largely

---

2 The opposition, however, is more to the CPI (M) and less to other forces like the Forward Block or the RSP, also a constituent of the Left Front. The smaller parties have a sizeable presence in some constituencies of the region.

3 Backwardness in other parts of the state had given birth to the growth of Naxalite/Maoist violence in recent years. This is principally true in the southern part of the state. There has been a growth of Naxalite violence in West Midnapur, Purulia, Bankura and Birbhum, which are officially considered as backward districts of the state.
placed in the category of SCs and STs and who have clearly lagged behind in terms of development indicators. The second is related to the practices of the CPI (M) and the Left Front, which to a certain extent stems from its domination in the state and in the region. The CPI (M) has been using aggressive tactics for capturing and controlling institutions within the state, which had led to an erosion of democracy. It has failed to accommodate and address their grievances and has also failed to accommodate the elites of these ethnic groups. Third, in the absence of a sensible and organised opposition at the state level, the demand of the principal ethnic groups finds expression if not exclusively but principally in one form of identity politics, which demands the formation of separate states.\(^4\)

If it is backwardness and the ethnic composition of the population in the region that is responsible for identity politics, why is it that the tribals in the south Bengal region of the state, even though backward, in the districts of West Midnapore, Purulia and Bankura\(^5\) has not been mobilised on ethnic lines successfully on the issue of a separate state even though they are ethnically distinct, poor in absolute terms and constitute a good section of the population in the state and the region they inhabit. In the southern part of West Bengal the tribals mainly are the residents of the *jangalmahal*, meaning forested belt. They constitute more than 1 million people in these three districts. In the 1970s, there was an attempt to mobilise the tribals on ethnic lines and create a Jharkhandi identity in the region in support of a separate state of Jharkhand which was to include 25 districts of Bihar (including today’s Jharkhand), Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh (including today’s Chattisgarh). In West Bengal, the movement gained some momentum from the 1970s. Mass rallies, meetings, *bandhs*, etc. were organised (Ghosh 1993). Ethnic mobilisation, however, was not very successful due to class mobilisation in the region and the entire state by the left that included the CPI, the CPI (M) and, to some extent, the Forward Bloc. Class-based mobilisation in the region prevailed, hence

---

\(^4\) In a federal arrangement, which the Constitution guarantees, it is felt that the creation of a separate state can be the answer to the problem of backwardness. The constitutional arrangement therefore, in one way, has been a source of these kinds of ethnic demands.

\(^5\) These three districts of south Bengal are considered to be backward districts. To the HDR 2004, Purulia ranked 16th, Bankura ranked 11th and undivided Medinipur ranked 7th (WBHDR 2004).
ethnic mobilisation could not gain much currency. The Jharkhand demanding parties thus succeeded only to a very limited extent. The Jharkhand Party secured only 7.09 per cent of the votes in the two seats that it contested in 1977 for the State Legislative Assembly. A decade later, in 1987, it did not contest the Assembly elections or even if it did, it put forward candidates as independents. Owing to fragmentation of the Jharkhand Movement, in the 1991 elections three parties contested the election — the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), the Hul Jharkhand Party and the Jharkhand Party, which overall polled 0.67 per cent votes in the state but contested 31 seats in all. In 1996, five factions of the movement contested. In 2001, however, the factions contested only 10 seats, managing to secure only 0.4 per cent of the votes in the state as a whole. The weakness of the movement was largely due to the fact that in 2000 the state of Jharkhand was formed by redrawing the boundaries of Bihar, hence the movement in West Bengal ran out of steam. The success of class-based mobilisation, the split in the Jharkhand movement and the formation of the separate state of Jharkhand in 2000 had not allowed ethnic parties to have much success in the region. The mobilisation by the Maoists in the region in the most recent period is a continuation of radical class-based mobilisation.

This article is divided into two principal sections. In the first, we begin with the backwardness of the region on the basis of official and academic studies with certain indicators in mind and in the second, we look at the principal forces that articulate and address the problem of backwardness of the region. We note that the political articulation of backwardness has taken two principal forms. The forces of the first type which are much more prominent feel that the formation of separate states can be a panacea to the problem of backwardness. The second of these forces argue that the region needs more development assistance for the region and therefore shuns identity politics. These forces have been marginalised in recent years.

I

Understanding Backwardness in the North Bengal Region

Let us turn to the North Bengal region first. North Bengal consists of six districts — Malda, Uttar (North) Dinajpur, Dakshin (South)
Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and covers an area of 21,000 sq. km, which is about 24 per cent of the state area. As per the 2001 Census, the total population of the districts under North Bengal was 14.72 million, which was 18.35 per cent of the state. The decennial growth rate of population is higher than the state average and this is alarming considering that there is an influx of immigrants from Bangladesh and Nepal into the bordering districts. There is also a high percentage of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which is well above the state average. The percentage of SC population is 29 per cent as per the 1991 Census, which is conspicuously higher (by 5 per cent) than the state average. The SC population is mainly concentrated in the districts of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and West Dinajpur. Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts also account for the high percentage of tribal population. In Jalpaiguri, the tribal population accounts for 21 per cent and in the district of Darjeeling it accounts for 13.8 per cent. This proportion of tribal population is much higher than the state average of 5.6 per cent (Planning Commission 2002). A study by the Planning Commission also found that the SC and ST population recorded an increase between 1971 and 1991 in the state as whole and also in the north Bengal region.

The entire region is regarded as backward in academic as well as in official circles. The Planning Commission commissioned a study in 2002 to assess the relative backwardness of the region and to provide policy support for the future development of the region. It identified three districts — Jalpaiguri, South Dinajpur and North Dinajpur — out of the six in North Bengal as backward for its ‘Backward Districts Initiative-Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana’. Malda was added later to the list, increasing the number of backward districts to four in the region. This scheme ‘aims at focused development programmes for backward areas which would help reduce imbalances and speed up development’. It identified these districts as backward districts on the basis of certain index of backwardness comprising three

---

6 Cooch Behar is often spelt as Koch Behar and Coochbehar and the district derives its name from the Cooch dynasty that ruled the princely state for several centuries before its merger with the Indian Union on 20 August 1949. It was on this day that King Jagaddipendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur renounced power and decided on the merger of the state with the Union of India. On 19 January 1950, the state was merged with the state of West Bengal.
parameters with equal weights to each parameter: 1. value of output per agricultural worker; 2. agriculture wage rate; and 3. percentage of SC/ST population of the districts. The districts of North Bengal, except Darjeeling, are less developed in comparison to most of the districts of South Bengal. None of the districts are favourably placed except Darjeeling, which ranks fourth in terms of human development in the state. The districts rank between 10 and 17. In terms of per capita income, except for Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri all the districts occupy above the tenth position (GOWB, West Bengal Human Development Report 2004). Hence, officially it has been accepted that the region is backward in terms of several indicators. One also notes that there are ‘both diversities and disparities within the districts of North Bengal region’ (Planning Commission 2002).

Backwardness is manifested in several forms ranging from agricultural backwardness in terms of land distribution and productivity, poor development of industries, high incidence of poverty and poor infrastructure facilities such as health and education. Let us turn to all these indicators of backwardness that are manifest so markedly in the region. The Planning Commission states that according to available statistics with reference to three main civic amenities, i.e., electricity, safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, North Bengal is poorly placed in comparison to the state of West Bengal (Planning Commission 2002: 2). The literacy rate in this region is low except that in Darjeeling district it is only 50.13 whereas in the rest of the state it was 61.7 per cent. The per capita income is low in all the districts of the region; it is much below the state average. The Planning Commission also found that even though the per capita income increased in all the districts over time, the increase had been at a much slower rate than in the state as a whole (ibid.: 3). Even though backwardness of the region manifests itself in several forms we shall focus on the region’s backwardness in terms of industrial, agricultural and poverty indicators. While looking at poverty we confine ourselves to rural poverty since the region is primarily rural and there is a high dependence of the population on agriculture, to which we shall turn later.

The other districts in West Bengal that were identified for the programme were Purulia, Midnapur West, Bankura and Birbhum. These districts lie in South Bengal.
Industry

In comparison to the industrialisation of the state the level of industrialisation of the North Bengal region is very low. The task force of the University noted that ‘industry only plays a minor role in the economy of North Bengal’ (North Bengal University 2001). It was found in 2002 that only 2 per cent of the workers were in the household manufacturing sector whereas in the state as a whole 5 per cent were in the same sector (Planning Commission 2002). There is an absence of big industries in the region, tea being an exception. The region is, however, marked by the presence of several smaller industrial establishments under the Small Sector Industries out of which 32.2 per cent of the units are located in Jalpaiguri district, 21.3 per cent in Darjeeling, 19.01 per cent in Malda, 16.3 per cent in Uttar (North) and Dakshin (South) Dinajpur and 11.2 per cent in Cooch Behar. The most important fact about these industries is that a good percentage of them are located around Siliguri town of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts. It is because of this that nearly 89 per cent of all registered industrial employment in North Bengal is to be found in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri.

On industrial and commercial activities in North Bengal, the task force notes:

Large industry is very scarce in the region. Except for a few companies and a few hotels, business organisations exist mostly in individual or partnership form. Large Corporate business organisations are nearly absent, except in the presence of tea Corporate like Duncans, Tata Tea, etc., and other like Hindustan lever, which are among the few to set up houses in North Bengal. Smaller companies in the region such as Kusum Iron & Steel Co. Ltd., or Sinclairs hotels Ltd., do not always have the ability or the wherewithal to deal with the problems of capital and labour scarcity that are frequently confronted in the region. Certain activities have thus not developed adequately in North Bengal (North Bengal University 2001: 66).

The single industry that is of any significance to the socio-economic fabric of North Bengal happens to be the tea industry. Tea plantations

---

8 One of the consequences of this low level of industrialisation is that there is a low level of urbanisation in the region; hence the region is relatively rural.
9 Among the tea-growing states, West Bengal is the second largest producer and produces around 21 per cent of the tea in India.
are spread not throughout the region but are located mainly in the hills and plains of Darjeeling and in Jalpaiguri district.\textsuperscript{10} It was once a booming industry which now has been hit by a crisis, which manifests itself in several forms. The tea plantations first started coming up in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal under foreign capital from the second half of the 19th century along with the jute mills that grew in South Bengal almost at the same period in the districts of Howrah and Hooghly along the banks of the river Hooghly. The first tea plantation though came up in 1856 in Darjeeling but within a decade 38 more tea gardens were added. By 1874 the number rose to 113 and by 1885 there were 186 gardens in the district. There was, however, a noticeable decline in the two decades that followed even though the area under tea cultivation increased significantly. In 1905 there were 148 of them and the number remained almost the same till 1935. The decrease in the tea gardens was primarily because of the fact that many small gardens merged and many merged with the big ones. As a result the number of gardens declined but the area under tea cultivation in the district increased significantly. In Jalpaiguri, the other district where the tea plantations are found, it was planted for the first time in 1874. The plantations are located in the western Dooars, which was once a part of Bhutan before the Bhutan war of 1864–65. In 1901 there were 236 plantations but in 1907 it came down to 180. In the post-independence period starting from 1947, there was no significant increase in the number of tea gardens or in the area under tea cultivation even though there was a boom in the industry till there was a slump which started from the late 1990s. The only growth that took place was in the small plantations sector that mushroomed in the Dinajpur district for some time but it employs very little labour. In recent years there had been a significant increase in the number of plantations in the Jalpaiguri district — from 191 in 1997 it increased to 532 in 1999 — but most of these are small plantations. It is due to this that the average daily workers employed in the plantations has not increased significantly. In 1997 the average daily number of labour employed was 159,378 and it increased only marginally to 161,176 in 1998 though the increase in the number of plantations was almost three-fold in the period 1997–99.

\textsuperscript{10} There are three separate tea-growing zones in West Bengal: Darjeeling, Duars (also spelt as Dooars) and the terai region. The latter forms the foothills (plains) of the Darjeeling district whereas the Duars are a part of the Jalpaiguri district.
At present there are 330 plantations (excluding some of the smaller ones) in the state but so far as the working complement, particularly the permanent working complement, is concerned there has been a decline since 1951. Bhowmik (1992) has found that the total working complement in the industry in a period of 30 years from 1951–81 decreased by 25 per cent, from 322,679 to 213,662. By 1987 the labour force has reached a figure of 2.38 lakh (Jana 2002: 217). As per the tea statistics released by the Tea Board, the average daily number of labour employed in West Bengal in 1994 was 258,448; in 1995 was 258,179; in 1996 was 252,103; in 1998 was 247,584; and in 1999 was 251,012 (Tea Board, Tea statistics 1999–2000).

The industry though was the only industry which was unaffected by the crisis that faced all the major industries in West Bengal but since the second half of the 1990s it also had entered into a crisis. The crisis in the industry, it is commonly believed, started from the second half of the 1990s due to the policy of liberalisation that had had an effect on the profit earned by tea, lack of proper adoption of agro-technology, low rate of re-plantation, lack of long-term policy, lack of proper adoption of agro-technology, low rate of re-plantation, low investment in the development of gardens, frequent changes in ownership, emergence of short-sighted merchant class as plantation owners and poor utilisation of resources (Chakravorty 2002). The most important effect of the crisis had been that many big and established tea gardens closed down due to a number of reasons. A researcher in December 2002 found that in West Bengal 20 tea gardens were under lockout. These closures have rendered a large number of labour unemployed in these three districts. At present, around 15 big gardens are in a state of lockout.

**Agriculture and Rural Poverty**

In the absence of inadequate industrialisation and the inadequate growth of the service sector, agriculture remains the chief activity of the people in the region. In recent years, there has been an increase in agricultural productivity but the growth in productivity in the region is much lower than the rest of the state. Out of all the districts, Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri have recorded very low rate of growth in agrarian productivity. The Planning Commission noted that it was lower than the drought-prone district of Purulia in South Bengal. So far, as average landholding is concerned, it is small and there is a possibility that in
the future there will be a further decrease in the size of landholding because there is a pressure on land due to the tendency towards migration in the rural areas of the region.\textsuperscript{11} Average landholding in Malda district was, however, smaller than the state average. The number of the landless is also high in most of the districts, except in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. These two districts are an exception due to the fact that tea garden workers in these districts are not included as a part of agriculture labour. The NBU report notes ‘that there has been an increase in the proportion of landless agricultural labourers in North Bengal’ (2001). With the slowing down of land reform measures at the state level from the early 1990s, it appears that there will be a growth of landlessness in rural North Bengal in future years.

Landlessness is the prime cause of rural poverty in the region. Incidence of poverty appears to be very high since landlessness is high in the districts. One other factor can be attributed to the high level of rural poverty and that is the slow growth of agrarian productivity. Though it had increased in recent years, is much below the state average. The incidence of poverty is also high which can be made out from three other factors. First, because there is a high concentration of SCs and STs in all the districts of the region and it is a well-known fact that there is a direct relationship between poverty and the proportion of SC and ST population in the country. Second, it has been estimated that the per capita income of all the districts of North Bengal was far below the state average except Darjeeling where it is just below the state average. Third, it is also because of the poor record of implementation of special programmes for the poor in these districts. The Planning Commission study found that even though the allocation of welfare-oriented programmes is more or less proportional to the population, but, the release of funds for implementation and the actual implementation, which can be made from the utilisation of funds for the policies had been very poor. It has also been found that a good amount of funds have gone unspent in the districts under various programmes. In this regard, the case of Cooch Behar is slightly better than other districts of the state.

\textsuperscript{11} The average landholding in North Bengal, though low or small, is higher than the state average except Malda, where the average landholding is smaller than the state average.
The Central Districts

Even though the entire region is backward and underdeveloped in terms of several indicators, not all the districts have been affected by identity politics. Out of these districts, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling are primarily the districts that have been affected by identity politics and we contend that this is one form of articulation of backwardness in the region. There are several demands and the demand involves the formation of a state of Kamtapur led by the Kamtapur People’s Party (KPP) and its faction, the Kamtapur Progressive Party (KPP), the formation of a separate state of Greater Cooch Behar and the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland by the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), the Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMM) and other groups. Out of these, the movement led by the GNLF appeared first in the 1980s and till recently had been the most powerful one in terms of its impact and also in terms of its achievements. It is the partial success of this movement which to a large extent contributed to the growth of the other two movements in the region. There are certain common features of these movements. First, all demand the formation of separate states and second, the movements are rooted in the backwardness of the region. In the section below, we briefly look at the various forms of the movement. But before we do that let us take a look at the ethnic composition of these districts in brief considering that it is the complexity of the ethnic situation in the region and districts that gives birth to identity politics and makes it possible for leaders to mobilise on ethnic lines on the issue of a separate state.

Darjeeling district is home to several ethnic groups but the most prominent one happens to be the Nepalis, who started migrating from the adjoining areas of Nepal after Darjeeling became a part of the British Empire. The Lepchas were the original inhabitants but the rapid influx of Nepalis from Nepal outnumbered the Lepcha population. By 1881, the Nepalis formed the absolute majority not only in the three hill subdivisions but also in the entire district of Darjeeling (Dasgupta 1999). Most of the migrants from Nepal were low caste Nepalis. Both pull and push factors were responsible for the migration. Pull factors included the recruitment to the British army, the tea plantations, road and railway construction works, etc. Plantation workers in the

---

12 Thus, from the second half of the 19th century, the ethnic composition of Darjeeling changed due to waves of migrations from Nepal caused by a number of factors, both pull and push.
Darjeeling hills, contrary to the plains and plantations in Jalpaiguri district, mainly consisted of the Nepalis. Apart from the Nepalis, the other groups in the hills are the Bengalis (mainly middle class Bengalis), Biharis, Marwaris and some others. They, however, constitute only a small percentage of the population. The Nepalis are the dominant ethnic group of the district in the hills. Even though the Nepalis were stratified in terms of caste, a composite culture started developing in the region and this can be regarded as a Nepali culture.

Darjeeling, though it ranks fourth among the districts in the state as per the Human Development Report published by the Government of West Bengal and is not included as a backward district by the centre, its high ranking hides more than it reveals. Darjeeling’s favourable ranking is because of three reasons. First, it is because of the tourism industry even though it is seasonal. Second, it is because of the relatively much developed plains including the fast growing town of Siliguri. Third, it is because of the tea plantations. In the hills, though there is a small aristocracy represented mainly by the landholding classes and retired officers and a class of traders and the middle class, the overwhelming population has remained poor. The majority consists of agricultural labour, construction and plantation workers and small peasants.

Jalpaiguri district has a high percentage of Scheduled Caste population (36.71 per cent of the total population) inhabiting the countryside whereas in the 2001 census they constituted 40.24 per cent of the rural population. The Scheduled Caste population is predominantly made up of Rajbansis who chiefly constitute the agricultural workforce. Apart from the Rajbansis there are the Ravas, Totos, Metch, Santhals, Madasia, Oraons and Nepalis. The Santhals, Nepalis, Oraons, etc. primarily constitute the tea plantation labour force. Santhals are a migrant labour force that were recruited at different points of time in the colonial era and have migrated from the Chota Nagpur region, Santhal Pargana of Bihar and its contiguous tribal belt in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. What is interesting to note here is that the Rajbansis do not form a part of the tea plantation labour force, which is the chief industry of the district and even though almost all the big tea plantations of North Bengal are located in the district.

13 Though the growth of the tea industry tended to slow down from the early decades of the present century, the total number of workers employed in the tea gardens for the hill subdivisions (excluding the terai plains) amounted to 60,979 as late as in 1961 (Dasgupta 1999: 53–54).
Unlike that of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar is industrially a backward district though a few small tea plantations and a sizeable number of industries have come up in the recent past. It is primarily a rural district with a rural population of about 22,53,537, which is 90.9 per cent of the total population. This population primarily consists of the Scheduled Castes (hereafter SCs) who are concentrated mainly in the rural sector and are primarily landless labourers and work on the land owned by absentee landlords. In the rural sector, they constitute 53.14 per cent of the population. If we follow the distribution of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population from the report of the Directorate of Census Operations, 2001, we note that in some of the rural units of Mekliganj, Mathabhanga and Sitai, the SC and ST population constituted more than 60 per cent of the total population (West Bengal, Directorate of Census Operations 2001). Underdevelopment and backwardness of the region had affected the principal communities of the region who are ethnically numerous and distinct from the Bengalis, and it is these communities that are being mobilised by the leadership belonging to these communities for the formation of a separate state. They believe that the formation of a separate state could be a panacea to the problems affecting the community and the region.

II

Political Articulation of Backwardness

We have argued earlier that the political articulation of backwardness in the region has taken two principal forms. The first of these forms and forces argues that the region is lagging behind the South Bengal region and needs more funds for development. The second kind of forces which are much more prominent and active feels that the creation of a separate state(s) can be a panacea to the problem of backwardness confronting the region, hence these forces take recourse to the politics of identity and mobilise on ethnic lines. Underlying is the feeling that the region is more backward than the rest and that successive governments are responsible for this backwardness. Thus the root of these politics, as we shall see, lies in the backwardness of the region that has affected the different ethnic groups adversely in the region. We shall focus more on the second form of articulation since it is this that has become prominent than the first kind of force in the region. The first kind of force is represented mainly in the ruling left...
combine, the CPI (M) and forces like the RSP and Forward Bloc (FB) that have a sizeable presence in some constituencies of the region and political parties like the Congress or the Trinamool Congress, though there is a distinction between the first and the second here. We now turn to the movements that had gripped the region: the Gorkhaland movement which erupted in the hills in 1986; and the Kamtapur and the Greater Cooch Behar movement in the plains of North Bengal which erupted slightly later.

The Demand for Gorkhaland

The first articulation of backwardness came in the form of demand for autonomy in the hills of Darjeeling. We have earlier noted the nature and extent of backwardness of the district and the ethnic complexity of the Darjeeling hills. In official circles, Darjeeling is not considered as a backward district. It ranks fourth in the Human Development Report of the West Bengal government. This rank, however, does not reflect its actual condition. Darjeeling consists of plains including the fast growing city of Siliguri and the hills. Hence, the development of the plains gets reflected in the ranking of the entire district. In actuality, the hills of Darjeeling have remained a backward and underdeveloped part of the district. It is this backwardness coupled with the fact that the ethnic community inhabiting the district is completely distinct in terms of ethnicity from the Bengalis that has given birth to severe movements for autonomy, which manifested more vehemently in the mid-1980s. The ultimate outcome of all this was the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in 1988. We shall now turn to this story in brief.

The movement for autonomy in Darjeeling did not have its origins in 1980 when the GNLF was formed. It predates it. The demand for autonomy had existed in some or the other form since the beginning of the 20th century but more particularly since the 1940s. Even the national level parties having a presence in the hills like the Congress and the CPI at various points of time had demanded some form of autonomy for the hills of Darjeeling. Chakrabarti (1988) informs us that the ‘demand for recognition of Nepali language, employment opportunities, separate administrative unit, all these issues were raised in one form or other, long before the present agitation’ (ibid.: 40). Dasgupta (1999), in an interesting article, argued that there were three types of movement for autonomy that were discernable in the hills. The first was represented by the Hillmen’s Association under
the leadership of S. W. Ladenla, retired Additional Superintendent of Police in Darjeeling. This Association had demanded the formation of a separate administrative unit comprising ‘the present Darjeeling district and the portion of Jalpaiguri district which was annexed from Bhutan in 1865’. The most important feature of this association, however, was that it was pro-British.

The most important feature of this association, however, was that it was pro-British.

The second type of demand, according to Dasgupta, came from the educated middle class and the third from communist-led movements of the Nepali working class engaged in the tea plantations well supported by the peasants. These demands crystallised as a result of the aggravation of the economic problems in the hills during the last decade of the colonial rule. It was in 1943 the All India Gorkha League (hereafter AIGHL) of Dambar Singh Gurung came into existence and put forward the demand for autonomy with a broader social base. Probably the most prominent of the demands which the Gorkha League made was the recognition of the Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution; this remained the principal demand of the League. The growth to prominence of the Gorkha League from the 1940s led to the decline of the Hillmen’s Association.

In the 1980s, however, the autonomy movement took a different turn with the emergence and expansion of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (hereafter GNLF) under the leadership of Subhash Ghishing. The GNLF turned to be more militant of the organisations and started a movement (which also turned violent) for the formation of a separate state of Gorkhaland outside the province of West Bengal. Ironically, it was not the GNLF but the Pranta Praishad formed in April 1980 that had demanded in its very first petition (dated 13 April 1980) to the Prime Minister of India the formation of a separate state of ‘Gorkhaland’. The Pranta Parishad reiterated the demand even later after it was marginalised by the GNLF. It reiterated:

The Pranta Parishad demands the formation of a separate state (Gorkhaland) comprising of the Nepali speaking areas of the Dooars in the District of Jalpaiguri and the whole of Darjeeling District in accordance with the article 3 © of the Constitution (cited from Pranta Parishad in Chakrabarti 1988: 42).

---

14 The Association was the first of its kind in the hills and was represented mainly by the retired Nepali army and police officers, who were supported by the Nepali landed aristocrats and rich traders.
It rejected the autonomy efforts of the Left Front government of the state by saying:

We attach no value to the so called Regional Autonomy proposed by the Left Front Government of West Bengal and the Union Territory status as demanded by the Darjeeling District Congress (I) leaders (ibid).

It is this phase of the movement that drew the maximum attention of the academia more than any other phase. There are several scholarly studies on the genesis, nature and the course that the movement took and these are interesting and throw light on the movement proper, which continue even today in a renewed form by a different organisation. Some of the noteworthy studies include that of Misra (1986), D. Chakrabarti (1988), Dasgupta (1988), M. Chakrabarti (1988), Subba (1991), Dasgupta (1999), Samanta (2002), Golay (2004), Ganguly (2005), etc. These studies are interesting but most of these accounts linked the movement with the problem of identity. Attempts have been made primarily to look at the movement as an assertion of identity. There was, however, very little recognition of the fact that the root or the primary cause of the movement was economic underdevelopment of the hills, which resulted in the backwardness or underdevelopment of the Nepalis or the Gorkhas (which includes, along with the Nepalis, the Lepchas and the Bhutias). Economic underdevelopment is recognised say, for example, by D. Chakrabarti (1988) when he says that he does not ‘deny the role of economic factors’ but does not attach much importance to it in his analysis and terms the movement as the ‘politics of segregation’. In this context, Dasgupta’s work has more significance since he analyses the economic basis of the movement.

We will, however, focus primarily on the economic factors or, in other words, the economic roots and contend that it is this which is primarily responsible for identity politics in the hills. It is underdevelopment of the Nepalis or the Gorkhas which to us is the root cause of the movement for a separate state though other factors must have been also responsible for the movement as well in varying degrees. The GNLF, however, did not make reference to the backwardness of the region directly and the economic plight of the Nepalis or the Gorkhas and concentrated primarily on the issue of identity. But it did talk about colonial exploitation, recruitment of the Indian Gorkhas in the Gorkha regiments of the Indian army, development of the region, etc. The Pranta Parishad that was formed a few months before the formation of the GNLF time and again had pointed to the underdevelopment of
the region and the Gorkhas in contrast to others. The AIGL that had mobilised the Gorkhas for decades since 1943 had also pointed to the underdevelopment of the region. A Gorkha League memorandum, for example, stated:

Development of hill areas of Darjeeling district has been utterly neglected. While crores of rupees from public exchequer have been spent for the development of various projects in the plain areas of the states of W. Bengal, no fund worth the name has been spent for the development of Darjeeling Hill Areas during the regime of the Left Front Government. This has resulted in acute unemployment problem and retarded the growth and protection of the existing industries in the Hill areas, particularly tea. During the last four years about 10 gardens have gone out of existence sorely affecting the working class people. This shows what discriminatory treatment is being meted out to the hill areas (quoted in Dasgupta 1988: 18 from AIGL memorandum to the President).

To us the GNLF (now marginalised), in its demand for a separate state for the Gorkhas placed, and still places, more importance to identity than to the underdevelopment of the hills or the economic condition of the Gorkhas first, because it realises that economic demands could be countered and addressed to in other ways by the state government but the demand for a separate state on the basis of identity cannot be countered, the reason being that the Gorkhas are ethnically and culturally distinct from the Bengalis. In the Indian context, the primary basis for the formation of states had been linguistic nationalities. Second, it is because the GNLF believes firmly that in the Indian context ethnicity can be a powerful force for mobilisation. Hence, it is more of a tactical move by the GNLF to put forward ‘ethnicity’ much more vehemently rather than anything else including the ‘economic’.

The pull factors that attracted the Nepalis from Nepal to Darjeeling were: the growth of the tea plantations and the construction of a communication network in the hills and the recruitment of Gorkhas in the British Indian army. The tourism industry started developing much later, which also provided considerable employment. The wellbeing of the Nepalis or the Gorkhas therefore depended upon the flourishing of these avenues. We will argue that things were and still are not doing well in these fronts and all these had important implications or consequences in terms of economic hardship of the Gorkhas. Coupled with the economic hardship, the Gorkhas had to confront other factors like the problem associated with the recognition of Nepalis as Indians...
in different parts of the country. All this contributed to the movement. The assertion was complete autonomy from West Bengal since it was felt that formation of a separate state could only solve their problems. What happened to all these avenues in this period? This is a story to which we now turn.

In one of the earliest studies, Dasgupta (1988) pointed to the economic factors behind the movement. Rejecting the assertion of the West Bengal Chief Minister that there are no economic issues that are involved in the movement because the per capita expenditure is highest in Darjeeling, Dasgupta underlined the economic factors that must have shaped the movement of the GNLF. He claims:

There is no strategy for development of the hill region. Infra-structural development has been given a low priority. Consequently, the Hill development Council has degenerated into a non-functioning institution. The poverty in the hill area is increasing. Rate of unemployment, both rural and urban, is increasing at a great speed. The tea industry is sick. Agriculture is static. Industries have not been started. As the economic condition further deteriorates the ‘separatists’ might get a strong ground for further agitation and disturbances (1988: 26).

Let us turn to the problem of unemployment caused mainly due to lack of opportunities and the decline of the tea plantations, which was a major source of employment in the hills. The tea industry, which flourished so well in the hills of Darjeeling during the pre-independence period, faced a decline if not demise immediately after independence. In 1951 there were 101 operative tea gardens in the hill areas but by 1981, the number of operative tea gardens came down to 72. In the early 1970s there were nine ‘sick’ gardens and 38 ‘economically weak’ gardens. Added to this problem was the decline in the total area under tea cultivation. The worst consequence of this decline was in terms of employment, which fell sharply between 1951 and 1981. In 1951

---

15 There are a number of reasons that have been attributed to the decline of the industry in the hills of Darjeeling. The most prominent one happens to be the change in the ownership pattern of the plantation industry from the British to Indian capital. These owners were neither planters nor industrialists. They were basically traders, merchants, moneylenders and speculators. Most of these owners used the gardens as a source of short-term profit which resulted in its decline. The Government of West Bengal is often charged with not taking an active interest in the rejuvenation of tea plantations in the hills.
the total number of workers in the tea gardens was 63,042, which came down to 44,052 in 1981, a fall by almost 20,000 (Dasgupta 1988: 18). This decrease in employment must also have affected the workers and their dependants adversely.

The employment situation also worsened since the tourism industry, which had tremendous potential and could have provided alternative employment opportunities though only for a brief period, during seasons, did not do well either. There are studies that had pointed out that because of a number of reasons tourism as an industry did not do as expected (see, Subba 1987–88). There was no growth of industries or dramatic growth of any other sector that could have helped in the absorption of the labour force in the hills. In the meantime, the population of the hills increased due to natural growth as well as further migration. There was also a growth of literates in the hills, who largely remained unemployed because of lack of employment opportunities.

When we turn to the rural economy we note that agrarian productivity either stagnated or remained low and poverty in the hills increased for several reasons. Though far-reaching changes took place in the second half of the 1950s with the reclamation of new land for cultivation, the replacement of jhuming (shifting) cultivation with terraced cultivation and the introduction of new crops, since the 1960s and even in the 1970s agricultural performance deteriorated, which in turn had an effect on agrarian productivity. Studies have also noted that one of the reasons why agrarian productivity remained low was that the size of the farms or operational holding of cultivable land was very small, most of the farmers were small or marginal and this was a severe constraint on agricultural development and productivity. The category of agricultural labourers, which did not exist at all till the 1940s, also swelled over the years. The Census of India 1971 recorded the percentage of this category at 9.3 per cent. In 1981, the Census found that it was 8.8 per cent. This population was predominantly Nepali (Subba 1985: 149). Academic studies had also noted that ‘Operation Barga’, which was successful in West Bengal as a whole after the Left Front assumed power in 1977, had a far-reaching effect in the hills for several reasons (for details see, Subba, 1985).

In the rural areas poverty was quite high by the 1980s and studies had shown that the success of poverty alleviation measures in this regard was quite low. M. Chakrabarti (1988) had pointed out the difficulties in implementing the Integrated Rural Development
Programme (hereafter IRDP) in the hills since the programme was meant for implementation in revenue and not in non-revenue villages. The number of non-revenue villages in the hills is quite high, therefore a large section of the rural poor could not be covered under the IRDP scheme, which was the most important of all the poverty alleviation programmes. Similarly, a study conducted in the 1980s in 10 villages in the Kurseong and Sadar subdivisions of Darjeeling district also found that only a few small and marginal farmers of these villages took advantage of schemes like the DRDA, SFDA and later IRDP programmes for cultivation purposes (Choudhury and Sarkar 1988: 19). M. Chakrabarti found, further, that incidentally, the number of agitators of the Gorkhaldand movement in the Bijanbari-Pulbazar area under the Pulbazar police station where there were more number of IRDP beneficiaries were lower than in the other areas in Darjeeling and Kurseong subdivisions where there were less beneficiaries (1988: 2). These findings, though tentative in nature, indicate that there was a direct relationship between poverty and the agitation of the 1980s. Apart from these economic factors, ecological imbalance, deforestation, etc. must also have contributed to the pitiable condition of the Nepalis or Gorkhas in the Darjeeling hills and that must have propelled the movement. The identity factor was, however, all the time present as an important factor.

The movement that erupted and that was led by the GNLF, formed in July 1980, consistently demanded a separate state of Gorkhaldand. During the peak of the movement, which continued from 1986 till the signing of the Accord in late 1988, the hills witnessed large-scale violence, hate campaigns mainly against the Bengalis and the functionaries of the parties, particularly the CPI (M), that denounced the movement. The GNLF also lambasted the Left Front government that was in power and its policies. Let us not go into the details of the movement since there are several accounts that are available to which we have referred earlier. It must only be noted here that the agitation led to the signing of the Accord in 1988 and the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) which was later renamed the Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council (DGAHC), though the term ‘Autonomous’ was dropped on the insistence of the GNLF. Elections were held on 13 December 1988 for the first time and the Council started functioning from January 1989 when Subhash Ghishing assumed the office of the Chief Executive Councillor on 18 January.
Once the Council came into existence, the focus of academic attention shifted from movement to the functioning of the Council and how the GNLF used it for the purpose for which it was formed. There are several critical studies on its functioning. Let us not go into this in details since it is beyond the scope of this article. We, however, need to look at what happened after the DGHC was formed in the hills. The formation of the DGHC was though an interesting and crucial development but it failed to live up to the expectations of the hillmen and solve their problems even though the GNLF won all the three elections to the Council and Subash Ghising, Chief of the GNLF, assumed the post of Chairman of the Council since 1988. The other two elections were held in 1994 and 1999, which the GNLF won overwhelmingly.\(^\text{16}\)

In the post-Accord period that established the DGHC, there grew resentment against the functioning of the DGHC and the GNLF in the hills. The central allegations were mismanagement and misappropriation of funds by the leaders and absence of democracy in the functioning of the DGHC and also within the GNLF. For example, the Gorkhaland Sanjukta Morcha, a front comprising the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League (ABGL), Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists (CPRM), Pranta Parishad, National Union of Plantation Workers and several prominent citizens in 2000 alleged:

> The GNLF in connivance with the CPI (M) tried their level best to create total confusion in the national level so far as the movement of Hill people is concerned but above all the people at large were deprived from their basic fundamental rights. Since the year 1996 the people of this region have no role to play in the formation of new parliament due to the boycott call given by party in power. The left front government at the insistence of GNLF has withhold the elections of Panchayat Samiti (Gorkhaland Sanjukta Morcha, ‘The State of Gorkhaland: Our Fight for Separation (1907–2000)’ 2000; 13).

It alleged further:

> In order to maintain their political hegemony over the region these two ruling parties have grossly violated legal, democratic and constitutional rights of the people and are thus being deprived of various

\(^\text{16}\) The fourth elections that were to be held in 2004 could not be held since the GNLF did not agree to the continuation of the DGHC and demanded the formation of Gorkhaland.
developmental works. This is one of the glaring examples of how during these twelve years of DGHC rule the state Government as well as DGHC thwarted the decentralisation of planning and development process of the region. During this whole period the intelligentsia and pro people political parties had to remain isolated (ibid.).

Several developments took place in hill politics in the post-Accord period out of which four were crucial. First, several splinter groups of the Gorkhaland movement were not only formed but also flourished in the hills that challenged the GNLF and the functioning of the DGHC. This indicated, among other things, the steady erosion of the popularity of the GNLF in the post-Accord phase. The growth of these groups is revealed from the fact that in the Panchayat elections to the Gram Panchayat, several smaller organisations were able to carve out support for themselves and won seats in some of the constituencies. The second development of consequence was that in the second and third elections to the DGHC several candidates who were denied tickets by the GNLF contested the elections mostly as independent candidates. The third development was that the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League (ABGL) was able to regroup itself and started asserting and playing an important part in hill politics since the mid-1990s. Fourth, though of less consequence, was that the CPI (M), which had almost lost its popularity in the hills with the agitation for a separate state and the split in 1996 which resulted in the formation of the CPRM, was able to make a comeback, particularly from the end of the 1990s. It could enter into the tea garden areas where it had had some support before 1986. Some of the parties in the hills that were opposed to the GNLF formed several fronts like that of the People’s Democratic Front (PDF), which comprise chiefly of the CPRM, AIGL and GNLF-C as the chief components.

In the wake of mounting criticism the GNLF, in order to regain its lost support and for its legitimacy, declared that the Council was dead and reiterated its demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland

---

17 The first indication of the decline of popularity came in the 1994 municipality elections that were held to the three municipalities — Darjeeling Sadar, Kalimpong and Kurseong in the hills. Though overall the GNLF won, many of its candidates lost. Independents were the principal beneficiaries whom the people voted for.

18 The elections to the panchayats were boycotted by the GNLF on the pretext that the panchayats eroded the authority of the DGHC, but it fielded dummy candidates in the form of independents.
but from 2005 onwards raised the demand of Sixth Scheduled status for the region. All this ultimately resulted in the Accord that granted the Sixth Scheduled status to Darjeeling in December 2005.\textsuperscript{19} The amendment to the Constitution for giving effect to this was to be moved in Parliament but because of the renewed demand for Gorkhaland from the fall of 2007 it could not materialise.\textsuperscript{20} The amendment had become necessary to extend Sixth Schedule status to Darjeeling since under the constitutional arrangement the Sixth Schedule provisions pertain only to north-east India.

The second agitation by the GNLF subsided since it considered the granting of Sixth Schedule status as a milestone towards the achievement of the state of Gorkhaland. However, there were several forces that opposed the Sixth Schedule status since they perceived it as something which would make a distinction between the tribals and the non-tribals in Darjeeling. Since the tribals constituted only 30 per cent of the population of the hills to some source, there were apprehension from the SCs and others.

It was this agreement of December 2005 which produced the phenomenon of Bimal Gurung and the Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMM) and was responsible for the renewed agitation for Gorkhaland. Gurung, a popular Councillor and a close aid of Subhash Ghisingh for long, was expelled from the party on 3 October 2007 for ‘anti-party activities’. Shortly after his expulsion, he announced that the Hills should accept nothing short of Gorkhaland and formed the GJMM. After forming it he appealed to people across political lines to join the GJMM so that the hills could speak with one voice to attain Gorkhaland. Gurung declared that attainment of a separate state was their right and the GJMM would attain it peacefully.

In a short period the following of the GJMM swelled and it soon turned into a massive organisation in the hills, sidelining the GNLF that led to the fall of Subhash Ghisingh. The Morcha provided a powerful critique of the DGHC, the GNLF and also of the Sixth Schedule agreement. It criticised the DGHC as a ‘small defanged institution of self-governance’. It alleged that ‘the Government of West Bengal

\textsuperscript{19} The tripartite agreement was signed on 6 December 2005 between the Government of India, the Government of West Bengal and the administrator of the DGHC.

\textsuperscript{20} The Cabinet, however, had cleared the introduction of the bill to amend Articles 244 and 332 and the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to the Parliament in the winter session.
installed a satrap in the form of Subhash Ghishing, charged with the task of quelling any dissent in the Darjeeling hills and for ensuring that the demand for a separate state would never be raised again. Thus two decades of misrule, discrimination and corruption and graft were ushered in by the state government, an infamous era that was to see the destruction of the very social fabric of the hill people as well as the breakdown of infrastructure and institutions in Darjeeling’ (GJMM 2008: 16–17). It also provided an economic critique of the DGHC:

In the last about 20 years of the Council’s existence, the situation in Darjeeling hills reached point of no return. Many of the tea gardens were closed and entire cinchona plantation has been literally discontinued. In Dooars for the first time tea workers were dying ‘hunger deaths’. Most traditional means of livelihood had been uprooted. There were reports of several incidents of hunger deaths, suicides, trafficking of minor girls and large scale migration to urban areas…The DGHC has never made any development plans except the one in 1989. There was blatant violations of institutional norms and rules of accountancy leading to total disorientation of development in the hills (ibid.: 17).

The Morcha held and convinced the people that if the Sixth Schedule bill was passed it would disintegrate the Gorkha Community in lines of caste, colour, creed and religion. It felt that the Sixth Schedule was nothing but a ‘deep rooted conspiracy to divide … the hills and fragment the society into pieces. Subhash Ghishing never consulted the people of the hills, the political parties, the social organizations and any civil society organs. As history proved later, it appears that he didn’t even consult his oracles and shamans for this very document proved to be the engine of his downfall’ (GJMM 2008: 19).

The Gorkhas, the GJMM contends, never aspired for Sixth Schedule status. They have been continuously demanding a state that included Darjeeling and the adjoining areas from the terai and the Dooars region of Jalpaiguri district since this region is distinct from the rest of West Bengal in terms of historical, geographical, linguistic, cultural, socio-economic and ethnic causes and factors. It strongly believes that a separate state ‘would provide them a political identity and a constitutionally documented institutional space for interest articulation and protection within the broader territorial boundary of India. The desire for a separate identity also forms the basis for seeking assured development of the Darjeeling and Dooars region where the Indian Gorkhas reside in a majority’ (ibid.: 20).
The initial form of protests by the GJMM included the burning of copies of the memorandum of settlement signed between the Government of India, Government of West Bengal and the caretaker administrator of the DGHC, Subash Ghisingh. It burnt the copies on 15 November 2007 throughout the DGHC areas. The Morcha supporters later went on an indefinite hunger strike, demanding the removal of Subash Ghisingh from the post of caretaker administrator of DGHC and the scrapping of the Sixth Schedule status. The Morcha also organised a relay hunger strike in different parts of Darjeeling. It appealed to all students to take part in the strike. Bimal Gurung also called for a non-violent form of protest that took the form of non-payment of taxes to the government, including electricity and phone bills. Vehicles in the hills were asked to use GL (Gorkhaland) number plates. Similarly, the Jana Mukti Asthai Karmachari Sangathan launched a relay hunger strike to demand regularisation of jobs for all the ad hoc employees of the DGHC. But the most important form of protest were the long strikes which the GJMM resorted to in the initial years for pressing forward its demand. The outcome of all these was the resignation of Subhash Ghisingh from the post of Caretaker Administrator on 10 March 2008. The second outcome was that the bill to amend the Constitution was stalled after a parliamentary standing committee on Home Affairs called for a fresh assessment of the ground reality in the hills. The GJMM had also compelled the state and the centre to hold several rounds of tripartite talks which so far has not yielded any positive result.\footnote{The fifth round of talks was slated to be held on 18 March 2010.}

Even though there are several similarities and differences between the movement led by the GNLF in the 1980s and the current movement by the GJMM, the crucial difference happens to be the map of the proposed state. The territory demanded includes not only the three-hill subdivisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong but also Siliguri, terai and parts of the Dooars that fall in Jalpaiguri District of North Bengal extending up to the river Sankosh on the border with Bhutan. The original map of the proposed Gorkhaland territory is contained in the document ‘The Case for Gorkhaland: Creating a New State Out of Darjeeling District and the Dooars’, which the GJMM presented at the first tripartite talks between the Government of India, Government of West Bengal and Gorkha Janamukti
Morcha on 8 September 2008. The total state area runs up to 6,246 sq. km and includes 1,060 Mouzas out of which 718 are in Darjeeling district and 342 in the Dooars. It includes 21 police station areas out of which 13 lie in Darjeeling district and eight in the Dooars. The total population of the proposed state of Gorkhaland is approximately 30 lakh as per the 2001 census (GJMM 2009: 16).

Partly because of the inclusion of the Dooars and the terai in the proposed state and also because of other reasons, the GJMM faces tough opposition in these areas from several organisations. On the first hand it faces challenge from chauvinistic forces like the Amra Bangali, the Bangla and Bangla Bhasa Bacho Committee and the Janachetana in the plains or terai region of Darjeeling district. Amra Bangali and Bangla Bhasa Bacho Committee are militant organisations which are determined to protect the Bengali community and the partition of Bengal. Janachetana regards the majority of the Nepalis in India as foreigners, those who are of late trying to disturb the peace, unity and sovereignty of the country’ (Kar 2009: 64). It points out that the ‘Gorkhaland Movement is in no way similar to any other movement for separate state anywhere in India, because of the mix up of two sections of people of a single linguistic community. The one, the treaty beneficiary (1950) Nepali Nationals residing in India supposed to be with no political rights and the other the Nepali speaking bonafide citizens of India (ibid.).’ It had demanded three things to the government. ‘First to identify and register the treaty (1950) beneficiary Nepali Nationals residing in India supposed to be with no political rights and the other the Nepali speaking bonafide citizens of India (ibid.).’ It had demanded three things to the government. ‘First to identify and register the treaty (1950) beneficiary Nepali Nationals, Secondly, to exclude names of those foreigner guests from electoral rolls and prevent such entries and thirdly not to entertain political demands from a class of people whose citizenship status is not ascertained till to-day’ (Janachetana, Letter to the Leader of the Opposition, West Bengal Assembly, 30 May 2008).

The most daunting opposition which the GJMM faces is from the Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad in the Dooars and terai. The inclusion of the Dooars and terai within the territorial boundaries of the proposed Gorkhaland state is resented by the adivasis who do not accept the argument of the GJMM that culturally the Nepalis and the adivasis share certain commonalities along with the hardship and deprivation which they face in the state of West Bengal. The Parishad strongly rejects this claim and resists being a part of the proposed state of Gorkhaland; instead it demands that the Dooars and the terai may be granted autonomy by bringing them under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution which could ensure the development of
the tribals in the region. This opposition and counter mobilisation had led to conflicts between the Gorkhas and the adivasis in the region. The Parishad had submitted a 16-point charter of demand to the Chief Minister and launched strikes and dharnas, hunger strikes, road blocks, etc. Since the majority of the adivasis are migrant tea garden workers they also demand a hike in the wages of tea garden workers from ₹ 62.50 to ₹ 250 per day. The other demand includes distribution of land deed among the tea plantation workers, inclusion of the National Highway 31C in the four-lane project, etc. (The Statesman, 5 January 2009). There are indications that the movement by the adivasis for autonomy, particularly for the Sixth Schedule, will intensify in the future which in turn is bound to intensify the conflict between the GJMM and the Parishad, particularly in the Dooars.

The CPI (M), though it has no presence in the hill subdivisions, is still the biggest force in the terai region and the Dooars. It opposes the movement by the GJMM. Its opposition stems from the theoretical position that smaller states are entities that ‘are neither politically or economically viable’. To the party the ‘smaller the states would become, the more would be the unitary control exerted over what is stated to be a federated structure on the country’ (People’s Democracy, 11 May 2008). Hence, to it the ‘struggle against the unreasonable demand for a separate state must face resistance from all sections of the society cutting across political affiliations’ (ibid.). The trade union wing and other mass organs of the CPI (M) had dubbed the movement as ‘undemocratic’, ‘separatist’ and ‘opportunistic’. In a tacit manner, the party has also abetted forces like the Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad and Amra Bangali, which oppose the GJMM violently.

We finally contend that the agitation by the GJMM in the future is likely to grow in intensity and so also the schism between the Gorkhas and the Bengalis and the Gorkhas and the adivasis. We also hold that behind all the upheavals surrounding the demand for Gorkhaland by the GJMM and others in the hills lay the economy of Darjeeling, which still remains underdeveloped even after the DGHC was formed in 1988. On this aspect a young researcher noted in 2004:

There was an ideological vacuum in the society. Coupled with this is the deteriorating economic condition in the hills. The three Ts (Tea, Timber and Tourism), which formed the bedrock of the hill economy, are in shambles today. Many of the tea gardens have closed down and there are already reports of starvation deaths in these places. The rural (non tea garden) economy has collapsed and hordes of people are
now migrating to the towns putting pressure on already overstretched infrastructure and resources. Class divisions have become stark, as also the spread of the growing *nouveau riche* culture (Golay 2004: 85–86).

**The Demand for the States of Kamtapur and Greater Cooch Behar**

As we have seen earlier, there are two movements for separate states in the North Bengal region along with the movement for a separate state of Gorkhaland in the hills. These movements are the Kamtapur movement led by the two factions of the once unified Kamtapur Peoples Party (hereafter KPP) and the movement that demands a separate state of Greater Cooch Behar led by the Greater Cooch Behar Democratic Party (hereafter GCDP) and the Greater Cooch Behar People’s Association (hereafter GCPA). Out of these two, the latter is a much more recent one. These movements are identical in some respect and also in form. The KPP came into existence in 1995 with the demand for a separate state of Kamtapur consisting of the six North Bengal districts (excluding the hills of Darjeeling), which has a population of slightly more than 20 million. The GCPA, though it came into existence in 1998 and demanded a separate state of Greater Cooch Behar, gained momentum only since 2005. Incidentally, the Greater Cooch Behar movement picked up momentum after the decline of the former. Before we analyse these movements in brief we must note a point regarding their social base. We begin by noting that the social base is identical — it is the Rajbansi community, the most numerous of the original inhabitants of the region, which is the core support base though attempts are also being made to bring others within the fold of these movements. Let us briefly have a look at the Rajbansis, the ethnic community who form the core of these two movements.

The Rajbansis are considered to be the earliest settlers in the region along with certain other ethnic groups. They primarily inhabit the rural areas and constitute almost 60 per cent of the total SC population of North Bengal (Mukhopadhyay 2005). Even though they inhabit the entire region, they are concentrated in the districts of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri. We note that over the years it is this community that has remained poor in absolute as well in the relative senses. Since they are the earliest settlers of the region a good number of them were *jotedars*
and other forms of subtenants and the remaining were *adhihars*. Due to a number of reasons the condition of the rich Rajbansis deteriorated since land passed on from them to the Bengalis who migrated to the region from the east that later formed Bangladesh. We need not narrate the story of how it all happened since it has been documented by several scholars, including the author, elsewhere. The point that needs to be emphasised here is that the Rajbansis had suffered due to several reasons, more importantly due to underdevelopment of the region they inhabit. The rich Rajbansis lost their land due to transfer of land to the Bengalis who arrived later and later on with the implementation of land ceiling acts, etc. after independence whereas the poor suffered since development policies pursued by successive governments failed to alter the relative backwardness of the region and also the economic condition of this community.

The Left Front government assumed office in the state in 1977 but the policies of the government failed to alter the condition of the Rajbansis in any significant manner. This was contrary to the expectations of the Rajbansis and others since these ethnic minorities had rallied behind the Left Front (LF) since the 1970s. The region’s districts, and more particularly the districts affected by ethnic discontent which we call the core districts, had returned LF candidates to the Legislative Assembly during successive elections. Despite this, when we look at how they fared under the LF regime we note that they did not fare well. The policy of land reforms that was designed for bringing an improvement in the condition of the rural poor did not really benefit the Rajbansis.

Studies including official ones note that land reforms measures so crucial in the early period of the Left Front regime were not given much importance in the 1990s. The West Bengal Human Development Report (2004) notes that, over time, the issue of recording of *bargadar* has become much less of a concern among district officials. Panchayats and peasant organisations have become more involved with other issues (ibid.: 32). The report pertains to the entire state hence it is also applicable to the region, which is relatively less developed than the southern part of the state.

---

Second, studies indicate that they lost more land in the 1990s under the operation of market forces. Census data points to the fact that in Jalpaiguri district, the number of rural agricultural labourers increased sharply in the decade 1991–2001. This is due to the result of a sharp decline in the number of rural cultivators in the same period. In Cooch Behar, there had only been a marginal increase in the number of rural cultivators. All these indicate that the Rajbansis lost more land in the last decade of the 20th century. The mushrooming of unauthorised tea gardens from the late 1980s is another development that had contributed to the growth of landlessness. There has been an enormous increase in the number of plantations in Jalpaiguri district. Since no new land has been reclaimed, the tea gardens must have eaten away a good part of the land cultivated by the Rajbansis. A large amount of land seems to have changed hands. To one unconfirmed source, in the recent past 40,000 hectares of land has been garnered by the small tea gardens. There are studies that also show that reverse tenancy is in vogue and hence land is often leased to others for cultivation of vegetables and fruits.

In the absence of suitable employment opportunities elsewhere they have suffered from the problem of unemployment as well. There is almost no middle class among the Rajbansis. Decentralisation of power had had not much a major effect on the poor. Poor implementation of poverty alleviation programmes had failed to ameliorate their condition. According to the WBHDR (2004), the rate of rural poverty in the central districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar is as high as 35.73 and 25.62 per cent respectively. Incidentally, these are the two districts which have a high concentration of Rajbansi, Namsudra and other ethnic minority groups. Our contention here is that it is this under development of the Rajbansis and other ethnic minorities caused mainly due to the loss of land and non-availability of employment opportunities that has given birth to the movements for the separate states of Kamtapur and Greater Cooch Behar since the mid- and late 1990s.

---

23 This Census report confirms the findings of the state level NSS data, which indicate that in the state as a whole there was an increase in the number of the landless. In 1999–2000 it had found that 49.8 per cent of the rural households were landless.

24 In Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, the Rajbansi population is as high as 23.86 and 39.24 per cent respectively. The Namasudra and Palia or Pan population is also very high in numerical as well as in percentage terms.
The Kamtapur Movement

We turn very briefly to the central features of the movement here. The demand for a separate state of Kamtapur is not a completely new one since demands for a separate state for the Koch-Rajbansis of North Bengal had existed since the 1970s. This demand, however, was confined to limited groups and was restricted in its spread. At present it is much more organised and mature though in recent years, fissures have developed in the leadership of the movement. The KPP was formed in 1995 by Atul Roy and some of his close associates to ‘agitate peacefully in a democratic way for the creation of the Kamtapur state’ (Haldar 2000: 60). In their original demand for Kamtapur state they included not only North Bengal but also Goalpara district of Assam though they were not very sure about this district. The central argument is that the North Bengal region originally belongs to the Kamtapuris who are predominantly Rajbansis, Khens, Mechis and Koibartyas in caste terms and are culturally, linguistically, socially and historically distinct from the Bengalis.

It argues that the Kamtapuris, though they constitute 65 per cent of the total population of North Bengal, have lost their identity because of the continuous influx of Bengalis or Bhatias from Bangladesh. The KPP attempts to create a Kamtapuri identity and not a Rajbansi one by claiming that they speak a language called Kamtapuri and not Rajbansi. This is deliberate since the leaders seek to mobilise other categories of population (other than the Rajbansis) into the movement as well. The KPP claim that the Kamtapuris are economically backward and that successive regimes in West Bengal are responsible for this. It contends that the dignity and socio-cultural identity of the Kamtapuris can only be protected and colonial exploitation and neglect can only come to an end with the formation of the state of Kamtapur within the Indian Union. No state level or national level political party has supported the Kamtapuris in their quest for statehood (except the support of the BJP to one of the factions), but they have been able to enlist the support of several organisations that operate in the region like the CPI (ML) Santosh Rana faction, CPRM, Samajwadi Jana Parishad, Uttar Bangal Jharkhandi Sangharsh Samiti, etc. Some of these organisations have

---

25 The leadership of the movement had reiterated that a separate state be demanded within the territorial boundaries and not sovereignty of India.
endorsed the claim of the KPPs for the recognition of the Kamtapuri language though all do not support the demand for a separate state.

Since we argue that it is economic underdevelopment of the region and the consequent poverty of the ethnic community that is crucial for an understanding of the movement for a separate state, let us focus on the demands of the two factions of the KPP relating to the economic development of the region. It must be noted that the original KPP has an 11-point charter of demands out of which the demands related to economic development are more crucial. It includes: the declaration of the Teesta irrigation project as a national project, ensuring all-round development of the North Bengal region, establishment of a Central University in Cooch Behar after the name of Thakur Panchanan Barma and publication of a white paper regarding the economic status, culture, population and ethnic identity of the original inhabitants of North Bengal. It alleged that ‘there has been no development in North Bengal after Independence. The worst-affected are the Kamtapuris, who have lost their land and are unable to find jobs. The situation has gone from bad to worse during the 26 years of Left Front rule’ (Atul Roy in an interview with Tapas Ganguly, *The Week*, 16 November 2003).

The other demands include: inclusion of the Kamtapuri language into the Eighth Schedule of the Indian constitution; broadcasting of Kamtapuri cultural programmes from the All India Radio, Siliguri and the telecast of cultural programmes of Kamtapurians for the Kamtapuris of North Bengal from the Fulbari Doordarshan substation; expulsion of illegal foreigners from North Bengal on the basis of the cut-off year of 1971; imposition of an inner permit line in order to curb illegal influx of immigrants in North Bengal and other adjacent areas; barbed fencing on the Indo–Bangla border to restrain intrusion of illegal foreigners; and regarding exchange of enclosures they demand the exchange of Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and Bangladesh enclaves in India without delay.

---

26 The linguistic and cultural demands, though important, are to us secondary in nature and are articulated only for the purpose of articulating the demand for a separate state.

27 A careful examination of these demands reveals two important points. First, the demands are much more concrete in nature than the demands of the Uttarkhand Dal. Second, we note that there is a remarkable similarity with the demand of the Bodos for a separate homeland — Bodoland — on the north bank of the Brahmaputra in Assam (see Barua 1999).
There are several frontal organs that operate and mobilise support for the KPPs. Some of these were formed prior to the formation of the KPP and are directly linked to the KPP. Frontal organisations include a student’s front called the All Kamtapur Students Union (AKSU) formed in August 1994; the intellectual front Kamtapur Vasha Sahitya Parishad (KVSP) formed in 1997; and the Kamtapur Women’s Rights Forum which is the women’s front formed in 1998. With the split of the original KPP some of these mass organisations have also suffered splits, undergone changes and face confusion. The most militant and controversial of the organisations is the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO). The exact nature of the relationship between the KPPs and the KLO is not known. The demand of the two is, however, identical — both demand the establishment of a separate state of Kamtapur.

How have the KPPs fared in the elections? What electoral strategy have they adopted to win the elections? The KPPs have contested elections either on their own or in alliance with other forces in the region since the 1990s, calling for support and meeting with various degrees of success. The success, however, had been more in local level panchayat elections than in the Assembly or the parliamentary elections. For example, in 1999, they were able to win a few Gram Panchayat seats.

In the Assembly elections the KPPs had followed a different strategy. Realising that their strength was very limited and confined to the Rajbansi-dominated areas in the region, they had given a call to ally with other forces including the Trinamul Congress, now the principal opposition in the state. In the 2001 Assembly elections the KPP, which was undivided, contested 16 seats without success (The Week, 16 November 2003). In the 2006 Assembly elections the Kamtapur Progressive Party, led by Atul Roy, failed to form an alliance with the Trinamul Congress and fielded candidates in constituencies including the Siliguri constituency where Kedarnath Sinha was fielded as a candidate. Roy contested the Kranti seat in Malbazar subdivision.

28 The CPI (M) and the state government argues that the KPPs have links with the KLO; the latter is, in fact, to them, a militant wing of the former.

29 The CPI (M), for example, felt that the ‘Kamtapuris did not get any seat … but the vote share of the Kamtapuris should not be ignored. They got 2.09% in Coochbehar for nine seats, 8.60% in Jalpaiguri for 11 seats, 6.85% in Darjeeling for two seats, and 2.82% in Maldah for two seats. Their workers did not slacken efforts despite the certainty of defeat’ (The Marxist, April–June 2001).
of Jalpaiguri district. Both the factions have fielded more candidates in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts, both in the assembly and parliamentary elections, than in any other district in North Bengal but success has eluded them so far. As stated earlier, they have only had a limited success in the panchayat elections.

The Kamtapur movement, even though has weakened in recent years with the split in 2005, still remains a cause for concern for all. This is because of two factors. First, it is because of the fact that the region had remained underdeveloped and this underdevelopment had affected the Rajbansis adversely, hence the community remains volatile. An organised and determined leadership can mobilise their full support in the future since they are a politicised community unlike many other backward communities in the state. Second, there is a possibility of the movement gaining momentum in the future since there are indications that the KPP faction of Atul Roy, which had registered itself as a political party with the Election Commission, is trying to garner support from other forces that mobilise on ethnic lines. The KPP, led by him, appears to be the main party or faction, the Nikhil Ray faction (the original one) being dormant at the moment.\(^{30}\) It has also revived its demand for a separate state since May 2007 in a public rally in North Bengal.

**The Greater Cooch Behar Movement**

The demand for Greater Cooch Behar state erupted in the year 1998 with the formation of the Greater Cooch Behar People’s Association (hereafter GCPA) on 9 September 1998 at Kakbari School. The movement, however, gained momentum in the second half of 2005. Incidentally, it gained currency after the KPP weakened due to a split in the party. It was led by the GCPA, which converted itself into a political party called the Greater Cooch Behar Democratic Party\(^ {31}\)

\(^{30}\) Certain developments have taken place in the recent past which indicate that the movement can again become a crucial one in the region. There are reports that the Kamtapur Progressive Party had forged alliances with associations like the GCDP and the All Koch Rajbansi Students Union of Assam and that this had led to the formation of a common platform — the Greater Kamta United Forum (GKUF) — which has revived the demand for a Kamtapur state that would include 11 districts of Assam, all six districts of North Bengal and two districts of Bihar inhabited by the Rajbansis.

\(^{31}\) It converted itself into a party in order to contest the panchayat polls but both the forces are now separate and function separately.
Backwardness in the North Bengal Region of West Bengal

(hereafter GCDP) on 20 September 2006. The GCPA claimed to be a development-oriented organisation and started mobilising the Rajbansis and other ethnic minorities on the issue of a separate state of Greater Cooch Behar. It also got the tacit support of the two KPPs. Let us briefly turn to the salient features of the movement.

The GCPA, since 1998, has been demanding the formation of a separate Greater Cooch Behar State comprising Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, North and South Dinajpur districts and the undivided Goalpara district of Assam. What is the rationale behind this demand? They argue that Cooch Behar, which was a princely state, became a part of India on 20 August 1949 and a part of the state of West Bengal on 19 January 1950. To them, the manner in which Cooch Behar became a part of West Bengal violated the terms of the agreement. The leaders allege that the inclusion of Cooch Behar in West Bengal was illegal as during the time of the signing of the agreement between the King of the princely state and the Government of India, Cooch Behar was promised a ‘C’ category state, but it was merged with an ‘A’ category state. Thus, the GCPA demands the implementation of the original merger agreement between the Maharaja of Cooch Behar and the Government of India.

The form of agitation by the GCPA and the GCDP had been submission of memorandums, picketing, representation and demonstrations. They reiterated their demand by writing to the Home Minister, President of India, A. B. Vajpayee, former Prime Minister, Sonia Gandhi, President of the AICC and several other important political leaders at the national level. In July 2005, at the insistence of the GCPA, farmers stopped paying land taxes in Cooch Behar. In August of the same year, a delegation of the Association met the President and the Union Home Minister to press their demands. On several occasions they have demonstrated at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi to draw nationwide attention. In September 2005, the movement took an ugly and violent turn when clashes between the GCPA supporters with the state police led to the killing of six people, including three policemen. The agitators were demanding just before the 2006 West Bengal legislative assembly elections that there should be no elections in Cooch Behar since the status of Cooch Behar was not clear and

32 There is, in fact, a confusion regarding the boundary claims of the new state. To some, it includes all the districts of North Bengal excluding Darjeeling and the undivided Goalpara district of Assam.
it sought a clarification of the territorial status of Cooch Behar. The organisation demanded the formation of an interim caretaker government by the centre.

The economic contents of the movement are not fairly articulated but from the demands it has put forward and from its social support, it can be argued that the movement is led and supported by the poor in rural Cooch Behar consisting mainly of ethnic groups like the Rajbansis. This can be made out from the fact that the district of Cooch Behar is the home to a large number of ethnic groups, mainly the Rajbansis. Cooch Behar has a total population of 24,79,155 as per the 2001 Census out of which the rural population constitutes 90.9 per cent of the total population. This population consists mainly of the Scheduled Castes (hereafter SCs) who are primarily landless labourers and work on the land owned by absentee landlords. In the rural sector, they constitute 53.14 per cent of the population. Out of this SC population the Rajbansis constitute around 39.24 per cent of the population; this is followed by the Namasudras, who number around 1.65 lakh. Since rural poverty in Cooch Behar is as high as 25.62 per cent (WBHDR 2004: 80), it can be deduced that a large part of the poor belong to the SC population which is largely constituted of the Rajbansis and Namasudras. The party alleges that the ‘Cooch Behar People is exploited and ejected in all respect. Cooch Behar people have lost their prosperous life and future in their main land Cooch Behar’ (GCPA Memorandum to Sonia Gandhi, 27 August 2008). All the 12 office bearers of the GCPA in 2008 belonged to the Rajbansi community.

The GCPA and the GCDA had been successful in mobilising a large section of the community in their rallies and meetings and the leaders had been able to enlist the support of the Kamtapur Progressive Party led by Atul Roy. Roy, who had, in 2006, rubbished the demand for Greater Cooch Behar state, has supported it the next year by saying that he is ‘not averse to the proposed state being named as the Cooch Behar state as that is also the demand of the GCPA’ (quoted in The Statesman, 22 April 2007). Though the GCPA boycotted the Assembly

---

33 If we follow the distribution of SC and ST population from the report of the Directorate of Census operations, 2001 we note that in some of the rural units of Mekliganj, Mathabhanga and Sitai, the SC and ST population constituted more than 60 per cent of the total population (West Bengal, Directorate of Census Operations 2001).
elections in 2006, there are indications that it tacitly supported Roy’s Kamtapur Progressive Party. The GCDP however contested the Lok Sabha elections of 2009; its candidate, Bangshi Badan Barman, contested as an independent candidate and secured 37,226 votes.

Even though it is clear that it is the Rajbansis and other ethnic minorities who form the backbone of the movement and the leadership is drawn from these communities, since the demand is for a separate state there is a possibility that in the future it may be able to draw the support of others like the middle class and petty bourgeois sections of the Bengalis in Cooch Behar considering that it is a district which is poor, underdeveloped and less urbanised. Even former Left Front leaders like Kamal Guha, belonging to the All India Forward Bloc, had admitted that the region including Cooch Behar suffers from the problem of under development; according to him, this was one of the reasons for the political and social unrest in the region. Given this background of the district, the formation of a separate state may appear to all (including the Bengalis) a panacea to the prevailing ills of the district.

How has the Left Front looked at the movement? The Left Front used two different strategies in order to counter the movement for a separate state of Greater Cooch Behar. It had used strong-arm tactics, which took two forms. It also claims to be using development of the region to counter the movement. As far as the second point is concerned, it is ambiguous in the sense that in the beginning it claimed that North Bengal is not a deprived region at all but later, with the ascendance of the movement, it had hinted at greater funds for the region, thus accepting that the North Bengal region remains under developed. The first strategy included the use of police force in order to counter the mobilisation by the GCPA and the second involved using counter mobilisation in the region. The CPI (M) had argued that there was no demand for a separate state of Cooch Behar during the time of the State Reorganisation Commission in 1956.

To sum up, we have argued in this article that the North Bengal region of West Bengal has remained under developed and backward. Even the long rule of the Left Front in the state had failed to arrest its backwardness. It remained backward in relative as well as in absolute senses; there are several indicators of the backwardness which we have discussed in the first section of the article. It is this under development that has adversely affected the ethnic communities of the region which are numerically large in number and ethnically distinct from others. In
the entire development process, it is these communities who are largely placed under the category of SCs and STs that have lagged behind the others in the region. It is these communities that are being mobilised by ethnic leaders. Hence, ethnic or identity politics in this region, as in other regions of the country, has taken the form of demand for autonomy. We are led to believe by the mobilisers that the formation of a separate state is a panacea to their backwardness.

References


Barman, Rup Kumar. N.d. The Kamtapuri Movement: A Historical Review (mimeo).


Choudhury, Namita. N.d. ‘Urbanisation in North Bengal: Trends and Issues’ (mimeo).


Subba, Tanka Bahadur. 1983–84. ‘Migration and Agrarian Change in Darjeeling’, *North Bengal University Review (Special Issue on North Bengal)*, 4 and 5. December–January.


Assertion of a Region: Exploring the Demand for Telangana

Rama Rao Bonagani

Introduction

India is a plural society with both vertical and horizontal divisions along the lines of kinship, culture, religion, languages, tradition, economic condition and so on. The significance of distinctive group identity cannot be overestimated in India (Panda 2001: 31). Regional identities are rooted amidst India’s diverse rich cultural traditions and are deeply impacted up on by not only shared linguistic, cultural and political consciousness but also by economic variables (Subhash 2005: 374). Regional identity can be located in terms of the interests of the inhabitants of the region who share an emotional bondage with the region, formed around commonality of religion, language, customs and culture, socio-economic and political stages of development, common historical and geographical traditions and a common way of living. Any one or more of these widely prevalent sentiments of togetherness tend to strengthen the regional bond in a given situation.

Regional identity is constructed for a collective action in order to attain certain definitive goals. A region in this context can be defined as, Forrester suggests, as ‘a smaller area within a region or nation, which for economic, historical, and social reasons is aware of possessing a distinct identity’ (1970: 6).

This article is an attempt to investigate into the emergence of regional identity in the regional state of Andhra Pradesh (AP hereafter) that has asserted itself in the form of the demand for the creation of the separate state of Telangana. It suggests that this demand, like other demands from different regions of India cutting across state boundaries, can broadly be attributed to the continuation of regional
inequalities in terms of socio-economic, cultural and political factors which create a feeling of neglect, deprivation and discrimination in the underdeveloped regions.

**Political History of Telangana**

Telangana region has had a peculiar history compared to the other regions of AP such as Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. Historically speaking, Telangana formed a major part of the former princely state of Hyderabad, which consisted of three distinct linguistic regions — Marathi, Kannada and Telugu — under the Hyderabad Nizam (Ramulu 2007: 90). The Nizam had attempted unsuccessfully to maintain Hyderabad, one of the largest princely states of colonial India, as an independent state. His efforts took place simultaneously with the largest agrarian upheaval in modern Indian history taking place in Telangana region. Starting in July 1946, communist guerrilla squads had began overthrowing local feudal landlords and organising land reform in Telugu-speaking area of Hyderabad, collectively known as Telangana. The struggle, joined by women in large numbers, was not only against the landlords but was also aimed at the overthrow of Nizamshahi (Rao 1978). With the Nizam’s continued refusal to accede his territory to India despite persuasion and the violence perpetrated by the communist-led rebellion looming over the princely state, the central government finally sent an army in 1948 to get Hyderabad state forcefully acceded to the Indian Union (Sundarayya 1972: 1). The violent phase of the Telangana movement was subsequently suppressed by the use of state coercion.

As for the Andhra and Rayalaseema regions, they were under the Madras Presidency and were ruled by the British. The Andhra Mahajana Sabha was formed to articulate the need for a new province for Telugu-speaking people, separate from the Madras Presidency. The Congress and the Communist Party supported the demand for a separate Andhra. In 1949 the JVP committee, comprising of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramaiah, submitted its report, accepting in principle the demand for a separate Andhra state. The state was formed in 1953, the first state to be created on a linguistic basis, when Potti Sriramulu, a Gandhian, agitating for provincial linguistic autonomy, died following a prolonged fast. The Telugu-speaking districts of Madras state were separated to form the
state of Andhra (Gray 1971: 463). There was a debate regarding the capital city of Andhra. The Communist Party, unwilling to accept the popular demand for Madras as the capital of Andhra, proposed that the main Telugu-speaking districts of the Nizam’s state be also joined to Andhra and that Hyderabad city be made capital of the new state. Under the circumstances, Andhra political leaders had accepted Kurnool as the capital, largely to satisfy their support groups from the people of the Rayalaseema region, instead of the more convenient centrally located city of Vijayawada (Seshadri 1970: 62).

The process of vernacularisation and switchover to regional languages for administrative and legal purposes had made it imperative for the national leadership of ruling Congress to consider the need for undertaking the task of reorganisation of the states in India. Consequently, the Congress government at the centre appointed a commission to look into this aspect in 1953.¹ In 1955, the Report of the State Reorganisation Commission (SRC) did note the lack of homogeneity between Telangana and Andhra regions. It recommended the formation of a separate Telangana state for five years, while leaving open the possibility of forming a single Telugu-speaking state after that period had expired. However, since at that time it was the linguistic basis only that was recognised for the formation of the new states so the Indian government rejected this recommendation. There was, in addition, intense local political pressure. The state of Andhra Pradesh came into being in November 1956, with the merger of nine, four and seven districts from Telangana, Rayalaseema and Andhra regions (Gray 1971: 463). AP as of today consists of 23 districts, which correspond fairly accurately to the area in which Telugu language and culture are predominant. The regional distribution of various districts is listed out in Table 6.1 (Government of Andhra Pradesh 2004: VII).

¹ Significantly, while applying and implementing the States’ Reorganisation Act, 1955, the then Congress government developed four formal rules: no reorganisation for groups that made secessionist demands (for states like Sikkim); no accommodation of regional demands based on religious grounds (in light of the problem of Punjab); no linguistic recognition unless out of popular demand (in 1954, for instance, western Uttar Pradesh wanted a separate state but this was not a popular mass demand); no reorganisation if the demand came from only one of the important language groups (for instance, within the Madras province both the Telugu- and Tamil-speaking people wanted a reorganisation).
Table 6.1: Districts of Andhra Pradesh (Region-wise Distribution)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telangana</th>
<th>Coastal Andhra</th>
<th>Rayalaseema</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Adilabad</td>
<td>1. Srikakulam</td>
<td>1. Cuddapah*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hyderabad</td>
<td>5. West Godavari</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mahabubnagar</td>
<td>7. Guntur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Khammam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Renamed Kadapa as per the Dr Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy bill recently passed by the Andhra Pradesh Assembly.

Social Dimensions of Telangana Demand

Education and healthcare are the two key contributors in personal and social development. The question to be considered here is: Are regional imbalances in terms of access to quality education and healthcare responsible for the emergence of regional identity in Telangana (Reddy 1997: 157). The answer is to be in the affirmative as at the time of the formation of AP, it was assured that inter-regional developmental disparities, including education in different regions of the state, would be removed within a period of five years (Shanker 1997: 151). However, even after more than 50 years of state formation, the percentage of literacy, which is necessary for social and economic development in Telangana region, continues to be the lowest in the state (Subrahmanyam and Reddy 2002: 219). As per the 2001 Census, the literacy level in the Telangana region was 58 per cent, while coastal Andhra region showed 62.5 and Rayalaseema showed 60.7 per cent literacy (Reddy and Rao 2003: 1242). The share of Telangana is less than 20 per cent in the total quantum of grant-in-aid (Department of Higher Education, AP).

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government during its tenure had started reforms in the area of primary education including creation of schools and village education committees for increasing enrolment, reducing dropout rates and improving the overall literacy level. However, these committees did not succeed in fulfilling their objectives to the extent desired. Studies have shown that Telangana region records the highest dropout ratio followed by the regions of coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema (Reddy and Rao 2003: 1243).
Another reason for the lower level of literacy in Telangana region was the number of educational institutions and teachers being relatively lower in comparison to the rest of coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. Table 6.2 provides details about primary schools and teacher strength in the various regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Telangana</th>
<th>Coastal Andhra</th>
<th>Rayalaseema</th>
<th>Total (AP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools (Boys + Girls)</td>
<td>24,428</td>
<td>26,437</td>
<td>13,032</td>
<td>63,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (Men + Women)</td>
<td>73,178</td>
<td>65,042</td>
<td>34,381</td>
<td>1,72,601</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The people of Telangana region not only have lower levels of accessibility to primary education, but also to the upper primary, high school, and college (including technical and professional) levels. Moreover, corporatisation of education has been taking place in the Telangana region through private institutions such as Vignan, Sri Chaitanya, Vikas and Narayana (interviews conducted in January 2007). As a result, there is a strong feeling among the educated middle classes in the Telangana region that the upper-caste communities from Andhra are exploiting their region through commercialisation of education and usurping their opportunities. The Telangana Movement booklets spread messages like ‘owners of private colleges belong to coastal Andhra but students belong to Telangana’ (Telangana Development Forum 2006: 25).

The Government of India’s proposal to establish an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in the Telangana region also had become highly politicised. A majority of the middle and upper middle class groups in the region felt that the main motive of the then Congress government led by late Dr Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy (YSR) for planning to shift the earlier location of the IIT from Basara in Adilabad district to Medak district was inspired by serving the interests of the Andhra people. Basara was considered the right place for establishing an IIT because it was more accessible and beneficial to the neighbouring backward districts of Telangana (interview with Telangana Rashtriya Samiti (TRS) activists in January 2007). The TRS activists alleged that the government was fulfilling Reddy’s dream of establishing
Indiramma Rajyam as Medak district was once Indira Gandhi’s Lok Sabha constituency.

As far as the health sector is concerned, studies have shown that medical facilities in the state indicate the predominance and rapid growth of the private healthcare sector. This phenomenon increased further during the TDP regime in the 1990s. Factors such as stagnation in expansion of public hospitals, decreased resource allocation to the health sector after the initiation of a structural adjustment programme and lack of government regulation on the minimum standards of medical facilities, pricing and the training and quality of staff were responsible for the rapid expansion of private sector (Narayana 2003: 1230).

There are also variations in the number of government hospitals in three regions. Table 6.3 provides a detailed picture of the number of government allopathic medical facilities.

**Table 6.3: Government Allopathic Medical Facilities (Region-wise Break-up)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Telangana</th>
<th>Coastal Andhra</th>
<th>Rayalaseema</th>
<th>Total (AP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Hospitals (including special treatment)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Health Centres (PHCs)</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>1,386</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 6.3 clearly reveals that the number of general and primary health centres in Telangana region is relatively lower in proportion to their share in the overall population of the state. Being a backward region, the people in Telangana would not be able to bear the expenses of private healthcare.

**Political Economy of Water**

Telangana is the largest region of the state, with a population and area that is more than that of both coastal Andhra and the Rayalaseema, covering 41.47 per cent of the state area and 40.54 per cent of the total inhabitants. It, in fact, contributes more than 50 per cent to state revenue. However, Telangana remains a victim of regional discrimination.
In Telangana, industrialisation has occurred only around the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad; the IT revolution has also come to the neighbouring satellite city of Cyberabad and the remaining areas have remained neglected even when they have the necessary natural resources for development (Satyanarayan 1997: 124). That leaves the agriculture sector as the critical sector for Telangana economy.

Agriculture has, in fact, always remained the main occupation of the people of the region. The success of agriculture mainly depends on the availability of irrigation facilities.

Coastal Andhra, except few of its districts, is the most properly irrigated and fertile region, and is the most prosperous and wealthy of the three subregions. Canal irrigation still dominates the coastal Andhra region. All major irrigation projects in the state have been undertaken to benefit the coastal regions where irrigation with the canal system is up to 74.25 per cent. Well irrigation has, however, replaced tank irrigation as the second most important used form in all the three regions (Reddy 2003: 1180). Kodandaram has estimated that the net area under tank irrigation in AP declined from 10.68 lakh hectare to 5.67 lakh hectare between 1955–56 and 2001–2002. In contrast, the net area irrigated by canals went up from 12.92 lakh hectare to 15.62 lakh hectare between 1955–56 and 2001–2002, most of it being in the Andhra region (Prabhakara 1997: 78). This shift has adversely affected the Telangana region more than the other regions as canal water has been unevenly distributed among the regions in Andhra (Kodandaram 2007: 92). Rayalaseema has also been neglected despite being a dry, infertile area, subject to frequent droughts and famine. Studies have shown that the share of river waters through major irrigation canals in the Krishna basin of the Telangana, coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions is relatively 27, 56, and 17 per cent respectively, while the catchments area share of the Telangana is 69 per cent, coastal Andhra is 13 per cent and Rayalaseema is 17 per cent (Forrester 1970: 7). Moreover, the share of the Godavari waters for the Telangana region is much less as compared to the rest of Andhra (Simhadri 1997: 70).

Distribution of projects across the regions also shows that the number of irrigation projects in Telangana region is lower compared to Andhra region. Telangana has been denied its rightful share in river water by successive governments. Many of the districts of the region are suffering from acute water crisis and some like Mahabubnagar have become drought prone. Farmers in Telangana are forced to
pay for digging bore wells and pay heavy electricity charges on using them. With bores drying up due to low underground water levels, agriculture has become increasingly untenable.

This is due to the failure of the successive state governments dominated by Andhra elite that have been held responsible for the stepmotherly treatment meted out to the Telangana people. Even under the present Congress government’s irrigation programme called Jalayagnam started by late YSR, discrimination against the Telangana region continues. M. Kodandaram argues that the 26 projects under Jalayagnam are expected to irrigate 59 lakh hectare, of which 43 lakh hectare will be in the Andhra region, and only 16 lakh hectare in Telangana will be irrigated (Kodamaram 2007: 93).

It is also important to note that in the pre-reform period, the state support systems, in terms of the subsidies for irrigation and power supply were in place. The pro-reforms TDP government led by Naidu rolled back the earlier initiatives and raised the irrigation facilities charges. Since the reforms continued unabated under Naidu government, power tariff was raised many times over in the wake of the power sector reforms and the subsidy for farming sector was also lessened or withdrawn. As the reforms have continued even under the present Congress governments now having second term, the problems of agricultural sector in general especially those faced by the small farmers in particular, of the poorer regions of Telangana and Rayalaseema, in the state are bound to be neglected (Pai 2005: 231).

The endemic agricultural crisis and dwindling state support led to a spate of farmers’ suicides (apart from the handloom workers suicides). Free power for farmers was the main electoral agenda for the Congress party in the 2004 State Assembly elections which was fulfilled by the late Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy government.

However, the people of Telangana have remained unhappy as the power supply remains inadequate. Their grievance is that though the coal of Telangana is being used to generate electricity, non-Telangana beneficiaries use the power thus generated, whereas Telangana farmers continue to suffer from serious power shortages. The Telangana people also share their perception about the neglect and discrimination against the Telangana region by referring to the occupation of lands

---

2 Up to February 2010, as many as 240 farmers have committed suicide in Telangana region, the highest among the three regions of the state.
for both irrigation as well as residential purposes in their region by the people of coastal Andhra, lack of sufficient irrigation projects in the region and denial of the region’s due share of water from Krishna and Godavari (interviews held by the author in January 2007 with the respondents in Karimnagar district of Telangana).

**Cultural Factors**

As mentioned at the outset, apart from the socio-economic perspective of regional identity, language is to be considered as the basis for the formation of the regional identity in this case, and serves as the basis of cultural unity for the emergence of the demand for Telangana state. This has also to be analysed in contrast to Vishalandhra cultural identity, mostly associated with the inhabitants of coastal Andhra. The majority of the respondents of Karimnagar who I interviewed, comprising of Telangana intellectuals and middle- and upper-class Telangana wadis, believed that coastal Andhra culture was being forcefully imposed on them in terms of music, language usage in movies, newspapers, TV, books and festivals. They resent domination of a particular form of hegemonic culture of coastal Andhra on marginalised Telangana. As a result, the authenticity of Telangana culture gets displaced as it faces continuous threats of simultaneous processes of marginalisation, and appropriation and absorption by the dominant cultural tradition emanating from coastal Andhra.

The local people describe Telugu Talli (Telugu mother) as a pet mother, and the Telugu language as the outsiders’ language like English (Ramulu 2007: 63). Moreover, they desperately want a Telangana language whose pronunciation differs from the coastal Andhra language. They are now portraying the Telangana Talli (Telangana mother) whose photo frame was inaugurated on 2 November 2006 at Karimnagar Dhoom Dham Programme. Kakatiya University in Warangal has in the past held seminars to create awareness about the distinctive language of the region.

Of late, Telangana writers have emphasised the necessity of teaching Telangana history and culture through Telangana language only (Reddy 2005: 118). The common complaint is that the Telangana dialect is looked down upon. The Telugu film industry is dominated by producers who were rich farmers from coastal Andhra. The lead roles in Telugu films are played by actors, especially the ones belonging to Kamma caste, also from the coastal regions, while representing
people from Telangana as the stereotypical villains. The marginal roles, especially those of the villain (Telangana Sakunthala) and that of the comedian are routinely given to Telangana artists. The Telangana accent is used for the unimportant roles, which the Telangana people find humiliating. The coastal rich also dominate the print and electronic media. Ramoji Rao’s Eenadu Group from coastal Andhra is specially held responsible for imposing the Telugu language on Telangana people due to its hold over the entertainment industry (interviews with students of Osmania University as well with the students of Hyderabad Central University, January 2007).

A group of Telangana intellectuals also feel that there is a cultural distinctiveness related to festivals. The celebration of the festivals of Bonalu, Bathukamma, Yellamma (goddess), Pochamma and Mallanna can be found mainly in the Telangana region. In contrast, Makara Sankranti is widely celebrated in the Andhra region along with other Indian festivals. As a result, the Telangana people get a strong feeling of distinct cultural identity.

In recent years, a group of Telangana artists, particularly Karimnagar poets, writers, singers and artists, have started developing and composing audio songs such as Telangana Dhoom Dhaam by Gaddar, M. Ramulu and others; Telangana Prajaa Garjana by one Telangana Abhimani; Telangana Ghosha by Avudurthi; Talladilluthunna Telangana by Gaddar, G. Anjaiah (developed by the Centre for Telangana Studies) etc. These songs have been used as a tool to highlight the themes of Telangana language, culture, customs and economic backwardness of the region and to create awareness among the masses.

In fact, through recorded songs in Telangana language known popularly as janapada songs, the regional singers have made efforts to keep alive a strong feeling of cultural regional identity, which has provided an important basis for the demand of a new state (interview with Mayura Audio Centre, January 2007).

---

3 Bathukamma is a Festival of the Goddess, widely celebrated for nine days in Telangana. One can see several similarities between this festival and the Durga Puja. This festival had been celebrated since the times of the Nizam, because they want to show their cultural unity against autocratic rule of the Nizam.
Politics of Accord

Besides the economic and cultural dimensions of the regional identity the political one will be analysed in this section. It is important to understand as to what extent the political leadership been responsible for suppressing or undermining the Telangana demand, and finally, what is the politics behind this demand.

Gentleman’s Agreement

Although many Telangana people had supported the formation of the linguistic state, the domination of the Andhras was always feared, mainly on account of their economic strength, higher rate of literacy and extensive political experience gained during the British colonial rule. As a result, there was an agitation against the formation of the unified state, led by Chenna Reddy. However, the situation improved with the announcement of safeguards agreed upon by senior Congress leaders from both the regions and signed in 1956, also called the Gentleman’s Agreement (Gray 1971: 464). One of the main guarantees that were provided to the Telangana region was the creation of a regional committee to look into the regional grievances and recommend the remedial measures. It was decided that if the chief minister was from one region, the other region should be given the deputy chief ministership.

Most of the agreements reached at the time, however, were never fulfilled. Table 6.4 provides a detailed picture of the ruling party position and the region-wise distribution of the chief minister’s office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Number of Chief Ministers</th>
<th>Duration in office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telangana</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal Andhra</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TDP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rayalaseema</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TDP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: President Rule, 10 January 1973–10 December 1973. (11 months, 5 days). Some chief ministers in all three regions have held office in different or two consequent tenures counted as one.
Table 6.4 clearly shows that the majority of the chief ministers who ruled in AP were from coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. This has been one of the main sources of anguish expressed by the people of Telangana, who feel deprived from their legitimate share in power, supposedly guaranteed in the Gentleman’s Agreement and other safeguards. As of now, there is a widespread feeling of being a victim of internal colonialism.

After the Gentlemen’s Agreement and the shifting of the state capital from Kurnool to Hyderabad, all the government personnel, businessmen, and rich farmers from the Andhra region, who sought better avenues and various young men seeking better opportunities, soon migrated to Hyderabad city and other parts of Telangana. In the old Hyderabad state, it was essential to obtain a mulki\textsuperscript{4} certificate to apply for any job. Without abiding to mulki rules, a significant number of qualified teachers from the coastal regions were appointed in the Telangana region. This became an eyesore to the aspirants from Telangana for teaching positions (Seshadri 1970: 73).

A group of Telangana citizens felt that contrary to the Gentleman’s Agreement, the revenue surplus from Telangana was not being spent entirely on Telangana for developmental purposes but was also being spent in the Andhra and Rayalaseema regions. As a result, many students, teachers, lawyers, white-collar workers and businessmen revived the movement, which received strong urban support. Consequently, the Telangana Praja Samiti (TPS) was established by a group of young intellectuals (lawyers, teachers, journalists) in their 20s and 30s, who had friends and relatives among the students. None of them were Congress supporters or professional politicians. They joined with the students to give the agitation purpose and direction (Gray 1971: 466). Later, political leaders, especially Konda Lakshman and Chenna Reddy, joined the TPS, demanding the creation of a separate Telangana.

In the March 1971 parliamentary elections, the TPS, led by Chenna Reddy, emerged victorious from the Lok Sabha seats, winning 10 of

\textsuperscript{4}One is a Mulki if one had resided in Hyderabad state for a period of more than 15 years. Those born and bred in the state are automatically Mulkis. Moreover, under the Mulki rules which had existed since Nizam’s rule, no candidate could be appointed to any kind of service of the Hyderabad state if s/he had not been a Mulki.
the 14 Telangana constituencies and obtaining 47.5 per cent of the votes polled (Bernstorff 1973: 959). Despite this demonstration of popular public support for a separate Telangana state, the central government, under the leadership of Indira Gandhi, refused to concede to the demand.

However, this movement slowed down as following Chenna Reddy’s talks with Indira Gandhi revolving around the six-point formula developed by Reddy, the TPS merged with the Congress. The majority of the respondents that I interviewed from the region felt that it was because of Reddy’s surrender to Mrs Gandhi’s offer of high political positions in the state that the movement was compromised. It was clearly a politics of cooption of the local leadership with no sincere desire to meet the demands of the people as the majority of the promises embodied in the six-point formula were never fulfilled. The lone exception was the creation of Hyderabad Central University.

**Demand for a Separate Andhra State**

Underlining the deeper regional divide in the state, as a result of the Telangana agitation of 1969–71 and the subsequent Gentlemen’s Agreement, mounting discontent erupted in the coastal Andhra region at the changed balance of power between the regions in the favour of Telangana. Many migrant workers had gone back to the Andhra region and narrated stories of hardship, insult and physical violence to which they had been subjected in the districts of Hyderabad and Telangana during the movement. As a result of this, agitation for a separate Andhra state started. But it failed due to the centre’s intervention in the state’s affairs (Gray 1974: 339). Consequently, like the demand for a separate Telangana state it also receded with time.

---

5 The Government of Andhra Pradesh, on 1 September 1973, had announced a six-point formula for balanced development of Andhra Pradesh. This was widely accepted by the three region political leaderships. This formula promised the establishment of a new central university in Hyderabad, cancellation of Mulki rules and regional committee for Telangana, constitution of administrative tribunals to look after government employees, setting up of a planning board at the state level and sub-committees for backward areas. It was said that preference would be given in case of certain non-gazetted and other jobs to local candidates and finally in order to avoid litigation, the Constitution should be amended.
The N. T. Rama Rao Phenomenon and the Rise of Telugu Nationalism in the 1980s

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP), under the leadership of N. T. Rama Rao (NTR), came to power in AP in January 1983, replacing the Congress as the ruling party in AP, which had ruled for nearly three decades (Tummala 1986: 379). Regional themes of Telugu nationalism were emphasised by NTR. He exposed the prevailing corrupted political culture and argued against repeated intervention from Delhi in the name of Telugu people’s pride (Kohli 1988: 1992). NTR promised special new government programmes to help women, the youth and the backward classes for securing better educational facilities and jobs.

At the same time, in order to safeguard the interests of Telangana, the NTR government passed the G.O. 610 in 1985, which stipulated the filling up of certain jobs in the Telangana region by the local people. However, successive state governments did not implement this order properly. Since the late 1990s, Chandra Babu Naidu and his vision of creating a United Golden AP through the Janmabhoomi Programme and his personal command over party organisation were the main reasons for the disappearance of the Telangana movement for the time being.

Significantly, the BJP, trying to get a foothold in the region, had supported the creation of a separate state of Telangana by adopting a resolution at Kakinada in 1997. Hoping to reap electoral benefits, the party fought the 1998 elections based on the slogan of ‘One Vote–Two States’ (Reddy 2005: 8). However, the TDP, led by Naidu, continued its opposition to the demand for separate state of Telangana, thus constraining the BJP, which needed the support of the TDP for the NDA government it had led since 1998.

Facing mounting pressure, the TDP government had to appoint a one-man commission, headed by a retired IAS officer J. M. Girgliani in 2001 to look into the implementation of G.O. 610 (Reddy 2006: 6). The Commission had faced a lot of problems in getting information at the secretariat because of a majority of the departments have remained dominated by the Andhra people. The Commission found that there was a gross violation of the order by the government as Andhra region’s people were appointed against the posts which were meant for local candidates from Telangana. Its recommendations and findings have not been implemented so far. This is the main reason...
why the majority of the respondents in the Telangana region felt that Andhras have occupied their jobs.

**The Revival of Telangana State Demand: Rise of Telangana Rashtriya Samiti**

The Telangana Rashtriya Samithi (TRS) was formed on 27 April 2001 under the leadership of K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR). The single agenda the TRS professed to pursue was that after acquiring power, the party would form a separate Telangana state. The big question at the time was whether the TRS chief KCR, belonging to the dominant Velama caste in the Telangana region, was really looking forward to the development of the region given his past record as a TDP minister and deputy speaker positions (Reddy 2004: 74). It was thought that like Chenna Reddy, he also could be co-opted by the parties not keen to create a separate Telangana.

In 2004, for the Lok Sabha as well as the Assembly elections, the TRS made a successful electoral alliance with the Congress party in the Telangana region with the promise of the creation of Telangana state after elections. The Congress party came back to power with three-fourths majority in the state, and formed a coalition government at the centre. The TRS also won a significant number of Legislative Assembly seats (26 MLAs) and Lok Sabha seats (5 MPs) in the Telangana region, and joined the government at the centre and state levels.

Due to TRS pressure, the Telangana issue was incorporated in the UPA manifesto. The party did succeed in getting the Congress-led UPA government to appoint a sub-committee consisting of Pranab Mukherjee and Sharad Pawar to look into the demand. It seems that the committee had received a consensus from a significant number of political parties both at the centre and the state levels (Shanker 2006). However, the main alliance of the left parties, with the CPI (M) at its helm, which had 61 MPs in the Lok Sabha providing outside support to the UPA, was opposed to the demand at that time.

**Karimnagar Lok Sabha By-election 2006: A Case Study**

Consequently, the TRS withdrew support from the Congress at the centre. Later, K. C. Rao also resigned from his Karimnagar constituency due to a provocative statement made by his rival Congressman
M. Satyanarayan. In the subsequently held by-elections on the Karimnagar constituency seat, the TRS chief won a landslide victory. This election was taken as a referendum by the TRS and crucial for other parties for their survival in the region. Table 6.5 provides a detailed picture of the by-election results.

**Table 6.5: Karimnagar Lok Sabha By-election Results**
*(Held on 4 December 2006)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karimnagar</td>
<td>K. Chandra Sekhar Rao</td>
<td>TRS</td>
<td>3,78,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T. Jeevan Reddy</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>1,76,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L. Ramana</td>
<td>TDP</td>
<td>1,70,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch. Vidhya Sagar Rao</td>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>21,144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table above clearly shows that riding a pro-Telangana wave, the TRS chief retained his Karimnagar seat with a record margin of 2.01 lakh votes.

What kind of support led to such a huge margin? The Telangana Vidhyavanthula Vedika led by schoolteachers, lecturers and lawyers went to the Karimnagar constituency and mobilised people, raising the issue of the region’s economic backwardness. The teaching and non-teaching staff of Osmania and Kakatiya universities went and campaigned for the TRS; the students also went to the Karimnagar constituency and divided themselves into smaller groups for visiting each Mandal with the help of the local TRS activists. They sensitised the people through a door-to-door campaign regarding lack of jobs, irrigation projects and lack of sufficient power supply to their region (interviews conducted with research scholars of Osmania University, January 2007).6

Taking a clue from the stage shows in the Andhra region, the leadership of Gaddar organised cultural programmes in the Telangana region to sensitise the masses on various social and economic and

---

6 The field study I undertook involved interviews conducted with TRS activists, research scholars at Osmania University and Hyderabad Central University, including the then President of the Telangana students’ organisation in the university and Deputy Statistical officer, CPO, Karimnagar and finally with the owner of Mayura Audio Centre, Karimnagar in January 2007.
cultural issues. These programmes reached the masses easily and provided an impetus to the feeling of a strong regional identity, encouraging them to cast their vote for the Telangana issue and not for the candidate.

The Telangana Development Forum was established by a group of NRIs for the cause of Telangana state. These NRIs invested their finances in developing and purchasing literature; audio cassettes were distributed to public transport drivers as well as the general masses. These *janapada* songs were composed in a Telangana melody, which reached the masses and helped them come to terms with their cultural identity and backwardness.

Apart from the non-political organisation’s united efforts, the political parties also followed different strategies to win the elections. In response to the TRS slogan of a separate state at any cost, the Congress slogan was the development of the region through various schemes like the Indiramma Scheme, etc. The Congress also received support from the Muslim minority OMIM party for campaign as well as the Dalit sub-caste leader Krishna Madiga for campaigning for the Congress candidate. In contrast, the rival TDP used the backward caste (BC) card to win the election by giving a ticket to the BC caste leader. The central government’s order to publish a statutory skull denoted warning on beedi packets was also used by the TRS during the campaign as detrimental to the economic interests of the beedi workers from the region.

The above mentioned strategies taken up by the opponents failed to convince the people of Karimnagar. Their regional sentiment remains fairly strong in terms of socio-economic, cultural and political backwardness, articulated in the form of a separate Telangana state. Despite this clear and demonstrative mandate, the Congress party still opposed the demand for the separate state and unanimously recommended for the second State Reorganization Commission to look into the issue.

**Lok Sabha Elections 2009: Telangana Issue**

The 2009 Lok Sabha elections saw a bitter campaign launched by the TRS against the Congress for its betrayal, asking the people to defeat the party. The then powerful Congress Chief Minister Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy openly opposed the demand for the bifurcation of the state despite the Congress high command still being undecided
about the issue. Changing track, the TDP finally shed its ambivalence on the issue and came out openly in support of the demand. This, of course, enabled the party to form an electoral alliance with the TRS. As for the left parties, while the CPM continued its opposition to the demand, the CPI now favoured the creation of a separate state.

It was speculated that riding on the wave of overwhelming support for Telangana, the TRS–TDP alliance would be able to sweep the elections in the region as the Congress would be paying for its refusal to redeem its pledge. However, as the CSDS–National Election Study (NES) data showed, the Telangana factor did not influence the voting preferences in the region in a significant manner as even among the respondents who preferred a separate state the creation of a separate state of Telangana, 33 per cent voted for the Congress. This was mainly due to the popularity of the late Rajasekhar Reddy who was preferred as Chief Minister by 35 per cent of the respondents from the region. The popularity of YSR can be largely attributed to the welfarist schemes he launched and successfully implemented and also the fact that he came from the powerful Reddy community that has presence in all the three regions of the state. The present Chief Minister K. Rosaiah, a Vaishya, lacks community-based support and hence has been unable to rein in either pro- or anti-Telangana forces even in his own party.

**Telangana Movement as of Now**

With the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) constituting a committee on Telangana to be headed by Justice Srikrishna to give its report by 31 December 2010, the movement for a separate Telangana has again come to a crossroads. Only time will tell whether a separate state of Telangana would finally be reality or one has to wait for the formation and final recommendation of the Second States’ Reorganisation Commission (SRC), if at all it is to happen in the near future. A lot

---

7 In the CSDS–NES survey, 46 per cent of the respondents from the Telangana region supported the formation of a separate Telangana state whereas only 33 per cent agreed to continue with the integrated state. In comparison, only 9 and 10 per cent of the respondents from coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema supported the demand whereas an overwhelming 64 and 79 per cent respectively desired to maintain the status quo (Suri et al. 2009: 111).

8 This section draws substantially from Gudavarthy (2010).
depends not only on how effectively the leaders of the TRS would be able to negotiate with the leaders of the other two regions as well as with the national parties, especially the Congress national leaders. The party may also at times threaten to repeat a desperate act like the fast unto death undertaken by K. C. Rao to pressurise the centre.

At the moment, there is also a need for the pro-Telangana forces to convince the left parties, especially CPM, as their opposition to the demand has been fairly well known and was the reason why despite the alliance, the TRS put up its candidates at many places in the 2009 Assembly elections in the state.

As for the other parties that matter in the state (as well as national) electoral politics, the BJP has consistently taken a pro-Telangana stand. This can be attributed to the party’s consistent policy of supporting the creation of newer and smaller states to reap electoral dividends and also to the fact that the party has a stronger support base in Telangana than in coastal Andhra and as such the party leadership, unlike the Congress, is not unduly perturbed about the loss of the support base in the other two regions of state by supporting the demand. Undoubtedly, the BJP stands to gain with the formation of a separate Telangana, and it was only due to the constraint of alliance politics (with the TDP) that it underplayed the issue during the 2009 Lok Sabha elections. Now when the alliance is broken, the BJP can hope to gain in electoral terms, even if for a short period, like in the case of Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh.

Significantly, while applying and implementing the States’ Reorganisation Act, 1955, the then Congress government had stipulated that any demand, even if on the basis of language, which would be secessionist or communal in nature, or would be lacking popular support or would be opposed by the other linguistic groups, would not be accepted. The demand for Telangana fulfills all the above criteria including the last one if one considers the fact that in the recent Assembly elections where, despite the TDP raking up Telugu pride and Andhra sentiment by suggesting a possible water crisis due to the sharing of river water, it could not garner a substantial percentage of vote or seats in the coastal districts.

**Conclusion**

On the whole, one can argue that the demand for a separate Telangana state is justified given the aspirations of the people of the Telangana
region. The Union and the state governments have to sooner or later respond to the feelings of deprivation and discrimination among the people of the Telangana region and fulfil their demand of a separate state. What holds back the fulfilment of the demand is the presence of the factions and thirst for power within the parties in the state, especially within the Congress. In order to save the situation, the present Congress government should straightaway implement G.O. 610; provide equal distribution of water through irrigation projects; and invest in other financial incentives through budget allocations for the backward Telangana region.

It is also time to ask some real questions. Would the creation of a separate and smaller state be able to address the genuine grievances of the Telangana people arising out of the longstanding under development of the region? Would the benefits be appropriated by the regional elite belonging to the numerically large and affluent castes, i.e., the Reddys, Kammas, Rajus and Kapus? Or would it be the parasitic strata of middlemen/contractors/land mafia of the region which would have the free run in connivance of the local political class? There is a distinct possibility that the Telangana elite comprising the rich farmers of the region as well as those who have stakes in the burgeoning real estate business would be looking for opportunities to capture political power and further advance their economic interests. As of now, one can observe that it is only the lack of water for irrigation purposes and not the land question that is being raised which basically refers to the interests of the landed peasantry. The ‘new’ middle classes, especially the professional ones and the university students, have clearly been aiming at the enhanced job opportunities for them in the service sector as a result of creation of separate state. Class politics with radical potential addressing the productive classes, i.e., the marginal farmers and the urban working classes, is clearly missing from the struggle unlike in the 1940s and 1950s. The Naxal forces that still have presence in the region have not been part of the movement. In fact, the TRS has been invoking the memory of the Nizam’s rule but not the Naxal movement to rekindle the identity politics based on region.

Telangana as of today suffers from rampant unplanned urbanisation that goes in the name of unabashed modernisation being carried out by the land mafia and corporate lobby and resulting in displacement of the urban poor, spiralling cost of housing, widespread pollution and the drinking water crisis. The new industrial towns that
have emerged, especially around the capital city in the Ranga Reddy district, have played havoc with the availability as well as the quality of underground water being used for irrigation as well as drinking. The available tanks and river system have also been polluted as industrial effluents pour into them.

Experiences from the new smaller states like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand show that the political classes in these states have been unable to cope up with the pressure/inducement being brought upon them coming from the corporate/big business houses bent upon exploiting the natural resources of the region. Moreover, given the presence of Naxalism in the state, it is important to note that both Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have been dependent on the centre to meet the challenge being put up by the Maoist forces. Another aspect would be the issue of economic viability and the political will of the ‘new’ leadership if the separate state is created to continue with the pro-poor welfare schemes/programmes started of late by the late YSR government and continued by the present Rosaiah government like the Rajiv Arogyasri Programme (health insurance scheme), ‘108’ and ‘104’ health schemes to run the ambulance services and ‘mini hospitals on wheels’ respectively for the villages or the grant of loan terms to the distressed farmers and to self-help groups (The Hindu, 15 March 2010).

The failure of the current leadership of the Telangana movement to meet the grave challenges this impoverished region presents would be a betrayal of the aspirations of the ordinary masses that have been supporting the demand in search of good governance and greater development benefiting all.

Finally, as as the demand for separate statehood for Telangana can be justified, it is certain that the break-up of the first linguistic state of post-independence India would be emotionally and politically wrenching for the people of the three regions in the state (Chatterjee 2006).

Acknowledgement
The editor has benefited greatly from the critical inputs provided by Ajay Gudavarthy of CPS, Jawaharlal Nehru University on the issue which helped him a great deal in thoroughly revising and updating the article.
References


Exploring the Demand for Telangana


The midnight declaration of the decision of the Union government by the Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram on 9 December 2009 to initiate the process for the creation of a new state of Telangana has given the recent boost to such demands in different parts of the country. In the immediate past, such provocation was provided by the creation of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal (now Uttarakhand)\(^1\) and Chhattisgarh as separate states in November 2000 marking the latest phase of the state-reorganisation within the federal polity of India.\(^2\) The birth of Uttarakhand, for instance, has given a boost to the demand of further territorial reorganisation of the parent state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) into four more states — Harit Pradesh in western UP, Poorvanchal in eastern UP, Oudh Pradesh/Madhya Pradesh/Madhyanchal in central UP, and Bundelkhand in southern UP. In fact, for the sake of brevity of analysis, the politics of the separate states in UP in the postcolonial period can be divided into three phases: one, from the 1950s to 1993; from 1994 to 2007; and from 2007 onwards. While during the first phase the demands were raised only occasionally, it was during the

\(^\ast\) This article is largely based on my ongoing major UGC project ‘Politics of Separate States in Uttar Pradesh: Castes, Regions and Development’ (1994–the present).

\(^1\) In this paper the terms Uttarakhand and Uttaranchal have been used interchangeably. The nomenclature of the state has been marked by politics between the BJP-led NDA and the Congress-led UPA. The movement for the creation of this state was launched in the name of Uttarakhand. But the BJP-led government in 1990 named the newly created state as Uttaranchal. The succeeding Congress-led government, however, renamed it as Uttarakhand in 2006.

\(^2\) These demands resurfaced especially after the Independence Day declaration by the then Prime Minister H. D. Devegowda in 1996 to create the new state of Uttarakhand (Kumar 2000b: 3079–3080).
second and the third phases that the division of UP has remained the live issue all through. This article seeks to situate the demand for Harit Pradesh in the context of the debate on the reorganisation of the state in India and to analyse the politics relating to the creation of new states in India. It seeks to explore the following questions: Are the stances of the political parties on Harit Pradesh informed by the political expediency or principled understanding? What changes have taken places in the nature of the politics of Harit Pradesh in the third phase of the politics of separate states in UP? And, in a more general sense, under what circumstances are the demands for the creation of new states fulfilled whereas in other cases they remain unfulfilled?

The article can be read in four parts. In the first part is presented the factual descriptive narrative of the politics of Harit Pradesh as it has unfolded over the years in the parent state of UP. The second part takes up the discussion about the positions of different political parties on the demand for the creation of Harit Pradesh and also asks whether their respective stands are determined by principled considerations or betray political opportunism for electoral gains. The third analyses as to why the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) has yet not been in a position to get the demand for the creation of Harit Pradesh realised despite having been an important partner in the coalition governments in UP and also at the centre several times in the recent past. This is particularly so as it has always put it as one of the conditions to enter into any coalitional arrangements. The concluding part sums up the discussion while making a prognosis about the fate of the movement for separate statehood.

Since the late 1990s, in their attempt to carve out a space for themselves in order to control the regime in a state, a segment of the political class of western UP has been demanding the creation of a separate state of Harit Pradesh to be carved out of the parent state of UP, consisting of 23 districts, i.e., Agra, Mainpuri, Firozabad, Aligarh, Bareilly, Badaun, Bulandshahr, Etah, Mathura, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Pilibhit, Rampur, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Haridwar,3 Shahjahanpur, Mahamaya Nagar, Baghap, Haridwar has already been included in the new state of Uttaranchal, which was formed on 9 November 2000. Its inclusion evoked opposition from certain forces in UP. The BKU, led by Mahendra Singh Tikait, launched an agitation against its inclusion in the new state. But the main political forces which were demanding Harit Pradesh did not participate in this agitation, even as the BKU has not yet joined the one for Harit Pradesh.
Gautambudha Nagar and Jyotiba Phule Nagar. These districts mainly belong to Rohilkhand and the upper and lower doab geographical regions. Over the years, different names have been given to the proposed state, e.g., Doab Pradesh, Ganna Pradesh, Kisan Pradesh, Jatistan, Brij Pradesh, Pashchimanchal, Panchal and Harit Pradesh. Harit Pradesh, which literally means ‘green province’ and signifies the agricultural prosperity of the region, is the latest nomenclature given to it in June 2000.

Making of Uttar Pradesh

Evolved during more than three quarters of a century, from 1775 to 1856, UP may be viewed primarily as an ‘artifact’ or as a ‘largely collection of geographical regions’ made up of the different regions which were brought as one administrative entity under the colonial administration by conquest and annexation, and were placed under two distinct administrative provinces of the Northwest Provinces (later named as Agra) and Oudh. These provinces were brought under the unified colonial administration of the provinces of Agra and Oudh, later renamed as the United Provinces. The autonomous princely states of Rampur and Tehri Garhwal became constituents of the province in 1949. The name of the province was again changed to Uttar Pradesh in January 1950 (UPZAC Report, vol. I, 1948: 79–80; Brass 1983: 229–31, 1985: 230; Kumar 2000a: 50). In 1950, there were 51 districts in UP. Their numbers kept increasing since then and with creation of 17 more districts during the first two coalitional regimes led by Mayawati as Chief Minister, i.e., from 3 June–17 October 1995 and from 21 March–20 September 1997, their number had become 82. Following the formation of Uttarakhand on 9 November 2000, the state of UP was left with 70 districts. A new district was added in 2008 by the BSP government.

The districts of the present UP can be categorised into six regions: 1. Rohilkhand; 2. Upper Doab; 3. Lower Doab; 4. Oudh; 5. eastern districts; and 6. Bundelkhand (Brass 1985: 71–73). On the basis of their geographical location in the state, the districts can be identified as those belonging to western, central, eastern and southern UP or Bundelkhand region. Such categorisation is relevant for the discussion

---

4 Though one is not sure as to when new nomenclature will be replaced by another, yet for brevity of discussion I will use Harit Pradesh and separate state of western Uttar Pradesh interchangeably throughout this article.
in this article as it is used in almost all kinds of academic and political discourse relating to various regions of UP. As mentioned earlier, the proposed state of Harit Pradesh is supposed to cover 23 districts of western UP falling under Rohilkhand, Upper Doab and Lower Doab regions of western UP.

**Beginning of the Demand**

On the eve of the UP Assembly elections in 1996, Om Singh Tomar founded the Kisan Vikas Party (KVP) with the agenda for creation of a separate state. The KVP contested the 1996 and 1998 Assembly elections in several constituencies of western UP region with the formation of a separate state of Western UP as its main agenda. The party, however, performed badly in the elections. It also ceased to exist after the 1998 election. Nevertheless, in the following period certain political parties, individuals, lawyers and organisations have continuously raised the demand. Most prominent among these have been Ajit Singh, son of prominent Jat leader and former prime minister of India Chaudhary Charan Singh, with his party under different names, i.e., the Bharatiya Kisan Kamgar Party (BKKP) and the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD). Ajit Singh was also instrumental in forming organisations like the Pashchimi Uttar Pradesh Rajya Nirman Morcha (PUPRNM); Western Uttar Pradesh State Formation Front); and Harit Pradesh Nirman Samiti (HPNS). The PUPRNM was set up in 1997 following a seminar held at Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi, at the behest of Ajit Singh. It aimed at mobilising public opinion in favour of a separate state of western UP (interview, 9 July 1999, Gyanendra Sharma, President youth wing of the PUPRNM). With the renaming of the proposed state as Harit Pradesh, HPNS was formed on 27 June 2000 at a meeting of leaders from western UP held in New Delhi (Hindustan Times, 28 June 2000). The advocates of Harit Pradesh support similar demands raised in other parts of Uttar Pradesh. It was after he lost the 1996

---

5 The UPPRNM was set up in 1997 following a seminar held at Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi at the initiative of Ajit Singh. It aimed at mobilising public opinion in favour of a separate state of western UP (interview, 9 July 1999, Gyanendra Sharma, President youth wing of the PUPRNM). With the renaming of the proposed state as Harit Pradesh, HPNS was formed on 27 June 2000 at a meeting of leaders from western UP held in New Delhi (Hindustan Times, 28 June 2000).

6 They suggest that apart from the newly created state of Uttarakhand, the existing state of UP should be divided into four more states: 1. Harit Pradesh;
Lok Sabha election to the rival BJP candidate that Ajit Singh took up the demand for the creation of a separate state of western UP in a forceful manner. The most important occasions for raising such a demand can be chronicled thus. On 23 September 1998, eight MLAs belonging to the BKKP led by Kokab Hamid walked out of the UP Vidhan Sabha when their demand for creation of a separate state of western UP was not met. Their demand was made in response to presentation of the Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Bill, 1998 by the Kalyan Singh government for a separate state of Uttaranchal, which was approved by the NDA government at the centre and got the assent of the President in November 2000. The bill was passed after making some amendments to the original bill. Again, on 24 October 2000, Kokab Hamid, now from the platform of the Rashtriya Lok Dal — the changed nomenclature of the BKKP — introduced a resolution on the floor of the UP Legislative Assembly for the division of the UP into four states including Harit Pradesh, i.e., Poorvanchal, Awadh Pradesh (Madahyanchal) and Bundelkhand (The Hindu, 25 October 2000). The resolution was, of course, defeated. During the past one decade the modus operandi of mobilising public opinion for Harit Pradesh by Ajit Singh or any other leader of the BKKP/RLD has included public meetings, padyatras, press conferences, press statements, jan andolan (mass movement), announcement to start agitation, holding of seminars and brainstorming sessions. (see The Times of India, 7 March 1998; Hindustan Times, 17 October 1998 and 10 November 1998). The first brainstorming session on Harit Pradesh was held in Mavalankar hall; JMM leader Shibhu Soren, among others, attended it in New Delhi in 1997. The invitees to the brainstorming sessions or seminars/conferences included those leaders from other regions who supported the formation of or agitated for the small or separate states

2. Poorvanchal consisting of 27 districts — Mau, Allahabad, Kaushambi, Ajamgarh, Ballia, Behraich, Balrampur, Gonda, Shravasti, Siddarth Ngagar, Basti, Maharajganj, Deoria, Khushinagar, Ghazipur, Jaunpur, Sultanpur, Kabir Nagar, Pratapgarh, Sonbhadra, Sant Ravidas Nagar, Mirzapur, Varanasi, Chandauli, Faizabad, Ambedkar Nagar and Gorakhpur; 3. Bundelkhand consisting of seven districts — Jhansi, Banda, Jalaun, Shahujinagar, Lalitpur, Hamirpur and Mohaba and should include the following districts of Madhya Pradesh as well — Sagar, Damoh, Datia, Bhind, Murena, Narsinghgarh, Panna, Chatapur, etc.; and 4. Madhya Pradesh/Awadh Pradesh/Madhyanchal consisting of 14 districts — Lucknow, Barabanki, Hardoi, Unnao, Sitapur, Rai Berielly, Kheri, Kanpur Nagar, Akbarpur, Fatehpur, Farrukhabad, Etawa, Orraia and Kannauj (Tomar n.d.).
(interview, 9 July 1999, Gyanendra Sharma, President, youth wing of the PUPRM; see also The Hindu, 20 August 2000). The second brainstorming session was held on 16 July 2000 in Muzaffarnagar; Prakash Ambedkar, leader of the Bahujan Republican Paksh-Bahujan Mahasangh (BRP-BMS), was one of the participants in this meeting (The Hindu, 17 July 2000; The Times of India, 17 July 2000). The UPRNM also organised sit-ins at the district headquarters in the first week of August 1998. The agitation had turned violent; students courted arrest and around 70–80 of them were sent to jail. (interview, 9 July 1999; Gyanendra Sharma). These activities of the advocates of Harit Pradesh are reminiscent of how the leaders of Haryana participated in various conferences and meetings and submitted memoranda to urge upon the government to create a Haryana Prant before and after its creation (Kumar 1991: 123–24).

Even before the 1990s, the demand for a separate state of western UP was raised but never pursued. Highlighting the cultural links between the Hindu Jats of Haryana and Bharatpur in 1931, Chaudhary Lalchand, president of the Delhi session of the Jat Mahasabha, demanded a separate state for Hindu Jats comprising of the Meerut, Agra and Delhi divisions. In 1935, Chhotu Ram demanded a province populated by Hindu Jats alone, including south-east Punjab (present Haryana), western UP and Rajasthan with the purpose of protecting the cultural and economic interests of the Hindu Jats (Datta 1999: 134). In 1954 as well, 97 MLAs hailing from western UP gave a signed memorandum to the central commission for the reorganisation of the states, demanding a separate state of western UP consisting of the districts of western UP and some parts of Haryana. The demand was vouched in terms of the cultural and linguistic affinities, historical precedents and administrative convenience (Brass 1974: 18). The Janata Party MLA, Sohan Veer Singh Tomar (convenor of the PUPRM), raised it in the UP Assembly in the 1970s. Even Charan Singh had preferred smaller states to bigger ones like UP and Bihar while arguing that these states were difficult to manage from the administrative point of view. He had suggested that the ‘remarkable progress made by smaller states may provide clue to how states can be reorganised’ (Hindustan Times, 30 October 1979).

---

7 It is interesting to note that this demand animated a debate among the politicians of UP opposing and supporting the demand (see Kudaisya 2006: 380–99).
Why a Separate State?

In an important text concerning the issue, the convenor of the PUPRN, Sohanveer Singh Tomar, has stated the bases for the demand of the creation of a separate state of western UP in a booklet captioned Uttar Pradesh Ka Punargathan Kyon? (Why Reorganisation of UP?). These bases have been reiterated by Ajit Singh in a message through this booklet, in public statements, speeches, rallies and interviews and are shared by a large section of people in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts who are supportive of the movement.\(^8\) The arguments in support of their demand for a separate state can be briefly stated as follows.

It has long been argued by the proponents of the creation of the new state of Harit Pradesh that the political class of UP calling the shots at the state capital of Lucknow has continuously neglected the western UP region as the development of western UP remains insignificant in comparison to its contribution to the state in terms of material resources. ‘Paschimi Uttar Pradesh Ki Kamai Ko Poorvi Uttar Pradesh Walein Khaetein Hein’ (western UP toils and eastern UP eats) is the common refrain in the region. The argument goes that the other parts of UP are developing at the cost of western UP. Ajit Singh has claimed that west UP contributes 70 per cent of the annual revenue generated in the entire state though not even 20 per cent of the state expenditure is made in the region (Amar Ujala, 19 July 1998).

In what is reminiscent of the Punabi Suba demand of the 1950s and 1960s, the contribution of the region of western UP to national defence and security is highlighted to press for the demand. The role of the Jat regiment in this regard is highlighted. Pertinently, the allegation of discrimination of western UP by the supporters of Harit Pradesh can be termed as a case of perceived ‘reverse discrimination’. In a comparative mode, it is different from the perception of discrimination experienced in the case of the demand for a separate state in other parts of India like Vidarbha, Telangana or Gorkhaland. While in the later cases the allegations are made that their regions being victims of ‘internal colonialism’ are economically backward either because of the policies of the centre or their exploitation by the outsiders or other...

\(^8\) It is based on the discussions I held with groups of people in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar; personal interview, Gyanendra Sharma, 9 July 1999; and newspaper reports.
regions, in the case of the western UP region the argument is reversed (like in the case of Coorg); their prosperity is allegedly exploited to benefit the backward regions of UP like Poorvanchal.

Besides political economy, geography also comes in to the picture as the location of the state capital Lucknow and High Court at Allahabad is considered too distant from the western UP region. Visiting these cities is cumbersome, economically and otherwise, for the people of the western UP. Ajit Singh in his booklet titled *Uttar Pradesh Ka Punargathan Kyon* has argued that the constitutional and administrative institutions of the state are beyond the reach of ordinary masses of the region due to spatial distance and poor means of transportation (Tomar, n.d.).

The spatial discrimination in terms of progress is put forward as justifications for the demand. Most of the factories are located in the regions of eastern UP. The academic institutions of western UP are given much less grant-in-aid in comparison to those of eastern and central UP. Central university status has recently been granted to Allahabad University whereas Meerut University remains in a dismal state. Whenever people of the western UP region visit Allahabad High Court or Lucknow, they are cheated and discriminated against. There is a perceived cultural discrimination as well as people of the eastern and central regions look down upon those from western UP. In terms of public employment, the early advantage of the eastern and central regions in the field of modern education works against the aspirants from the western region. There has also been a complaint of unvarying discrimination by the recruiting bodies manned by the people of eastern UP explaining the under representation of the people from the region in government jobs.

Then there is an argument in terms of greater administrative efficiency. Due to a large population of 170 million (sixth largest country in the world if it would have been a separate country) living in so many different agro-climatic and cultural zones, the state is, the argument goes, unwieldy to be governed. States like Haryana and Punjab have made progress due to their smaller sizes. Ajit Singh, the main protagonist of the idea of separate Harit Pradesh, has argued in *Uttar Pradesh Ka Punargathan Kyon*? that the main reason for the chronic maladministration and lack of development in UP is

---

9 *Hindustan Times*, 12 March 2000 also mentions the distance between various district headquarters and Allahabad.
the ‘expansion of single administrative jurisdiction’ in the whole of the state since the colonial times. His argument is that democratic governance usually succeeds in ‘small units’; the bigger the units, the lesser the contact with the masses. As UP is the biggest state in the country and no unit in any democratic system in the world is so big from the demographic point of view, it is not possible for the ‘centre’ like Lucknow to provide efficient administration for the entire state, especially those districts which are on the ‘peripheries’, even if geographically, only. It is humanly not possible for the Chief Minister to tour all districts of the state even once.

The local political class of western UP argues that the politicians of eastern UP attempt to keep them out of key political positions either in the parties or in the government. To substantiate this point, the President of the youth wing of the PUPRNIM, Gyanendra Sharma, said that from 1992 to 1997 the UP government had banned elections to the student unions of the western UP institutions, while it was allowed in their counterparts in the eastern UP. He also said that most of the chief ministers of UP hailed from eastern UP and they took decisions in favour of eastern UP (interview conducted by the author on 9 July 1999). Echoing similar views, Ajit Singh has repeatedly alleged that though some of the recent chief ministers like Mayawati, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Kalyan Singh all hailed from western UP, ‘once they reached Lucknow they forget about this place (western UP) because eastern and central UP are where votes are concentrated’ (*The Times of India*, March 1998).

Cultural differences between western and eastern UP are another factors that are brought into the picture. The central and eastern parts of UP share more commonalities in terms of culture with western Bihar rather than with western UP. Western UP has a distinct cultural legacy of historical significance: the city of Mathura, the place of birth of Lord Krishna; Hastinapur, the capital of Pandavas; and Meerut, the place from where the first war of independence started in 1857 are located here.

Some of the above arguments/perceptions seem to be real and others are constructed. The one relating to the distance between the state capital, Lucknow, and the centre of legal machinery, Allahabad and the concentration of political power in the eastern and central regions, for example, are based on the genuine grievances of the residents of western UP that come in the way of the democratic idea of decentralisation and governance. Whether real or constructed,
the above arguments are relevant so far as they succeed in mobilising popular support for a separate state.

Significantly, the demand for Harit Pradesh was a follow-up of other related federal demands which had been raised from time to time: a branch of the mini-secretariat be set up in western UP; an agricultural university be set up in western UP; Meerut College, being the biggest college in the state, should be declared a deemed university; and a bench of Allahabad High Court be set up in western UP.

The demand for setting up of the bench of the Allahabad High in western UP has witnessed an almost three-decade long agitation of lawyers of western UP beginning 1978. In response to the lawyers’ agitation, the central government had appointed a commission under the chairmanship of Justice Jaswant Singh known as the Jaswant Singh Commission on 24 September 1981 to look into the issue of setting up a separate bench of Allahabad High Court in western UP. The terms of reference of the Commission were not confined to UP only; it was to consider such cases in other parts of the country also, wherever the demand for the establishment of separate benches of the high courts was raised. The Commission was supposed to submit the report within six months of its commencement. But several six-month extensions delayed the submission of the report till 30 April 1985.

The Commission recommended the setting up of the bench of the High Court in western UP, but in Agra; not in Meerut. It also recommended the setting up of a circuit bench in Dehradun and Nainital. The suggestion to set up the bench at Agra and not Meerut invited the wrath of the lawyers of Meerut region. With the submission of the Jaswant Singh Commission Report, the focus of the lawyers’ agitation shifted to the implementation of the Report. The demand for the bench got linked with the issue of a separate state. Against the background of the disappointing results of the lawyers’ agitation, lack of local popular support to it and the ambivalent attitude of most politicians of the state, the lawyers of the Meerut region have realised that the only solution to the problems of he people is to have a separate state of their own. The setting up of a separate bench of the High Court no longer remains the issue now; rather it would be a High Court of a new state. However, the agitation for the bench of the

---

10 The following discussion is based on the charter of demands of the High Court Bench Sthapana Sangharsh Samiti, Paschimi Uttar Pradesh; Meerut Bar Association.
High Court has been continuing with occasional rallies and meetings and boycott of work on Saturdays by the lawyers. Ajit Singh links the demand for a separate state with the unwillingness of the governments to set up a separate bench of the Allahabad High Court (Amar Ujala, 18 July 1988). It is noteworthy that other politicians were sore over the suggestion to set up the bench at Agra, but Ajit Singh did not join this issue. Perhaps he wanted to project himself as the leader of entire western UP, including Agra and Meerut subregions.

**Politics of Caste in Harit Pradesh**

The politics of Harit Pradesh is intertwined in the politics of region and caste in UP. With the rise of other peasant castes in post-Mandal UP such as the Yadavas, in the post-Charan Singh era the Jats are placed in a politically disadvantageous position. Given their small numerical strength in the population of entire UP and restriction of their habitation mainly to the districts of western UP — Meerut, Baghpat, Muzaffarnagar, Mathura, Aligarh and Agra — especially in the face of challenges mainly from the Yadavas, the existing size of UP constrains the ascendancy of the Jats in the politics of the state. Yadavas, on the other hand, are not only numerically larger, they also inhabit almost all the regions of the state like the Jats in the neighbouring state of Haryana. The creation of a separate state of western UP might enable the Jats to dominate the politics of Harit Pradesh as they would have substantial population and would occupy a dominant place in the agrarian economy. It would provide a greater opportunity to the local political class in terms of holding public offices.

According to the 1931 Census, Jats formed only 1.6 per cent of the population of UP, while Yadavas constituted 8.7 per cent of it (Hasan 1989: Table 2). A survey conducted in 1991 showed the OBCs as forming 37 per cent of the voters in UP, of which Ahirs and Yadavas were the largest (Hasan 1998: 138). The Jats of UP were included in the OBC category later, in March 2000. Even the Rapid Caste Census which was conducted by the Panchayati Raj Department of the Samajwadi–BSP government in 1994 to assess the population of the OBCs in UP with the purpose of providing reservation for them in the urban and rural local bodies elections pegged the Jats along with the Bhumihiars and Tyagis as only constituting 2 per cent of its population. OBCs, which included Yadavs, constituted 37 per cent of the state’s population (ibid.: 166 and Table 4.10). In the Assembly
elections held between 1952 and 1980, the percentage of the Jat MLAs along with those of Bhumihars and Tyagis varied between 4.49 (in 1969) to 6.95 (in 1974), of Ahirs (Yadavs) MLAs along with those Kurmis, Lodhs and Gujjars between 6 (in 1952) and 23.26 (in 1974) (ibid.: Table 4.2).

It is pertinent to ask here as to how Charan Singh was able to dominate the politics of UP despite being a Jat without substantial population of his caste in the major part of the state as in the traditional rural setting of the state of UP political power is often more concentrated in the community the leader belongs to than the leader’s personality. An analysis of the policies and strategy of Charan Singh regarding the backward classes and landed peasantry and his emergence on the scenario of UP politics at a particular epoch can provide a possible explanation of the influence of Charan Singh.

Charan Singh remained an undisputed leader of the peasantry and backward classes in the entire UP during the first two decades following independence as a Congress leader and later as a non-Congress leader till his death in 1987. While he was a member of the Congress, he carved out a separate base for himself among the backward class peasantry in central and eastern UP, e.g., the Yadavs, Lodh Rajputs, Kurmis and Koeris, by pursuing ‘kisan politics’. During the 1950s and 1960s Singh visited eastern and central UP frequently and addressed meetings of the backward class peasantry. He appreciated the benefits of the land reforms accrued to them, of which he was the main architect while being in the Congress government in UP. He consolidated his position as a leader of the backward classes in particular and emergent rich peasantry in general (Brass 1983: 97–99; Hasan 1989: 175–77, 1998: 131; Singh 1992: 128–29, 158–59). His differences within the Congress with the upper-caste leadership led to his defection from it at an appropriate time and to the formation of the BKD by him in 1969. Contrary to the Congress’ policies, he gave representation to the middle castes and the OBCs in the allotment of tickets, in the governments headed by him and as heads of his party at the district and state levels (see Johnson 1975: 242–65; Srivastava 1976: 333–34; and Hasan 1989: 191, 1998: 131–32). He also continued to ally with the backward class leadership having socialist orientation in UP and Bihar like Mulayam Singh Yadav, Ram Naresh Yadav or Karpoori Thakur.

Charan Singh dominated the politics of the backward classes and peasantry of UP in a particular phase of peasant politics: 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 backward classes coupled with his policies and strategies, Charan Singh was able to project himself as the leader of the backward class peasantry in the entire state.

Meanwhile, during the three decades after independence, there also emerged a new generation of leadership among the non-Jat peasant castes like Yadavs, benefiting from the state policies, especially land reforms, mainly abolition of landlordism and the Green Revolution. Leaders belonging to the non-Jat peasant castes, mainly the Yadavs, filled up the vacuum created by Charan Singh’s death. The epochal factors now favour Yadavs more than the Jats. As mentioned earlier, they are better placed from the point of view of larger caste population, and also in terms of wider regional spread.

**Expediency Versus Principles**

Attitudes of the major political parties and leaders about creation of new states in India have largely been dictated by political considerations. With regard to Jharkhand state Corbridge argues that its formation was informed more by the BJP’s urge for political dominance in the region than by concern for the tribals in the region (Corbridge 2003: 57–58). So far as Harit Pradesh is concerned, various levels of political parties and the leadership — national, state and district/regional — have not adopted a common principled stand on it. Political expediency has prevailed over the principled position in informing the political positions. While the national leadership of the parties, with the exception of the CPI (M), has not been averse to division of the state, their local level leaders have been divided on caste lines. Even as the Jat politicians cutting across parties have been almost unanimous in their support to the demand of Harit Pradesh, the non-Jat politicians have been opposed to it despite the fact that their state and national level leadership support it. While a section of the BJP leadership is not averse to the idea of further
The Case of Harit Pradesh

The division of UP even after the creation of Uttaranchal and the Congress has not taken a categorical stand on it, the SP is opposed to it. The BJP’s erstwhile Dalit President Bangaru Laxman supported the idea of small states. L. K. Advani had said that the NDA government would also support it, if the state legislature of the concerned state passed a resolution to this effect. The Chief Minister of UP (belonging to the BJP), Ram Prakash Gupta, opposed the further division of UP after the creation of Uttaranchal. Another BJP leader from western UP, Bireshwar Tyagi, rejected the idea as politically motivated, while some other BJP leaders from the region supported the demand for a separate state of western UP. On 18 September 1998, the opening day of the assembly session, some members belonging to the BJP had walked out of the UP Assembly demanding the creation of separate state of Poorvanchal. In fact, on that day some ministers belonging to the BJP also demanded that a separate state consisting of 12 districts of eastern UP should be created. They shouted: ‘No Uttaranchal without Poorvanchal’. The demand, however, was dropped at the instance of the Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh (The Times of India, 19 September 2000).

The BJP joined the SP in opposing the RLD’s resolution in the UP Assembly suggesting the division of UP into four more states. The President of the Uttar Pradesh BJP unit, Kalraj Mishra, agreed with the need for the creation of Harit Pradesh, but pointed out that the time for it was not favourable as the state of Uttaranchal had recently been created. Contrary to the arguments of the RLD, the SP said that smaller states are not economically viable. The BSP, the Rastriya Kranti Party, the Janata Dal, the Lok Dal and the left parties supported the resolution of the RLD. Even the BSP’s local leaders differed from the higher-level leadership on the creation of Harit Pradesh. While the BSP supported the RLD’s resolution in the State Assembly, its local activists argued that they would support it if they were given the lead, not Jats. The BSP activists in a group discussion with me on 18 November 2000 in Meerut expressed the need for a separate state of western UP, and said that they would like to support an agitation.

---

It seems that political considerations overshadowed even the main reason for the creation of Uttaranchal. As Jayal argues that ‘the raison d’etre of the new state (Uttaranchal) has been lost in the very moment of its birth. The interests of the maidan are seen to be predominating not only in the various political and administrative compromises that have already been struck, but also in those which are prefigured’ (Jayal 2000: 4311).
for it if asked by their party. But they also pointed out that at present the demand is being raised by the Jats because the latter are facing political crisis (The Times of India, 1 October 1998; Dainik Jagran, 24 June 2000; The Hindu, 19 October 2000; Hindustan Times, 24 December 2000). Now that Mayawati has taken a formal and public stance on the trifurcation of UP during the new phase of politics of separate states in UP, i.e., after Mayawati got the absolute majority in the UP Legislative Assembly in the 2007 elections, it is likely that the BSP supporters would support the creation of Harit Pradesh categorically.

Indeed, it has been during the second phase of politics of separate states in UP, specifically after the 1996 Lok Sabha election till 2007, that Ajit Singh had raised the demand for the creation of Harit Pradesh more consistently. Marked by the domination of coalition government formations, this phase provided him an opportunity to strike a bargain with the dominant political formations to press for the creation of Harit Pradesh. Singh raised the demand of Harit Pradesh keeping in mind the political expediency — to bargain for ministerial positions in the coalition governments, to settle political scores over the opponents, during the election campaigns or as matter of principle he raised in the coordination meetings with the leaders demanding smaller states. On other occasions the issue was relegated to the background. One of the examples which explain Singh’s stance on Harit Pradesh include his partnership in the Mulayam Singh-led coalition government in UP from 2003–2005. During this period, Singh rarely raised the issue. But he used it as a bargaining chip or excuse to be absolved of the responsibility of failure of the Mulayam Singh-led coalition government; as the Kavita (December 2006) and Nithari (January 2007) episodes sullied the image of the government, he visualised that these would become the campaign issue in the election to be held just after three months (April–May 2007); he also raised this issue whenever he had a difference with the allies. Just two days before the

---

14 The BSP’s support for the small states is confirmed from the stance which its MLAs took in the Rajasthan Assembly recently. BSP MLAs, led by Mahir Azad, along with the independent MLAs demanded the creation of a separate state for the districts of the eastern part of Rajasthan — Bharatpur, Alwar, Dholpur, Sawai Madhopur, Dausa and Karauli. They alleged that the politicians and planners belonging to the western and southern parts of Rajasthan discriminated against the eastern districts and made investments in their regions (The Hindu, 3 November 2000).
The Case of Harit Pradesh

UP Assembly meeting to test the vote of confidence for the Mulayam Singh government, he announced the launch of a week-long agitation in February for the creation of Harit Pradesh.

The victory of the BSP with clear majority in the 2007 Assembly election marks the latest or the third phase of politics of separate states in UP. This phase signifies a break to the coalition government formations in UP. This has undermined the bargaining power of the parties with a few MLAs for either getting the ministerial berth or getting any other demand fulfilled and has affected Ajit Singh’s position most adversely so far as his role in the politics of Harit Pradesh is concerned. At the moment the position of the RLD led by Singh has got weakened. In comparison to the earlier phase, he has raised the demand less frequently. Except expressing support to demands for creation of small states in different parts of the country like Telangana, Vidharbha, Gorkhaland, etc. or issuing statements in support of Harit Pradesh, etc., we seldom find any action of the part of the RLD. The situation in relation to this demand will depend on future developments. However, unlike the other issues, the demand to create Harit Pradesh can offer an opportunity to Singh to extend his social base, cutting across the castes and classes in western UP. It depends on his political acumen as to how he can remove apprehensions from the minds of several non-Jats that the creation of such a state will lead to their marginalisation and to the domination of the Jats over them in the newly created state. It also can help him to cash in on the resentment against the BSP government among large sections of people, especially the non-Jatav Dalits. Discussions with the cross-sections of people indicate the need for the creation of a separate state. In order to get the adequate number of legislators who could help in passing the resolution for Harit Pradesh in the UP Assembly, he needs to form an alliance with the legislators from eastern and southern parts of UP who are demanding separate state and Bundelkhand respectively of Poorvanchal.

The era of coalition politics has enabled the regional forces both opposing and supporting the new states to affect the cause of their formation. Despite the willingness of the BJP to create Uttaranchal, it could not be created until the Akali demand to exclude Udham Singh Nagar district from it was appeased by appointing a three-member committee, by attempting to make provisions (Clause 84) in the draft

15 I was witness to one such meeting where I was invited as a participant observer.
UP Reorganisation Bill, which did change the existing size of the landholdings, and appointing a Sikh, Barnala as the governor of the new state (Robinson 2001; 199, 209, 211).

It is mainly the political consideration which leads to the formation or non-formation of new states. With the exception of the CPI (M), which has taken a principled stand against the formation of the new states, most parties have been shifting their stances in the light of political expediency. Unlike the case of Uttarakhand, which had been supported by the major national and state level parties, the cause of Harit Pradesh lacks such near unanimity of support of political parties in UP as a whole and within the districts which are supposed to form Harit Pradesh. And the political parties which support it have not been consistent. It is obvious from their reaction to the UP Reorganisation Bill, 1998 introduced in the UP Assembly by the Kalyan Singh government with the purpose of creation of Uttaranchal. On 24 October 1998, the Lok Dal/BKKP introduced a resolution in the Assembly seeking the division of UP into four more states (Poorvanchal, Awadh Pradesh [Madhyanchal] and Bundelkhand apart from Harit Pradesh).

**Context and Conditions for Harit Pradesh**

The political context has been a decisive factor in the formation of the new state, like most of the issues. The context for the demand and creation of the new states could be provided by the elections, a particular political situation or the crisis in the coalition regimes. If the context for the creation of the linguistic states was provided by the death of Potti Sriramulu, of the states in the north-east by the ethnic resurgence in the 1960s, the context of the creation of three new states in 2000 was created by the efforts of the BJP to carve a political space for it. It was more significant in the context of Uttarakhand. The change in the political context just within seven years became suitable for the BJP to pursue the case of Uttarakhand. The lack of the BJP’s seriousness about the issue of Uttarakhand was obvious from the fact that only one of several BJP’s MPs was present when the issue was placed in the Lok Sabha in 1993. But the BJP became serious about the issue in 1998 because it considered that support for Uttarakhand would carve a base for it in the new state as the popular sentiment favoured, especially in the wake of police violence on the Uttarakhandis in 1994 (Mawdsley 1996). The creation of Uttarakhand further helped it electorally.
The contexts of the other two cases — the Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand — are also important. The impact of the popular movement on the creation of the new states also is perhaps contextual. The demand for the creation of a separate state of western UP was denied in the 1950s on the ground that it lacked popular support (Brass 1974; Kumar 2000b: 3081). The popular movement did have an impact on the creation of Uttarakhand, but there was no such sustained movement for the creation of Chhattisgarh. In fact, the creation of the new states was more a result of the ‘political between restricted numbers of elite actors than the pressure from below’ (Corbridge 2003: 56). Despite the fact that there was no popular movement for Chhattisgarh, the NDA government created Chhatisgrah. In the case of Jharkhand, though there had been a popular movement for its creation, there were rival political formations ruling at the centre and the state of Bihar, from which Jharkhand had to be created: the NDA ruled at the centre while the RJD-led coalition ruled in Bihar. Laloo Prasad Yadav had once said that only over his dead body could Jharkhand be created, but he supported the resolution in 1998 because of the changed circumstances. This change in his stance was caused because he needed the support of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha for the survival of his coalition government.

The factors, which enable the formation of the new states, also include the constitutional requirements and the political situation. According to Article 3, for creation of new states a bill should be presented in either house of Parliament but it should be done on the recommendation of the President after he takes into account the views of the affected states. But Article 3 has been subjected to contested interpretation, which again depends on the political expediency of different political parties involved. Brass’s explanation of the conditions needed for the creation of the new states can be placed among the political factors. He observes that to enable the creation of a new state out of an existing state — one of these conditions include support to the demand for the new state in both areas — the areas which cover the proposed state and the rest of the state (Brass 1991: 168). In fact, the constitutional requirement — the passage of the resolution in the State Assembly and in the parliament also becomes in reality a political factor — and the bargaining power of the political parties, which demand or oppose the formation of the states, depends on their strength in the respective legislature and the Parliament. The advocates of Harit Pradesh have given secondary consideration to the politics of
popular support. They have cared more for the manipulative aspects of politics — electoral and coalition.

**Popular Support for Harit Pradesh**

If we compare the case of Harit Pradesh with three recent cases in terms of popular support to them, it bears some similarities with the case of Uttarakahnd. In both cases most grounds adduced in favour of the new states are the same: the main offices, Lucknow the capital of UP, etc. are too distant from the reach of the people of these areas; and neglect and discrimination of their respective areas. The articulation of the regional demands for both cases was made almost at the same time, i.e., in the 1950s: while P. C. Joshi asked for a separate state of Uttarakahnd in 1952, as mentioned earlier in 1954, 97 MLAs hailing from western UP gave a signed memorandum to the Central Commission for State Reorganisation demanding a separate state of western UP and Haryana (Brass 1974: 18; Mawdsley 1996).

It was, however, only in the 1990s that the demand for separate states in both cases picked up.\(^{16}\) Comparing the intensity of the movement for Uttarakhand with the other social and cultural protests of the earlier period in the hills, Mawdsley observes that in terms of ‘the depth and intensity nothing has matched the events of 1994 and early 1995’ (Mawdsley 1996: 206). Again, while the movement for Uttarkhand gained momentum after the police action on the Uttarakhandi protesters in 1994 (Khatima and Muzaffarnagar incidents), the movement for Harit Pradesh gained momentum after the realisation of its supporters that a separate bench of the Allahabad High Court would not be set up in Meerut.

There is, however, a major difference between the two cases so far as the popular support of movement is concerned. The Uttarakhand movement drew popular support of the people, cutting across caste and gender barriers. The movement for Harit Pradesh has not become a popular movement; it revolves around manipulative politics — elections and coalition governments. In fact, it reflects the

\(^{16}\) The earlier period in both cases saw the intermittent activities – in case of Uttarakhand in 1966, 1967, 1968 and 1979 and in case of Harit Pradesh in the 1970s when Sohan Veer Singh Tomar as Janata Party MLA, who was the founder convenor of the present PUPRN, had raised the demand on the floor of the UP Assembly.
general trend in the region supposed to cover Harit Pradesh, where all major social movements are disconnected and are autonomous of each other — the most popular farmers’ movement led by the BKU of the late 1980s focused exclusively on the issues of the large or medium land holding rich farmers who mostly belonged to the middle and high castes. The two-decades-old lawyers’ movement did not see the participation of other groups than the lawyers; discrete caste organisations focus only on the issues of their respective castes. All these have not yet coalesced into the regional articulation to make the Harit Pradesh movement a popular one.

Ajit Singh, however, has attempted to mobilise various stakeholders, e.g., political parties, students, lawyers, trading community and chambers of commerce in support of Harit Pradesh. But this mobilisation has not involved the masses. It has remained confined to the token representation of the representatives of these groups in the programmes — seminars, dharnas, etc. — organised in favour of Harit Pradesh. In terms of geographical scope the Harit Pradesh issue is restricted to only the Jat-dominated districts, especially Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Baghpat. In contrast to this, the agitation for the setting of High Court bench in western UP was supported by the lawyers of Agra division and of the hill districts Dehradun, Nainital and Puari till the creation of Uttaranchal and submission of the Jaswant Singh Commission report.

The major characteristic of the case of Harit Pradesh, which distinguishes it from other cases related to the creation of separate states, is the perception of a large number of its supporters. Unlike in other cases one of the main arguments in favour of the creation of Harit Pradesh is that the prosperous region of western UP is discriminated against by the central and state governments in order to develop the backward and under developed region of UP, especially eastern UP. This perception can be taken as a case of ‘reverse discrimination’, where a developed region alleges that its level of development is the cause of its discrimination with the purpose to help the backward regions. In other words, such a region is ‘punished’ for having become developed and at its cost the backward region is supported. Such a region therefore demands that rather than ‘feed’ the backward regions,

17 For mobilisation of lawyers, students, trading community and chambers of commerce (see Dainik Jagran, 24 June 2000; Hindustan Times, 13 November 2000).
it should run its own affairs by becoming a separate state. The case of western UP is much closer to that of Punjab so far as the prosperity is concerned, but the dissimilarities between the two are more glaring than the similarities.

**Politics of Electoral Opportunism**

Ever since Ajit Singh made Harit Pradesh his agenda, he has been expressing the need to have adequate political strength in the State Legislative Assembly and the Parliament — enough number of the MLAs and MPs who could affect the passage of the resolution for creation of Harit Pradesh. He often says that if his party got adequate number of MLAs in the UP legislature and MPs in the Parliament, he would be able to get a resolution passed in the Assembly to push the case further. In order to get his demand realised he not only needs adequate numbers of the MLAs but also the MPs in the Parliament. He used the era of coalition governments both in the centre and the state to his advantage from 1989 onwards. Till 2004, there was hardly any political formation at the centre and the state with which he has had not truck. He took the advantage only in terms of getting himself ministerial positions at the centre and to his party colleagues at the state level. But he could not use his bargaining power to get the resolution passed in the UP legislature or in the Parliament.

On the eve of every election he declared that he would make Harit Pradesh an agenda of campaign; he used it as a bargaining chip while making pre-election alliances or joining the coalition governments. He also raised this issue whenever he had conflict with his alliance partners or the political rivals. Addressing a rally of his supporters at Shamli on 9 November 1998, Singh raised the demand for the creation of Harit Pradesh, saying: ‘the moment we have enough MPs and MLAs with us, a separate state would become a reality’ (*Hindustan Times*, 10 November 1998).

On the eve of the impending Assembly elections, Singh thought it essential to get at least 50 out of 100 MLAs elected on a single platform in order to be effective as a balancing force in the formation of the government at the state level so as to be able to force the passage of a resolution in the Assembly for the formation of Harit Pradesh. In his assessment of the case of no party getting necessary majority for the formation of the government in the state, such a strategy was bound to work. He made a fervent appeal to the electorate in 2000 to vote for
those parties which would support the demand. His party was to ally with any party which would support the issue. Singh hoped that once the momentum for the formation of the state picked up other parties like the BSP, NCP and SP would also support the issue (Hindustan Times, 11 October 2000).

On the eve of the 2002 Assembly elections in UP, Singh also entered into an alliance with Prakash Ambedkar and was hobnobbing with the NCP with the purpose of being able to bargain on the issue with whoever becomes the chief minister of UP. (But those parties were virtually non-existent in UP.) It is worth noting that Singh is also strident in his attitude towards the SP; he has in the past accused Mulayam Singh Yadav of backtracking from the issue. Singh points out that Yadav was one of the signatories to a document along with Charan Singh which had demanded a separate state for western UP, but he is now no longer supporting the demand.

The significance of the issue can be gauged from certain decisions of the BJP-led government in UP vis-à-vis the issues relating to the demand for Harit Pradesh. Even as the BJP leadership at the state level seems to be opposed to the creation of Harit Pradesh, those in the region are inclined towards it. With an eye on the 2002 Assembly election, the BJP government in UP sought to address the issues of federalism in UP, which is a sort of concession to Harit Pradesh advocates. The decision of the state government to have Meerut as the centre for conducting the PCS (Provincial Services Examination) apart from other two already existing centres — Lucknow and Allahabad — and the sanction of a proposal to set up an Agriculture University in Meerut by converting the western campus of the Gobind Ballabh Pant University situated at Modipuram into a separate university seem to be attempts towards meeting the demands raised by the proponents of Harit Pradesh (Hindustan Times, 19 August 2000). During one of the earlier regimes, even Mayawati made an announcement to establish a bench of Allahabad High Court in Meerut. But she had to reverse this decision within a few days of its announcement due to the opposition of lawyers from Allahabad.

Unlike the states formed on popular demand, the demand for Harit Pradesh has generally been raised in the context of elections. Addressing an election rally in eastern UP on 3 May 2007, Laloo Prasad Yadav, campaigning for the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), promised to create a state of separate eastern UP called Poorvanchal (PT STV News, 3 May 2007).
Though Ajit Singh has the advantage of his father’s legacy, he faces more formidable challenges now. Not only has a generation of ambitious politicians emerged within the Jat community, there are a large number of political parties which can provide fora to them. This undermines the hold of a single leader on the support structure among the Jats. The success of Ajit Singh or any other political leader will depend on the strategy, which will bring different castes and communities together. Ajit Singh’s case is different from that of Charan Singh. Not only was the latter an intellectual of higher calibre with an ideological mooring, he was also able to provide leadership to the backward classes and peasantry, cutting across castes and communities in north India. Moreover, Charan Singh led at a time when it was not the politics of reservation but the _kisan_ politics that dominated the subaltern politics in the Hindi-speaking states of north India.

**Summing Up**

To sum up, the demand for Harit Pradesh is linked to the politics of caste and region. It is also indicative of the marginalisation of Jats in the politics of UP. The emergence of the non-Jats, especially the Yadavs, in backward class politics of the state in the post-Charan Singh era as they enjoy numerical superiority in most regions of UP unlike the Jats is one of the main reasons for the marginalisation of the latter. Since the numerical strength of the community is an important factor in electoral politics based on first-past-the-post system, a section of Jat politicians understand that in the present state of UP they may not be able to dominate politics. However, if the region of western UP, where Jats have substantial numerical strength and control a large part of the agrarian economy, becomes a separate state they may be able to play a much more significant political role. To be fair, it is not merely the Jat community or its leadership that is asking for the Harit Pradesh. The feeling of discrimination against the region is widespread among the non-Jats also who complain of ‘reverse discrimination’ even as they apprehend that Jats may dominate the newly created state.

This may explain the lack of local popular support for the demand in the recent years as has been evident in the electoral reverses suffered by the RLD in recent elections in the region. It is also obvious that the periodic assertion of the demand for the separate statehood by political class led by Ajit Singh, president of the RLD, is guided...
more by the political opportunism than a politics of conviction or principles. He has periodically raised the demand in specific political contexts as an electoral issue in the electoral campaigns; a bargaining chip for the share of power in the ruling coalitions of different hues; or even to browbeat political opponents.

Moreover, as argued above, unlike the Uttarakhand movement, the movement for Harit Pradesh has lacked in terms of popular participation. Its leaders seem to have banked more upon the manipulative politics in the coalition governments by having an effective number of legislators elected to the Assembly or members in the Parliament. They have seldom made an attempt to include people from different sections of the society, relying primarily on the support of a particular community, howsoever influential it might be. The dismal performance of the Rashtriya Lok Dal in the last two parliamentary elections has weakened its bargaining power at the national level.18 There lies a crucial challenge before the advocates of Harit Pradesh even at a time when the Telangana issue has reignited the politics of new states.

References


18 The RLD contested on 10 seats winning only on 3 seats in 2004 Lok Sabha elections (a gain of 1 seat compared to 1999) whereas it could win 5 seats contesting on 9 seats in 2009 elections. Its vote percentage was a meagre 0.61 and 0.44 respectively in the two elections (Sridharan 2010: 126–27).


The success of actually existing democracies, we are told, depends on their ability to evolve democratic rules and institutions and enhance the stakes of various cross-sections of people with diverse and often rivalling identities in observing these rules and participating in these institutions. While the democratic nature of these rules and institutions is never doubted, the challenge that the actually existing democracies face today, we are further told, is to incorporate particularly the poor and the marginalised sections, including the minorities, into the democratic body and thereby subjecting them to the same rules and institutions of the grand democratic game. The democratic game is supposed to be neutral to the actors who are called upon to play it. It therefore cannot be corrupted or vitiated by them. In an assessment made in 1960, Harrison (1960), for example, grimly predicted that India would not be able to withstand the demands that arose, reflecting the social cleavages within India, especially among linguistic groups. Reflecting upon the post-colonial ‘new’ democracy in India, Harrison noted that the movements for the linguistic reorganisation of states were becoming increasingly restive and militant. If these movements that reflected the social cleavages within the society did not rip India apart, Harrison argued, the country might endure either with a weak, truncated centre with powerful provincial rulers, or, alternatively, with an authoritarian state which would be holding the country together by coercion.¹ By the end of that decade, however, it became clear

¹ Reading the literature on India in the first years of independence, one comes across many other such studies also that predicted the break up of India for one or another of many reasons. King observes that ‘Gloom and doom … always figured prominently in speculation about the fragility of India’s unity’ (1998: 53). Gould (1985) has provided an interesting account of the history of pessimism about India and about Indian unity in particular.
that India would successfully tide over such pressures and scholars like Das Gupta (1970), Kothari (1976) and Narain (1976), among others, veered towards the view that political demands couched in identitarian terms have contributed at one level to the broadening of the popular base of our democracy and, at another, to the politicisation of such identities. In a country like India, where individuals are deeply embedded in groups and communities, it is not unnatural that political demands are expressed in the language of regional, sub-regional, ethnic and other variants of ‘primordial’ identity. But insofar as they are brought into the democratic ambit, the dynamics of democratic politics effect a change in their nature. They increasingly shed their ‘primordial’ character and function more and more like ‘modern’ interest groups. The ideology of intense anti-Brahmanism that came to inspire many of the movements for states’ reorganisation in south India, for example, gradually lost its steam by the end of the 1960s and was suitably ‘routinised’ and ‘institutionalised’ while adapting to the democratic rules of the game. All this shows that democracy in India has come of age. India’s language problem, according to the stream of scholars named above, has been successfully resolved.

Insofar as regional and other identities are incorporated into the democratic body politic, they become integral to it and play the same game that democracy sets out for them and, most importantly, observe its rules and participate in its institutions. We, on the other hand, argue that incorporation of regional identities implies, at one level, what Foucault would have called governmentalisation of such identities and, at another, and perhaps as a corollary to it, a certain dissipation of the emancipatory potential otherwise promised by democracies all around the world. Democracy today seems to have situated itself at various other sites and locations and regional or subregional identities have perhaps exhausted their democratic potential and do not necessarily cater to the imperatives of democratisation in India. Incorporation of regional identities or, for that matter, subregional identities unfolding within regional identities (‘regions within regions’) contain democratic potential only up to a point or what I propose to describe as the democratic threshold. Any attempt at incorporating them into the democratic body beyond the critical threshold underlined above acts only as a stumbling block to

---

2 The author has discussed at length such other sites and locations (see Das 2008: 262–83).
democracy and further democratisation. As democracy today has been considerably disembodied and has started playing itself out in multiple sites and locations, any further incorporation of regional or subregional identities by remaining completely oblivious to these newly emergent sites and locations results in the further deepening of the democratic crisis. Democracy probably is the only political regime that has this rare potential of disembodying itself by transcending the limits set forth by any given social body — nation, ethnic, region or any such form of identity and accordingly rearticulating itself (see Lefort 1988: 18). We suggest that the way out of this democratic paradox lies in redefining the democratic game itself and, consequently, transcending the limits set forth by identities and identity politics. All this calls for a paradigm shift from a strictly identitarian democracy sustaining and at times enriching itself by remaining confined to the identity game and continuously extending recognition to constantly emerging regional and subregional identities to a democracy being played out in multiple sites and locations and asserting its relative autonomy from identity and governmental rationality. In simple terms, we need to appreciate that democracy has moved way beyond the frontiers of identity politics and plays itself out in multiple sites and locations.

Accordingly, the article is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on how the formation of linguistic states contributes to the hegemonic accretion and entrenchment of ethnic identities and how even the demand for the formation of such states being voiced in some quarters is sparked off by the same objective. The second part points to the anomalies implicit in the political game of granting statehood to ethnic demands for statehood with particular reference to the Bodo movement/insurgency. The third part dwells on the concept of threshold and shows how regional and identitarian demands and their fulfilment involve governmentalisation of identities and a certain dissipation of the emancipatory potential of democracy. We seek to develop our argument with particular reference to India’s north-east.

India’s north-east consists of the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, popularly known as the ‘seven sisters’ along with Sikkim, the last to become one of its parts and enter the North Eastern Council (NEC). The region is often referred to as ‘miniature India’ with its extraordinary ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, with more than 160 Scheduled Tribes belonging to five different ethnic groups and over 400 distinct tribal and sub-tribal groupings speaking about 175 languages,
and a large and diverse non-tribal population as well concentrated mainly in Assam and Tripura. According to the 2001 Census of India, the region accounts for one of the largest concentrations of tribal people in the country, constituting about 30 per cent of the total population, with a skewed distribution of over 60 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland taken together. With the only exception of Kerala outside it, three states of the region — Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya — contain an overwhelming majority of Christians (90.02, 87 and 70.03 per cent respectively). Although described as ‘miniature India’, the conclusions reached in this article should not and cannot be mechanically applied to the rest of India. In fact, the region is so diverse and heterogeneous that even the case studies attempted here may not have an exact resemblance to the experiences of other parts of the same region. Viewed in this light, India’s north-east is neither compact nor homogeneous.

The Hegemony of State Identities

Although states within the Indian Union have never been officially conceptualised in identitarian terms, these, for all practical purposes, serve as embodiments of dominant language groups living within them. While the Indian National Congress spearheading the struggle for independence committed itself to the recognition of language-based regional and provincial identities way back in its Nagpur resolution, 1920, it gradually reneged on its early commitment as independence looked imminent and preparations were beginning to be made for the transfer of power. By the early 1950s, several parts of India, including the then undivided province of Hyderabad, were bursting at the seams on the question of linguistic reorganisation of the erstwhile provinces. The States Reorganisation Commission in its report submitted in 1955 gave its verdict against the formation of purely linguistic states on the ground that it would trigger off fissiparous and secessionist forces in a country where nationalism and pan-Indian identity were yet to establish their stronghold. On the question of reorganisation of the then undivided state of Assam, the Commission explicitly opined in

---

3 Such words as ‘tribes’ and ‘tribals’, are freely used in India both in popular parlance and in official circles without any of their necessarily pejorative connotations.
favour of maintaining the status quo on the ground that the creation of smaller states by vivisecting it close to the international borders would be detrimental to the security and integrity of India. That Assam was, however, subjected to several rounds of territorial surgery since 1963 when the state of Nagaland was first carved out of the erstwhile Naga Hills district and Tuensang area is an altogether different point. Language was never officially recognised as a principle of states’ reorganisation. The Assamese elite earlier had sought to establish its hegemony and retain its majority status by declaring Assamese as the official language of Assam in 1960 and establishing it as the only medium of instruction in schools and other institutions of higher education in 1972 and also by being instrumental in organising large-scale riots and pogroms against the outsiders from time to time. Evoking the logic of ethnic articulation, the elite resisted the demand for the territorial reorganisation of the state.

Ethnic articulation within the state represents a certain coincidence between an ethnic community and the territorial space that it claims as its ‘homeland’. In their coincidence, they produce what Cohn describes as an ‘ethnic space’ (Cohn 1987: Chapter 6). How does this coincidence come about? Even a cursory glance at political trends in the region points to at least three modalities of such coincidence.

One, coincidence may be effected through consolidation of a particular ethnic community by way of bringing together its fragments strewn over a host of states and administrative units of our Union under one political dispensation. Naga insurgency is usually designated as the ‘mother’ of all insurgencies in the north-east region. It is the oldest as well as the longest surviving insurgency in the region. The Naga National Council (NNC), under the leadership of Angami Zapu Phizo, was the first to declare independence a day before India became independent on 15 August 1947. The NNC, at that time widely regarded as the representative body of the Nagas, was said to comprise over 30 groups of tribes and as the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (now Nagalim) (NSCN) broke away from the NNC — the parent body in 1980 — the mantle of Naga insurgency passed over from the NNC to the NSCN. Gradually, factional rivalry wrecked the ranks of the NSCN and two of its factions led by Isaac-Muivah (I-M) on the one hand and Khaplang (K) on the other continue to be at loggerheads with each other with varying degrees of intensity. Ceasefire was declared between the Government of India and the I-M in 1997 and separately with the K in 2001 without any ceasefire being brokered
between the two rival insurgent groups. As post-ceasefire peace talks progress, the demand for ‘sovereignty and independence’ has by all accounts considerably mellowed down now and the NSCN (I-M) seems to be poised to settle for what it calls ‘special federal relationship with India’. This ‘special relationship’ yet to be spelt out and accepted by all concerned understandably would be informed by the principle of ‘asymmetric federalism’. While the institutional form of this relationship is yet to be spelt out, what comes as a stumbling block to any successful conclusion of such peace talks is the integration of all Naga-inhabited areas of the north-east under one administrative dispensation within a radically recast federal body. The newly resurgent demand for the formation of a greater ‘Nagalim’ comprising the present state of Nagaland and the Naga-inhabited areas of the neighbouring states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh — although vociferously resented by the governments and communities going to be affected by the decision — will have to be understood in this light.

Two, coincidence is often achieved by getting rid of those areas where members of another community are concentrated in numbers, thereby making the political unit smaller, culturally compact and ethnically homogeneous. When a line was sought to be drawn along the ‘eastern frontiers’ (as the north-east was known in colonial times) as part of the grand game of partitioning the subcontinent and a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Cyril Radcliffe was established, disputes arose between the two emerging dominions, particularly over the mixed areas where they had had contentious claims. The district of Sylhet, then a part of East Bengal, was one such area and the committee decided in favour of holding a referendum for the purpose of determining whether it should be included in India or in East Pakistan. The referendum held in 1947 may be cited as an illustration of the second modality of ethnic articulation. The then leadership of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) — dominated mostly by the Assamese-speaking Varna-Hindus — is said to have virtually conceded the district to East Pakistan supposedly on the ground that its inclusion as a Bengali-majority area in Assam would have meant a percentage decline of the Assamese-speaking populace in the state. The Assamese, therefore, had ‘little stake in Sylhet’ (Chakrabarty 2002: 346–47). Guha has pointed out how the division between the pro- and anti-inclusion votes in the referendum roughly matched with the prevailing numerical distribution of the relevant religious communities in the district. As he puts it: ‘Sylhet,
“the golden calf” which was sacrificed in 1874 to usher in a new province, was now once more sacrificed at the altar of a new state’ (Guha 1977: 320).

Guha’s observation seems only to evoke ridicule from a section of Assamese chauvinists. Bargohain, for example, argues: ‘It is difficult for us to digest the bitter pill of sympathy towards the Bengali Hindus hiding behind this kind of statement. Because, it is illogical to think that Sylhet will remain a Hindu one (district) inside Assam- this is contrary to all historical judgments’ (Bargohain 1989: 276). What it means is that Sylhet, whether included in India or not, would be a Muslim-majority area. Yet, Barghoin’s argument may be interpreted in a different way. It is expected that if Sylhet were to remain in Assam, she should remain as ‘a Hindu district’. The streak of chauvinism should not escape our notice when Assamese nationality is tacitly identified with the Hindus and Bargohain refuses to extend the boundaries of Assamese nationality beyond the society of the Varna-Hindus.

In this connection, it will be interesting to see as to how the discourse on Assamese homeland is developed in present-day Assam. Sarma, for instance, accuses the then Assamese political leadership of having committed ‘the deadly mistake’ of settling for an essentially composite and heterogeneous ‘Greater Assam’ in postcolonial India where the majority status of the Assamese-speaking people would always hang in thin air. As he argues: ‘During the British era, “Assam” definitely referred to the seven districts of the Brahmaputra Valley, which has been principally centred on Assamese-language and culture and the two districts of Cachar; and by the word “Assamese” one would invariably refer to the people whose fate or lives were linked with these two areas. … It is for this reason that it was necessary for Assam at the dawn of Independence or at the time of subsequent states reorganization (1955–56) to recognize the real place (prakrit ghar); that is to say, he was expected to settle within the four walls of her room; and after that she should have concentrated on such efforts as fulfilling her own distinctive hopes and aspirations, to make Assamese the state language, to develop her education and culture, to make Assamese the medium of education and culture’ (Sarma 1973: 150).

The concern that informs many of these sentiments is to find out the right size for a state in which Assamese hegemony will be securely established whether by doing away with the territories where they are not in a majority or by resolutely resisting the inclusion of such areas in it. Tamuli, a historian and an eminent Assamese litterateur,
for instance, accuses ‘the Bengali-speaking public’ of being ‘the first’ to raise the demand for dividing Assam and tagging Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar (now in West Bengal) with the district of Cachar and the then Dhubri and Goalpara subdivisions of Assam, thereby making way to the formation of a separate ‘Purbanchal’ consisting of the predominantly Bengali-speaking population of Assam (Tamuli n.d.: 13). The larger the size of the state, the thinner will be the representation of the Assamese in it. Bargohain, Sarma and Tamuli all share the same anxiety of keeping the state appropriately small so that others do not outnumber the Assamese.

Last, but not the least, coincidence is also achieved through what in recent parlance is known as ethnic cleansing. The strategy of ‘ethnic cleansing’ is widely practised by most of the militant groups in the region. Assam’s districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar (NC) Hills lying between the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys have now become the flashpoint of ethnic tensions and violence. The two districts — home to a number of ethnic groups like the Hmars, Dimasas, Karbis and others — are already on the boil. The Hmar–Dimasa clashes that have been intermittently taking place in the NC Hills since March 2002 also exemplify the point. Dima Halam Daoga (DHD) — the insurgent body claiming to represent the Dimasas — looks upon the area as their homeland and its policy of cleansing the NC Hills of the ‘outsiders’ — initially the Hindi-speaking people — dates back to its formation. In May 1999, DHD militants reportedly killed about five of them in an encounter in the district. While the Hmar Peoples’ Convention (HPC) — the insurgent body claiming to represent the Hmars — sprang surprise attacks on the Dimasa-inhabited villages in the neighbouring district of Cachar on 31 March 2002, the Dimasas, under the leadership of such organisations as the DHD and All-Dimasa Students’ Union (ADSU), have reportedly been responsible for torching tens of Dimasa-inhabited villages, killing and evicting them. According to one estimate, about 3,500 Hmars were forced to leave their homes and some of them even took shelter in neighbouring states including Manipur (‘500 Hmars …’ 2003). Such organisations as Kuki Inpi of Manipur and the Hmar Students’ Association (HAS) organised the movement of the Kuki and Hmar internally displaced persons (IDPs) respectively. These organisations have been conducting raids apparently in a bid to cleanse these areas of the ‘outsiders’ and gradually consolidate and establish their claim to Dimaraji — a separate Dimasa homeland comprising the NC Hills and parts of Cachar and Dimapur districts of
Assam and Nagaland respectively. The HAS even accused the DHD of having attempted at changing the name of the NC Hills to ‘Dima Halali’ without taking the sentiments of the minorities, particularly the Hmars and the Kukis, into account. Many of the Dimasas too were displaced as a result of these clashes and some of them fled to the neighbouring district of Cachar in Assam. The minority tribes submitted in protest a memorandum to the Governor of Assam that further led the Dimasas to target the minority tribal groups. Besides, in Karbi Anglong, Karbi National Volunteers (KNV) was formed in March 1995 with the specific objective of combating the Citizens’ Rights Preservation Committee (CRPC) which it considers as the umbrella organisation representing the non-Karbi groups in the district. It accuses the latter of spreading communal feelings among the people ‘with the active help from the Centre’ and vowed to oppose the ‘imposition’ of Hindi as the official language.

The Game Regions Play

Region, in other words, provides the site of ethnic articulation. Regions within regions only make the site contested. The stronger the ethnic articulation is within a region, the more intense will be the contest. Given its phenomenal ethnic diversity and heterogeneity, no region in the north-east can be so neatly carved as to completely exclude others. The presence of minorities is only inevitable. Regions within regions therefore are not emblematic of any dramatic denouement of the process. Ethnic articulation within a region perpetually produces minorities and sets off further demands for the creation of more regions within regions. Regions within regions, in other words, are like a game in which regional identities are produced perpetually without any end in sight. As regions develop within regions they both mimic and subvert the latter. They mimic it insofar as they raise the same demand for statehood and ironically, while mimicking, they also subvert it for they challenge the hegemony of the dominant group within the reorganised state. Mimicry also implies subversion. The contest is aptly illustrated in the case of the Bodo movement insofar as it made a critique of what is commonly known as ‘the dominant Assamese nationalism’ (Baruah and Sharma in Misra 1991: 20). Insofar as the Bodos had been successful in carving out a region for themselves in the form of the Bodo Autonomous Council in 1993, the Santhals, the Bengali-speaking Muslims as well as the other plains tribes questioned their hegemony.
The Bodos, according to the dominant Assamese nationalist discourse, are regarded as an indispensable part of Assamese nationality. In their self-perception of an expanded Assamese collective self, the Bodos, by virtue of their assimilation into the Assamese language and culture, form only one of its integral parts. Indeed, dominant Assamese nationalism since its emergence in the early 20th century harps on the twin demand of assimilation and expulsion. The demand for assimilation is inspired by the urge on the part of its ideologues to create ‘a world after its own image’ by asking others to adopt Assamese language and culture. The plea was so strong that Nav Kanta Barooah, the famous Assamese poet and litterateur, widely known for his liberal views, once argued that the immigrant ‘other’, whether tribal or not, should assimilate into the Assamese culture as ‘sugar melts in milk’. We must note that the plea for assimilation also implies an antecedent de-culturation or abandonment of their language and culture. Thus, to cite an instance, when Assamese was made the official language of the state in 1960, large-scale riots broke out in Assam, particularly in the mixed areas of the Brahmaputra valley, targeting mainly the Bengalis. The declaration of Assamese as the official language of Assam was taken by most of the Assamese chauvinists, as Bhandari informs us, as the imposition of a ban on the use of Bengali or any other language even in private conversation. Bhandari, an eminent Sarvodaya leader reporting extensively on the Assam disturbances in 1960 further points out:

In the northern part of Darrang district and in the Uttar Lakhimpur subdivision, the special feature of the disturbances was to compel the Bengali-speaking girls and women to wear mekhla (a kind of long skirt worn by the Assamese women, SKD) or to create circumstances in which they would be compelled to wear mekhla. It is a decent dress no doubt … But when one has to wear a particular costume under compulsion it becomes a different matter altogether (Bhandari 1961: 36).

Women in every society have to bear the brunt of carrying the honour of their community literally in their bodies. The acceptance of the mekhla – the commonly recognised symbol of Assamese identity — by Bengali women was taken as the ultimate submission of their community to the Assamese hegemony. Such examples are by no means rare. The move is designed to eventually produce a society in which the other, as it were, does not exist and is effectively banished from all public places. Assimilation, for all practical purposes, implies invisibilisation.
Dominant Assamese nationalism was also predicated on the demand for the expulsion of the non-Assamese outsiders, including more often than not but not necessarily citizens from other parts of India. Thus, ‘quit notices’ were reportedly served as early as in 1979 — at a time when the erstwhile Assam movement (1979–85) was at its peak — to many of the non-Assamese who might have been living in Assam for generations and whose citizenship identity might not have been in doubt. The distinction made between the ‘outsiders’ and the ‘foreigners’ at the time of the Assam movement by its ideologues was dangerously thin, with the effect that many of the outsiders had to bear the brunt of an otherwise anti-foreigners’ upsurge. It was only in 1980 that the Asom Sahitya Sabha, the supreme literary body providing intellectual leadership to the Assam movement (1979–85), suggested an amendment and replaced the term ‘outsiders’ by the constitutionally acceptable and politically correct term ‘foreigners’. There is reason to think that these two demands of assimilation and expulsion were not always mutually exclusive. There were instances of people who were under the threat of being driven out in spite of the fact that they had been living in Assam for generations together and had assimilated themselves successfully into the Assamese mainstream. One such family whom I had had the chance of interviewing in 1989 was highly respected in Assam and was even involved in founding the Gauhati University, the oldest and one of the premier institutions of higher education in the region. One’s assimilation, in other words, was never regarded as a guarantee against one’s expulsion from Assam or even one’s annihilation. Assimilation and expulsion in other words serve as the means of realising what Gohain calls ‘the Assamese Varna-Hindu dream of turning Assam into a homogeneous society’ (Gohain 1989: 1377).

It is in the background of the dominant Assamese nationalism that the Bodo critique gained its momentum (for details see Das 2009: 305–14). The preparation of the Bodo critique, although central to the Bodo movement, was by no means a unilinear process and the Bodos seemed to have adapted themselves ‘overwhelmingly’ to the central premises of the dominant Assamese nationalism at least down to the 1960s. While the Varna-Hindu Assamese society is the mainspring of dominant Assamese nationalism, the Bodos, by all historical accounts, got them assimilated in bulk into the Assamese society since the late 19th century. They were, as Mukherjee and Mukherjee have pointed out, ‘for a long time eager to be accommodated into the lower rungs
of Hindu hierarchy’ (Mukherjee and Mukherjee 1982: 277). But the Bodo resentments against their absorption in the Hindu caste hierarchy slowly culminated in a process of return to their ‘imagined’ tribal roots. In 2004, a Bodo scholar, known for his moderate views, for example, observed: ‘The tendency to homogenize and to pass off the state’s (Assam’s, SKD) culture as one ‘Assamese’ culture fails to recognise its multiplicity and its essential Bodo or Mongoloid character’ (Pegu 2004: 99).

The critique may be traced back to the establishment of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (Bodo Literary Society) in 1952 and the first thing it did after its establishment was to demand the recognition of the Bodo language as a medium of instruction in primary and higher secondary schools. The use of Bodo language was officially recognised for the primary level in 1963 and for the higher secondary level in Bodo-concentrated areas much later — only in 1968. Similarly, in 1974, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) launched an agitation with the demand for using Roman script in place of the Assamese script. The Devanagari script replaced the Assamese script two years later, in 1976, at the instance of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ‘considering the broader national perspective’. The PTCA launched a movement for a separate ‘Udayachal’ state for the plains tribals in 1967 and continued the movement for 23 years. The United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF) led by Binay Khungur Basumtary came into being in 1984 and raised the demand for a separate Union Territory for the plains tribals to be carved out of Assam. Whether it is the PTCA or UTNLF, the proposed homeland was meant not only for the Bodos but also for all plains tribes including the Miris, Rabhas, Tiwas and others. But as the ABSU-Bodo Peoples’ Action Committee (BPAC) combine tightened their grip over the movement, the idea of a composite tribal territory gradually gave way to an exclusive Bodo homeland or what they called a separate Bodoland.

The Bodos, by all accounts, participated overwhelmingly during the initial years of the Assam movement (1979–85) and opposed the immigration and settlement of foreigners in the tribal-inhabited areas. In 1985, when the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) came to power with the promise of fulfilling the demands of detection, disenfranchisement and deportation of foreigners, Upendra Brahma — the firebrand Bodo student leader and a long-time associate of Prafulla Mahanta who became the chief minister — was unceremoniously dropped from
the cabinet. Personal chemistry of the two leaders along with New Delhi’s bickering in order to destabilise and discredit the non-Congress government by instituting the Special Services Bureau (SSB) — an intelligence agency allegedly meant for raising Bodo rebels against the sitting government — played a role in fomenting the Bodo movement. The critique perhaps culminated in the final break with the dominant Assamese nationalism, marked by the Gohpur riots of 1989. Not a single Bodo rendered homeless as a result took shelter in any of the relief camps of Assam on the ground that they were run by the Assamese-dominated administration (Ramaseshan 1989: 101). The Bodos preferred to stay along the highways under the open sky than to take refuge in the camps run by the ‘Assamese’ administration. Some of them even fled to nearby Arunachal Pradesh. Besides, Rabi Ram Brahma, then General Secretary of the All-Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU), issued a warning that all the non-Bodos living in proposed Bodoland would be expelled if they did not vacate it on their own by 15 August 1989. Besides, the ABSU resolution entitled ‘Divide Assam fifty-fifty’ adopted, in its Bansbari conference (1987), otherwise regarded as the testament of subsequent Bodo militancy, underscores the social and cultural break in these terms:

… the attitude of the Assamese people is anti-tribal; Assamese people are importing Assamese colonialism in tribal areas and dominating the tribals; Assamese people are following the policy of Assamese expansionism and chauvinism; Assamese people feel that Assam is only for Assamese and not for tribals; Assam Government is nothing but only an Assamese Government and not the Government of the people of Assam; Assamese people want to assimilate others (Datta ed. 1993: 240).

The excerpt, at one level, accuses the ‘Assamese people’ across the board of being ‘anti-tribal’ and having, as it were, breached the trust once reposed on them by the Bodos assimilating themselves into the so-called Assamese mainstream for long, but at another, posits the Assamese and the tribals now as two mutually opposite numbers. The Bodo discourse is permeated by a strong sense of betrayal, indeed a breach of trust that the Bodos had reposed on the ‘Assamese people’ with all their pristine innocence. The arrival of the critique marks

4 Gathered from a series of interviews with friends and acquaintances who had shared the hostel with both of them in Gaunahti University as boarders.
the end of the era of innocence. Rajani Kanta Bardoloi’s famous drama on *Miri Ziori* — although written in the context of the Miris (Mishings) another plains tribal group — smacks of a sense of tribal innocence in which the Assamese are looked upon as elder brothers within the same family and the Miris are depicted as different but not too different to become their opposite. It reminds one of the natural differences that exist within a traditional joint family amongst its members who, notwithstanding their differences, share the same family bonding and are committed to its wellbeing. Discourses of the plains tribals including the Bodos are positioned rather ambivalently between trust and its breach, between childlike innocence and tribal adulthood, between happy joint family and its ever messy break-up. Both dominant Assamese nationalism and Bodo critique thus take off from a common origin — the joint family — and have obviously very different views on how it broke up. All this implies a certain reversal of the earlier trend towards ‘accommodation into Hindu hierarchy’ and seeks interestingly to celebrate ‘the tribal culture’ as the ideological basis of the proposed political unit of ‘Bodoland’.

As the Bodo movement started to gather momentum, the government entered into an agreement with the leadership of ABSU–BPAC combine. The Accord signed in February 1993 sought to provide the Bodos with some measure of ‘autonomy’ in areas which are ‘contiguous’ and in which they constitute a numerical majority consisting of 50 per cent or more of the population. Even for the sake of preserving contiguity, areas where Bodos constitute even less than 50 per cent will be the constituent parts of the Council. Defining its jurisdiction, the Memorandum of Settlement, popularly known as the Bodo Accord signed on 23 February 1993 points out:

… There shall be, by an Act of Assam Legislative Assembly, a Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) within the State of Assam comprising the contiguous geographical areas between river Sankosh and Mazbat/river

---

[5] Some of the commentaries, however, fail to take note of the complexities and ambivalences implicit in the evolution of the discourse of the plains tribals in the following terms: ‘The plains tribals were always imbued with a strong sense of ethnic separateness. They resented Hinduisation and refused to be identified with the Assamese community’ (Swargiary in Pulloppillil & Aluckal 1997: 81, my emphasis). They, however, make a poor reading of history and ignore the underlying complexities.
Pansoi. The land records authority of the State will scrutinize the list of villages furnished by the ABSU-BPAC having 50 percent and more of tribal population which shall be included in the BAC. For the purpose of providing a contiguous area, even the villages having less than 50 per cent tribal population shall be included. BAC also include Reserve Forests as per the guidelines laid by Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, not otherwise required by government (of Assam) for manning the international border and tea gardens located completely within the BAC contiguous area.\(^6\)

Even a cursory glance at the population figures of the autochthonous Bodos living in the villages claimed by the ABSU–BPAC combine points out that their percentage has been rapidly on decline right from the middle of the 19th century. Such factors as massive influx of outsiders, rapid environmental degradation and huge land alienation of the indigenous people are primarily responsible for this remarkable decline (Das Gupta 1989: 15–17, 23; Bhattacharjee 1996). The figures have now hit the rock bottom so much so that contrary to the expectations of Bodo leadership, in over 500 villages they have reportedly been reduced to a minority. Never before in their history has the Bodo leadership been caught in such a quandary. Unless they could decisively prove their majority in a space that they prefer to define as their homeland, they could not get themselves entitled to whatever political autonomy is granted to them.

In its 28th Annual Conference held at Langhin Tinali, Karbi Anglong from 3–5 March 1996, the ABSU disowned the Bodo Accord and revived its demand for a separate Bodoland. A section of the Bodo leadership sought to resolve the circularity by way of taking to arms and resorted to the path of secessionist militancy. While the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) under the leadership of Ranjan Daimary demands complete secession from the Indian Union, such moderate organisations as the ABSU and the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) have insisted on the formation of a separate Bodo state within it. The BLT has ultimately settled for a Territorial Council. In simple terms, whether within India or without, both considered demarcation of space as crucial to the establishment of the Bodos as a majority in their ‘homeland’. This found further impetus during the Bodoland

\(^6\) See paragraph 3(a) of the Accord.
A Study of India’s North-east

movement, particularly after the formation of the Bodo Autonomous Council in 1993. When Bodo leaders reiterated their demand for including about 1,000 contiguous villages, they were curtly told by Hiteswar Saikia, then Assam’s Chief Minister, that they did not constitute a majority in these villages. The Bodo leadership got the clue, went deep inside the villages and cleansed them of non-Bodos in a bid to create a Bodo majority. Ethnic cleansing resorted to by a section of the militant Bodo leadership therefore was initially characterised by their potent desire of creating a majority of their own in order to lay hold of the villages under the jurisdiction of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC). In Bhaumik’s words: ‘As the Assam administration maintained that the Bodos were not a majority in more than half the villages that were to fall in the Council area, Bodo militants began targeting non-Bodo communities to spark off an exodus’ (Bhaumik 1998: 13). A series of riots was reportedly organised in an apparently planned manner to achieve the purpose of forming a majority and establishing them as the mainstream.

Although the Bodo movement developed predominantly as a critique of the dominant Assamese nationalism, Santhals and the Bengali-speaking Muslims rather than the Assamese settled in the proposed Bodoland area had to bear the brunt of violence organised intermittently by the Bodo militants. During the initial years of the Bodo movement, however, the Assamese and the Koch-Rajbangshis were targeted, albeit in a sporadic manner. With the rising crescendo of violence since the early 1990s, however, the target slowly shifted away from the Assamese and Koch-Rajbangshis to the Santhals and Bengali-speaking Muslims. It may be interesting to find out as to why such a displacement of target had occurred in the context of Bodo movement. For one, both the Santhals and the Bengali-speaking Muslims were soft targets. The militant groups that developed amongst them are definitely a later development. On the other hand, targeting the Assamese, otherwise dominant in the state as a whole, was bound to trigger off large-scale backlash against the Bodo population in other parts of the state. For another, the Assamese brands, both the Santhals as the Bengali-speaking Muslims, are ‘outsiders’ as well. The forefathers of the Santhals were brought to Assam as indentured labour in order to meet the growing demand for labour in the newly emerging plantation industry, while many, though not all, of the Bengali-speaking Muslims could be Bangladeshis migrating illegally to Assam after 1971. By way of restricting their attacks to these groups,
the Bodo leadership sought to establish a certain convergence of interests with the Varna-Hindu Assamese leadership and there is reason to think that the latter remained largely indifferent to the orgy of violence in the area.

A community that opts for ethnic cleansing obviously turns democratic logic on its head. It seeks to create a majority where there is not any. It thus subscribes to the same democratic principle of forming a region with the constitutive exclusion of some other communities. While the Bodos have been victims of an apparently irreversible historical process of being depleted into a minority in what they continue to claim as their homeland, they are accused of further mainstreaming it in a manner that marginalises its non-Bodo inhabitants (like other plains tribals, the Assamese, Santhals, Koch-Rajbangshis and Bengali-speaking Muslims, among others). These acts lead the minorities to organise themselves and resist the domination of the majority Bodos. The formation of such tribal organisations as the Adivasi Cobra Force and Sanmilit Janagoshthi Sangram Samiti (SJSS) is illustrative of this point. Insofar as they seek to resist the stridency of the majority Bodos — historically reduced to a minority — the same ethnic game is played with all its dangerous consequences.

In a paper published in 1995, Bhattacharjee aptly sums up the problem in the following words: ‘... what the situation in reality demands is that the existing political system needs to be restructured to the satisfaction of the total population and not only of a particular community or communities’ (Bhattacharjee 1995: 208). The problem was sought to be addressed by way of signing the Bodo Accord with the BLT leaders on 10 February 2003 that subsequently led to the creation of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). The BTC was formed with the objective of ‘providing Constitutional protection under the Sixth Schedule to fulfil economic, educational and linguistic aspirations and the preservation of land rights, socio-cultural and ethnic identity of the Bodos and speeding up the infrastructure of development in BTC area’. Article 4 that consists of eight clauses of the Memorandum of Settlement aims to ‘safeguard’ the interests and concerns of the ‘non-tribals in the BTC area’ by way of ensuring their special representation in the BTC (clause 2) and promising suitable modification in the Sixth Schedule while securing their settlement rights and transfer and inheritance of property. The promised amendment is based on the general principle laid down in the Memorandum of Settlement:
The amendments to the Sixth Schedule shall include provisions in such a manner that non-tribals are not disadvantaged in relation to the rights enjoyed by them at the commencement of the BTC and their rights and privileges including land rights are fully protected.

Bodos’ quest for a separate regional identity of their own by organising a social and political movement is modelled on the Assam movement (1979–85). In many senses, the latter sets forth the paradigm of social and regional movements taking place in today’s north-east. On the one hand, both the Assam movement and the Bodo movement were catalysed by the chronic anxiety on the part of the natives of being swamped by outsiders migrating from outside and of losing in the process their language and culture to them. A time will thus come in the not too distant future when the natives are completely pushed out of the employment rolls and even the legislative and other decision-making bodies by an overwhelming body of immigrants. On the other hand, although its bête noire, the Bodo movement is scripted, as it were, in the Assam movement and followed exactly all its rules and protocols. Violence in both cases is organised in a planned and orchestrated manner with the sole objective of cleansing what a community perceives as its homeland of others. Violence, in simple terms, is the means of establishing one’s demographic control over a given geographical space. The large-scale riots that took place particularly at the height of the Assam movement in February 1983 issued from this deep-seated desire of getting rid of the outsiders. The Nellie riots of February 1983 in which more than 1,700 lives were lost—mostly of Bengali-speaking Muslims — are a case in point. The Bodo movement is prototypical of a regional movement that, while seeking to subvert and challenge another, mimicked its rules and protocols. Regions within regions mimic each other as much as they subvert them. Mimicry and subversion are dialectically interlinked.

The Limits of Identitarian Democracy

The functioning of democracy, it is argued, presupposes the existence of a divided society. A society which does not recognise the social divisions within does not seem to care for democracy and justice. The supposed homogeneity implies effective concealment of the existing social divisions and develops social blindness to others. It creates a society where the ‘other’ does not exist. The untouchables
(the outcastes) as Sheth argues, are also the ‘unseeables’ in Indian society. Any visual contact with them is expressly forbidden in a traditional society and the upper-caste members ever coming into such contact were required to perform purificatory rites in order to re-establish their ritual purity. Traditional Indian society was moulded in a way where the untouchables were treated as if they did not exist so that the question of injustice ever done to them would never arise. Homogeneity makes the social ground for non-recognition of the issues of justice and democracy. Traditional Indian society is one in which inequalities and injustices exist, but are effectively invisibilised and excised from public discourse. Democracy, in other words, is the trademark of only the divided societies. Denying divisions is the source of homogenisation and wherever there is homogenisation, the other does not seem to exist. In a paper written in 2008, Das has made a case for differentiating the invisible and therefore unrecognisable other from the visible and recognisable ‘other’. Social concern for justice can develop only in a society where the ‘other’ is visible and therefore can be socially recognised. But where the ‘other’ remains invisible, there can hardly develop any social concern for it. Similarly, the Blacks in American society, though victims of all-pervasive discrimination right from the days of American independence and much before, became important only as recently as in the 1940s when they were sought to be incorporated into the body politic, thanks particularly to the persistent civil rights campaigns and some landmark court verdicts in the USA. As long as they were treated as extra-Constitutional entities and segregated from the mainstream American society, they remained invisible and did not seem to create any problem for it. The recognition of the Blacks as a problem was essential for treating them as justice-deserving entities. Thus, visual contact plays a role in making us appreciate marginalities and evoking a sense of responsibility towards others.

Social divisions, we are told, are a prerequisite for the functioning of a vibrant democracy. While the assertion of regional identities in a divided society is considered as a guarantee against any hegemonic accretion of national identity, regions within regions are usually taken

---

7 Sheth made this point in the ‘Dialogue on Social Justice’ organised by the Calcutta Research Group and Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Bhubaneswar from 20–22 November 2006.
as a counterweight to similar accretion of regional identities through the formation of de facto linguistic states within the Indian Union. Regional or subregional identities, according to this framework, are of necessarily a democracy-enhancing nature. We, on the other hand, argue that social divisions expressed through the various forms of regional articulation per se neither enhance nor debilitate democracy. While they may enhance democracy up to the critical threshold, they may prove to be debilitating beyond it. It is important that articulation of regional identity with all its varied forms should not pass beyond the threshold in order that it promotes and enhances democracy. This section draws our attention to some of the limits that our concept of threshold is supposed to set forth and impose on the apparently endless assertion of regional and subregional identities.

The concept is intended to free democracy from the identity game and situate it in multiple sites and locations. These sites and locations are marked by a relative autonomy from the rules and institutions of identitarian democracy setting off and encouraging an infinite proliferation of regional identities. Regions within regions certainly do not signify the end of this process. The ‘within’ often resembles the process of peeling an onion and dissipation of its democratic potential. Democracy’s relation to the question of identity, as Gutman points it, is far from simple:

… organizing politically on the basis of group identity is not good or bad thing in itself. When identity groups put the group above opposition to injustice or the pursuit of justice, they are morally suspect. Identity groups do better when they offer mutual support and help combat in justice for the disadvantaged people. Even when combating injustice is justified, it can be ugly. A completely justifiable struggle against the rights violations of an identity group, such as Ku Klux Klan, is often ugly, bringing with it unavoidable pain and suffering, or avoidable only at the price of appeasement. Resistance to injustice often itself encounters resistance, and people may undeservedly suffer as a consequence. By subjecting identity groups to fair-minded scrutiny, we come to recognize the good, the bad, and the ugly of identity politics (Gutman 2003: 3).

The importance of multiple sites and locations with their relatively autonomous rules and protocols makes it necessary on our part to appreciate their contribution to the agenda of extending democracy beyond governmental rationality. First, identities are a way of conceptualising hierarchies existing in the society by way of freezing
them off at a given point of time. Identities have a tendency of collapsing very different older systems of social difference into the new ones and lose sight of the fact that they are produced anew through governmental operations. While societies of South Asia in general have by all accounts been plural and heterogeneous, it is only with the emergence of the modern state that such pluralities and heterogeneities have been transformed into divisions and borders separating people on the basis of their gender, region, ethnicity, class and other varieties of membership to political and administrative units, and, most importantly, turn into distinct and clearly distinguishable objects of government. As the boundaries are drawn fairly precisely, ruling out other possibilities of crossings and overlaps, people are called upon to enumerate their identities in clear and unambiguous terms and the societies become dotted with innumerable faultlines, cutting them into new and hitherto unknown ways. Census operations conducted by modern states are reflective of these boundaries and fault lines. Census has always become a contested operation in the north-east. One’s status as majority or minority is always determined in relation to the unit within which it forms as such. If the size of the unit is altered, their relative statuses too get redefined (see for details Das 2009b: 199–216).

It is in this context that we need to understand and make sense of the dynamics of social divisions emerging in our societies. Divisions, in other words, are not simple means though which societies remain stratified, but are the products of the modern state’s technologies of government. The way people sharing cultural and physical spaces has been partitioned into ‘regions’ and ‘ethnic spaces’ speaks of how borders are created and what they do to the people. As identities fix our ethical world, we do not have much freedom to review and scrutinise them.

As we know, the census was introduced to India by colonial rule in the late 19th century. In the north-east, then referred to in colonial circles as the ‘eastern frontiers’, early census operations were informed by the twin objective of identifying diverse ethnic groups in terms of some given and unalterable diacritical marks and psychosomatic features (the size of the head, racial stock, language, food and dietary practices and so on) and enumerating them with reference to any particular geographically contiguous area also marked out as their more or less exclusive homeland. The ethnographies of such British administrative officials as Allen, Pemberton, Mackenzie, Endle and
Grierson bear testimony to the early colonial anxiety of defining a group in mutually exclusive terms and settling the otherwise nomadic groups in fixed and well-demarcated territorial homelands. These exercises made it obligatory on the part of many of the smaller groups historically, whose identities were fuzzy, to declare their identities in clear and unambiguous terms. The problem continues to this day. Thus, while the Nagas and the Kukis provide two generic group formations in the hills of Manipur, such smaller groups as the Anals and the Chirus that had hitherto been oscillating between these two broad formations without really identifying themselves with either of them were called upon to pronounce their ethnic identities and as a result were drawn into the Naga fold. Similarly, many Noctes of Arunachal Pradesh, according to a recent report, refuse to identify themselves as Nagas (Chhakchhuak 2004: 11–13), although the Naga rebel leaders include them as one of the 32 Naga groups scattered all over the region including Myanmar. By casting democracy in the mould of identity, democratic politics remains bound by the rules of the governmental game. This democratic imperative makes the group include others in its fold or to alter the size of its proposed homeland in a manner that confers on it its avowed majority status vis-à-vis others. Democracies firmly embodied in the ethnically well-divided regions and spaces reproduce the same governmentalising game. Accordingly, the success of all functioning democracies to a large measure depends on our ability to negotiate our autonomy in the midst of this great governmental game of identities, continuously questioning the hegemony of other identities.

Second, the segregation of population into different ethnic and linguistic groups and communities creates the impression that their recognition by the state should provide them with the space for participation and representation in government, thereby strengthening democracy. Yet, this very operation has another rather undemocratic possibility built into its disposition. This is the fact that in making these categories crucial to the discourse of rights and citizenship, there is a certain kind of essence that is attached to different segments of people of the country, understood as fundamental to their ‘identity’. Such essentialised identities not only deny the changing realities of society and people, undermining vertical and lateral social mobility, but they also ignore two extremely significant features of everyday social life. First, they overlook the fact that social life involves a negotiation in multiple and plural contexts, thereby making it impossible to
enumerate any single location or to claim any one identity as total or absolute. Life is far too complex to be typecast and steamrolled into any single identity. Second, they avoid taking into account the domain of intersubjective relations and dialogical practices as constitutive of identities in politics, which means that identities cannot be boiled down to aggregations of isolated individuals but should be seen in collective contexts and within shifting networks of difference.

While much of what we know as outsiders about the politics of India’s north-east supposedly plays around the rhetoric of identities, politics at such micro levels as villages, localities and neighbourhoods is determined by give and take — the complex webs of exchanges and transactions between otherwise diverse, if not rivalling, identity groups. Politics at the state or regional level and that of the insurgent groups follow well-divided and therefore very predictable ethnic lines. Yet, a good part of social and political life in villages, localities and neighbourhoods involves crossing these lines and constantly negotiating with these barriers. Social life always proves to be both larger and smaller than the lines and barriers our regional identities impose on us. Politics in the north-east is marked by the dialectical interplay between these two imperatives: identity and social life. In our over zeal of making sense of the region’s politics through the lens of identity, we often lose sight of this dialectical interplay and thereby the democratic potential of the locally operative multi-identity configurations (Das 2008: 262–83). These multi-identity configurations operating at the micro levels, however, are not strong enough to render the macro-political identities redundant.

A reference to the role of the Naga Mothers’ Association (NMA) will not be out of point in order to appreciate these multi-identity configurations in cutting the ethnic, regional and sub-regional boundaries and thereby promoting democracy. The NMA’s initial anti-drug and anti-alcohol campaign brought it to the core of ethnic and ‘nationalist’ agenda. Its concern in addressing social evils brought it gradually to the world of politics and made it realise its ‘indivisibility’ (Chenoy 2002: 135) and inseparable connection. For the NMA, the changeover came in 1994 when it transformed itself into a group poised to make peace interventions. In the same year, the NMA initiated an inquiry into the massacre of many civilians in Mokokchung and submitted a memorandum to the National Human Rights Commission. The NMA also opposed the imposition of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (1958) on Nagaland. Unless the causes of these social evils are properly
addressed and taken care of, the cases of drug addiction, substance abuse, alcoholism and such other things are bound to shoot up. The NMA does not believe in preserving the status quo for fear of peace being disrupted by it. But it subscribes to peace being established through justice.\(^8\) It views such apparent social evils as alcoholism, drug and substance abuse and sex-related crimes not so much as single and isolated cases but as offshoots of larger social and political problems. The NMA’s three successively elected presidents — Sano Vamuzo, Neidonuo Angami and Khesilie Chisi — have located these social evils in the political problems facing Naga society (Manchanda 2004: 25).

The NMA, set up with the help of Kripa Foundation and other charities, set up a Drug Rehabilitation Centre and an AIDS Care Hospice. After the ceasefire between the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (I-M) was declared in 1997, the NMA, with Naga Women’s Union, Manipur, went to speak to the NSCN (I-M) leaders and then to Khaplang, the leader of the other faction, to appeal to them to meet and talk over their differences. The factional killings continue although the intensity has been substantially reduced. The NMA’s role in building bridges can hardly be underestimated. The NMA’s language of mobilisation revolves around motherhood.

Every woman, according to the NMA, is a mother — potential or real — and there is a mother in every woman. It does not matter whether a Naga dies or a Kuki; it is important that a mother has lost her child. The NMA’s shift towards universal motherhood thus marks a departure from the established paradigm of ethnic politics in the region. Its campaign for ‘shedding no more blood’ including that of the non-Nagas plays a role in mitigating the hostilities and building bridges across the otherwise rival communities. The NMA has been persistently making the point. In a civil society dialogue organised in 2002 it, for example, pointed out that ‘as mothers we do not care just for our children but other children too who are victims of atrocities and violence’ (quoted in Banerjee 2002: 16). The NMA, in fact, keeps one day each year for mourning the dead, whatever community he or she belongs to, for it means a woman has lost her son or daughter. It is this metaphor of universal motherhood (that is very unlike traditional motherhood that remains confined to the four walls of the particular

\(^8\) Anuradha M. Chenoy describes it as ‘feminist understanding of peace’ (Chenoy 2002: 135).
family, clan or community) that also drives them to listen to the experiences of mothers who do not belong to the same community, open dialogues and build bridges with them. In 2002 for example, it was asserted that ‘the only way to build relationships is to have an understanding of others’ problems’ (quoted in Banerjee 2002: 16). Even an aggressor’s mother is bound to shed tears for the mother of the victim and vice versa. Concern for all victims implies transcendence of narrow ethnic boundaries and collective concern for all people whose lives have similarly been blighted by rape, torture and intimidation, irrespective of ethnicity and nation.

Yet, it seems that there is hardly any mellowing down of the macro-political stand. The NMA is very careful in maintaining its stand on the political question of reintegration of Naga-inhabited areas into one administrative dispensation, as mentioned above. Others viewed the extension of ceasefire beyond Nagaland, particularly to the neighbouring states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, as the first step towards dismemberment of these states. Neidonuo Angami observed in 2001 when the Bangkok declaration was made extending Indo-Naga ceasefire ‘beyond territorial limits’:

We welcome the recent ceasefire without territorial limits to all Naga-inhabited areas. But to our surprise our sister states (Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh) have started opposing it. We feel sorry for the unnecessary loss of lives in Imphal and the properties destroyed. We feel sorry there are differences in perspectives on the ceasefire. To us the ceasefire means cessation of armed confrontation, the creation of space for people to people dialogue, free movement of peoples, a time and space for consultation to find a permanent solution to the conflict. But to others it is threatening. In what way has it become a threat is not clear. We hope that we can explain what we mean by ceasefire. We are confident that they will understand. We appeal to them as mothers that we should all work for peace, because if a child dies, it touches us, it grieves us. Because for a mother anybody’s child is our child (quoted in Manchanda 2004: 62).

Finally, the mere official recognition of existing differences in a society can very well be counterproductive in actually ameliorating these differences. By posing purported static essences in the place of changing population profiles, one could in fact use the differences precisely in order to legitimate the current status quo, pitted against the marginally located. Once the political hierarchies are translated
into a legal–conceptual system of social divisions, popular movements can have no option but to articulate their grievances with the systemic borders. This can act as feedback for the formulation of the governmental strategy. It seems that one of the teething troubles with the liberal–democratic framework is the obstinate resistance to meaningful coalitions, leaving us isolated with our differences, living in an increasingly divided society. The question of democracy, however, cannot be drawn and quartered accordingly: the challenge for carrying democracy forward must involve imagining new forms of ethical collectives which will neither dissolve difference nor proclaim it as an obdurate essence. The signs of these new ethical collectives cutting across ethnic, regional and subregional lines are still unclear.

We have already seen how Bodo politics increasingly took on an exclusivist course particularly since the late 1980s and how the demand for a separate ‘Udayachal’ state gradually gave way to a separate state of Bodoland — whether within the Indian union or without. The demand for an exclusive Bodo homeland alienated the Santhals and the Bengali-speaking Muslims as much as the other plains tribals including the Koch-Rajbangshis, Rabhas, Tiwas and Mishings, among others. What earlier was a grand alliance of diverse tribal groups of the plains in the form of the PTCA eventually turned into a political alliance of virtually all groups arrayed against the Bodos. The SJSS, mentioned above, serves as an example. It aptly illustrates how an otherwise democratic dream of a separate state for the plains tribals took little time to turn into a nightmare in the decade of the 1990s. The real challenge is to reconcile the imperatives of identity with those of democracy.

It is in this context that we may make a brief reference to the political ideology of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). ‘Assamese hegemonism’ (Asomiya pradhanyabad) according to the ULFA, the insurgent group operating mainly in Assam, has done greater harm to the essentially multicultural society that Assam has historically been more than anything else. Its project of ‘Federal Assam’ is aimed at creating a society that ‘will give recognition to the right to self-determination of all ethnic groups and religious communities on the basis of equal rights and equal dignity in Independent Assam’. The ULFA replaced the hitherto prevailing designation of ‘Assamese nationalism’ (Asomiya jatiyatabad) by a new one of ‘combined nationalism of all the exploited peoples of Assam’ (Asomar samuh soshit raijar sanmilit jatiyatabad). It called for ‘free self-development’
of each nationality in ‘Independent Assam’ (‘ULFAr sathe…’, Anonymous 1991: 74). Never before has Assamese nationalism been such self-critical as it has been with the ULFA during the late 1980s.

It follows that identitarian democracy has its limits. Our notion of threshold enables us to appreciate these limits and highlight the importance of situating democracy in its multiple sites and locations. For, these sites and locations have opened up new and hitherto unprecedented possibilities.

**Note:** All translations from original non-English sources are by the author.

**References**


Politics of Autonomy in a Comparative Perspective: Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir

ASHUTOSH KUMAR

As the title of the article suggests, it undertakes a comparative study of the autonomist politics of Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, the two borderland states of India. The two regional states have been witness to a series of overlapping ethno-regional movements with a variety of aims ranging from autonomy (demand for more power and resources within the union) to secessionism (right to self-determination/secession) for the panth qaum (nation/community). The ensuing violence in the two states has left behind a string of hapless victims, a wounded psyche besides posing a grave challenge to the wellbeing of the social and federal fabric of democracy in India.

At the outset, the article underlines distinct similarities between the two states in terms of the geographical, historical and sociological elements that make such a study appear as a logical research project. In a more general sense, the rationale behind attempting such an article emanates from the considered belief that instead of embarking upon a comparative study of such analogous movements between and across the different countries of the world, as has been attempted most notably in the case of Kashmir,\(^1\) it would be much more rewarding intellectually to compare similar kind of movements, asymmetrically distributed within and across the country, if that be the case.

Extreme fluidity in the nature of regional politics and also the variegated nature of its society have often been cited as the reasons as

---

\(^1\) The movement in Kashmir has been compared with that of northern Ireland, Quebec, Sri Lanka, and Bosnia–Herzegovina or with Kosovo and East Timor (Bose 1999; Koithara 2004; Tillin 2006). Such comparisons are too far-fetched to be fruitful. This, of course, does not mean that the movement in Kashmir is to be considered as sui generis in nature.
to why the advantage of comparative studies across the regions in the Indian context has not been explored adequately. It applies also to the study of the autonomist movements involving territorially concentrated ethnic groups. This is despite the fact that India ‘provides laboratory like conditions for the study of such movements’ (Kohli 1995: 7).

While making an attempt to dispel such a misgiving, this article seeks to establish that there has been a certain degree of commonality in terms of the ‘policy’ pursued by the Indian state while ‘dealing’ with the two autonomist movements under study. For the purpose, the article undertakes a comparative analysis of the nature of political institutions and the processes that have evolved in the post-partition/post-accession period in the two states generating the demand for regional self-determination/secession.

If the policies/strategies have remained analogous, as the argument goes, then how come, while ‘normalcy’ has returned to Punjab after being wrecked by horrendous violence and demands for autonomy/secession until the late 1980s, albeit without a single demand raised during the movement in the form of the Anandpur Sahib resolutions being met, the movement for autonomy/azadi continues unabated in Kashmir along with relentless violence since 1989? If the Shrine Board episode that preceded 2008 Assembly elections was any indication, the Kashmir ‘problem’ remains bedevilled by rising hostility if not by an increasing violence that has now reached much beyond the valley (Chowdhary 2008: 52).

Why have the two seemingly analogous conflict situations had two different outcomes? Is it because the two cases are historically specific? Is it due to the asymmetrical grant of special status accorded to Kashmir under the Constitution that has not been the case with Punjab? Does it have to do with the different ways in which the democratic and federal institutions have evolved historically in the two states? Or is it due to the different courses the inter-party/intra-party competitions have taken in the two states over the recent decades?

The article takes up the above research questions and explores the possible answers in a historical and comparative perspective. Such a focused study confined to the two states would have wide ranging ramifications in the sense that it would enable us in tracing the nature of causal relationships between the autonomist politics and the democratic and the federal institutions at work in a conflict situation. On a prescriptive note, such kind of a study may be somewhat suggestive of the appropriate democratic and federal principles for meeting similar challenges elsewhere.
Before setting about such an ambitious research agenda, however, let us first dwell upon the overarching nature of the commonalities, mentioned at the outset, between the two states.

**Looking for the Commonalities**

In geographical terms, the two states underwent the process of territorial reorganisation as a consequence of partition that led to demographic reconfiguration in the aftermath of the communal bloodbath and mass displacement. The loss for the Indian part of Punjab was colossal as it inherited merely 36 per cent of the land of undivided Punjab. 80 per cent of the canal irrigated land along with the cash rich cotton belt went to Pakistan part of Punjab. Cropped area in the Indian Punjab remained 33 per cent as compared to 61 per cent in the Pakistan part of Punjab. Under the circumstances the uprooted and dispossessed Sikh landed peasantry got a raw deal. Like Punjab, the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir could also retain only 45.6 per cent of the original territory after the Indo–Pak conflict. Besides the loss of land, the people of the Kashmir valley suffered economically as it had trading and commercial ties with the geographically contiguous northern part of undivided Punjab, which now went to Pakistan. Families also got separated.

Besides being the victims of the partition legacy, the politics of the two borderland states has also been adversely influenced by their geo-strategic locations. Jammu & Kashmir, in particular, holds critical advantage for being a gateway to south and central Asia, receiving unwarranted attention of the global powers keen to internationalise the conflict. The two states share boundaries with a perennially hostile neighbouring country that has always been keen on extending active help to the autonomist forces.

The inherited socio-political systems based on the landed property relationships in the two states were also distinctly similar. Establishment of canal colonies in western central Punjab by the British as a result of the legislative measures like the Alienation of Land Act in 1901

---

2 Jammu & Kashmir shares a border with Pakistan, China (Xingjian province and Tibet), and Afghanistan (north-western corner). It is separated from the Central Asian republics by the narrow Wakhan tract of Afghan territory and a small section of Xingjian in the Taghdum-based Pamir (Kaur 1992: 93; Bose 2003: 206).
provided uniqueness to the social–political structure in an undivided Punjab, creating the rural–urban divide between communities. Only the feudal ‘agriculturalist’ castes/communities of the ‘martial race’ — the Sikhs (and the Muslims) — were entitled for the allotment of land in the canal colonies. ‘Non-agriculturalist/trading’ communities (mostly Hindus) were barred from acquiring agricultural land. Colonial policy was to win the abiding loyalty of the politically quiescent peasant castes and communities, whose members constituted almost half of the Indian army, and also to strengthen the political and economic dominance of the numerically strong feudal landed peasantry who shared complementarity of interests with the British administrators. ‘Punjab tradition’ was thus marked by a ‘synergy of the authoritarianism of British bureaucrats and the domination of a peasant society by indigenous landlords’ (Stern 2001: 50). Privileging the rural sector was a deliberate attempt to undermine the Hindu upper castes who dominated the trade, commerce and service sectors in urban Punjab and who were under the influence of the Congress. Moreover, the lack of the business/industrial establishment served the imperial interests as the rural youth saw the military service as the only viable employment avenue. The prominence of state parties like the Punjab National Unionist Party, a party of the landed peasantry (called Vadheras) in the colonial Punjab was testimony of the feudal dominance (Ahsan 2005: 98). In Jammu & Kashmir, the Dogra Hindu landlords belonging to Jammu region, who drew their tribute from the hapless Kashmiri Muslim tenants, held much of the land under feudal tenure. Like in Punjab, the Land Alienation Act was implemented in Jammu & Kashmir in 1926; it disallowed the transfer of the newly acquired rights to any but a member of the agriculturalist castes. The Act did not allow alienation of more than 25 per cent of any landholding for a period of 10 years. Ostensibly enacted to help the farmers, mostly the Muslims, in reality it worsened their situation as they exercised their selling rights in full for repaying their debts and thereby further consolidating the feudal hold.

In sociological terms, the complex nature of the politics of Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir can be attributed to the presence of several societal factors like region, religion and language that combine together to determine the political contours of the two states. Well-defined geographically, culturally and historically constituted distinct regions exist within the two states that reflect up on the pattern of the autonomist politics. In Punjab, for instance, it was the Majha
region, considered to be the ‘cradle of Sikhism’ due to the presence of main Sikh shrines and pilgrimage centres associated with the Sikh Gurus in the region, where the autonomist movement gained ground before spreading to the Doaba and Malwa regions (Deol 2000: 2). In Jammu & Kashmir, the autonomist politics backed by the Islamist forces made their appearance in 1989 first in the valley of Kashmir before gaining ground in the neighbouring Doda, Poonch and Rajouri subregions of Jammu. The two subregions of Ladakh, i.e., the Buddhist-dominated Leh and Muslim-majority Kargil have remained mostly untouched.

The two states in social terms have been a ‘mosaic of religious, ethnic, linguistic, and caste groups’ (Bose 2003: 10). The British reinforced and constructed inter-community competitiveness in the political arena by introducing separate communal electorates. After the exodus of the Muslims from the Indian part of Punjab, the rivalry shifted to one between the Sikhs and the Hindus. The Hindu Dogra rulers in Kashmir did what the British did in Punjab with the Hindus by discriminating against the Muslims.

Besides region and religion, language has also been a significant basis of the assertion of separate identity. If the Urdu/Hindi divide marked pre-partition politics, it was the Punjabi–Hindi divide that marked the communalisation of the language issue in post-partition Punjab. In the censuses held after partition, a large number of the Hindus, under the influence of the Arya Samaj, declared Hindi to be their mother language. There were others who were ready to accept Punjabi as their language only if it was in the Devnagari rather than the Gurumukhi script. Thus, like in the case of Urdu being identified with the Muslims in Jammu & Kashmir where there has been a demand in Jammu to make Hindi as one of the official language besides Urdu, Punjabi, especially in the Gurumukhi script, came to be identified with the Sikh community during the Punjabi Suba movement.

Ironically, none of the languages spoken locally, namely Kashmiri, Dogri or Ladakhi are the languages of teaching and official use in Jammu & Kashmir. While there has been a persistent demand to recognise and promote Dogri in the Jammu region (also known as Duggar Pradesh), there is hardly much demand in the valley about acceptance of Kashmiri as the official language despite repeated references to Kashmiri in political discourse. One reason may be the communal polarisation on the issue as the Kashmiri Pandits hold that Kashmiri can only be written in Sharda script (Kishwar 1998: 279–81).
The most distinctive characteristic, the focus of this article, however, has been the prevalence of a wide-ranging sense of people’s disenchantment in the two states emanating from what the people perceive as a ‘breach of trust’ in the form of the non-fulfilment of the promises made at the time of independence/accession. The violation of the federal and democratic principles by a personalising and centralising state elite has further accentuated feelings of alienation that simply refuse to subside even as politics returns to ‘normal’.

Case of Jammu & Kashmir

Jammu & Kashmir was the only princely state to ‘negotiate’ its ‘accession’ with India under extraordinary circumstances that arose due to the invasion of the Pakistan-supported tribal militia. A significant number of people in Kashmir, therefore, have always perceived their association with the Indian Union primarily in terms of a ‘contractual’ relation based on the notions of ‘parity’ and ‘negotiability’. It was best reflected in the then Union Government’s explicit and repeated acknowledgement of the conditional nature of the state’s accession.

The issue of holding a plebiscite, as per the UN Security Council resolution adopted on 13 August 1948 to determine the status of state ‘in accordance with the will of the people’, may have been sidelined by now but it has not ceased to be an emotive issue and a grim reminder for the Kashmiri people of an act of ‘bad faith’. The Indian state refused

---

4 The instrument of accession was unique in two aspects. One, it contained a commitment of the nature of that the accession would be subject to the approval of the people of Jammu & Kashmir. Second, it was accession and not merger as in the case of the other princely states (Singh 2002: 119). Clause 7 of the instrument ensured that ‘nothing in this instrument’ would compel the monarch to accept ‘any future Constitution of India’. It further stated that ‘The government of India could not force the state to accept the Constitution of India, for that would violate the agreed terms of the association of Kashmir with India ...The state had voluntarily surrendered three matters only and the government of India could not enlarge the sphere of its jurisdiction at its own discretion’ (SAC Report 1999: 120).

5 As late as on 1 January 1952, Jawaharlal Nehru, while condemning the Praja Parishad Movement, stated in a public meeting: ‘If, then, the people of Kashmir tell us to get out, we will do so.’ Nehru, speaking in the Lok Sabha on 26 June 1952, reiterated his position ‘It just does not matter what your Constitution says, if the people of Kashmir do not want it will not go there’ (quoted in Noorani 1999: 268, 269).
to hold the plebiscite despite earlier agreeing to it on the following grounds: First, the instrument of accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir had made the accession legal. Second, the National Conference (NC), the party in the valley that had successfully led the ‘Quit Kashmir’ movement against the oppressive monarchical rule had adopted a resolution supporting the accession, a position reiterated by Sheikh Abdullah, the NC leader in the Security Council. Third, the popularly elected Constituent Assembly, constituted to frame the Constitution of the state, duly approved the accession. Fourth, Pakistan did not withdraw its forces from the occupied territory, which was a necessary precondition for holding the plebiscite as per the Security Council directive. Notwithstanding the above plea, the issue, even after all these years, remains etched in popular memory and is a rallying point for the disgruntled masses in the valley.

Another act of ‘bad faith’ on the part of Indian state that rankles in the psyche of the masses has been its recanting on the promise of the asymmetrical grant of a special status of autonomy by taking recourse to the political and constitutional processes aimed at ‘integration/assimilation’ of the state. Considering its ‘autonomy’ as fictive, the people argue that Jammu and Kashmir has never been allowed to function like any other regional state let alone under Article 370 on the pretext of safeguarding national interest. Ominously, there have been periods when national interest and the interest of the ruling party (or its leader) at the centre have become synonymous.

In legal terms, the application of Article 370 implied that the Union Parliament’s legislative power over the state was to be restricted to three subjects only: defence, external affairs and communication. It was only with the concurrence of the head of the state government, which was subject to ratification by the constituent assembly of the state, that other constitutional provisions could be extended. The Sheikh Abdullah-led ruling National Conference (NC) had taken the position that the concurrence clause was supposed to lapse once the state’s Constituent Assembly that first met on 31 October 1951 had finalised the scheme. Mention of Article 370 as ‘temporary provision’ in the Indian Constitution therefore did not mean that it was capable of being abrogated, modified or replaced unilaterally. The NC argued that the ‘temporary’ nature of this Article merely underlined the fact that the power to finalise the constitutional relationship between the state and the Union had been specifically vested in the state’s Constituent Assembly. Once the Constituent Assembly dispersed after framing the Constitution of Jammu & Kashmir, which it eventually did in 1956,
no amendments to the Constitution of India could be made in their application to the state.  

The quantum of autonomy was curbed somewhat by the terms of the Delhi Agreement concluded on 24 July 1952 between the Union and the state governments. It affirmed the following: the residuary powers, in contrast with all other constituent states of the union, were to continue to be vested in the state as provided under Article 370; the state legislature was to retain power to regulate the rights and privileges of the permanent residents or the state subjects as defined in the 1927 state order; the fundamental rights chapter of the Indian Constitution was to be applicable to the state with modifications and exceptions, such as enabling transfer of land to the tiller without payment of compensation; jurisdiction of the Supreme Court was to be extended to the state; the state flag was not to be treated as a rival of the national tricolour; the power to grant reprieve and commute sentences was to lie with the President of India; the head of the state was to be recognised by the President on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly of the state; financial arrangements were to be evolved between the state and the Union; and national emergency under Article 352 was to be made applicable to the state in case of external aggression only. In case of internal disturbances, emergency could be proclaimed only at the request or with the concurrence of the state government. The jurisdiction of the Election Commission of India regarding the state was only with regard to holding elections of the President, Vice-President and members of Parliament. Subsequent to the Agreement, the Dogra dynastic rule came to an end on 11 November 1952 and was replaced with an elected constitutional head of the state called Sadar-i-Riyasat.

Significantly, it was not a position that some of the parliamentarians took when the Delhi Agreement was placed for its ratification before the Parliament on 24 July 1952. Speaking in the Rajya Sabha, Gopalaswami Ayyangar stated that Article 370 was not a permanent feature of the Indian Constitution and ‘when time was ripe’ the provision could be wiped off the Constitution. It was very much a reiteration of the position taken by him along with Vallabhbhai Patel and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad in the Constituent Assembly when the Article (306A of the draft Constitution) came up for the discussion on 17 October 1949. Arguably, the Article was not included in the Constitution in recognition of the state’s ‘distinct Muslim majority status or to embed corresponding group rights’ but was included ‘due to particular circumstances in the state at the moment of constitutional design’ (Tillin 2006: 52).
The tenuous relationship of trust came under further strain soon after the Delhi Agreement in the form of the Jan Sangh and Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS) backed Praja Parishad movement in Jammu region, which asked for the complete merger of the state with the Union by repealing both Article 370 and the provisions of the Delhi Agreement. The death of Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, leader of the Jan Sangh, in a Srinagar jail on 22 June 1953 after being arrested by the Sheikh Abdullah government for lending support to the movement led to a massive demonstration in Jammu and also in other parts of India, raising the spectre of the resurgence of Hindu communalism. There was now a question mark as to whether a Muslim majority state could exist, without fuss or friction, in a Hindu majority Indian Union. The movement heightened anxiety about the future of secularism and, more importantly, about the safeguarding of the autonomous status of the state — the factors that formed the bases of the National Conference leadership’s support for the accession to a democratic secular India rather than to a ‘landlord-ridden’ and ‘feudal’ Pakistan (Abdullah quoted in Gupta 1966: 367–70).

The rise of Hindu communal backlash put further pressure on Sheikh Abdullah who was already under fire from the disgruntled leaders of the NC like G. M. Karra for his authoritarian ways. To make matters worse, the Union was keen to implement Delhi Agreement by appropriate decision of Kashmir’s Constituent Assembly so as to give it a legal form. The rift between the two governments was complete on 9 June 1953 when the NC working committee, under the chairmanship of Sheikh, for the first time since accession, demanded the holding of the plebiscite under the UN auspices in which the people were to be given the choice not only to choose the merger either with India or Pakistan but also ‘the choice of independence of the whole state’ or ‘independence of the whole state with joint control of foreign affairs’ or ‘Dixon plan with independence for the plebiscite area [region wise disposition of the state]’ (Noorani 1999: 268–272). What probably forced the Centre’s hand was the suspicion that Abdullah was exploring the possibility of enlisting US support for an independent Kashmir (Guha 2007: 245).

The cataclysmic event took place on 8 August 1953 when Sheikh, along with some of his colleagues like Mirza Muhammad Afzal Beg, was arrested and put under incarceration. A pliable Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, already in touch with the Centre, replaced him, heading the NC government. Equally ‘loyal’ chief ministers, namely Ghulam
Mohammad Sadiq and Mir Qasim, followed him in the coming two decades before Sheikh could return in 1975 following his accord with Indira Gandhi.

In accordance with the politics of ‘integration’, the process of the erosion of the constitutional basis of autonomy and interference in the state’s internal affairs commenced now in real earnest. The President’s Constitution (application to Jammu & Kashmir) Order, 1954 extended the jurisdiction of the Union Parliament from three subjects to almost all the subjects in the Union List, amounting to a reversal of the 1950 Constitution Order. Part II and Part III of the Indian Constitution were made applicable to the state and so were Part V and Part XI. The Constitution (application to Jammu & Kashmir) Order, 1958 made applicable Article 352 relating to emergency. The Constitution Order, 1963 further enabled the Union Parliament to make laws for the state in respect of the matters in the concurrent list. In 1964, Articles 356 and 357 were made applicable, enabling the President of India to take over the administration in case of the breakdown of the state’s constitutional machinery. In April 1965, the State Assembly approved a bill, changing the title Sadar-i-Riyasat to Governor and Wazir-i-Ala to Chief Minister. 42 Constitution Orders issued over the last five decades have resulted in substantially curtailing the powers of the State Legislature whereas the powers of the Parliament have been extended. Out of 395 Articles of the Indian Constitution, 260 Articles have been made applicable whereas 94 out of 97 subjects mentioned in the Union List in the Seventh Schedule of the 1950 Indian Constitution are now applicable to the state. Out of the 47 subjects in the Concurrent List, 26 subjects, and out of 12 Schedules, seven are applicable to the state now.

The State Autonomy Committee (SAC), constituted by the Farooq Abdullah, led the NC government after coming to power in 1996; in its 1999 report is recounted the whole process: ‘from 1953 onwards, especially in the sixties, the process of erosion of the state autonomy was so rapid and on such a massive scale that … the state’s jurisdiction over the matters as (originally) envisaged … was gradually diminished and systematically transferred to the Union’ (SAC Report 1999: 77).

That the state government could review of all the ‘laws made by the

---

7 The SAC, in its report, had recommended that ‘the best course is for the President to repeal all Orders which are not in conformity with Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order 1950 and the terms of the Delhi Agreement of 1952’ (SAC Report 1999: 77). The Union Government, led by
parliament or extended to the state after 1953 on any matter relatable to the Concurrent List and may decide which of them, in its opinion, needs amendment or repeal’ was accepted by the centre in the form of yet another Kashmir Accord negotiated between Mirza Afzal Beg and G Parthasarathy on behalf of Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi respectively on 13 November 1974 (Singh 2002: 126). It, however, met with the same dismal fate as ‘the promised review of all Acts and Ordinances passed since the Sheikh’s arrest never took place’ (Chadha Behera 2000: 135).

The colossal erosion of the autonomous status of the state impelled the people of Kashmir to bitterly recall ‘the state’s initial flirtation with a conspicuously strong species of autonomy’ (Wirsing 2003: 203). Worse, the non-institutional and non-representative character of power politics under the garb of autonomy created multiple pockets of mass discontent and political mobilisation in the valley. The ‘nationalist’ political class was allowed to usurp all political and economic power using fraudulent means.

Bereft of popular support, the state regime ‘looked towards Delhi to strengthen its power as Kashmir stood as the nucleus of India’s secularist conception of the state’ (Prakash 2000: 2059). Repeated electoral malpractices were deliberately resorted to at the behest of the Indian state so that a credible opposition could not emerge in the valley. Kashmir ‘policy’ stipulated that all ‘secular’ and what could be called ‘pro-India’ forces were to remain united under one party to fight against the ‘communal’ and ‘anti-India’ forces (read pro-autonomy/azadi political forces). In pursuit of such ‘policy’, the Parliament passed the 16th Amendment Act in 1963, which stipulated that all candidates were to take an oath to uphold the ‘integrity of India’. It also passed the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in 1966.

A. B. Vajpayee, however, promptly rejected the recommendations, fearing that it would lead to the rise of fissiparous tendencies in other crisis states.

8 In the election to the State Constituent Assembly, the NC won all the 75 seats. Nobody opposed the NC candidates in the Kashmir region whereas in the Jammu region nomination papers of all the opposition candidates were rejected on flimsy grounds. The electoral rigging has been a fact of life for the people of Kashmir. As for the Assembly elections that took place till 1967: In the 1951 elections, 73 out of 75 seats were won by the NC uncontested; in the 1957 elections, 43 candidates out of 75 were elected unopposed; 70 candidates were returned unopposed in 1962 elections. In 1967, the nomination papers of 118 opposition candidates were rejected; 39 out of 75 Assembly constituencies returned candidates unopposed (Commentary 1999: 2703).
The constant denial of the democratic right to change, elect and oppose the government and the political party in power through electoral process ‘merely reminded’ the people that ‘they were less than full citizens of India’ (Puri 2000: 2219). As elections after elections were widely (and correctly) perceived as merely legitimising the predetermined choices, they failed to serve as means to articulate the political and economic exploitation of the people. It certainly led to a large plurality of the electorate to lose confidence in the system and quite a few of them completely opted out in favour of the method of the bullet.

The undemocratic manner in which a popularly elected government of Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, who had succeeded Sheikh after his death in 1982, was dismissed by then Governor Jagmohan, allegedly appointed for the purpose by Indira Gandhi after his predecessor B. K. Nehru had refused to do the hatchet job, did further damage to the credibility of the ‘Delhi Durbar’. Defection within the ruling NC was engineered for the purpose merely because Farooq was perceived as hobnobbing with the opposition leaders and, more importantly, had successfully campaigned in the 1983 Assembly elections on an anti-Congress, anti-Delhi and pro-Kashmiri autonomy plank. The fears of the Muslim majority of the valley worsened when Indira Gandhi personally led a highly communal campaign in Jammu region to mobilise the Hindu minority.

The final act came in the form of the Assembly elections in 1987 when a ‘chastened’ (and ‘pragmatic’) Farooq Abdullah finally ‘realised’ in 1986 before entering into an accord with the Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress that ‘any one who wants to form a government in Kashmir, cannot do so without sharing power with New Delhi. The people’s support did not matter much’ (Abdullah quoted in Puri 1993: 51, my emphasis).

The autonomist forces, forming an umbrella grouping — the Muslim United Front (MUF) — opposed the opportunistic electoral alliance between the Congress and the NC in the Assembly elections held in 1987. The electoral defeat of the MUF, through now familiar dubious means, was followed by police atrocities against the candidates.9

---

9 Even the Intelligence Bureau, a Government of India body, conceded that as many as 13 seats were lost by the MUF due to the ‘electoral malpractices’ (Widmalm 1988: 167).
The 1987 Assembly elections marked the last straw as the people lost all hope in the Indian democracy. A combination of ‘weakening political institutions like parties and an unaccommodating national leadership’ pushed the valley towards politics of violence (Kohli 1995: 29). Initial leadership of the Pakistan-backed militant organisations like the pro-azadi Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) or the pro-Pakistan Hizb-ul-Mujahideen was in the hands of the same Kashmiri politicians who had repeatedly been denied the minimalist democratic rights to participate, contest and get elected through elections.

The massive anti-India demonstrations followed by selective killings of the alleged ‘collaborators’ in the valley started in late 1989. The Indian state, instead of dealing with the situation with sensitivity, tried in vain to contain the movement through use of excessive force by deploying armed forces at a massive level. Breakdown of the constitutional order resulted in the imposition of President’s rule till 1996. In another sign of the centre’s perspective of seeing the problem as a ‘law and order problem’, the former army and police officers were appointed as governors and advisers in the strife-torn state (like in Punjab and in the north-east). What followed was a large-scale violation of human rights, chronicled in different independent reports by the human rights bodies and the activists. Security forces’ presence in the valley was reinforced by the extension of the extra-ordinary laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the introduction of the Disturbed Areas Act. Bose succinctly concludes that ‘the popular uprising for ‘self-determination’ … has been caused by … political dynamic and sequence of events, which has everything to do … with the denial of democracy by the Indian State to its Kashmiri citizens in the post-colonial period’ (Bose 1997: 115).

Though underemphasised, pervading alienation in the valley has a political economy dimension also. As a part of the ‘autonomy package’, Jammu & Kashmir, economically impoverished at the time of accession, was assured substantial financial subsidy to facilitate its ‘economic development’. Marked as a ‘special category state’, the

---

10 Significantly India’s ‘golden moment’ in Kashmir when it ‘was quiet-and beautiful as ever’ followed the first ever free and fair elections in the state in 1977, ensuring the victory of the revived NC led by Sheikh Abdullah (Varshney 1992: 217).
centre funded 90 per cent of the state’s plan in the 1950s and 1960s which has now been turned into 30 per cent grants and 70 per cent loans. This policy of economic appeasement, ostensibly to win the peoples support, failed miserably in its objective as the state witnessed the emergence of what can be called a model of ‘parasitic capitalism, whereby economic policies are determined by political motivations, causing imbalanced growth’ (Prakash 2000: 2057). A high cost dependent economy emerged, negating local entrepreneurship. The local political class, in connivance with the bureaucracy, manipulated the generous grants, indulging in unscrupulous rent-seeking activities.11 The agrarian sector that contributes to 40 per cent of state domestic product and engages two-thirds of the employable workforce in the state has remained a one-crop, one-season subsistence economy despite the radical land reforms undertaken by the NC in the 1950s.12 Cropping patterns, lack of irrigation, power shortages, climatic difficulties and the low size of landholdings have all nullified the gains of the land reforms as well as the financial/technological assistance from the centre, ensuring that the state remains food grains deficit one (Chandhoke 2006: 10–11). The ongoing ethnic strife has adversely affected both the tourism industry as well as horticultural exports in the valley. A huge chunk of productive land (170 sq. km as per the official records, not including an equal amount under illegal occupation) remains under the control of more than half a million security forces stationed in the state (Navlakha 2007: 4038).

Lack of development of industries and absence of private investment led to the failure of the educated youth, whose number has swelled due to the setting up of educational institutions, to have access

---

11 The varied electoral response of the people in the three regions of the state over the years has been illustrative of the misgivings the people in the Ladakh and Jammu regions have developed about the so-called autonomous status of the state. The Indian state has exploited such misgivings to deny the restoration of autonomy.

12 On 13 July the 1950 NC government, acting on its New Kashmir Manifesto (1944), introduced sweeping land reforms. During the 1950–52 period as many as 700,000 landless tenants, mostly Muslims from Kashmir but also low-caste Hindus from Jammu, became landowners as over a million acres were directly transferred to them (Dasgupta 1968: 387–88; Thorners 1976: 50; Ladenskaja 1977: 179). The continued popularity of NC cadres in rural Kashmir till date can be partly attributed to this.
to public employment. Faced with an uncertain future in a failed system marked by corruption, nepotism and embezzlement of public funds, the disgruntled youth played the role of a catalyst in mobilising the masses. The emergence of this independent and significant political force rendered ‘the old Congress system of patronage chain of big men infructuous in mobilizing an increasingly fragmented political society’ (Kohli 1994: 98). The madrasas that came up in the valley in the 1970s also became the breeding ground for the rise of Islamic fundamentalism among the youth who constitute almost one-third of the local militants (Ganguly 1997: 30). It is this educated youth that has formed the cadre of the separatist parties under the banner of the All-Parties Hurriyet Conference (APHC).

Since the revival of the elections in 1996, political space in the last two decades has somewhat expanded with the emergence of the People Democratic Party (PDP) as the first credible ‘mainstream’ state level party besides the NC in the valley. Parties have been able to recapture their legitimacy and relevance as the elections have been taking place periodically and in a ‘free and fair’ manner. The electoral compulsion of winning seats from all the three regions and the logic of coalition politics has also brought down ethnic stridency. Parties, in an attempt to recapture their relevance, are taking up the issues concerning the wider masses like fight against corruption, development of the education and health sectors and even local concerns like the human rights abuses by the security forces and the extraordinary laws. The people’s growing disillusionment with the violence and destruction caused by nearly two decades of armed struggle, now dominated by the ‘guest’ (read foreigners) mujahideen, has also contributed to the revival of democratic process in the valley.

Abhorring militancy that has played havoc with their lives does not mean, however, that the people in the valley are no longer alienated. The massive demonstrations in the valley over the Amaranth Shrine Board issue in 2008, reminiscent of the early 1990s and the unwillingness of the separatist parties under the banner of Hurriyet Conference to contest the 2008 Assembly or 2009 Lok Sabha elections are pointers to the fact that the situation is far from normal. The alleged rape and murder of the two Kashmiri women by the armed forces personnel in the valley triggered another spate of mass demonstration and strikes in late 2009. Despite the repeated demand for the reduction of the security forces from the valley even by the mainstream parties like the PDP, the valley continues to have the presence of a large contingent
of the armed forces combating armed militancy that has long assumed the form of a low intensity war that goes on unabated.

**Case of Punjab**

Partition marked the shaping of an autonomous political identity of the Sikh community that was manifest in the form of the creation of a territorial homeland. On the eve of partition, a segment of the Akali leadership in Punjab, which had vehemently opposed the partition, raised the emotive question: ‘The Hindus got Hindustan, the Muslims got Pakistan; what did the Sikhs get?’ Apprehensive of the losses the Sikh community would have suffered in the event of the partition based on the two-nation theory, the Akalis had, in vain, asked for a separate independent state of Punjab with a population ratio of 40:40:20 among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Following the rejection of this demand both by the colonial regime as well as the nationalist leadership, the Akali Dal passed a resolution in March 1946 demanding the creation of a separate independent state for the Sikhs. However, the Sikhs were scattered between east and west Punjab and constituted merely 15 per cent of the total population of an undivided Punjab.

Like among the Muslims in the valley, there was uneasiness among the Sikh community regarding the political status of the minority Sikh community in a Hindu-majority India which could be traced back to the colonial period. The traumatic experiences of the 1940s impelled the

---

13 The apprehension was rooted into the mobilisation of the Hindus by the Arya Samaj in colonial Punjab by glorifying the Vedic tradition. Hindus were asked to register ‘Arya Bhasa’ Hindi as their mother tongue. Its attempt to assimilate the Sikh identity in an overarching Arya Dharma contributed to the crystallisation of Sikh identity in the form of the Tat Khalsa movement. The Arya Samaj also launched the Shuddhi movement, aimed at reconverting the Muslim and Sikh depressed classes into the Hindu fold by a process of purification. The movement was in response to developments like the late colonial policy of favouring the Muslims over the Hindus; enumeration of the Dalits as a category separate from caste Hindus in the 1901 and 1911 Census, which would have reduced the Hindus to a minority under the separate communal electorate introduced vide the 1909 Morley–Minto Reforms; and the rise of the Ad Dharm Movement led by Mangoo Ram under whose influence the Dalits had registered themselves as non-Hindus (Ram 2004). The Sikhs countered by organising the Singh Sabhas, which not only underlined the difference between the Hindus and the Sikhs as two separate religious communities, but also demanded reservations for the Sikhs in the colonial services. Akalis championed the cause of ‘Punjab, Punjabi and
Sikh leadership, especially the Akalis in Punjab, to look for a political solution that could safeguard the community’s rights and interests.\textsuperscript{14}

Akali Dal representatives, elected on the basis of the separate communal electorate system in the Constituent Assembly, asked for a separate communal electorate and reservation of seats for the Sikhs in the legislative bodies. Non-acceptance of the demands resulted in the refusal of the Akali representatives to sign the final draft of the Constitution. The Akali demand for extending reservation benefits to the Scheduled Castes people, who had converted to Sikhism, was accepted only in 1956 by the Union Government (Hasan 2009: 221). Demand for community representation in the prospective national flag of independent India was, however, rejected (Kaur Singh 2003: 189).

The refusal of the State Reorganisation Commission to recognise Punjabi language as the basis for the creation of a Punjabi Suba hurt the Sikh psyche who felt that Punjabi had been denied its rightful status (Jodhka 2006: 12–16). As Brass has argued, the rejection was ‘an overt and deliberate political act designed to undercut linguistic basis of Punjabi Suba demand’ as ‘the dominant Hindu majority, unable to assimilate the Sikhs, adopted the tactic of avoiding their language so that the Sikhs, a minority people by religion, might become a minority by language as well’ (1974: 327).

\textsuperscript{14} The Sikh leadership had assurance in the form of a promise made by would-be Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who proclaimed that in an independent India the Sikh community, which had sacrificed a lot during the freedom struggle, would
The assertion of the demand for a ‘self-determined political status’ for the Sikhs within the Union was evident in the form of the Punjabi Suba movement that was subsequently launched. The Akali leadership never concealed its real intention, i.e., concern for preserving an autonomous Sikh identity despite launching the movement ostensibly on the linguistic basis. The Punjabi Suba movement consolidated the process of religion-based linguistic differentiation by imagining Punjab as a territorial homeland for the Sikhs. It was based on the notion of ‘Raj Karega Khalsa’ or ‘Khalsa Ka Bolbala’ (pre-eminence of Khalsa). This wish of the Akali Dal was not realised due to the colossal presence of the Congress, which dominated the electoral politics of post-partition Punjab to the extent that it even incorporated the Akali Dal in 1948–51 and again in 1956 on the eve of the general elections.

The Punjabi Suba movement marked the growing cleavage between the two communities now competing for political and economic supremacy after the mass exodus of the Muslims. The rural–urban divide, that can be traced back to the colonial past as discussed above, also played a role in accentuating identity politics.

The second phase of the agitation was launched in 1965 under the leadership of Sant Fateh Singh, the first Jat leader of Akali Dal who succeeded Master Tara Singh, a Khatri Sikh, marking a decisive shift in the sociological origin of the Akali leadership. Akalis now onwards couched their demands for Punjabi Suba in more inclusive terms of culture and language. This led to the acceptance of the demand by the parliamentary committee set up for the purpose at the end of the India–Pakistan war, marked by the heroic contribution of the Sikh community. It also helped that Nehru and Pratap Singh Kairon, the long-term Congress Chief Minister of Punjab, who were both opposed to the demand, were no more. Moreover, the movement for the formation of a Hindi-speaking Haryana in the south-east of

be assured of a ‘favoured status’ so that it could experience the ‘glow of freedom’. Interestingly, in the autonomy discourse, the sacrifice of the community is always highlighted, be it the freedom struggle or the wars fought with Pakistan.

After partition, though the Sikhs were still in a minority, 35 per cent, compared to 62 per cent of the Hindus in the Indian Punjab but now, as a result of movement of the communities across the border in the partition holocaust, they were concentrated in the central districts of Punjab, which made the demand for Punjabi Suba feasible.
the then Punjab had modified the thrust of Hindi/Hindu movement within the state.

Punjabi Suba, with Sikhs constituting 60 per cent of the population, was created on 1 November 1966. The delay in the decision, however, has always rankled in the Sikh psyche as an act of bad faith on the part of the Indian state. Punjabi Suba thus created did not include many Punjabi-speaking areas as the 1961 Census returns was considered as the basis of demarcation. The Census was considered flawed due to the communalisation of the language issue. The Union Territory status of Chandigarh as well as the shifting Bhakra Nangal Dam under the Union Government’s jurisdiction also remained contentious issues.16

The formation of Punjabi Suba, however, did not ensure the pre-eminence of the Akali Dal in electoral terms as the party had hoped. It had to enter into a coalitional arrangement after the 1967 Assembly elections to form the government that lasted merely for eight months. The party, in order to consolidate its alliance with the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, had to accept the three-language formula as suggested by the Sachar Committee by accepting Hindi as the link language along with English and Punjabi being the official language of the state. Despite the differences over the language issue as well as over the autonomy issue, the alliance between the two ethnic parties survived due to their complementary support base.

The Congress actively encouraged factionalism within the Akali Dal in an effort to weaken it. It also enjoyed a decent support base among the Sikh community, especially among the marginal Scheduled Castes and the urban upper castes (known as Bhapas). The Akali Dal, closely identified with the dominant Jat Sikh landed peasantry, which constitute a mere 20 per cent of the population, had the mammoth task of creating a majority out of a minority, so to say.

It was the above electoral compulsion that forced the Akalis to resort once again to the religious idiom by giving the slogan of ‘panth in danger’. In more secular terms, it also started asking for the recasting of the Centre–state relations as the Centre continued to meddle with state politics. The demand for autonomy found its echo in the form of the Anandpur Sahib Resolutions adopted by the Akali Dal in 1973.

16 The transfer of Chandigarh was subject to the exchange of 114 villages in the Fazilka and Abohar tehsils to Haryana by 1975 and also Punjab was to compensate Haryana with a grant of Rs 200 million for the construction of its new capital.
Like the NC, the Akali Dal also sought to restrict the Centre’s powers to the subjects of defence, foreign affairs, inter-state communication and currency. Describing the Sikhs as a separate Qaum/Panth (religio-political community/nation), the Akalis looked upon themselves as ‘embodiment of its hopes and aspirations’. As Brass argues: ‘The Akali Dal has not been simply a political expression, but it has played a critical role in creating a modern Sikh nation’ (Brass 1974: 433).

The resolutions incorporated seven objectives aimed at establishing the ‘pre-eminence of the Khalsa through creation of a congenial environment and a political set up’. These were: transfer of the federally administered city of Chandigarh to Punjab; readjustment of the state boundaries to include certain Sikh-majority Punjabi-speaking territories presently outside but contiguous to Punjab; demand for autonomy to all the states of India with the Centre retaining jurisdiction only over external affairs; defence and communications; introduction of land reforms in the form of land ceiling being raised to 30 acres instead of prevailing 17.50 acres as well as subsidies and loans for the peasantry and measures to bring about heavy industrialisation in Punjab; the enactment of an All India Gurudwara Act to bring all the historic gurdwaras under the control of the SGPC; protection for the Sikh minorities living outside the state; reversal of the new recruitment policy of the Centre under which the recruitment quota of Sikhs in the armed forces was to go down from 20 per cent to 2 per cent.

The working committee of the Akali Dal added two new demands to the Anandpur Sahib Resolutions in February 1981 after which a set of 45 demands were submitted to the Centre in September in the same year. The two new demands were the halting of reallocation of available waters of riparian Punjab to non-riparian states. Under the federally regulated arrangements, 75 per cent of the river waters of Punjab were being allocated to other states and the recognition of separate Sikh personal law. The Akalis also demanded the reformation/repealing of Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, which proclaims that Sikhs are a sect of Hinduism, so as to constitutionally recognise the Sikhs as a separate religious community.

The texts of the two Anandpur Sahib Resolutions, irrespective of their different interpretations by the different factions of the Akali Dal and also the propaganda of the other political parties (read the Congress), essentially highlighted the social, political and economic grievances of the state under an increasingly centralised Indian state.
The ‘religio-political ideology’ did get reflected, however, as the resolutions also stipulated that in the proposed ‘new’ Punjab with enlarged territory (the Sikhs ironically would be losing their slender majority as of present in that case), the ‘interests of the Sikhs are to be specifically protected’ and the Sikhs are to have a ‘paramount place or enjoy pre-eminence’.

Sharp Hindu hostility to the resolution provoked emotional allegiance for the resolutions among a sizable section of the Sikh community, thereby constraining them from noticing contradictions in it. As in the case of the Punjabi Suba movement, the mass thinking on these resolutions also received communal colouring. Principles of ‘rights and shared sovereignty’ enshrined in the Anandpur Sahib Resolutions were summarily rejected by the Indian state as inimical to national unity and integrity. The demands were decried as communal and also that they did not express the political aspirations of the wider masses.

The repeated failures in the negotiations with the Centre that began in October 1981 led to intensification of the second phase of the Akali agitation for the right to self-determination/autonomy. The repeated back out by the Congress-led Union Government, after making promises to the moderate faction of Akali leadership, gradually weakened their position and worsened the situation in the state.

With the marginalisation of the moderates due to the manoeuvrability of the Centre, the movement was gradually taken over by the militants led by Bhindranwale, who had initially been propped up by the Congress leaders to weaken the Akalis. The militant movement replacing the Akali Dharam Yudh Morchas now aimed at the creation of an independent Sikh state of Khalistan. Punjab witnessed mass-scale killings and violations of human rights at the hands of both the militants as well as the state agents. Assault on Bhindranwale and his followers, who had taken shelter in the Golden Temple complex, by the Indian army in an operation known as Operation Blue Star saw killings of a large number of civilians trapped inside. Large-scale house-to-house searches by security forces in rural Punjab followed; this was known as Operation Wood Rose.

The anti-Sikh riots allegedly instigated by some of the Congress leaders in Delhi and some other Indian cities after the assassination of Indira Gandhi further accentuated the political alienation of the Sikh community. The Akali leaders, most of whom were released only in March 1985 after spending months in Jail during the post-Bluestar period, made an attempt to save Punjab from the scourge of religious
fundamentalism and militancy in the form of the Rajiv–Longowal Accord on 24 July 1985. In the face of stiff opposition from Haryana and the assassination of Longowal shortly after, the Accord proved to be a non-starter. As a result, the Akalis, who had an absolute majority in the state legislature as a result of their victory in 1985 elections, helplessly witnessed growing militancy and increasing communal polarisation. These developments led to heightened acrimony between the moderate and extremist factions within the Akali Dal. The continued efforts to create divisions within the different factions of the Akali Dal further weakened the support base of the moderates, leading to the subsequent dismissal of the Barnala government in 1987. The Akali Dal once again came under the firm control of the extremists and the elements supportive of the idea of Khalistan. The situation remained unchanged even after the victory of the Akali Dal (Mann) in the November 1989 parliamentary elections. The party now clearly stood for the right to self-determination under the presidentship of Simranjit Singh Mann that subsequently found expression in the form of the Amritsar Declaration.

Militancy in Punjab could finally be crushed by the Beant Singh-led Congress government that came to power through the 1992 Assembly elections which was boycotted by the Akalis. The period saw gross violation of human rights as draconian extraordinary laws were enforced. Militants by that time had got discredited due to the atrocities committed by them. In any case, the demand for Khalistan never had popular support even after Operation Blue Star. Mainstream politics got revived with the 1993 Panchayati Raj elections which saw participation by all the parties and an impressive turnout of the voters. The Panthic agenda, which had given an initial boost to militancy, was now gradually replaced by an agenda for peace and Hindu–Sikh unity. In the historic Moga declaration in February 1996, the Akalis vowed to work for the all-encompassing ‘Panth, Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiat’ (Kumar 2004: 1519). Accused of being regional, sectarian and at times even communal by its detractors, the Akalis stopped raising the spectre of ‘Panth in danger’ and would rather talk of ‘Punjab in danger’. Guru Nanak Dev’s principles of ‘sarbat da bhala’ (welfare of all) and ‘manas ki jaat sabhey ek hai pehchan bo’ (universality and equality of mankind) became the watchwords now (Pandher 2007: 114).

The newly found moderation in the Akali Dal can partly be attributed also to its renewed alliance with the new incarnation of the Jan Sangh,
namely the Bhartiya Janata Party, a pro-Hindutva national party with a support base among the urban upper-caste Hindus. The BJP has been a critic of the Anandpur Sahib Resolutions and is opposed to the autonomy demand. Most recently, the Akali Dal had to omit reference to the Anandpur Sahib Resolutions in its party manifesto for the 2009 parliamentary elections on the insistence of the BJP, which is a partner in the coalition government in the state.

The paradigmatic shift can also be explained in terms of the coming up of a new generation of youth that has grown up in peaceful Punjab for whom the Operation Bluestar and anti-Sikh riots are distant memories. Under the new Akali leadership, secular politics is taking precedence over identity politics that thrived on linguistic, religious and regional aspirations.

The present shift from ‘gurdwara politics’ to developmental politics, however, still remains mostly at the level of political rhetoric and is yet to be translated into ground reality, despite the grim fact that post-Green Revolution Punjab has been witness to a deceleration in the economic growth. Rising costs along with stagnant technology and near freezing of the minimum support price of wheat and paddy have brought about indebtedness among the farmers who are being forced to commit suicide, especially in the cotton belt of the Malwa region. With investments in the industrial sector going to the neighbouring ‘progressive’ states, agro-centric Punjab’s economic growth rate has been less than the national average right since the 1990s. Reminiscent of the ‘high cost economy’ in Kashmir, Punjab has been witness to the populist policy of heavy state subsidies in the form of free water, electricity, foodgrain prices and exemption from certain taxes that actually help the rich farmers and drain the public exchequer. Also, a top-heavy and corrupted bureaucracy that was politicised during the days of militancy further bleeds the economy.

There is thus a marked dissonance between the political economy and the political processes in Punjab, with the former hardly influencing the latter (Chandhoke and Priyadarshi 2006: 2). Substantive economic issues like the structural crisis in the agrarian sector hardly find space in the political discourse of the state. In the radical discourse, however, the present crisis is attributed to a conscious and deliberate policy of the Indian state to use Punjab to act as bowl of foodgrain-deficient India while neglecting the state’s industrial growth. Now, when the Green Revolution has run its course, the Centre is not coming to the rescue of the beleaguered farmers.
The closed nature of the state electoral politics in terms of the caste/community/gender hardly helps in having assurance for lasting peace in the state. The growing assertion of the Dalits and caste-related rural violence, the continued Akali backlash against the followers of Deras like Dera Sacha Sauda and the ongoing politics of vendetta, intimidation bordering on violence against the political opposition (refer the summary expulsion of former Chief Minister Amrinder Singh from the Assembly on alleged corruption charges and the anomalies that were overlooked in the 2008 panchayat elections [The Hindu 2008]) are ominous signs for a state where not long ago militancy was brutally crushed without a single demand of the Anandpur Sahib Resolutions being met.

**Summing Up**

The article argues that the two most numerous religious communities in the states under study have experienced various moments of troubled relations between them. However, this has not been merely because they belonged to different ethnic, religious or linguistic categories but primarily due to the political and economic differences between them (Singh 2002: 175).

What have been the commonalities in terms of the response of the Indian state towards the two movements that the article referred to at the outset? As the above narration of the political developments in the two states reveals, instead of understanding the historical bases of the regional autonomist movements and exploring the possible democratic solutions, the centralising and personalising political class at the helm of the Indian state dubbed the movements as communal in nature and for a considerable period of time considered them as law-and-order problems, demanding merely an armed response.17

---

17 While the religious aspect obviously cannot be ignored, the Kashmiri Muslim resentment against Indian rule cannot be said to be simply a result of inherent antagonism between Islam and Hinduism or between Hindus and Muslims as such … Furthermore the argument that the Kashmiri movement is in essence an ‘Islamic’ or a Muslim “communal” movement, one ignores the fact that long before the Islamists entered the scene, the movement was led largely by secular elements, such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, who while advocating independence for Kashmir, were opposed to the notion of an “Islamist” state, at least of the kind proposed by the Islamists active in Kashmir today, such as Lashkar-i Tayyeba and the Jama’at-i Islami’ (Sikand 2002: 43).
The Indian state, in order to ‘deal’ with these autonomist/secessionist movements, has invariably taken recourse to a kind of lopsided politics that has been based on coercion (deployment of armed forces and repression of the movement with the help of extraordinary laws), economic populism (in the form of economic packages and subsidies), ad hoc-ism (in the form of having a short-term security-centric policy) and cooperation/co-option (with the locally discredited ‘nationalist’ leadership in the form of repeatedly failed Accords).

Regional and religious differences and discontent over the perceived domination of the majority community leadership in the two states have often been used in the past as the pretext to recklessly pursue the ‘hegemonised’ and ‘homogenised’ politics rather than acknowledging and accommodating the competing national and quasi-national identities and their demands.

As for the different outcomes in the two states, despite adherence to the analogous nature of the ‘policy’ employed by an unaccommodating political class bent upon undermining the federal democratic institutions, the return of ‘normalcy’ to Punjab as opposed to the continued turmoil in Kashmir can be attributed to the following five factors.

Notwithstanding the manoeuvrings of the central state, the representative democratic institutions did exist in post-partition Punjab barring the years of President’s rule as the elections did take place periodically and in a fair manner. It is hardly surprising that 1993 panchayat elections followed by the Assembly elections in 1997 turned the tide. This was not the case with Kashmir, where democracy, even in its minimalist form, has never been given a chance except in recent years. Elections were time and again manipulated and democratic institutions and rights were never respected even during the years when Sheikh was at the helm of affairs. Thus different trajectories of the two autonomist movements — the first being accommodated and the second continuing to witness the violence — have to do with the level of institutionalisation in the two states.

Second, unlike in the case of the Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims, the close cultural and social affinity (intermarriages; the two brothers in the same family being Sikh and Hindu) between the Hindus and the Sikhs has always been evident even in the face of extreme provocation during the period of heightened militancy. That the two communities have been mutually dependent upon each other in the economic terms has also contributed to the return to peace as Punjabi got
strengthened. Significantly, there was no backlash in Punjab even after the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi.

Third, Akali mainstream thinking has always been in the favour of substantive powers for the state within the Indian Union unlike in the Kashmir where the movement’s demand has always been overwhelmingly in favour of azadi (independence) or right to self-determination.

Fourth, Pakistan’s continuing involvement in Kashmir is also important. Kashmir has been the ‘core issue’ for Pakistan, an unfinished part of the partition agenda. This was never the case with the demand for Khalistan.

Fifth, one can possibly argue on the basis of recent worldwide experiences that an assertion of ‘political identity based on Islam is felt both more intensely and more comprehensively’ and thus one cannot expect ‘an Islam based ethnic movement to follow a trajectory similar to that followed by...Sikh nationalist movements’ (Kohli 1995: 29). Unlike the separatist movement in Punjab, which was lacking in terms of ideological cohesiveness and rampant factionalism and personalised enmity, the movement in Kashmir has increasingly been influenced and sustained by the global Islamist jihad ideology.

Reference


Engineer, Asghar Ali. 2000. ‘Can Autonomy be a Solution?’ Economic and Political Weekly. 1 July.


Part III

Caste and Politics of Marginality
This article makes an attempt to enquire into the nature of contemporary patterns of politics of a caste — the caste of the Lingayats — as it has unfolded through the work of its caste associations, in a subregion of the state of Maharashtra. This kind of exercise might appear a bit unusual, given the fact that the Lingayats constitute a dominant caste group, not in Maharashtra but in the neighbouring state of Karnataka. However, it is precisely due to their unusual location within the social hierarchy of Maharashtra that the article takes up the case of the Lingayats to investigate into the contemporary patterns of identity politics at the local–regional level, bringing about its specificity.

These patterns of identity politics were characteristically shaped in the context of the momentous decade of the 1990s, when complex processes of political configuration and social churning unfolded in the Indian political system. The ‘post-Congress polity’ of the 1990s has often been discussed in terms of rise of a competitive multi-party system and coalitional politics, increased levels of political participation of the marginalised social groups and a gradual process of regionalisation of the Indian polity in which political competitions were essentially set in the regional context and thus became multi-polar and spatially dispersed in nature. These political changes were strongly connected to the large-scale social churning that was taking place in Indian society at that time.

* The author gratefully acknowledges research assistance given by Appa Saheb Deshmukh in collecting information about associations of the Lingayats in southern Maharashtra and in parts of northern Karnataka. The fieldwork was conducted as part of a research project on the ‘Role of Caste Associations in Contemporary Indian Politics’ funded by the University of Pune.
The changing nature of the regional (and national) political economies in the wake of liberalisation, the politics of Hindutva (with all its regional variants) and the rise of OBC politics or the politics of Mandal perhaps constituted the three most significant dimensions of this social churning. Intricate reinforcements of these social and political factors during this period unleashed many simultaneous political trajectories across the regions of the country and complex patterns of identity politics were shaped as a part of these trajectories.

The politics of caste always played a very important role in deciding the nature of regional politics in India. Caste acted not just as one more societal factor in regional politics but often subsumed other factors within it (Palshikar 2006). Since caste essentially operated as a localised unit of social organisation, caste-based mobilisations were always local–regional in nature. The local–regional existence of caste helped to establish a complex relationship of interdependence between caste and region. As Palshikar suggests, ‘(C)aste is expressed regionally, region becomes politically sustainable on the basis of caste; caste is bound up by territoriality and in constituting social space caste takes the form of a region’ (ibid.: 272).

In the first phase of post-independence politics, the dominant castes of the region could manage this relationship to combine caste with other factors like language, regional pride and politics of development and could successfully preside over regional polities. However, the nature of relationship between caste and region became more nuanced in the 1990s under the twin impact of the processes of Mandalisation and regionalisation. This was caused by the new political aspirations that the post-Mandal politics unleashed among the hitherto dormant castes. As a result of these aspirations, caste consciousness was revisited and redefined under the changed context and each small backward caste started demanding a share in political power. This led to fragmentation of the existing or imagined caste blocs, rise of single-caste consciousness in electoral and mobilisation politics and multiple dispersal of claims to power and representation.

The politics of Mandal thus contributed to the process of regionalisation of politics and to the emerging multi-polar competitive party politics in the electoral arena. At the same time, processes of regionalisation and the subsequent rise of a competitive party system provided a possibility for many marginal, localised caste units to take an active part in politics and to assert their bargaining powers. Their mobilisations challenged the dominance of the regionally dominant
castes, upset the earlier tone of regional politics and encouraged a further dispersal of political competition not only at the regional, but at the local, subregional level.

Over the decades the nature of caste itself has been changing. Long-term material and cultural processes like capitalist development, education and urbanisation have borne a crucial impact on the process of secularisation of caste (Sheth 1999). These processes have also led to internal economic stratification within each caste in a significant way (Deshpande 2004). On the other hand, the processes of politicisation and the subsequent democratisation of caste (Kothari 1970) that unfolded since the early period of post-independence politics also proved crucial in bringing about a substantive change in the nature of the caste situation. The official discourse of affirmative policies including the policy of protective discrimination in the form of reservations, in which the state legitimised caste as a category in the social and political sphere, may be seen as the third important factor that has contributed to the changing nature of caste reality in India. In fact, it was the reservation discourse, or the politics of Mandal, that followed ‘kisan politics’, that ultimately reset the contours of regional politics, influenced the relationship between caste and region at various levels and shaped up a new kind of identity politics beginning the 1990s.

The caste-based identity-centred politics of the 1990s encouraged a new kind of political bargaining at the regional and subregional levels. It required some kind of federative processes in which castes and communities could come together to form loose alliances. At the same time, this politics also encouraged constant fragmentation and realignment of social blocs due to its extremely competitive, tentative character. Due to the peculiar nature of this kind of political competition, the role of caste associations once again became important during this period. When caste associations were first studied in the 1960s and 1970s (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967; Shah 2002), their role in the process of secularisation, politicisation and democratisation of caste was highlighted. Caste associations were revived in the 1990s in order to take on a somewhat similar but more nuanced political role in the changing political context. A probe into the nature of caste associations in the recent phase can thus become an interesting enquiry into various aspects of contemporary existence and politics of caste. The enquiry becomes manifold in nature. At one level, it enables us understand the kind of identity politics that gets shaped around caste and its contextual
implications. Second, in our exercise to understand the existence of regions within regions, this enquiry proves useful in exploring links between caste and region at the present political juncture. And finally, an enquiry into the nature of caste associations also gives us an opportunity to understand the contemporary caste situation at a more nuanced level. It is as a part of this manifold enquiry that the present exercise tries to investigate the nature of caste associations of the Lingayats in parts of Maharashtra.

The first section of the article tries to locate the Lingayats and their politics in the overall social and political context of Maharashtra. In the second section we trace the history of the Lingayat caste associations in Sholapur, a city in the southern Maharashtra region, to link it to the rise of caste associations in the first phase of post-independence politics. The third section of the article focuses on the more recent functioning of the Lingayat caste associations, arrival of new organisations, their demands and political negotiations that they try to enter into in the changing context of state politics. What are the implications of the work of these associations for the complex dynamics of caste and region interaction in particular and caste and democracy interaction in general? How do our enquiries help in understanding the contemporary caste reality in a better manner? We wrap up the discussion, taking some of these issues at some length, in the fourth section.

Caste Politics in Maharashtra and the Role of the Lingayats

The politics of Maharashtra is known for its placid and well-knit Congress system that survived intact for almost three decades of the post-independence period. It survived on the basis of successful accommodation of the entrenched interests, a neat and institutionalised system of patronage and favourable caste equations under the leadership of the dominant Maratha-Kunbi caste cluster. The Maratha-Kunbi caste cluster derived its strength on the basis of its numerical preponderance and land ownership that led to its political dominance in the state (Baviskar 1980; Lele 1981). The most conservative estimate of their numerical strength places Maratha-Kunbis at around 31 per cent of Maharashtra’s population. It is a highly stratified caste cluster centring among peasant cultivators but reaching up to feudal
aristocrats and rulers. They show a greater degree of unification and a greater absorptive power than similar peasant-warrior caste clusters, like the Rajputs, from other Indian regions. These absorptive powers were best put to use in the formative years of the Congress dominance in state politics. Along with their numerical preponderance, the Maratha dominance was a result of patterns of landownership in Maharashtra and a historically nurtured sense of identity among the Marathas. The Congress party of the pre- and post-independence periods could successfully appropriate this sense of identity under its Bahujan Samaj ideology in which the caste/cultural conflict in Maharashtra was essentially seen in terms of a conflict between Brahmans and non-Brahmins. Marathas were seen as leading the conflict on behalf of the various small lower castes. The construction of the Bahujan ideology provided the much needed cultural tool to the Congress and Maratha dominance and politics of Maharashtra became synonymous with the politics of Marathas (Palshikar and Deshpande 2003; Vora 2003, 2009; Palshikar and Birmal 2004).

The local/subregional caste reality in Maharashtra did upset the overall patterns of Maratha dominance to a certain extent. Apart from the Marathas and Kunbis many other intermediate, trading and peasant castes did exert numerical/social dominance and controlled economic resources in certain pockets of the state (Vora, 1994; Birmal 1996). The Lingayats can definitely be seen as one of these locally dominant communities in Maharashtra. However, these communities, including the Lingayats, could not challenge the political dominance of the Marathas at the state level. The Marathas could establish horizontal and vertical alliances with these communities and could successfully retain regional political power till the decade of the 1980s.

The Maratha dominance faced its first cracks in the 1980s when the nature of the regional political economy changed rapidly in the wake of liberalisation, the politics of Mandal and of Hindutva posed a challenge to its accommodative political ideology and the nature of the party system in the state became more competitive with the rise of the BJP and the Shiv Sena as oppositional political forces. These changes altered the nature of both regional politics in general and Maratha politics in particular (Deshpande 2006). Maratha votes were fragmented across parties and yet they could retain formal political power in their hands even in the 2004 and 2009 national and state
level elections (Palshikar and Birmal 2004; Deshpande and Birmal 2009; Palshikar et al. 2009; Palshikar and Kulkarni 2010). However, the electoral contestations of the 1990s and the changing nature of the mobilisation context did provide a chance for many other social groups to take active part in the electoral and non-electoral politics of the state.

Unlike the north, the OBC politics in Maharashtra could not develop its own independent, forceful trajectory in the 1990s. Instead, the then emerging politics of opposition to the Congress rule, in the form of the BJP and the Shiv Sena, tried to accommodate OBC aspirations within its fold. However, the arrival of the Bahujan idiom (Palshikar 1994) did contribute to the redefinition of caste consciousness, rise of caste-based mobilisation including some single caste-based parties and, most importantly, to the process of regionalisation and further dispersal of party/electoral politics. The process was not limited to those castes that were officially included in the state list of OBCs. It engulfed many other smaller castes that were confined to certain subregions, had a marginal yet significant presence in the earlier electoral politics and were desperate to consolidate their claims of representation. The Lingayats of Solapur and the adjoining regions were one of them.

Lingayats in Maharashtra

The social history of the Lingayats goes back to the state of Karnataka and to the Veershaiva movement of the 12th century (McCormack 1963; Ishwaran 1983; Singh 1998). The Lingayats derive their identity from their worship of Shiva and from the sacred linga (a symbol of Shiva) that they wear on their person. The community was initially founded as a sect of Veershaivism by Basveshwara to mark revolt against Brahminical/Vedic religion. The ideology of Veershaivism that the Lingayats practiced tried to substitute the Brahminical religion in its preaching of equality before God and in establishing a new set of rituals, sacred centres based on these preachings. The Lingayats acquired a very complex social identity since the very inception of Veershaivism. Historically, the Lingayats were converted from various segments of communities following Hinduism. These communities, although they tried to replace Vedic religion, actually developed a parallel and very elaborate social hierarchy within them. The hierarchy was largely linked to the occupational distinctions among these groups. The Anthropological Survey of India (ASI) studied 24 different
Lingayat communities across six states of the country. These communities followed social divisions like sects, clans and subcastes within them and varied occupational patterns (Singh 1998: 1984–85). At the same time, all these communities together, in their religious practices, claimed the status of a separate religious sect. Many groups within the Lingayats never completely detached themselves from the fold of Hinduism. As a result, when the Bhakti movement and its historical context declined, the Lingayats gradually claimed an inclusive caste identity, especially in the states of Karnataka and Maharashtra. In discussing the status of the Lingayats as a sect, many anthropologists and sociologists (most notably Max Weber), considered the Lingayats to be the example par excellence of a religious group becoming a caste and describe them as a caste-sect (quoted by McCormack 1963). This dual identity that the Lingayats developed historically makes their case an interesting one to investigate the contemporary context of democratic politics. As a result of historical processes that spread across more than eight centuries, the Lingayats today acquire a complex social identity, an identity that oscillates between being a separate sect detached from Brahminical Hinduism and claiming the status of a dominant group within the existing caste hierarchy within Hinduism.

In Karnataka (and in the south Maharashtra region), the Lingayat dominance emerges as a result of their numerical strength, ritual status and possession of material resources. In Karnataka the Lingayats are concentrated in the Bombay-Karnataka and Hyderabad- Karnataka regions. They constitute around 16 per cent of the total population of Karnataka, of which nearly 60 per cent reside in the northern districts. This region is adjacent to the southern part of Maharashtra and forms a continuous stretch of Lingayat dominance. They constitute hardly 2 per cent of the total population of Maharashtra. However, their concentration in the southern pockets like the districts of Solapur, Kolhapur, Latur and Osmanabad makes them numerically significant at the local–regional level.

Although the Lingayats come from diverse occupational and social groups, the Lingayats in the above mentioned regions of Maharashtra and Karnataka come mostly from intermediate castes and possess material resources both in the rural as well as urban sectors. In Karnataka nearly 18 per cent of the Lingayat families own more than 5 hectares of land. Similarly, a large number of Lingayats are placed in the government sector. In Maharashtra, the Lingayats
have land ownership as well as trading monopoly in many southern districts. In Solapur, well-known Lingayat families control the cotton mills that form the backbone of the city’s economy. In other adjacent districts they are well placed as agriculturists, traders and control key resources in Maharashtra’s famous cooperative movement. The common ritual/social and economic status shared by Lingayat elites makes them a more homogeneous group in parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka. Along with the trading castes, many other small occupational groups share the Lingayat status in this region. These include artisan castes, castes traditionally engaged in services and even some formerly untouchable groups. These groups were bound together by their distinct Lingayat identity and by the numerical as well as social preponderance of the elite Lingayat sections. The consolidated strength of all the Lingayat communities transformed them into a significant caste bloc not only in Karnataka but in parts of Maharashtra as well.

The politics of the Lingayats in Karnataka is too well known and well researched (Manor 1990; Shastri 2009). In Karnataka, they form one of the two most dominant social groups contesting for political power. There is also a very neat geographical/regional division between these two communities — Lingayats and Vokkaligas — in Karnataka. Therefore, the Lingayats are able to exert complete political influence in parts of northern Karnataka region. The situation in Maharashtra is different for them. The numerical dominance of the Lingayats in Maharashtra was localised in a few centres of the state. Even in these pockets, the Maratha Kunbis have a prominent numerical as well as political presence. Thus the politics of the Lingayats in Maharashtra shaped itself not through contestation but in the form of constant negotiation with the dominant Maratha Kunbi caste bloc and other small social groups. The state level-leadership of the Marathas and the Congress encouraged these negotiations in the formative period of state politics as a part of their accommodative political ideology. The Lingayats, on the other hand, did not challenge the overall dominance of the Marathas in state politics and remained loyal to the Congress party for a long time.

On an average, around six or seven Lingayat members are elected in the Legislative Assembly of Maharashtra. Most of them are elected from Lingayat-dominant districts of the southern part. Till 1990, the Lingayat leaders were mostly loyal to the Congress party. In the district of Solapur that we want to discuss here in detail, both Lingayats and
Marathas have shared political power at the district level for a long time (Shirapurkar 2007). Economically influential Lingayat families supported the electoral politics of the Congress and the Marathas since the 1960s. The Congress, in turn, protected their economic interests in the then existing regional political economy and extended the state institutional infrastructure for the benefit of these groups.

**Akhil Bharatiya Veershaiva Mahasabha**

During this entire period the community interests of the Lingayats were represented by the Akhil Bharatiya Veershaiva Mahasabha that was established in 1904. This was a federal body that worked for the spread of Veershaivism and for protection of interests of all Lingayat communities. The work of the Mahasabha was mainly coordinated from Karnataka, but Lingayat elites from Solapur were equally active in it till 1950. Establishment of the Mahasabha was the first organised effort on the part of the Lingayats to negotiate with the then emerging modern democratic context. The formation of associations like the Mahasabha symbolised the first dynamic phase of caste politics interaction. During this entire period, caste associations became an important political agency that brought forth the secular aspects of the functioning of caste, fulfilled the integration and mobilisation functions and reconstructed caste consciousness in the context of changing social and political realities. The Veershaiva Mahasabha tried to perform these multiple functions for the Lingayats in the pre- and post-independence periods. There was much emphasis on the need for the Lingayats to modernise themselves. There were appeals to take up modern education, modern occupations/businesses and modern agriculture. The Mahasabha also appealed to its members to educate the ‘women of the community’, adopt norms of gender and caste equality and do away with the practices of untouchability. According to the Mahasabha, this would constitute the true restoration of the Veershaiva ideology. For these purposes the social role of the sacred institutions (Maths) was often discussed. Finally, the Mahasabha tried to establish an institutional support system for its members in the form of educational institutions, community halls, etc. All these were essentially efforts to cope with the changing political and social context of the post-independence period.

In its functioning, the Mahasabha projected the Veershaiva or religious identity of the Lingayats rather than their caste/community identity. Such a stance helped in the consolidation of support of all
the subcastes and communities within the Lingayat fold in favour of the Mahasabha. The religious identity was mainly used for internal consolidation of the group and for facilitating the secular material interests of the community. The politics of the Mahasabha did not acquire communal overtones in the initial period and did not antagonise Hindus or Muslims. This was mainly because the Lingayat identity was shaped differently as far as their electoral participation was concerned. Electoral politics of the Lingayats gained momentum since the creation of the state of Karnataka in the mid-1950s. The demographic and political situation in Karnataka posited the Lingayats against the Vokkaligas, a dominant peasant caste officially belonging to the Hindu fold of the caste hierarchy. Electoral contestation with the Vokkaligas saw the Lingayats acquiring the form of a dominant caste group and highlighted their numerical strength as a caste bloc. In Karnataka politics, a reference to the Lingayats actually meant the dominant landowning sections within the Lingayat group. But with advances in electoral politics, these sections could manage to create an overlap between these two groups in order to consolidate the required numerical support for Lingayat politics. Thus the Lingayats consistently used their caste identity in the electoral politics of Karnataka. The work of the Mahasabha and consolidation of the Lingayats as Veershaivaites helped in the emergence of the Lingayat caste bloc.

As discussed earlier, politics in Maharashtra was shaped differently for the Lingayats. As a part of their negotiation with the regionally dominant Maratha Kunbis, the Veershaiva Mahasabha in Maharashtra largely adopted a non-political stance. Leaders of the Mahasabha shared a good equation with the Congress party since the formative period of the nationalist movement. This equation was put to use in the early period of Congress dominance and the Lingayats in Maharashtra generally supported the Congress party. The efforts of the Mahasabha to mobilise various subcastes of the Lingayats on the basis of their distinct religious identity also proved useful in this respect. However, what helped the Mahasabha the most in maintaining its non-political stance was the limited spread of democratic politics. As a result of the well-knit Congress system almost till the 1980s, politics in Maharashtra was largely confined to the elites and offered a very limited scope for large-scale political participation. This helped the Lingayat elites to maintain their hold over the marginal subcastes within the Lingayat fold. Office bearers of the Mahasabha in Solapur mainly came from the influential trading castes within the Lingayats.
Their interests were well represented under the Congress system and also under the political economy taking shape under the leadership of the Congress. All these factors helped the Veershaiva Mahasabha to act as a federative body of the various Lingayat subcastes in the social and political spheres.

Along with the Veershaiva Mahasabha, associations of small Lingayat subcastes were formed in the pre- and post-independence periods. The Lingayat Gawalis (a subcaste representing milkmen) had established the Akhil Bharatiya Veershaiva Gawali Parishad in 1968. The community of tanners from the Lingayat fold, known as Veershaiva Kakkyyas, founded an organisation for social reforms within the community in 1937. Similarly, Lingayat subcastes in Karnataka also established their own community organisations in order to mobilise the small subsections within the Lingayat fold. However, these organisations never challenged the authority of the Mahasabha in the arena of political representation. Lingayat subcastes were a curious mix of distinct social and occupational identities that also shared the larger caste-sectarian identity of the Veershaivas. These communities looked upon their independent organisations as a useful resource in the modern context. In most cases the associations doubled up as business/occupational organisations, voiced the demands of these communities to the state regarding their caste occupations, ran a marriage bureau for the community members and generally had a very limited scope. The associations became active mainly under the changing political and social context of the 1990s.

Three Demands

Our enquiries about the history of caste associations in Maharashtra reveal a very interesting pattern of their development. This pattern is not confined to the associations of the Lingayats but is typical of associations of many other marginal castes. Like the associations of the subcastes within Lingayat fold, many other artisan and service castes in Maharashtra had formally established their caste organisations some time in the first part of the 20th century. The political role of these associations remained very marginal in the first phase of electoral politics as caste was not a dominant idiom of regional politics at that time, the dominant caste groups cornered political resources and political contestations were limited in scope. Thus many of these caste associations, including those of the Lingayat subcastes, were almost
defunct during the first three decades of the post-independence period. Their work was confined to social rituals and routine community functions like organising festivals and running marriage bureaus.

These associations acquired a more active role in the 1990s when the life and politics of these communities were disturbed at various levels. In the wake of the changing nature of regional political economies and reshaping of the reservation discourse, caste associations of the small artisan and service castes put forward three kinds of demands before the state. In economic terms the castes demanded some kind of protection to their traditional caste-based economic rights, symbolic cultural demands that helped in keeping the caste identity alive and demands to mould the reservation policy in favour of their community.

Among the Lingayats in Solapur, small artisan subcastes like the Lingayat Gawalis, Veershaiva Kkayyas and Madiwal Machayyas (washermen) reactivated their respective caste associations during the 1990s. Beyond the common sectarian identity that they shared with upper-caste Lingayats, each subcaste tried to define its own identity in terms of the three kinds of demands discussed above. These castes invented their own community heroes and their symbolic cultural demands typically involved a request to the state to name some institution after that person or to erect his statue at some place. The second set of demands was about protection of their community-based economic rights. This has been a very prominent concern for many artisan castes in recent years. The skewed nature of capitalist development in the post-independence period has affected the economic existence of these castes in a very profound manner. They were uprooted from the traditional rural economy long back. And yet, many of these castes did not get any opportunity to take up modern occupations in the urban sphere. Instead, the majority of the caste members have either been forced to cling to their traditional occupation in whatever forms it survives in the present context or have been ghettoised in sundry manual occupations in the so-called modern sphere. Thus, even today, most of the Lingayat Gawalis raise cattle and are in the petty milk business in Solapur. A majority of the Madiwal Machayyas run small laundries in towns and cities and the Kkayyas still survive on the business of tanning. These groups have inevitably resorted to their caste identities in putting forward their economic demands. For them, the caste associations have doubled up as business organisations. Our studies of Maharashtra show a
similar process taking shape across different artisan castes (Palshikar 2000). The economic existence of different caste groups thus provides an important aspect of their contemporary construction of identities. These constructions, however, are distorted at various levels as capitalist development and the subsequent processes of urbanisation, education, etc. have introduced economic stratification within each small caste. And yet these caste groups find it convenient to fall back on their caste identities in order to put forward their secular economic demands. As far as the Lingayats are concerned, the process of economic stratification is two-fold. Each Lingayat sub-caste is internally stratified to a certain extent. However, the skewed nature of capitalist development, especially within the local confines of city of Solapur, has also resulted in a growing distance between upper caste/upper class Lingayats and the small artisan groups. At both these levels, economic stratification has damaged the cohesive Lingayat caste-sect identity of the earlier period.

The other significant factor that has led to some kind of distancing among the different sections of Lingayats is the reservation discourse after the 1990s. It is well known that the accentuation of ‘backward castes’ in the reservation discourse promoted by the Indian state has disturbed the notions of hierarchy and status within the caste system to a definite extent. These processes have affected the earlier cohesive Lingayat identity at more than one level. The small, backward subcastes among Lingayats seek maximum benefits of the reservation policy with the help of their caste-based mobilisations. Since the reservation policy is largely based on tokenism and encourages only a thin dispersal of the scantily available resources with the state, these castes, like many other backward castes, keep demanding a separate quota within quota for themselves. There are also typical demands to shift their particular community from this to that group of beneficiaries of reservation policy. The competition for backward status has gone to such an extreme that many small castes from the Lingayat fold in Karnataka have suggested that the suffix ‘Lingayat’ should be dropped from the caste names so that they would be treated on par with their Hindu counterpart backward castes. The other kind of extreme is evident in the politics of a more militant organisation of Lingayat youths recently established in Solapur.

This organisation, named the Shiva Sanghatana, proclaims a strong Lingayat identity in its name. It claims that for purposes of affirmative action, all Lingayats be considered as ‘Lingders’ and be included
in the category of Scheduled Castes! Lingders are one of the lowly communities within the Lingayat fold who have been included among the Scheduled Castes by the government. Taking a cue from this, the Shiva Sanghatana initiated an agitation over the issue since the year 2002. The organisation insisted that since Lingders are Lingayats and belong to the Scheduled Castes, all Lingayats or Veershaivas must be included in the same category and be treated as members of the Scheduled Castes (Deshmukh 2006). In the elaborate hierarchy that resurfaced among the Veershaivas since the decline of the Bhakti movement, the Lingders were placed at the lowest rung. Earlier, on no occasion would the Lingayat upper castes have entertained such a demand to club them together along with the Lingders. It is the reservation discourse and the surrounding processes of caste politics interaction that have prompted the Shiva Sanghatana to take such an extreme step in their politics. This demand of the Shiva Sanghatana provides an interesting key to understand the complexities that surround the construction of contemporary Lingayat identity. It also points to an extreme case of what happens to caste when it is exposed to the reservation discourse that is manipulated by the state at various levels and is reduced to a politics of categories. On the other hand, this journey of the Lingayats from their claims of being a dominant caste to those of being the lowest of the low castes also shows how flexible caste identity has become in the contemporary context in terms of its movement on the purity–pollution axis.

**Politics of Shiva Sanghatana**

The entire politics of the Shiva Sanghatana is full of many such complexities as far as its construction of Lingayat identity is concerned. It is also an interesting pointer to various dimensions of caste politics interaction in recent Maharashtra that have set the terms of regional politics and facilitated dispersal of claims of power.

The Shiva Sanghatana was established in 1996 when the political dynamics in Maharashtra was changing fast. It started as an organisation of the youth — the Veershaiva youth — to aggressively declare their distinct Veershaiva identity. These youths basically complained against the elite hold over Lingayat politics and challenged the established political leadership of the community. The organisation worked to upset the established patterns of politics of caste in which an effective nexus between the Congress party and Lingayat leadership prevailed. In the context of the changing nature of the party system...
of the state, the Shiva Sanghatana wanted to enter into new political equations on behalf of sections of the Lingayat youth.

The Sanghatana used various tactics to create a political space for itself in the Lingayat-dominant regions of the state. It was around the mid-1980s that the BJP and Shiv Sena arrived on the scene as an alternative to the Congress in the state. These forces grew rapidly, with their attempts to appropriate the politics of Hindutva and Mandal as mobilisation strategies and with sections of Marathas from the region shifting their loyalties to these forces. This provided a readymade political space for negotiations with the Lingayat youth, under the banner of the Shiva Sanghatana. Till then, Lingayat caste associations had maintained a ‘non-political’ political stance. But the Shiva Sanghatana now chose to take up an overtly political role. In the second half of the 1990s, the organisation spread rapidly in the southern districts of the state as well as in regions of western Maharashtra and Marathwada. In all these districts the Shiva Sanghatana tried to upset the established equations of political power by staking claims of representation on behalf of the Lingayats. Initially the Sanghatana declared its support to all Lingayat candidates, irrespective of the political parties to which they belonged, contesting elections to the state assembly in 1999. In all subsequent elections the Sanghatana extended support to either local Lingayat candidates or to the BJP Shiv Sena. Through their negotiations with the BJP and Shiv Sena the organisation tried to oppose the dominance of their own caste elites, the Marathas and the Congress party. At the same time, by keeping the caste card intact, the organisation could keep its political loyalties constantly shifting from one party to the other. This was the beginning of an essentially floating, tentative kind of caste-based politics that the Sanghatana wanted to promote. The message was that the Sanghatana (and therefore the community) would not be loyal to any particular political party but would always encourage political bargaining at the time of elections. This kind of political bargaining would be based on caste/community loyalties. The politics of the Shiva Sanghatana thus represented a phase in which caste associations would take up more obvious political tasks and would mainly act as negotiating agencies in electoral politics. Their work constituted one important aspect of the constant configuration and fragmentation of caste blocs at that time. Caste associations worked to create social alliances that shaped coalition politics at a more formal level. Since both social and political alliances were essentially weak and incoherent in nature, the work of the caste associations became a difficult task for them.
In order to act as a bargaining agency on behalf of the Lingayats, the Shiva Sanghatana had to construct the Lingayat caste identity in a skilful manner. The discourse on identity politics and especially the discourse on caste identity sometimes assumes that castes/communities are a ‘given’, existing as monoliths out there to be used for political purposes. The attempts on the part of Shiva Sanghatana to construct a Lingayat identity suitable for its politics shows how communities, including caste communities, remain porous, are fractured and are constantly reshaped in the multiple grids of identity politics. These communities remain open to competing identity claims and need to constantly negotiate with these claims in order to keep their political presence alive. The Shiva Sanghatana tried to do exactly the same on behalf of sections of the Lingayats.

The cluster-like identity of the Lingayat caste had already declined when the Shiva Sanghatana arrived on the scene. The small subcastes among the Lingayats had accepted an active role in mobilising the members of their own communities in the post-Mandal era. There was a further fragmentation on political lines with the arrival of a competitive multi-polar party system. Not only did different sections of the Lingayats favour different political parties, but each subcaste was also internally split in favour of different political forces. In order to mobilise these splintering sections of the Lingayats and to create a numerically strong constituency for itself, the Shiva Sanghatana projected a complex identity of the Lingayat community. At one level it demanded that all Lingayats be considered as Lingders and be awarded the status of a Scheduled Caste. At the same time, it also advertised the distinct religious identity of the Lingayats as Veershaivas in a more militant manner. Since 2001, the Shiva Sanghatana picked up an issue related to one of the Lingayat symbols in Solapur and entered into a fight against the Muslims (Deshmukh 2006: 68–69). This was about one of the 68 lingas that the Veershaiva guru Siddheshwar established in and around Solapur in the 12th century and is placed adjacent to a mosque. Contestation started at the beginning of the 20th century when the Lingayats accused the Muslims for not respecting the sanctity of the place and deliberately creating obstacles when Lingayats wanted to offer prayers at the place. The issue remained contentious but was temporarily resolved when the municipal corporation of the city intervened. Prior to 2002 there were only minor contestations over the issue, especially at the time of the annual religious festival of the Lingayats. The Shiva Sanghatana blew up the issue and posed it as
a major threat to the Lingayat existence in Solapur. It made repeated
demands to the state government to protect this sacred place of the
Lingayats and threatened with agitation if the demands were not
agreed to.

By taking up the issue the Sanghatana began a process of othering
of Muslims and its politics quickly acquired a communal form. This was
an attempt on the part of the Lingayat organisation to appropriate
the moment of Hindutva politics that was shaping up in Maharashtra
under the leadership of the BJP and Shiv Sena. In order to negotiate
with these two forces the Sanghatana acquired communal overtones
that were lacking in the earlier stance of the Lingayat caste associ-
ations. In its politics, the Sanghatana posed the religious identity of
the Lingayats in a very interesting manner. Sometimes it proclaimed
a distinct religious identity of the Veershaivas that essentially negated
links with Hinduism. On one occasion, for example, the chairman of the
Sanghatana appealed to all Lingayats to drop Ram from their names as
it infects their pur Veershaiva identity. These proclamations of a distinct
religious identity were seen as useful for internal consolidation of the
community, especially of the small subcastes within the Lingayats.
At the same time, the Lingayats also wanted to set up alliances with
militant versions of Hindutva politics. Therefore, on other occasions,
the Sanghatana glorified Hindutva symbols like Shivaji, participated
in celebrating these symbols and antagonised Muslims against both
Hindus and Veershaivas. Both, the name of the Sanghatana and its
main slogan ‘Garv Se Kahon Hum Lingayat Hain!’ bring out these
dual strategies that it practiced. ‘Shiva’ connotes a reference to Shiva,
the deity whose devotees the Veershaivas are. But the name also bears
close connection with that of Shivaji who is chosen as a core symbol
of their own versions of identity politics by both the Shiv Sena and
the Marathas in Maharashtra. The slogan ‘Garv Se Kahon’ no doubt
proclaims an aggressive, distinct sectarian identity of the Lingayats. But
at the same time it keeps a close affiliation with the politics of Hindutva
by accepting its terminology both in letter and in spirit. It is the duality,
incoherence and implicit contradictions that defined the politics of
the Shiva Sanghatana in particular and of caste associations in gen-
eral. In the context of overall political instability and disintegration
of communities, caste associations had to traverse a difficult path in
shaping identity politics around caste ideology.

The case of the Shiva Sanghatana becomes more interesting
because it constructed the Lingayat identity at various levels, using
several, often contrasting, trajectories to push for its political role on behalf of the community. Its simultaneous attempts to appropriate the politics of Mandal (by claiming the backward class status for all Lingayats and by celebrating Ambedkar along with Shivaji) and the politics of Hindutva shows the ways in which caste politics interaction was shaping among the Lingayats.

To what extent were these strategies of the Shiva Sanghatana successful? Did its politics give the organisation any chance to negotiate the terms of electoral contests in the Lingayat-dominant regions of the state? What role did caste associations like the Shiva Sanghatana play in the changing political context of the nineteen nineties? In the 2004 elections two office bearers of the Sanghatana were elected to the state legislative assembly as representatives of the BJP Shiv Sena while in 2009 one among them got elected on the BJP ticket. To that extent the Shiva Sanghatana was successful in breaking the Congress Lingayat nexus that worked well earlier. It was also able to make a dent in the mainstream electoral politics of the state, although in a limited way. The Sanghatana’s efforts to establish alliances with Marathas as well as with other castes added to the competitive nature of electoral politics. By encouraging a straightforward political bargaining with all political parties, the Sanghatana not only created a foothold for itself but also contributed to a further dispersal of power in the region. We may see it as a more general phenomenon emerging at that time. Along with the Lingayats, many other associations of numerically small, localised castes in Maharashtra used the same tactics to tilt the political equations in their favour at the local–regional level. Some of them even floated their own single-caste parties. In Maharashtra these efforts did not upset the Maratha dominance much at the formal institutional level. Even in the 2004 and 2009 elections fragmented Marathas could retain political power to themselves. However, the work of caste associations like the Shiva Sanghatana definitely contributed to the changing nature of the party system in the state. In the last two decades or so Maharashtra witnessed a gradual transformation of its party system in which elections became multi-cornered, electoral politics was woven around two competing alliances that had shaky support bases and in which electoral outcomes could be better interpreted at the subregional or rather at the district level (Palshikar and Birmal 2007). The active role of the caste associations of the 1990s can be seen as one of the important factors that contributed to the emergence of these unpredictable, floating, tentative patterns of electoral politics.
The tentative nature of politics shaping at the state level fractured the earlier patterns of the caste politics nexus and set in some new, local equations of caste and region dynamics.

**Summing Up**

The politics of the Shiva Sanghatana attempts a very contemporary construction of caste/community identities. This construction typically emerges as a result of interaction between caste and democratic politics for more than 50 years. Here, caste/community identities are not strictly defined in terms of their ritual status and the traditional hierarchy. Instead, these identities get shaped largely as a part of the contemporary social and political state and non-state discourse. Political activities of caste associations thus become an example of interpenetration of caste and political factors and of the adaptability of caste to parliamentary democracy (Barnett 1977: 397). The case of the Lingayats shows how under the impact of politics and political economy community identity gets reconstructed at various levels and acquires a very flexible form. Community identities are always social constructs. In his early studies of changing identities in south Asia, Barnett states how community discourses become meaningful in the presence of particular institutional possibilities and socio-economic conditions. But he also goes on to show that these discourses are never shaped in a smooth manner. When identity and identity choice becomes a central concern for any community, members of that community may hold widely differing views on what it means to belong to that community. This leads to constant internal fragmentation within the community and the politics of any caste/community develops a complex narrative. Politics of the Shiva Sanghatana faced the same problem when the Lingayat identity started breaking internally as each subcaste within them tried to mobilise itself on its own and many caste associations proliferated. Their arrival further contributed to the process of regionalisation of the politics of Maharashtra. At the same time it presented a difficult variety of politics of caste. In order to cope with these difficulties, the Shiva Sanghatana kept testing all the ideological choices that were contextually available to it for the construction of caste identity.

Caste politics interaction in its recent phase points to certain major changes in the nature of caste. Caste has gradually been de-ritualised as a part of the long journey of democratic politics in India.
In its most contemporary phase, this journey points to what some commentators refer to a process of ethnicisation of caste (Fuller 1997). The constitutive principles of caste seem to be shifting from hierarchy and status to interest and identity. It is around material, political interests that community identities are shaped in this recent phase. In the context of democratic politics and also in the context of changing political economy, a new system of social stratification seems to be shaping into which these caste-like communities enter and are try to negotiate their own space.

These negotiations sometimes take the form of obvious political bargaining with this or that political party. But the nature of caste associations also provides a more nuanced space for political negotiation in its contemporary phase. This is negotiation with democratic politics itself. Agencies like caste associations try to create small openings within practices of democracy, where some form of non-democratic, unaccountable politics may legitimately venture into democratic realm. This form of politics invokes primordial loyalties like caste, sect or religion and, at the same time, tries to redefine the content of these loyalties to suit the democratic claims of the group. The contextual nature of Indian democracy did always provide some scope for a variety of non-democratic claims to operate within its realm. As the nature of mainstream/electoral democracy becomes more tentative, more floating in its recent phase and as politics starts revolving around symbols, a complex overlap between democratic claims and non-democratic politics emerges. Caste associations, in their own small way, express and try to manage this tension. It is this tension that keeps caste alive while it is being constantly redefined and remoulded. These new caste identities and the agencies representing them may ensure a symbolic presence of caste communities in present-day democratic politics. Democratic politics apparently acquires a more contentious form as these agencies keep fighting for political power. However, does this politics ensure a true representation of the communities involved? Such questions may be best left to the course of politics as it evolves.

References


———. 2006, ‘Caste Politics through the Prism of Region’, in Rajendra Vora and Anne Feldhaus (eds), Region, Culture and Politics in India. New Delhi: Manohar.


Singh, K. S. 1998. *India’s Communities (People of India)*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
The history of Tamil Nadu as a region has been quite interesting as admixtures of caste, class, language and race have been operating and interacting with each other, leading to important consequences for the state. In this article, an attempt has been made to study the interaction of the categories related to caste and region influencing the politics of Tamil Nadu against the background of the long anti-Brahminism and, more recently, the emergence of an independent Dalit identity following the rejection of Dravidian identity. It is important to note that caste has been taken as an issue of discussion here as, being a social construct, it is in continuous interaction with the region that mainly consists of a wide range of territorial arrangements. For instance, expressions of regionalism and caste are confined to a particular region or locality — this can be depicted in the emergence of the Nadar movement in the southern parts of Tamil Nadu and the Ad-Dharm movement among the Ad-Dharmis in parts of Jullundhur and Hoshiarpur, etc. The emergence of regionalism, in fact, was closely associated with the emergence of the dominant castes; the non-Brahmin movement dealt with the issue of regional identity. The expression of regionalism in Tamil Nadu through the Self Respect and non-Brahmin movements aimed at creating a society where the backward castes have equal human rights. The anti-Brahmin movement directed against the Tamil Brahmans allowed cooperation among the Telugu-speaking people on a regional–linguistic basis and a consolidation of identity of ‘non-Brahmin’. Just as this movement sought to effect a fusion of many non-Brahmin castes, it also aspired to build a ‘southern’ identity opposed to the ‘north’.
In 1937 the movement, led by Periyar, waged an anti-Hindi agitation. The logical culmination of anti-Hindi, anti-north Dravidian non-Brahminism was reached in 1939 when the Justice Party demanded an ‘independent’ Dravidstan.\(^1\) Democracy, adult suffrage, mobilisation of the poor and underprivileged by the political parties and social welfare policies of the state together with the increasing atrocities by the backward classes has been responsible for the recent assertion of Dalits in Tamil Nadu, leading to the creation of a Dalit identity. The assertion of Dalits in Tamil Nadu is more radical and militant, and alienated from the government and mainstream parties. As a result, Dalit leaders have preferred to form their own organisations, many of which profess Marxism and are committed to revolutionary changes, to look after their own interests. Given this background, the article discusses the reasons for distancing Dalits from the non-Brahmin and Dravidian ideology, leading to the formation of Dalit organisations and political parties in contemporary Tamil Nadu. It also provides insights into the reasons of their move into parliamentary politics and its impact on the state politics of Tamil Nadu. The article is organised as follows: The first part discusses the early emergence of Dalit identity in Tamil Nadu rooted in the cultural moorings of the non-Brahmin movement leading to a deeper consciousness and identity. The second part discusses important reasons for the emergence of Dalit organisations in Tamil Nadu in the post-independence period, following the rejection of Dravidian identity. The third part discusses politics or strategies of assertion on the part of these organisations. The last part discusses the impact on the electoral politics of the state as a result of the assertion of these organisations through electoral politics in the state of Tamil Nadu.

**Early Emergence of Dalit Movements in Tamil Nadu**

Any discussion of the movement has to take into account the caste composition of the respective state. The caste system in Tamil Nadu, being both elaborate and deeply segmented, led to an emergence of steep caste hierarchy between the Brahmins and the untouchables.

Second, while being relatively fluid in the middle rungs, caste was rigid below the lines of pollution. As a result, emergence of

\(^1\) Hardgrave (1969: 10–35).
untouchability in Tamil Nadu in its most brutal form and as a widespread phenomenon could be traced to the 8th century AD. From the mid-19th century, political organisations began to appear on the provincial scene for the cause of the eradication of untouchability. It would therefore be right to argue that Dalit consciousness in Tamil Nadu predated the political expression of the non-Brahmin movement beginning the last quarter of the 19th century and helped in the formulation of the ideology that provided support to the latter. Given the steep hierarchy, Dalits in Tamil Nadu became, very early, conscious of their distinct identity. However, until the 1930s, the newly forming consciousness was limited to a group of newly educated intellectuals who were aware of the religious reform movements, the impact of colonialism, the beginnings of the national movement and how these developments would impact upon them.

The conscious construction of the distinct Dalit identity was a work of number of the intellectuals from the depressed classes in the late 19th century such as the Ayothidas, Masilmani, Maduraiar and Appaduriar. Ayothidas’ early journalistic writings claimed that Buddhism was the religion of the Panchama, or the original inhabitants of Tamil soil. He founded the Advaitananda Sabha in 1870 and in the late 1800s the Chakya Buddhist Sangam in order to revive the interest of depressed classes in Buddhism. In 1881, he formed the Dravida Mahajana Sangam to petition the colonial government on behalf of the Panchamas. While most of the demands of the Sangam were to obtain economic, educational and professional benefits, many also voiced the demand for self-respect.

While conscious of their newly emerging separate identity, a number of factors led the Dalits to support the non-Brahmin movement in the colonial period. First, a common dislike of the Brahmins who had usurped an all-important place in Tamil society subjugating them, and who had to be confronted. Politics was to provide the means for it. Second, a common identity of Dravidians based on the region, language and historical past, which attracted greater appeal rather than caste was the defining category of the period; most intellectuals such as Ayothidas had a deep sense of ‘Tamilness’. Third, until at least till the 1930s, the Dalits were not attracted by the Indian National Congress or the national movement which they identified with Brahminical

---

3 Ibid.
Hinduism and northern domination. The Dalits were particularly critical of the Gandhian viewpoint that problems were social in nature and were to be resolved after attaining independence. It could be therefore concluded that while each caste group maintained its distinct identity, the emergence of the non-Brahmin movement on the bases of race, caste and language gave the history of Tamil Nadu a distinct ethnic stamp. The fusion of various non-Brahmin castes for political action produced what was described as ‘the sub-society created by the intersections of the vertical stratification of the social class’ ⁴ with each caste and ethnic group playing a seminal role in Tamil Nadu politics, providing non-Brahmin Dravidians an important support base. As Palshikar argues, ‘caste–region interaction in Tamil Nadu strengthened an exclusionary regional nationalism. Further, it also sought to delegitimize Brahmans not only from their superior caste position but also from the scope of regional identity.’ ⁵ ‘Dravidianism, therefore, neutralized many of the caste-based issues of conflict that dominated Tamil Nadu politics in the first half of the twentieth century.’ ⁶

**Emergence of Dalit Organisations in Tamil Nadu: Exploration into the Causes**

An important development in the immediate post-independence period in Tamil Nadu has been an attempt on the part of the Dalits to create an independent and distinct identity of their own, following the rejection of Dravidian ideology since the 1960s and, most significantly, in the 1980s. The reason for this challenge to Dravidian identity lay in the ‘uneven manner in which the Non-Brahman movements progressed and are both social and political’. ⁷ The rejection of Dravidian ideology by the Dalits and the MBCs was a result of the twin process of democratisation and mobilisation of underprivileged groups in the post-independence period and is partly an attempt by these groups to create an ‘all India identity’. ⁸ The current Dalit intellectuals of the Pondicherry Group have questioned the logic behind the construction of Tamil/Dravidian on two grounds: ‘Whether the identity of Dravidian

---

⁴ Milton (1964: 51).
⁵ Palishkar (2006).
Emergence of Dalit Organisations in Tamil Nadu

includes Dalit or not? Did the category of the Non-Brahman immobilize the Dalits from articulating a separate identity of their own?  

It is important to realise that the non-Brahmin movement and Dravidian identity of the colonial period contained within itself seeds of hostility and separation between the ‘clean’ non-Brahmin caste groups and the Dalits. Formulated in the period of rising Brahmin domination, this ideology was mainly anti-Brahminical, an aspect that appealed to the Dalits, being the lowest in the caste hierarchy. However, a close examination reveals that it was the construct of the scholars of the Shaiva Vedanta school, meant to provide a new identity to the Vellalas vis-à-vis the Brahmins, and offered very little to the Sudra and Ati-Sudra masses. As long as the Self Respect movement attacked the Brahmins and Vaishnavism, the non-Brahmins were happy to support it, but when it moved beyond to include all the tenets of Hinduism and issues of untouchability, they were disturbed and attacked it. 

The contradictions between the non-Brahmins and the depressed classes began to emerge formally with the issue of the Non-Brahmin Manifesto in December 1916 that was to form the unified basis of the political action for the non-Brahmin movement, and included Muslims, Christians, Anglo-Indians, the Scheduled Castes, in fact, all the non-Brahmins. Although the Justice Party had used the term ‘non-Brahmin’ in the most inclusive sense to cover all the depressed classes, the separateness of the latter remained an important feature of the non-Brahmin movement. In the Justice Party, the depressed classes hardly had any representation in the party leadership. Legally limited franchise meant that the exercise of the vote was restricted to the property-owning and educated segments of the population, i.e., the non-Brahmins. The fact that English, not the regional language, was the language of political discourse of the movement, illustrates, to a great extent, the exclusionary nature of the movement. M. C. Rajah, the principle representative of the untouchables in the legislative council, also felt that ‘if the denunciation of the untouchables by the Justice Party members’ did indeed represent the non-Brahmin policy, ‘untouchables would be obliged to severe the connection with the Justice Party’. It was not long before Rajah and the untouchables left the Justice Party altogether.

---

10 Ibid.
11 Barnett (1976).
'Despite its motto of the equal opportunities for all and injustice to none the beneficiaries of the non-Brahman were mostly “forward” Non-Brahmins themselves; whose ascendancy began in the 1920’s and reached its peak in the 1950’s. In fact Vellalas one of the most powerful and wealthiest castes of Tamil Nadu seems to have been the “fer-de-lance” of the movement. The castes at the head of the movement were all those that dominated and exploited untouchables distanced themselves from the power struggle.'\textsuperscript{13}

The organised demands of the depressed classes gained importance as soon as the Justice Ministry assumed office and were voiced mainly through the resolutions and questions passed in the legislative council by their 10 nominated members mostly on the representation in public services, appointment of the depressed classes to certain posts like that of peon and job reservations for the Scheduled Castes. M. C. Rajah demanded 30 per cent reservation in the services. In a memorandum, the Adi-Dravida Mahajana Sangam insisted on separate electorates for the depressed classes, arguing that joint electorates were worse even than nominations, as the depressed classes elected by caste Hindus would not work for the depressed classes. To quote Rajah, ‘it is the high handed poisonous action of the members of the party who after infliction all known and unknown injury on over community shed crocodile tears and pose as friends of the depressed classes’.\textsuperscript{14} The leaders representing the Dalits attempted to play an important role in generating awareness and creating consciousness of the Dalits.

Second, the contradictions in the DMK played an important role in organising the Scheduled Castes. While most of the non-Brahmins in the DMK wanted social reform such as the abolition of untouchability and the upliftment of the Dalits, they were not keen to implement land reforms which would have effectively ended their control in the countryside as most of them were landowners.

The statement highlights contradictions not only of the ideology of the non-Brahmin movement but also sheds lights on Tamil nationalism. The transformation of Tamil nationalism, however, was accompanied by the complete manifestation of the DMK as a backward community. Modification of the radical social reform tenets of the movement rendered the DMK and ADMK less capable of evaluating pressing

\textsuperscript{13} Radhakrishnan (1996).
\textsuperscript{14} Rajah (1925: 64).
Harijan problems. While the fissure between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins healed at the top under the aegis of Tamil nationalism, the gap between the Harijans and all others kept on widening at the bottom. Both the DK and the DMK failed to analyse the non-Brahmin as an agent of the exploitation. While most of the non-Brahmins in the DMK wanted social reforms such as the abolition of untouchability and the upliftment of the Dalits, they were not keen to implement the land reforms which would have effectively ended their control in the countryside as most of them were landowners and Dalit labourers. The policies of the non-Brahmin movement oscillated from condemnation of the Brahmins to desperate attempts to emulate and reconcile with them. On taking of office the Justice Party immediately began to show favours to certain Brahmin politicians and even formed the government with the arch Brahmin C. P. Ramaswamy Ayer. The resolution of the dual membership finally brought the two polar sides of regionalism and nationalism together. The orientation of non-Brahmin aspirations towards emulating and sharing privileges imputed the Brahmins to explain whether there was ever a non-Brahmin movement at all.\textsuperscript{15}

The DMK renounced its anti-Brahmin stand and canvassed actively for the support of the Brahmins in 1967; in subsequent elections, the AIADMK went a step further and established the Brahman Association (TAMBRAS) with Jayalalitha, a Brahmin, as propaganda secretary, and later chief secretary, distributing tickets to a large number of the Brahmins in the elections and representation in the cabinet. Speaking on contradictions, Narendra Subramanian points out that Periyar conceived of the Dravidian community primarily in the terms of coalitions of mega-castes — the non-Brahmin castes of neither Tamil Nadu, i.e., Tamil-speaking Hindus who were neither Brahmins nor the Scheduled Castes. Indeed, the DK, the successor of the Self Respect movement was called by Periyar as the ‘sudra kazhagam’.\textsuperscript{16} Subramanian further writes, ‘His (Periyar’s) references to dalits were much like those of the Muslims and Christians. To the extent he as a Sudra was opposed by same Brahmanism which condemned the scheduled castes to the status of the pariah could be read the mobilization of the SC’s through the rejection of the Hinduism. Indeed he suggested that the SC’s would enjoy parity with the Brahmans in future Dravida Naidu that led to the considerable entry of the scheduled castes in 1940’s and 1950’s. However Periyar could also be

\textsuperscript{15} Irschick (1969).

\textsuperscript{16} Subramanian (1999: 47).
regarded as relegating the scheduled castes concerns to the secondary status.\textsuperscript{17}

Third, on both the religious and secular sides the objectives of the movement oscillated between outright condemnation of the Brahmins to desperate attempts to emulate and reconcile with them. While the launch of the non-Brahmin movement delegitimised the Brahmins, with the formation of Madras state they were incorporated as members of the Dravidian society. As Washbrook says, ‘It is indeed ironical that a strong non-Brahman movement, through its regionalism allowed a re-entry of the Brahman caste both into the elite and into the political arena in general.’\textsuperscript{18}

Instead of the destruction of the caste system and implementation of the new principles of societal organisation, social reform came to mean better conditions of the backward castes groups at the bottom within the old system. On assuming office, the Justice Party began to immediately show favours to certain Brahmin politicians and even formed the government with the arch Brahmin C. P. Ramaswamy Ayer. The resolution of dual membership finally brought the two polarities of regionalism and nationalism together. The orientation of non-Brahmin aspirations towards emulating and sharing privileges imputed the Brahmins to explain whether there was ever a non-Brahmin movement at all.\textsuperscript{19} The Brahmins, the main exploiters, were ideologically re-incorporated into the Tamil community on the basis of regional and linguistic identity. While the fissure between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins was being healed at the top under the aegis of Tamil nationalism, the gap between the Harijans and all others kept on widening at the bottom. The transformation of the political parties into a backward community and modification of the radical social reform ideas alienated the Dalits from these parties. The linking of these two caste groups has led to an emergence of independent Dalit movements, independent of Dravidian ideology, questioning the notions of homogeneity and inclusion of the Dravidian non-Brahmin movement.

The fourth factor that contributed to the emergence of Dalit organisation was the declining reforming impulse of the Dravidian parties. As Subramanian explains, each party sought to cultivate a

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Irschick (1969).
broader constituency with their own version of populist mobilisation. For instance, the DMK employed empowerment or assertive mobilisation that tended to win support among more upwardly mobile sections of the electorate.20 On the eve of the elections of 1996, the DMK emphasised themes like good government, corruption, leadership, etc. even as the AIADMK’s campaign was based on contesting the DMK’s claims to good government. The campaigns of two Dravidian parties suggest that untouchability as an issue had lost its centrality as an electoral issue. This has led the untouchables, in recent years, to question the ideological discipline of both the parties. It is also important to remember that the ruling party during the period assertion was that of the DMK and the AIADMK.

The failure of the political parties to respond to the demands of the Dalits to reconfigure power at the local levels has alienated them from the Dalits. While the DMK attempted to stem this new politics by invoking its old language of pan-Tamil unity which was no longer convincing for the Dalits, the AIADMK openly supported the Thevars. Other parties such as the Congress, CPI and CPI (M) did not step into the power vacuum to address the issue of Dalit empowerment. All these opened an ‘uncolonised political space for autonomous Dalit mobilization’ by Dalits themselves.21 The ineffectiveness of the DMK and AIADMK has encouraged ‘counter mobilisation’ of the caste groups. The emergence of the Vanniyars, the lower backwards, carved out a non-Brahmin identity separate from the upper backwards, leading to the formation of the PMK. The emergence of the Dalit party Pudhiya Tamizhgham, under the leadership of Dr Krishnaswamy, is a new development and points to the autonomous mobilisation of the Dalits themselves.

An important factor for the emergence of Dalit organisations has been economic and educational development of the Dalits in the immediate post-independence period leading to greater politicisation and awareness. The most remarkable achievement of the Dalits during the last few years has been their advancement in the domain of formal education. A recent study of Muthukulathur region in Ramnathpuram district which witnessed the worst caste riots between Thevars and Dalits points out that the village has ‘110 graduates as dalits, seven engineers, five lawyers, one India police service officials, on Indian

---

revenue service official and three doctorate holders’. Considerable educational and economic empowerment of Dalits in Tamil Nadu in the immediate post-independence period has led to greater politicisation and awareness among them, leading to further questioning by them of the ideological discipline of the mainstream parties. Reflecting their educational advancement. Pandian, in his paper, highlights a recent study of Muthukulathur region in Ramnathpuram district which witnessed the worst caste riots between Thevars and Dalits, and points out that the village, has: ‘Along with educational advancement, the affirmative action programme, entering trade and migrating to West Asian and other countries, has strengthened their economic base and they have become less dependent on the backward caste for their employment by diversifying into various other occupations. This has hastened their assertion in the political arena.’ This advancement of Dalits in the material domain is, however, not matched by the social status accorded to them in the public domain by the caste Hindus, particularly the Thevars, as untouchability in the worst forms against them has emerged and has led to increase in the cases of caste atrocities. The attacks on the Dalits by the backwards are directed against their newly emerging wealth, as seen in the destruction of the luxury goods owned and purchased by the Dalits. This disjunction between the economic, social and political power have led to the emergence of Dalit organisations for themselves, distanced from the Dravidian agenda.

The response of the state to the self-assertion and ensuing conflict between Dalits and the backward castes is one of the macro interventions from above. This ranges from changes in the reservation system, providing compensation to the victims of caste conflicts and setting up of commissions of enquiry to deal with the caste conflicts. The Justice Mohan Commission, was for example, was appointed by the state government in July 1997 to look into recurring caste clashes and suggest measures to prevent them in the future, yet most of the recommendations of the Commission were not accepted. Similarly, the Gomathinaygam Commission of the inquiry which probed into the caste atrocities against the Dalits at Kodiyanthakam ended up submitting a report which was anti-Dalits and ruled out any police excesses in Kodiyanthakam. This experimentation with the reservation system and biased reports in favor of the ruling party suggests the

22 Ibid., p. 502.
23 Pandian (2000).
failure on the part of the state to address the issue of power at the local levels.\textsuperscript{24}

Elaborating on this, Pandian continues, ‘although the Tamil Nadu government has a credible record of disposing the cases under the PCR Act, the net outcome does not favor the dalits. From 1992–1997 some 750 cases of atrocities were registered however the number of convictions secured by the PCR was very low. From 1992–1997 only 4 out of 1500 cases led to the conviction despite the fact that in 1997 as many as 118 villages were declared as atrocity prone.’\textsuperscript{25} These steps on the part of the state government suggest failure of the state to grant social justice to the Dalits.

The ordinance on religious conversion by Jayalalitha, and DMK government resolution in 1998 that ‘installation of the statutes should be permitted only after obtaining the prior permission of the government, Jayalalitha appointment of two important positions to the Brahmans — the chief Secretary (T. V. Venkatraman) and advocate general (K. Subramanian) could be regarded as moves on the part of the Tamil Nadu state to remain ignorant to dalit demands. The announcement of temple renovation and alliance of DMK with the BJP also worried the dalits and suggests that the grand design of Jayalalitha of “Aryanisation of Dravida Naidu”.’\textsuperscript{26}

\section*{Dalit Assertion in Tamil Nadu: Forms of Assertion}

Dalits in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere in India have followed a two-fold strategy of mobilisation at different point of times: electoral and politico-cultural. This is a common pattern in most of the states — Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Kerala. In Punjab, in the absence of availability of any genuine political party addressing their issues, Dalits have recently resorted to cultural assertion through deras and construction of separate gurudwaras. Similar to Uttar Pradesh, the growing grassroots process of ‘Ambedkarisation’ in the countryside has helped in the advancement of the Dalit movement in UP, with many villages in Meerut district revealing a tremendous growth in the consciousness among Dalits about the ideas and life of Ambedkar. The Dalit self-assertion in Tamil Nadu ranges from protest at the grassroots

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 502.
\textsuperscript{25} Pandian (2000).
\textsuperscript{26} Karim (2002: 4–6).
level like seeking equal honours in temple festivals, naming public spaces in the name of their leaders, erecting statues of their leaders in the public sphere, participating in panchayat elections and electoral politics and forming their own parties. Mutual statue-breaking and their participation in electoral politics have become a major source of caste conflict in south Tamil Nadu.

It is against this background that one needs to understand their move into electoral politics. Deliège has coined the term ‘paradoxical marginality’\(^\text{27}\) to express the ambiguity of the untouchable position which is at the same time inside and outside the system. He is here referring to the fact that untouchables are socially excluded but economically dispensable. The 1999 election contends how this paradoxical marginality extends into the political sphere (Table 11.1). In their electoral strategies Dalits were the ‘campfollowers’\(^\text{28}\) of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alliance</th>
<th>Share of valid votes</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DMK-led alliance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMK</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMK</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MADMK</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDMK</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AIADMK-led alliance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIADMK</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (I)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI (M)</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TMC (M)-led Alliance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMC (M)</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janata Dal (Secular)</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Candidates for the Liberation Panthers were listed under the TMC (M) label for these elections.

*Source:* Tamil Nadu election data disks.

\(^\text{27}\) Deliège (1997: 104).
\(^\text{28}\) Pai (2000).
Emergence of Dalit Organisations in Tamil Nadu

Dravidian parties up to the mid-1960s. However, as in the other states, they have at times supported the Congress Party.

For example, in the 1930s, when the Congress came to power in the Madras Presidency under Rajagopalchari, who removed the social and civil disabilities that affected the lower castes, especially the opening of temples, a section of the Dalits moved towards the Congress. The support of the Dalits for major political parties has been instrumental in the making of the government. It is important to understand that Dalit support to the DMK and AIADMK led to the establishment of the stable bi-party system in the Madras Presidency. During the colonial period they were attracted to the DK due to the leadership of Niacker. The political parties in Tamil Nadu from time to time re-oriented their ideology to attract Dalit votes. The DMK and AIADMK rose to prominence in Tamil Nadu politics primarily based on the populist articulation of ethnic appeals, which served as an important tool to attract Dalit support. The gradual changes associated with the DMK and AIADMK became more pronounced in the 1990s, making these parties less ideologically distinct from each other. Even though neither the DMK nor the AIADMK introduced major new policies through the 1990s for the Dalits and continued with their earlier populist policies such as high quotas and the free lunch scheme, they continued to harness the support of the Dalits.

The electoral successes of the AIADMK in 1980s and 1991 have been largely due to Dalit support. The various programmes for their upliftment by the MGR government such as the midday meal, abolition of the hereditary posts of karnam and the lack of atrocities ensured this. However, in spite of the MGR’s promises of justice and ‘Sambandhi Bhojanams’ in 5,000 temples across the state, caste atrocities were responsible for mass conversion to Islam at Meenakshipuram in 1981. Once the DMK captured power contradictions within the party and various aspects of the non-Brahmin movement surfaced, that had major consequences for the electoral politics and party system of the state. Although Annadurai consciously guided his party towards the lower backwards and the untouchables, it remained, for all practical purposes, an urban party of the rising non-Brahmin castes.

An important reason for the Dalits moving away was the growing perception that the DMK leadership had failed to protect them from...
the constant caste clashes after independence between themselves and the backwards. This had an important consequence for electoral politics. Dalit activists in Tamil Nadu today argue that the Dalits have, through all these years, faithfully supported existing parties but they remain excluded from positions of the political leadership and suffer in the allocation of the development resources. Based on the model of the BSP in the north that seeks to work for social justice and economic empowerment of the Dalits, the Pudhiya Tamizhgham was formed just before the 1998 elections. Its leader, Dr Krishnaswamy, argued for the creation of a ‘New Tamil Nadu’ in which Dalits would not suffer the oppression of the upper castes. Krishnaswamy won the Ottapidaram Assembly seat in the 1996 State Assembly elections on a Janata Party ticket. The PT contested 15 seats in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections. Though the PT did not win any seats, it gained enough votes to establish itself as a potential alliance partner in future elections. The 1999 elections (Table 11.1) were also important because the Dalit Panthers of India, headed by R. Thirumalavan, decided to participate in the elections.

Till the 1999 elections, the Dalit Panthers had followed the policy to boycott the elections. But even after the case of poll boycott, the Dalits had to face immediate resistance not only from the oppressive castes but also from the ruling political dispensation, as they regarded the boycotting of the election by the Dalits as a challenge to its authority. Even after continuing the boycott of the elections, state atrocities against the Dalits continued and they continue to suffer. Seeing this, the DPI was influenced to contest the elections as they realised that even if they boycotted the elections the Dalits would be attacked and therefore it would be better to participate and fight for their own political rights rather than being killed. Participation in electoral politics, Thirumalavan asserted, would mean that ‘new cadres will become corrupted. They will develop a compromising character.’ For political processes to be considered legitimate, however, the link between ‘the represented and the representatives must be explicated by means of symbols as a morally justified relationship.’ This, however, failed to happen in Tamil Nadu, and the Dalits felt that their concerns were never voiced in Parliament. Thus, the Liberation Panthers’ boycott

\[30\] Wyatt (2002).

\[31\] The Hindu, 1 November 1999.

\[32\] Bohholm (1996).
of the electoral processes in this light was one of the few democratic means to explain the grievances of the Dalits. As they declared on the eve of the 1999 elections, ‘we don’t want to give up our social space while we are fighting for the political power and we don’t want to sacrifice our political identity while we are intervening in the social issues’.\(^{33}\)

By participating in electoral politics, by prominently displaying the posters of Thirumalavan and the cycle symbol of the TMC and refusing to see them as socially subordinate, the Dalits began to emerge in caste politics. For the Dalits, the creation of the Third Front that was independent of the Third Parties in Tamil Nadu permitted them to articulate a positive identity that rejected the notions of slavery, submission, exclusion and marginality. An important development of the election in 1999 was the possibility of an electoral alliance between the PMK, representing the Vanniyars sections of the society and the Dalit political parties. The possibilities of this alliance emerged as the Vanniyars were also moving away from the key Dravidian political parties.

While the 1999 elections demonstrate the high point of Dalit mobilisation, the 2001 State Assembly elections manifest contradictions (Table 11.2). It was widely assumed that the elections would be contested by two fronts — the DMK and the AIADMK — as it was unclear whether a Third Front like that of the 1999 elections would emerge in these elections. The TMC, disheartened by the performance of the Third Front, gave an early impression that it would join the AIADMK front. Consequently, the PT and DPI joined the DMK alliance. The PT and DPI, even though they had a strong antipathy towards the BJP because they viewed the party as committed to Hindu nationalism and dominance of the upper castes, yet both the Dalit parties justified their presence in the alliance with the local NDA. The Dalit parties suggested that their main local opponents were the AIADMK and PMK in the struggle for caste inequality. These elections thus manifested contradictions as to why the more principled Third Front, committed to oppose caste oppression, was not formed. The alliance did not perform well and Krishnaswamy lost both the seats he had contested. Only Thirumalavan won the seat he had contested. The electoral alliance of 2001 (Table 11.2) was not repeated in the 2004 elections. Isolated by mainstream Dravidian political alliances,

\(^{33}\) The Hindu, 11 October 1998.
a Third Front was again formed in the elections. Since Krishnaswamy and Thirumalavan wanted the Dalits’ political solidarity built by them over the last five years to be preserved at any cost, they pieced together an alliance of their own called the People’s Alliance along with the Makalli Tamil Desam (MTD) and the Indian National League (INL) that contested the 28 seats in all. The DMK-led Democratic Progressive Alliance won all the seats and polled 57.4 per cent of the votes.\textsuperscript{34} DPI leader Thirumalavan, who contested in Chidambaram, came second after the PMK’s E. Ponnusamy, pushing the BJP candidate T. Periasamy to third place. Thirumalavan received 2.55 lakh votes while Ponnusamy got 3.43 lakh votes.\textsuperscript{35}

The 2006 Assembly elections in the state further manifested contradictions in the pattern of alliance formation in the history of Tamil Nadu. The contradiction to be noticed in the 2006 Assembly elections (Table 11.3) was the presence of the MDMK, Dalit Panthers of India (DPI), Indian National League, All India Forward Bloc and Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) in the Democratic People’s

\textsuperscript{34} Rana (2006: 405).

\textsuperscript{35} Subramanian (2004).
Emergence of Dalit Organisations in Tamil Nadu

The formation of these alliances suggest a dramatic dilution of radicalism of the Dalit movement in Tamil Nadu. Initially, the formation of independent alliances of the DPI with the PMK or the Third Front raised hopes that the Third Front or independent alliances would bring down the conflicts between the backward castes, the Vanniyars and the Dalits in north Tamil Nadu and pose a strong challenge to the Dravidian parties. However, the alliances formed at the eve of the 2006 Assembly elections suggest the compromising character of the Dalit leaders. It needs to be seen as a part of the transformation of the DPI and its leader Thirumalavan from an anti-caste movement to a defender of Tamil identity.

If in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections a formidable alliance of the DMK, Congress, MDMK, PMK, CPI and CPI (M) trounced the AIADMK–BJP alliance in all the 39 seats in the state, the equation changed dramatically in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections. The alliance formed by the DMK, Congress, DPI and IUML, although a much weakened one, contested against the AIADMK alliance consisting of the PMK, CPI, CPI (M) and MDMK. This election proved, once again, the rising contradiction within the Dalit movement in Tamil Nadu. The alliance of the DMK again came to be seen as one of the most

Table 11.3: Electoral Alliances in 2006 Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alliance</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Share of votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMK alliance</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMK</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMK</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIADMK alliance</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>32.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADMK</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDMK</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCK</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JD(S)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FB (S)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMDK</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IND</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMC (M)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tamil Nadu Election Commission Data Disks.
contradictory alliances because the Congress and the DPI were at daggers drawn on the Sri Lankan Tamil issue. Thirumavalavan, during the election, asserted that his party would neither campaign for the Congress candidates nor oppose them. The Pudhiya Tamizhagham, Indian National League, the recently floated Manithaneya Makkal Katchi (MMK) formed of the Social Democratic Alliance fielded five candidates for the 13 May Lok Sabha polls in Tamil Nadu.\footnote{36} The alliance contested from Tenkasi, central Chennai, Mayiladuthurai, Pollachi and Ramanathapuram. The Pudhiya Tamizhagham leader Krishnaswamy contested from Tenkasi (reserved) constituency and made development the main plank of his campaign. He said at Azhagapuri village, ‘the southern districts are ignored in industrial development. So my focus will be on industrial development, health, education, roads and transport.’\footnote{37} His candidature enthused the party’s cadre, who were sore as regards its earlier alliance with the DMK.

\section*{Impact of the Emergence of Dalit Organisations in Tamil Nadu on State Politics}

The rise of Dalit organisations introduced important changes in the state politics of Tamil Nadu. In fact, this introduced, something Harriss points at, the growth of ‘casteism’ over the last two decades, a significant departure from early Dravidian anti-caste discourse.\footnote{38} The rise of caste-based parties like the PMK, DPI and PT, having significant links with certain castes, are a manifestation of such a phenomenon. Thus, the rise of the rise of Dalit organisations led to greater caste-based mobilisation in Tamil Nadu. Caste discrimination, caste conflicts, caste-based political mobilisation are significant to this.

Second, the rise of Dalit organisations and parties with specific caste links introduced major changes in the party system of the state. On the one hand, there was a movement from the bi-party to the multiparty system and, on the other, a steady fragmentation of the party system. The emergence of the two-party system in Tamil Nadu can be traced to the elections of 1952 that established the DMK as the single largest opposition party to the Congress in the State Legislative Assembly.

\footnote{36} ‘Pudhiya Tamizhagham-MMK Form Social Democratic Alliance’, Chennai newsonline, 15 April 2009.
\footnote{37} Subramanian and Vishwanathan (2009).
\footnote{38} Harriss (2001).
From time to time various parties resorted to adopt populist measures to appeal to Dalit voters. Two policies of Kamraj helped him to gain the support of the Dalits and even some of the non-Brahmins: welfare policies aimed at the poor and the strategy of the ‘Tamilisation’ of the Congress Party by giving Assembly seats to the non-Brahmins in the cabinet. In the later period the DMK, led by Annadurai, portrayed itself as the representative of economic and social egalitarianism; to generate Dalit support the DMK promised to sell rice at the low price of one rupee per measure. The DMK defeated the Congress in the 1967 elections, ousting the Congress as a major contender. The AIADMK, led by the MGR, challenged the pre-eminence of the DMK by adopting various programmes for Dalit upliftment; the lack of atrocities during this period ensured support. The party went on to win the 1977, 1980 and 1984 elections under the leadership of the MGR and the two parties have dominated politics ever since 1967. However, the electoral successes of the DMK and AIADMK did not change the grassroots reality of the confrontation between the backward castes and the Dalits. In spite of the MGR’s promises of justice and ‘Sambandhi Bhojanams’ in 5,000 temples across the state, caste atrocities were responsible for the mass conversion to Islam at Meenakshipuram in 1981, as mentioned earlier.39

At the background of the above two developments in the state, i.e., the decline of the Dravidian parties and the decline of the Congress, led the Dalits in Tamil Nadu to form their own parties. As a consequence, unstable electoral alliance became an important feature. While the Congress was a key alliance partner of the Dravidian parties in the 1970s and 1980s, it was displaced by a series of smaller parties such as the DPI, PT and PMK. Events leading to the 1999, 2001 and 2004 elections demonstrated how these small parties could swing the outcome of the elections and coalition formations. While the emergence of the smaller parties (DPI and PT) reflects the aspirations of the excluded group to be included in the political processes and reap the advantages of state benefits, on the other hand the emergence of these groups had become an important cause of party fragmentation. Third, the emergence of the caste-based parties brought changes in voter participation and partisanship (Table 11.4). The decline in popular enthusiasm for the

---

major parties brought with it a decline in voter participation rates in the 1990s. While voter participation rates ranged between 65.4 per cent and 73.6 per cent in the three elections of the 1980s, they ranged between 58 per cent and 66.9 per cent in the four elections of the 1990s. Participation rates increased in 1996 by a temporary surge of opposition to the AIADMK rather than enthusiasm for the DMK. Participation rates were especially low in 1998 and 1999, partly due to the frequency of the elections. The emergence of new political parties based on caste and identity also brought important changes in electoral politics by influencing the pattern of alliance formation in Tamil Nadu (Table 11.5). ‘The Congress held onto the support of about 20% of the electorate for a long period after its defeat in 1967. This contributed to a stable pattern of the party competition in the state. The two Dravidian parties were able to secure more than 70% of the vote, but Congress remained a crucial alliance partner.’

The formation of the TMC (M) and emergence of parties with Scheduled Caste support in 1999 began the formation of coalition governments and formation of alliances by the DPI and PT with the key parties, the DMK and AIADMK. This gave Dalit political parties scope to enter mainstream politics and take up issues cutting across caste barriers. The formation of alliances with key Dalit political parties has

---

compelled successive state governments in the direction of taking proactive steps for Dalit empowerment. Dalit entry into the political arena led mainstream parties to take proactive steps on issues related to their interests. Some of the examples are discussed below.

For instance, for 10 years (1996–2006) the conduct of elections to four village panchayats in Madurai and Virudhunagar was blocked owing to the anti-reservation attitude among the backward castes for Dalits. In the 2006 round of local body elections, the Dalit and left parties demanded elections to be held in the four panchayats. The effective intervention of Chief Minister Karunanidhi further facilitated the conducting of smooth elections. In another instance, the CPI (M) focused on the problems of the Arunthathiyars, the most oppressed of the Dalit population. It highlighted the state government’s failure to implement a 10-year-old order of the Supreme Court that manual scavenging should be ended and those engaged in it be provided alternative jobs within a time frame. The government accepted the demand of the CPI (M) and some Dalit parties for separate reservation for the Arunthathiyars in educational institutions and government jobs. The State Assembly also passed a Bill that provided for 3 per cent sub-quota within the Dalit quota for the Arunthathiyars. The CPI (M) exposed the failure of governments, both at the centre and in the states, to allot funds in their annual budgets for the benefit of Dalits under the 20-year-old Special Component Plan (now known as the Scheduled Castes Sub-plan) and the huge loss to Dalits as a consequence.\footnote{Vishwanathan (2009).}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Tamil Nadu 2009 Lok Sabha Election Results}
\begin{tabular}{lll}
\hline
Party & Contested & Won \\
\hline
Congress & 15 & 8 \\
AIADMK & 23 & 9 \\
DMK & 21 & 17 \\
CPI & 3 & 1 \\
CPI (M) & 3 & 1 \\
MDMK & 4 & 1 \\
DPI & 2 & 1 \\
IUML & 1 & 1 \\
PMK & 6 & 0 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textit{Source: ‘South Regained’, Frontline, 26 (11), 23 May–5 June 2009.}
To conclude, the case of Tamil Nadu can be seen a good example where regionalism is used as a tool to construct a broad social alliance of different castes (for example, the non-Brahmin movement manifested itself on an alliance between the non-Brahmins and the Dalits) as well as assertion of caste identity (manifested in different forms at different stages: rise of dominant castes, exclusion of the Brahmins, alliance with the Dalits, alliance with the Brahmins and exclusion of the Dalits, etc.). The contradictions related to caste that were pushed under the veil of regionalism and Dravidianism have surfaced again with the process of alliance formation between the Dravidian parties and the Brahmins, rejection of Dravidian politics following non-accommodation of the Dalits and the spread of Dalit–OBC conflict. The recent electoral alliances of the Dalit parties with the mainstream political parties — the DMK and the ADMK — has meant that caste has become the centre of the discourse of regional parties and thereby of the region.

References


Pai, Sudha and Jagpal Singh. ‘Politicization of the Dalits and the Most Backward Castes: A Study of the Social Conflict and Political Preferences in Four villages
Emergence of Dalit Organisations in Tamil Nadu


Palshikar, Suhas. 2006. ‘Caste Politics through the Prism of Region’, in Rajendra Vora and Anne Feldhaus (eds), Region, Culture and Politics in India. New Delhi: Manohar.


Affirmative Action, Group Rights and Democracy: The Mala–Madiga Conflict in Andhra Pradesh

SUDHA PAI

Andhra Pradesh has been witness to the protracted conflict between the Malas and Madigas, two numerically significant Scheduled Caste (SC) groups in the state. The Malas are found to a greater degree in the Circars or seven coastal districts of Andhra region that experienced colonial rule as part of the Madras Presidency, while the Madigas are more numerous in the nine districts of Telangana region that were part of the erstwhile princely state of Hyderabad under Nizamshahi. In four districts of Rayalseema region, the proportion of both groups is about the same. The conflict, over the sharing of the benefits of affirmative action provided by the state, and the demand by the latter that they should be provided separate quotas to safeguard their interests, has brought the issue of ‘group rights’ and its significance for Indian democracy to the fore.

At the time of independence, the members of the Constituent Assembly were keen to frame a Constitution based upon the principle of equality for every individual: equality before law, status and opportunity that would lay the foundations for an egalitarian democracy in an overarching sense. The Indian state, however, inherited a rigidly hierarchical and segmented social structure based upon caste that was an obstacle to equality of opportunity to large sections of the population who constituted historically disadvantaged ascriptive groups. The founding fathers realised that establishment of the liberal democratic state as it operated in the advanced industrial societies of the West would create a procedural republic that would provide equality to individuals before law through citizenship rights, but would be insensitive to differences — social and cultural — between citizens. Communities that had been victims of social discrimination
would continue to be placed at a disadvantage, unable to compete on equal terms with the rest of society. Consequently, although many members including Ambedkar spoke strongly in support of the individual in the Constituent Assembly, they also pleaded for the recognition of special claims of certain groups who had been historically disadvantaged (Saksena 1981).

Recognising the limits to the principle of equality, the Constituent Assembly moved away from the traditional liberal framework and tried to devise ways in which disadvantaged groups could receive equal treatment in the public sphere. Accordingly, the members decided to adopt affirmative action for historically disadvantaged groups, such as the SCs, who had suffered the social disability of untouchability. These provisions were based on two principles: equalisation of opportunity structures and inclusion of excluded and marginalised groups into the mainstream of social and political life. Affirmative action was not an attempt to compensate for past disadvantages, rather the aim was to ensure that existing social disabilities and prejudices did not continue into the future, and there would be the establishment of an egalitarian democracy in independent India. Affirmative action through state intervention was designed to be an instrument that would control the forces of competitive capitalism of the marketplace in all spheres of life, and a pillar of India’s democracy. It was also hoped that the forces of modernisation through state policy would triumph over ethnic identities and in time ‘universal values’ would make them redundant. For this reason affirmative action was seen as a temporary measure which would not be required, hopefully, after a decade.

Affirmative action aimed at three kinds of preferential treatment for the SCs: 1. removal of social and religious disabilities on account of their social segregation and cultural isolation; 2. preferential treatment in educational institutions, government employment, seat reservations in Parliament, State Legislative Assemblies (and panchayats since the 73rd Amendment) together with other ameliorative measures to improve their life opportunities; and 3. protection, if required through legislation, from all forms of injustice and exploitation. This study focuses on reservations, i.e., equalisation of opportunities. However, in practice it is difficult to separate this principle from that of ‘inclusion’ as even in reservations, as our study will show, ascriptive identities at the subcaste level can play a role. Reservations also constitute the most controversial aspect and impinge on politics, because though
based on the same rationale as all the others, they impact upon ‘others’ outside the disadvantaged group, leading to competition for scarce resources. In recent years, this competition is seen among the SC groups as well.

This article, based on an analysis of the conflict since the late 1990s between the two SC groups in Andhra Pradesh, argues that in actual practice, reservations have neither created equality of opportunity for the SCs, nor led to their inclusion and integration into Indian society; rather, the results have been contrary to what was envisaged by the Constitution makers. Protective discrimination sought to introduce equality by recognising group identities and privileging them over the individual. In terms of actual implementation, however, the whole group does not benefit, rather only individuals from the targeted groups gain; in fact, it is the ‘creamy layer’ or ‘upper crust’ that corners the maximum benefits. Consequently, while a significant number have gained, such redistribution through state policies has not been spread evenly throughout the beneficiary groups or regions in which they are inhabited. This has produced a small, educated and privileged ‘class’ among the SCs, while the large majority remain poor, marginalised and with little access to opportunities. Second, scarcity of reserved seats and jobs has created increasing competition between SC groups, and complaints of ‘under-representation’ in the benefits of affirmative action by an increasing number of scheduled subcastes, leading to conflict and violence (Mahajan 1998: 146). Invoking the principle of social justice, demands for providing special quotas in reservation to under-represented subcaste groups have contributed to the resurgence of ascriptive identities. While both these aspects are important, this article focuses on the second aspect.

Discontent and conflict, based upon the issue of sharing of the benefits of reservation among subcastes, is visible in many states of India. The Mangs in Maharashtra, Jatavs in Uttar Pradesh, Madigas in AP, to give a few examples, feel that the Mahars, Jatavs and Malas respectively have cornered a disproportionate share of the benefits of reservation. This article analyses this discontent in the case of Andhra with reference to the Mala–Madiga conflict since the late 1990s over the reservation policy.

The article is divided into three parts. The first part examines the relationship between group rights and affirmative action in the overall Indian context. This provides a background to the second part, which
describes the demands put forward by the Madigas in Andhra Pradesh, the reasons underlying them and the state response. The concluding section discusses the impact of policies of affirmative action based on reservation and ‘protective discrimination’ on democracy in India.

**Affirmative Action and Group Rights in India**

To reiterate, there are significant differences both in the underlying normative concerns and the manner in which group rights have been introduced in India and western Europe with consequences for affirmative action in India. In the West, 19th-century liberalism gave importance to the individual and individual rights. It was argued that this was the best method of removing structures of discrimination and constructing an equal and democratic society. Individual rights were closely associated with the building of a democratic society and were seen as the bedrock of democratic governance. Throughout the 19th century, marginalised communities and groups (for example, women) used this principle to articulate their demands in their struggle for equality with the rest of society. It was only after these rights had been extended to all the individuals as equal citizens that social differences and group rights emerged and were granted recognition. As a result, since the late 20th century, liberalism has undergone a change and today communitarians are giving importance to groups and group rights. They argue that by making all individuals citizens, the differences between them have been ignored, and as such are not being taken into consideration by the state in policy making.\(^1\) This trajectory is seen in the USA where affirmative action has also been used to help the Black community. Industrialisation and rapid economic development following the formation of a new nation did not produce social awareness of discrimination, or the demand for political intervention. It was only after almost 200 years, in the wake of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, that the Democratic Party adopted a programme of affirmative action (Gupta 2000: 99). Even then it was not done through legislation but by a series of executive decrees issued by the Kennedy administration (Glazer 1975: 44–48).

In India, the makers of the Constitution, in dealing with the historically underprivileged groups, adopted the principle of ‘group

\(^1\) Poul et al. (1996).
equality’, a feature closer to 20th century liberalism. The Directive Principles of State Policy under Article 46 charged the state ‘to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people particularly the SCs and Scheduled Tribes, and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation’. Accordingly, the Constitution under various Articles provided ‘protective discrimination’: political reservations (Articles 330–32), reservation of seats in educational institutions (Articles 15(4) and 29) and reservations in government jobs (Articles 16(4), 320(4), 333 and 335). The actions of the Constituent Assembly were shaped by the specific historical context in which the Constitution was being framed, rather than the experiences of the West where the philosophy of traditional liberalism was yet to be questioned in the 1950s. During the colonial period, under the leadership of Ambedkar, SC groups had asserted against the social and cultural disabilities perpetrated against them by caste Hindus and fought long and hard for these rights. Indeed, in the late colonial period, the single most important agenda of the Scheduled Caste Federation formed by Ambedkar had been separate electorates, together with reservations in educational institutions, jobs in the bureaucracy and a host of other supportive measures. As a result, there was little opposition in the Constituent Assembly to the principle of affirmative action for disadvantaged groups. In contrast to the West, group rights were granted recognition in a society in which the principle of equality and values of universal citizenship had yet to be accepted and firmly established and which had yet to experience the practice of democracy.

These historical trajectories explain a major difference in the affirmative action programme between the two countries: the presence of a quota system in India and its absence in the US. In India the notion of community is very strong, the individual is not as important as the group to which he belongs. In fact, in the Constituent Assembly, many members during the discussion on fundamental

---

2 Saksena’s analysis of the debates of the Constituent Assembly shows that not much time was spent on discussing the issue of affirmative action. The number of persons who spoke was very few. Out of a total of 324 only 103 members, i.e., 30 per cent, actually participated in the debates and even out of these 103, no less than 66 persons spoke only once or twice (Saksena 1981: xviii).
rights tilted towards community representation rather than individual rights, causing concern to many leaders that the undiluted concern for community privileges would erode the status of the individual and make the community a perennial interest group. This prompted Ambedkar to remark while moving the draft Constitution on 23 November 1948 that it ‘would be equally wrong for minorities to perpetuate themselves’ (Gupta 2000: 106). Accordingly, in India, the affirmative action programme is based upon group membership and not ‘category affiliation’ (ibid.). At independence, the SCs were viewed as a vulnerable minority requiring protection because they had not been able, due to discrimination over a long period of time, to acquire requisite skills such as education, which would enable them to take advantage of opportunities that development would provide. Hence, reservations were based on a quota system and dilution of standards for SCs was deemed necessary. Consequently, reservations were based more on redressal (which is community-based) than on compensation (ibid.: 110). Moreover, in India, a basic aim was the removal of the caste system, which is why the Constitution makers were so keen that reservations should not be in perpetuity but reviewed periodically.

In contrast, in the West, the process of individuation leading to individual rights has been an important process which has shaped the nature of affirmation action. In the US, Title VII made explicit that this policy would not permit the lowering of qualifications and the undermining of merit, rather it was meant to remove prejudices that exist among individuals who are deemed intrinsically equal. So the policy merely encourages employment and school enrolment among the Blacks and unlike in India is based on the principle of compensation for past discrimination. The widespread support, even among the Blacks, for these principles shows how deeply ingrained the idea of individual merit is; this made it possible to dismantle affirmative action with the passage of Proposition 209 in the 1980s.

Third, it is important to understand that while much of the debate on group rights in the West has been around the conception of cultural difference and recognition by the state of these differences\(^3\) in India,

---

\(^3\) A good example is the demand in Canada by Francophones in Quebec and the First Nation Peoples for recognition and protection of their cultural differences. As Kymlicka has argued, ‘the accommodation of differences is the essence of true equality and group specific rights are needed to accommodate our differences’ (Kymlicka 1995 in Mahajan 1998: 104).
it is on discrimination based on ascriptive identities. Hence, in the Constituent Assembly during the debate on affirmative action policy, members defined social groups in purely ascriptive terms and caste was selected as the primary criterion for identifying the beneficiaries; no suggestions were made to implement it on a class basis. As the policy of affirmative action was conceived in the context of membership of a group that is socially and historically disadvantaged, it was not meant for removal of poverty and class-based differences, though it could contribute to narrowing of such differences. The members of the special subcommittee of the Constituent Assembly set up to examine the issue of affirmative action argued that it was being adopted because of the unique position historically occupied by the SCs in Indian society. While the standards of education and material being of the SCs were, even by Indian standards, extremely low, equally important was the fact that they suffered from grievous social and cultural disabilities. The members held that affirmative action would remove social and economic differences and ethnic identities would be replaced by the universal identity of citizenship. Hence, in post-independence India, caste identities were accorded importance and came to play an important role. They became the sole basis on which discrimination was identified, and promoting equality between caste groups was viewed as the only method by which the existing forms of discrimination could be removed. Affirmative action has therefore heightened awareness of caste and subcaste identity.

Fourth, while state intervention is a critical factor in the upliftment of the SCs, the pattern of economic development in the post-independence period has been crucial in determining the impact of policies of affirmative action. Affirmative action both in the US and in India was not meant to remove market competition, but to restrain it in certain areas. In India, affirmative action could not over-come the unequal economic structure of society, reinforced by an uneven distribution of gains in the post-independence period, under a predominantly capitalist system of development. Since independence, only a small section of the SCs has benefited as capitalist development in the countryside together with the failure of large-scale industrialisation has increased existing inequalities. Consequently, affirmative action has increased socio-economic differences among the SCs leading to greater competition for limited jobs. In the US, on the other hand, being an economically advanced country, while there are reports of the emergence of a ‘black bourgeoisie’, the benefits of
development have been more widely distributed; by 1980, about two out of every five employed Blacks were working in white-collar jobs (Kilson 1983: 85).

Moreover, as discussed above, in this process of capitalist development, certain subcastes who were economically and educationally better placed historically to take advantage of the benefits of affirmative action have advanced at a faster rate. This has sharpened conflict over benefits between subcastes and led to a new kind of resurgence of identity consciousness in recent years. High levels of political consciousness are seen precisely among the educated sections of the SCs. State policies of reservation combined with politicisation has promoted the emergence of a vocal political leadership among SCs that has used the politics of caste to enter the middle class. The leadership of the BSP provides a good example. Using political means for upward mobility, low-caste elites operate virtually as socio-economic groups to gain educational and occupational opportunities through reservations. ‘Secularisation’ has detached caste from the ritual status hierarchy on the one hand, and has imparted it a character of ‘power-group functioning’ in competitive democratic politics on the other. Describing these shifts as de-ritualisation and politicisation respectively, Sheth argues (1999: 2504) that it is now ‘possible for individual members of different castes — including SCs — to acquire new economic interest and social-political identification and own class-like as well as ethnicity identities … (this) has opened up a third course of change … classisation’. Modernisation of India’s economy and democratisation of its political institutions has created horizontal groups competing for power and control over resources in society. This horizontalisation of SC groups has been accompanied by a new form of consciousness arising out of perception of common political interest and modern status aspirations, which has led to disruption of hierarchical relations and to increase in competition and conflict among them. This is overlaid by the new power system created by the political parties and above all by social policies — such as of affirmative action — of the state (ibid.).

Equally important is the manner in which policies of affirmative action have been implemented by the central and state governments in recent years. Many concessions have been made to group identities, which have led to a growing demand for representation and employment in institutions. The best examples are representation for the OBCs in several states on the basis of various state-level backward
class commissions’ recommendations. The Mandal Commission report accelerated the process. Significantly, the Karunanidhi government introduced a separate quota for the MBCs within the quota allotted to BCs in 1989 in Tamil Nadu. Similar demands were made by the MBCs in UP, during the BJP government headed by Rajnath Singh, in the 1990s based on the MBC Commission report 1975. Most recently, the demand for reservation in higher education for the OBCs is coming up after its implementation by the Union government in the central institutions. The Gurjars launched a movement for ST status in Rajasthan that was actively resisted by the locally influential ST community of the Meenas. Thus, there has been a proliferation of demand for reservation by various groups, both among the SCs and the backwards.

Due to these attributes of the affirmative action programmes in India, many studies\(^4\) point out that only a small section of the SCs has received the benefits of reservations. Galanter has attempted a cost and benefit analysis to SCs with specific reference to reservation in government employment. His and some other studies (Aggarwal and Ashraf 1976) show that availability of jobs has encouraged many families to give education to their children and job reservation has provided ‘a manifold increase in the number of families liberated from circumscribing subservient roles, able to utilise expanding opportunities and support high educational attainments … they provide the crucial leaven from which effective leadership might emerge’ (Galanter 1989: 193). Nonetheless, he points out that among the SCs, only certain castes have gained larger proportion of benefits than others. A number of studies show that educational inequalities among the SCs themselves not only exist, but are also widening (D’Souza 1980). Only a few among many SCs have taken advantage of education, particularly higher education (Shah and Patel 1977; Aggarwal 1983; Viswanadham and Reddy 1985; Chalam 1988). There is a close association between the social and class position of parents and educational achievement of their children. Viswanadham and Reddy observe, ‘Most of the top achievers come from the families of higher socio-economic status and a vast majority of under-achievers are from poorer sections among the SCs’ (1985: 58).

---

\(^4\) The studies mentioned in this section are all from a review of studies on SCs by Shah (2001).
Mendelsohn observed in the 1980s that reservation had been ineffective or had had a ‘marginal effect on poverty’ and had created an elite group within the SC community which, he suggested, could potentially provide leadership. He points out that in the results of the 32nd round of the NSS (in which for the first time the statistics for the SCs were computed separately), 18.11 per cent of those below the poverty were SCs and tribes, whereas their share of the population was 21.57 per cent. Once the poverty figure was divided by half, 40.60 per cent of the Indians below this line were SCs. In short, the lower you draw the poverty line the greater the proportion of SCs after 40 years of reservation (Mendelsohn 1986: 501). In the political sphere both his study and that of Sachchindananda (1977) noted that most Scheduled Caste MPs and MLAs did not come from backgrounds of absolute poverty, rather their family-owned land or business was able to provide them an education. It was this section that had gained a disproportionate share of the seats reserved for the SCs, leaving the really poor and backward far behind (ibid.). Narayana noted that while SC workers directly dependent on agriculture formed 72.2 per cent of the total workers, their representation in Parliament was only 36.5 per cent; but while 1.2 per cent of the SC population were engaged in trade and commerce, but their proportion in the fifth Lok Sabha was 9.2 per cent (Narayana 1978). Studies of SC elite conducted in the early 1970s in Bihar and Andhra (Lal and Tiwary 1976; Abbayasulu 1983) showed that they belonged to the privileged sections. We find a similar situation in Gujarat even at the district level. A very insignificant number (less than 10 per cent) of the Congress SC leaders at the district level were small and marginal farmers and landless labourers (Shah 1975). Studies also argue that education among the SCs does not produce ‘new Ambedkars’ but introduces ‘bourgeois values’ which create a rift between them and the uneducated sections of the community (Isaacs 1965; Chitnis 1981; Sinha 1986).

Studies also show that the sections of the SCs that have made rapid strides in terms of the educational attainments, employment and in politics are from those subcastes which have historically been better-off and had taken to education earlier. Shah and Patel mention that four SCs — Vankar/Maru, Garoda, Mahyavanshi and Rohit/Samgar/Nalia — have utilised a much larger share of government assistance for higher education in relation to their population and the total number of post-matric scholars from all SCs (1977: 193). Pai and Singh, in their study of western UP, point to the Chamars as being more advanced
in terms of education and use of reservations than the Pasis, Balmikis, Musahars and others (1995). D’Souza, in his study on Punjab, argues that educational inequalities among SCs are related to two structural dimensions: ‘One of these is the division of these people into mutually exclusive castes and the other is the concentration of different castes in various educationally and socio-economically differentiated regions’ (1980: 57). He observes that due to affirmative action structural constraints between SCs and non-SCs have somewhat reduced but they are ‘acting with greater vigour’ among the SCs. Some scholars have also argued that education inculcates bourgeois values among SCs and creates divisions between educated and uneducated SCs (Chitnis 1981; Sinha 1986). A similar process is seen in the field of political participation. As mentioned above, aspirant politicians who have received party tickets and contested elections tend to be from the better-off sections. Thus, affirmative action has not produced group equality, rather assimilation into the mainstream, caste and sub-caste identities have received a fresh lease of life in Indian society. Keeping these arguments in mind we turn now to a study of the Mala–Madiga conflict over the sharing of the benefits of affirmative action in Andhra Pradesh.

Reservations, ‘Fair Shares’ and the Mala–Madiga Conflict in Andhra Pradesh

According to the 2001 Census, SCs constitute 16.2 per cent of the total population of Andhra Pradesh. Out of 60 jatis or sub-caste groups listed in the SC order pertaining to Andhra Pradesh, the Malas and the Madigas are the largest. Together they make up 80 per cent of the SC population in the state. Out of the state’s population of 7.6 crore, SCs account for 1.2 crore. Within the SCs community, Madigas make up

---

5 SC is a collective term encompassing within itself a number of communities suffering from the social disability of untouchability. After independence, the President of India notified the list of SCs in accordance with the provisions of Article 341. Under this article, the SCs have been specified separately in relation to each of the states and Union Territories. Taking the country as a whole there are more than 700 communities in the list of SCs, with many existing in more than one state. For a study on the Mala see Rathnaiah (1991); for Madigas see Singh (1969).
49.2 per cent of the SCs and Malas 41.6 per cent. Other castes such as the Relli community, which is preponderant in the three northern coastal districts, and the Adi-Andhra group make up the rest (2001 Census). The Malas are found mainly on the coast while the Madigas are concentrated in Telangana, mainly in Mahbubnagar, where they form 77.30 per cent of the district population (Abbasayulu 1983). The terms Mala and Madiga began to be used by the colonial government in order to avoid the use of older demeaning terms. The development of a distinct identity of Mala and Madiga developed during the colonial period and is attributable to the various privileges extended to them by the colonial authorities. The terms were mentioned in the 1881 Census as broad generic categories encompassing different untouchable groups in AP (Singh 1995: 872. In the 1920s, the Malas and the Madigas constituted 17 per cent of the population (Malas 7.3 per cent and Madigas 9.7 per cent) but were divided into numerous subcastes spread unevenly across the Andhra districts under British AP (Reddy 1989: 269).

The immediate reasons underlying the conflict between the Malas and the Madigas since the late 1990s over the benefits of affirmative action is the increasing competition for jobs and seats in educational institutions over the last two decades. A study of the impact of reservations on AP shows that in the first two decades after independence, very few benefited from preferential treatment and were able to get a government job. The impact of the policy was very slow and as one study commented in the early 1970s, had ‘barely scraped the surface of the problem’ (Ramaswamy 1974a: 1153). The Elayaperumal Committee report showed that SCs had gained education and jobs under the policy largely in urban areas (1969). The greatest concentration of SCs was in the lowest paid government jobs. While they accounted for 11 per cent of the employees in Class IV jobs with a very low salary, in the higher categories of employment this percentage fell and was only 2 per cent in the gazetted ranks. In the judicial services, for example, the proportion of SC employees in Class I and II posts was less than 1 per cent in 1965. In the police service, of the 50 posts allotted in the rank of superintendent of police, only one had been filled. Even in the lowest category, 90 per cent of the posts went unfilled. There was, however, a steady increase in the number of job seekers. Between 1954 and 1962 the number of SC applicants increased four-fold, but only about 10 per cent had been placed in employment (ibid.: 1157). The Elayaperumal Committee
report indicted the then Congress government for its manner of implementing the policy, as a large number of posts even in the lower category remained unfulfilled. However, at least partly, this was because of the lack of educated candidates who could qualify for these posts. This was because the literacy rate was low and progress in education and urbanisation was very slow. While the number of those enrolled in primary schools was increasing, the number of dropouts was very high.

The picture underwent a marked change by the 1980s. Between 1976 and 1981, there was a rapid expansion of SCs in the Andhra bureaucracy as a new generation of educated SCs began to emerge (Reddy 1989: 310). The total number of SC gazetted officers increased from 767 to 1,560, a rise of 103 per cent; in the non-gazetted category, SCs grew from 26,000 to 36,976, a rise of 39 per cent. In public sector undertakings SC personnel among the supervisory administrative staff increased from 41 to 169 — a rise of 28 per cent — in the same period. Among supervisory technical personnel the increase was from 120 to 512 (a rise of 319 per cent), among non-supervisory administrative personnel from 1,649 to 3,175 (92.5 per cent) and non-supervisory technical staff from 229 to 1,317 (a rise of 475 per cent). By 1986, the SCs and the OBCs together made up 46 per cent of all employees in the state administration. However, most of these were posts were outside the effective power structure, which means that there is increasing competition for jobs in the lower echelons of the government hierarchy among sections of the SCs (ibid.: 311). Reservations in the Panchayati Raj institutions from 1980s onwards also made a difference. Until then, SCs had no representation among all the 334 samiti presidents. After reservations were introduced, a sizeable number gained representation. In 1981, out of 576,000 government employees SCs comprised 83,539, i.e., 14.5 per cent (ibid.: 310).

Although the number of those who had been able to make use of affirmative action policies and obtain government employment increased, the numbers of those who were illiterate, poor and unable to make use of these policies remained very large. A study in 1974 showed that most SCs lived in rural areas and were agricultural labourers. Even in the towns, where educational levels among SCs had improved and jobs obtained, according to the Elayaperumal Committee report, the number who had made use of affirmative action policies constituted a negligible proportion of the SC population. In fact, the study pointed
out that the large majority of SCs everywhere still followed their traditional occupations of leather working, scavenging or agricultural labour. In the sample villages surveyed, there had been only a minimal mobility away from traditional occupation (Ramaswamy 1974a: 1156). However, by the end of the 1980s, a small, primarily urban-based privileged class had emerged among the SCs in the state who had been able to make progress due to affirmative action. According to one authority, those employed in the public services in AP constituted less than 4 per cent of the SC population, but were the most articulate and aware section (Sankaran 1998).

With increasing awareness of low social and economic status and assertion of Dalit identity this slow progress, coupled with increasing competition for now fewer lower level jobs in the government, has led to increasing discontent within the SC community which has manifested itself in divisions between subcastes, primarily the Malas and the Madigas. In April 1997, the Madigas, invoking the principle of social justice, demanded through their organisation the Madiga Reservation Poratta Samiti (MRPS) that they be given sub-quotas within the 15 per cent allotted to the SCs in the state. Their contention was that the Malas had received a disproportionate share of the benefits of reservation while they as a community, which was more backward, had not received a ‘fair share’. The demand itself is not new; it was voiced for the first time in 1972 before the Chief Minister and subsequently many members of the Assembly and other important public institutions from the Madiga community had raised it from time to time. However, in April 1997 it took the form of a mass movement in which a large number of the community participated. For nearly two months beginning 14 April, activists of the MRPS, led by their leader Krishna Madiga, undertook a 1,000 km dandora mahapadyatra, i.e., a long march to the beating of the traditional drum (Frontline, 11 July 1997: 43). It began from Chandrababu Naidu’s ancestral village of Naravaripalli in Chittoor district and ended at Hyderabad, at the Chief Minister’s official residence, on 1 June. On the way it criss-crossed six districts and addressed many street-corner meetings. The Madigas used a number of tactics to draw attention to their demand and their low status such as affixing the caste tag to their names and painting the Malas as being cunning and selfish who took away all the reservations granted by the state. The Malas, in retaliation, formed the Mala Mahanadu under P. V. Rao and opposed the demand. The MRPS, however, gained the support of most political parties and
organisations that do not want to oppose such demands and the legislature passed a resolution unanimously accepting the demand (ibid.).

The report of the Justice Ramchandra Raju Judicial Commission of inquiry — set up by the state government on 10 September 1996 — submitted in May 1997, agreed that there was disproportionate distribution of reservation benefits in favour of Malas and the Adi-Andhra group compared to their representation in the population as a whole. The Commission based its report on statistical data regarding the number of persons belonging to SCs employed in central and state government departments, public sector undertakings in the state, local bodies and cooperative institutions. It found that the vacancies reserved for SCs in public employment and the seats reserved in institutions of higher education were availed of between the Malas and the Madigas in the ratio of 64:34. The report led to more strident demands by the Madigas for a separate quota. The state government was favourably inclined, but as described a little later, the courts have now allowed the policy to be implemented.

### Historical Emergence of Differences

The deeper reasons for the conflict between the Malas and the Madigas lie in the historical background in which these two subcastes developed a distinct sense of subcaste identity, their differential economic and educational levels and the pattern of Dalit mobilisation in AP. Policies of affirmative action have increased these differences and sharpened historical animosity and competition, contributing to a heightened sense of separate identity between them. The Malas and the Madigas are both ‘untouchable’ castes and despite the former being placed higher in the caste hierarchy, suffer equally all the indignities of being outcastes. In the atrocities that took place at Padirikuppam in Chittoor, Karamcheddu in Prakasam and Neerukonda and Chundur in Guntur district, both communities were victims. Far more important is the differential impact of educational and socio-economic development in the colonial period. The two communities, as mentioned at the outset, have been demographically concentrated in the different regions of AP. The Malas have had an early advantage in comparative terms over the Madigas as they have been concentrated in the coastal Andhra region as the latter have been mostly residing in the Telangana region. The coastal region contains some of the most fertile soils and has been traditionally prosperous and culturally and politically active. Under British rule, due to the anicuts on the Krishna and Godavari
The Mala–Madiga Conflict in Andhra Pradesh

The coastal and Telangana region has relevance in Dalit politics. The logic of unevenness pervades through and informs not merely the elite formation of the ruling classes and dominant castes of the Reddys and Kammas, but also the Dalit intellectual elaboration as well (Srinivasulu 1994: 2585). The Dalits of the coastal areas who have experienced a number of social reform movements such as the non-Brahmin, Adi-Andhra, Christian missionary reform, rationalist and nationalist movements are ahead of the Dalits of Telangana by a generation. This relative advance is not merely region-specific but caste-specific as well. Within the coastal districts, compared to the Madigas it is the Malas who have benefited from colonial policy and activities of social reformers in the region and from ruling class politics of patronage and co-option after independence (Balagopal 2000: 1078).

The Malas were the main recipients of preferential treatment by the British. The most important act of the British that set the trend for subsequent policy was the denotation of castes rather than individuals as depressed. Due to the influence of the Brahmo Samaj, Sanskritisation was attempted and the Mala, particularly on the coast, decided to use the British Census to rename themselves as Adi-Andhra. Till 1921, the Mala and Madiga were the two main untouchable castes listed in the census. But by the 1931 Census, both these groups, particularly the former who were more aware, had sharply declined, being replaced by the nomenclature Adi-Andhra (Ramaswamy 1974b: 1963). The British government, under its policy of helping the depressed classes, began, from about 1883, on the recommendation of the Education Commission Report, separate schools for them wherever necessary and in 1921 a Commissioner was appointed to supervise their educational needs. Due to the efforts of the Anti-Brahmin movement, reservation of
jobs for non-Brahmins was granted by the colonial government, which benefited the depressed classes as well. In the Madras Presidency one out of every 12 posts for non-Brahmins was meant for them and by 1947 two out of every post. Political representation was granted after 1919. The Self Respect movement also exhorted the depressed classes to cultivate self-respect, which included educating children so as to improve their position in society. All this had an impact upon the depressed classes living on the coast, most of whom were Mala or Adi-Andhra.

The second major influence on the coast was that of the Christian missionaries. While their basic aim was to improve the economic condition of the SCs and convert them to Christianity, the vehicle they used was education, which enabled those in the coastal region to register significant gains in terms of jobs and improved living conditions. The activities of the missionaries did not remove caste distinctions, rather they tended to reinforce them. They also tended to increase the traditional antagonism between the Malas and the Madigas on the coast as the former were converted in large numbers to Roman Catholicism and the latter to the Baptist faith (Ramaswamy 1974b: 1959). The coastal areas also experienced a Brahmo Samaj movement up to the 1930s, which was basically a reaction to the attempts by Christian missionaries to convert the untouchables. The Brahmo leaders tried to integrate the untouchables into Hinduism by providing free education and a sense of social consciousness among them. They also gave an impetus to the Library Movement, which swept Andhra in the 1930s and attempted to win the right of entry into public libraries for untouchables, succeeding despite the opposition of orthodox Hindus. Several Congress leaders were sympathetic to the work of the Brahmos and supported it; with their help, the latter were able to groom several untouchable leaders. By the 1920s, when Mahatma Gandhi took up their cause, there was already widespread awareness among the coastal SCs about their condition and a desire to improve it. In contrast in Telangana during the colonial period, there was no comparable attempt at social reform or deliberate effort to improve the lot of the depressed classes (ibid.).

Due to these differing historical patterns, the Malas have advanced beyond the Madigas in terms of their ability to make use of the policies of affirmative action in the post-independence period. A study in the 1950s pointed out that the Madigas were economically backward because they had taken to education very late compared to the Malas.
It argued that this was because the Madigas had a secure source of traditional occupation and livelihood in leather working in which the other subcastes could not compete but which became a factor inhibiting the exploitation of secular opportunities for mobility. The Malas, lacking such an occupation, took to agriculture in which they had to compete with many other caste groups, which made them take to formal education much faster. Moreover, the Madigas were involved in jajmani relationships with upper-caste landlords, which helped to keep them in their traditional occupation. Reddy observes: ‘... the jajmani system which cultivates a sense of security has itself bred sluggishness in the Madiga, and the lack of it among the Malas drives them to strive at many a job and secure a living in many ways’ (Reddy 1954: 61).

Ramaswamy’s study in the early 1970s noted a striking difference between the two communities in terms of their ability to exploit educational facilities. The Malas were way ahead of the Madigas in the late 1960s. In the urban areas the rate of literacy was 26.8 per cent among the Malas, whereas among the Madigas it was 15.8 per cent. Even in the rural areas where literacy is far less, there were twice as many literates among the Malas as among the Madigas. This difference was more pronounced between the two castes at every level, from primary to higher education. The Malas and Adi-Andhras were able to corner most scholarships: the Malas secured 43 per cent of the total scholarships for SC students in 1968. The Adi-Andhras, although a bare 12 per cent of the population, cornered nearly a third. In contrast, the Madigas secured only 22.8 per cent of the fellowships although in terms of their proportion to the total SC population they far exceed the Malas (Ramaswamy 1974a: 1158). In fact, Ramaswamy comments that if the educational level of both communities were to continue at the same pace, ‘then the cleavages among the SCs which are at the moment barely visible would sharpen and may even lead to the emergence of an elite’. This, she argues, would lead not merely to the ‘emergence of a small upper crust of educated and well-placed individuals within caste groupings but also of the emergence of status distinctions as between the castes themselves’ (ibid.).

These differences persist even today; the gap has narrowed, but not much. The Madigas are somewhat more backward and lagging behind the Malas in terms of the numbers employed in services, higher education and other socio-economic indicators. While both communities are predominantly rural, 16.49 per cent of the Malas reside in
urban areas as against 13.37 per cent of the Madigas (1981 Census). Figures also indicate that all subcastes of the Malas favour education and 21.23 per cent of them are educated and have availed of all facilities provided by the government under affirmative action policies. In contrast, the Madigas have not made satisfactory progress in the field of education; only 11.31 per cent are educated. While they have responded favourably to affirmative action, their main complaint is that ‘developmental activities are not reaching them in full, this is because middlemen exploit their ignorance’ (Singh 1995: 819).

Two patterns of Dalit mobilisation in AP in the post-independence period have contributed to the differences and ongoing conflict between the two groups: Ambedkarite and Congress in mainly the coastal areas and communist in the Telangana region. The pattern of Dalit mobilisation in the coastal areas encouraged education and other forms of upward mobility and entry into electoral politics. The Republican Party of India, formed in 1956 as a branch of the All-India Republican Party of India formed by Ambedkar’s followers soon after his death, was predominantly a party concentrated in the coastal region and most of its leaders were Malas from this region. Although the party could win few seats, it contributed substantially to the development of political consciousness by movements for land and minimum wages and strikes in urban areas in the 1960s (Rao 1968: 62) and by starting an Ambedkar Memorial Society in Hyderabad and a Telegu fortnightly in 1972. Many of the writings of Ambedkar were translated into Telugu and widely read. The impact of this was seen mainly in the coastal areas where youth hostels were set up for the education of SCs from rural areas, meetings held, Ambedkar’s birthday and death anniversary celebrated and a strong conversion movement took place.

Following the decline of the Republican Party of India in the early 1970s, the Congress party under Indira Gandhi was able to gain support of the SCs by policies such as Garibi Hatao and the 20-point programme (Reddy 1989: 285) and even under P. V. Narasimha Rao, who increased Dalit representation in his cabinet from 17 per cent to about 30 per cent; out of 29 cabinet ministers 10 were Dalits and backwards. (Kumar et al. 1982: 17). Rao also tried to increase the pace of land reforms and introduce a ceiling on agricultural land in 1972 and to initiate change in the panchayats to bring down the influence of the Reddys. For the first time a state-level conference on Dalits was held under Congress rule in April 1970 in Hyderabad to discuss their problems and to initiate a time-bound programme for them.
After the conference the Andhra legislature passed a resolution to set up a body for the welfare of Dalits. In 1976 the government set up several committees to examine the representation of Dalits in various government departments, PSUs and other bodies, the pace of educational facilities available and the number of caste atrocities (ibid.). Thus, Congress rule provided some material benefits to the SCs. Most of these changes took place in the coastal districts which were already developed and where the SCs had enjoyed Congress patronage over a long period of time. The TDP under NTR continued a similar set of policies towards the Dalits such as ₹2 per kg rice, midday meals for children and sale of dhotis and sarees at low cost among the poor, housing sites, drinking water and abolition of the hereditary post of the village karnam (headman). Even in the BSP, a recent entrant into AP politics, it is the coastal Malas who are found predominantly to the neglect of the Madigas and the OBCs. The organisation and method of working of the BSP is closer to that of the Congress and other parties and has attracted the coastal Malas who have been used to this form of politics rather than the Dalits of the Telangana region who are closer to the organisational and mobilisational patterns of the left.

In Telangana the articulation of Dalit identity has taken a qualitatively different form from the coastal districts, both in terms of the socio-economic specificity and politico-ideological contours (Srinivasulu 1994: 2584). Here, communist activity during the late colonial period led to anti-feudal movements for land, better wages and against oppression/exploitation by the landlords. The rise of the Naxalite movement, agrarian struggles and left movements among students during the last two decades have radicalised the Dalit youth and made them unhappy with the dominant Dalit discourse and political formations. The CPI (ML) groups have taken up questions such as vetti (forced labour) and untouchability along with the land and wage question and thereby been able to mobilise the Dalits. Here there has been rapid spread of Dalit organisations such as the Dalit Kala Mandali and the Dalit Writers, Artists and Intellectuals Forum (DWAIUF). This has been due to the influence of the Dalit Panthers movement in Maharashtra. The DWAIUF has conducted workshops and seminars that have raised consciousness and created an upsurge in subaltern literary and cultural creativity (ibid.). This pattern is different from the traditional Ambedkarite dispensation of Dalit articulation of the coastal region and its confinement to the question of reservation and share in political power.
Despite these differing patterns following the Karamchedu massacre which shocked and united the Dalits, a Dalit Maha Sabha (DMS) was formed in 1985. With civil libertarian leader Bojja Tarakam as President and K. Padma Rao as General Secretary, it was felt that the Dalit movement had taken the form of a civil rights movement rapidly spreading to all parts of the state and bringing into its ambit all subcastes of the Dalits. However, it did not spread to the Telangana region. The first conference of the DMS, held in 1986, marked the harmonious phase of the movement (Srinivasulu 2002: 55). But soon after that divisions arose. The differences and tensions inherent in the DMS’s objective Dalit position, support base, leadership and ideology surfaced during their second party conference in 1988. The third and last conference was held separately in 1991 by two groups, both of whom called themselves Andhra Pradesh Dalit Maha Sabha (APDMS).

A major problem was that the leadership and cadre of the DMS came predominantly from the Mala community, with the Madigas remaining in the background. The entry of the BSP and differences over whether to join hands with it also created divisions (Srinivasulu 2002: 55). Moreover, developments within the TDP which was voted to power in the 1994 elections, namely, the removal of N. T. Rama Rao from power, the consequent split in the party (the minority faction led by NTR and later by his widow, and the ruling group led by his son-in-law N. Chandrababu Naidu) and the demise of NTR occurred in fast sequence between August 1995 and January 1996. The TDP faced three Lok Sabha elections (in 1996, 1998 and 1999), necessitated by the uncertainties of the hung Lok Sabha and unstable governments at the centre, and the State Assembly election in 1999. These elections led to a rapid shift and alignment of political forces that had an impact on Dalit politics in the state. (Srinivasulu 2002). The TDP, which had not succeed in carving out any significant support among the SCs during its first decade of existence, now took advantage of the division in the community along caste lines. By supporting the demand for categorisation and showing a preference for the Madiga candidates in the reserved constituencies the TDP (Naidu) gained their support but furthered the division among the Dalits.

State Response and Increasing Antagonism

As Table 12.1 shows, the Justice Ramachandra Raju Commission recommended reclassification of the SCs in Andhra Pradesh into four
groups — A, B, C and D — based on inter-se back-wardness with fixed quotas for each of these groups.

The 12 subcastes that made up the Relli group, the most back-ward in the panels estimation, were categorised in the ‘A’ group with 15 per cent reservation. The Madigas, who are made up of 19 subcastes, were categorised as the ‘B’ group; 7 per cent reservations was set aside for this group. The Malas, consisting of 25 subcastes, were categorised as the ‘C’ group with 6 per cent reservation. Adi-Andhras, who comprise four subcastes, were placed in the ‘D’ group with 1 per cent reservation. The state government, on 6 June 1997, announced acceptance of 10 out of the 18 recommendations of the Raju Commission, including the Madiga principal demand for the reclassification of the SCs into four groups (Frontline 1997: 43). However, this did not end the agitation. The government order had referred to categorisation of SCs in respect of reservations in the educational and employment fields alone. As soon as it was issued, the Madigas began to demand reservations in the political and social spheres as well, on which the government has not taken any decision. The MRPS also began, in the late 1990s, an ‘awareness programme’ in all villages to inform members of the Madiga caste of the benefits that would accrue from the reclassification. It also decided to launch a movement to ensure enrolment of children in schools (ibid.).

The Malas, on the other hand, felt that the report of the Raju Commission was flawed. They pointed out that the allegation that they had cornered the benefits of reservation was incorrect, as the allotted quota never got completely filled. They felt it was a political decision by which the TDP attempted to gain the support of the Madigas. Accordingly, the Mala Mahanadu approached the AP High Court which, on 18 September 1997, held the Government Order ultra

### Table 12.1: Broad Categorisation of the SCs — Group Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste groups</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Reservation granted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madiga (B)</td>
<td>37,37,609</td>
<td>46.94</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mala (C)</td>
<td>32,63,675</td>
<td>46.94</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adi-Andhra</td>
<td>7,13,824</td>
<td>8.96</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relli (A)</td>
<td>1,33,689</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vires the state government’s powers and unconstitutional. The Court pointed out that the government should have, under Article 338(9), consulted the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Tribes before taking the decision to effect the categorisation, although the government did argue before the court that it was not mandatory according to the Constitution for it to do so.

Following the court’s ruling, violent conflict broke out, in the last week of September and first week of October 1997, between the two principal Dalit communities in East and West Godavari districts in which a Madiga youth was killed. The MRPS was upset because it had supported Naidu in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections. It tried to put pressure on the state government to get the categorisation approved. In June 1998, Krishna Madiga staged a hunger strike and called upon the Madigas to take to the streets for the first time. A Madiga youth immolated himself at Tadipatra in Anantpur district. As the MRPS had been a constituent of every non-Congress government formed at the centre in the 1990s and had backed the TDP in the 1999 general elections, the MRPS felt that if the party wanted, it could have got the categorisation approved by the central government (Balagopal 2000: 1079–1080). ‘If the TDP cannot ensure that the BJP government brings in the categorization, then the TDP should withdraw support to the BJP government,’ Krishna Madiga demanded. ‘The TDP MPs, who won the elections with our support, should resign’ (ibid.).

The prolonged agitation led to a split in the movement, one section following Krishna Madiga and the other Krupkar Madiga. The SC/ST Commission advised the government to reject the report of the Raju Commission. However, the state government decided not to take this advice and, under Article 338(7), passed an ordinance accepting the categorisation. Further delay took place when the Governor of AP decided to send it for the President’s assent which it received only a year later. The state government then was able to promulgate a fresh

---

6 Under Article 338(9) the government is expected to consult the SC and ST Commission before taking any major decision regarding these groups. The judgment did not in any way question the earlier ruling by the Supreme Court in the case of the Mandal Commission upholding such a subdivision, but argued that this was done in the case of backward castes and not the SCs. The SCs, the court pointed out, were the most backward group identified by the President and therefore any further demarcation would effectively place those identified as ‘less’ backward outside the list (Balagopal 2000: 1079).
order on 9 December 1999. The ordinance was challenged before the High Court by various writ petitions as being violative of Articles 15(4), 16(4), 162, 246, 341(1), 338(7), 46, 335 and 213 of the Constitution of India as also the Constitutional (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950 notified by the President of India and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Amendment Act, 1976. During the hearing of the writ petitions, the state government replaced the ordinance with the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Act, 2000 on 2 May 2000 on the same lines as Ordinance No. 9 of 1999. The validity of the Act was challenged before the High Court of Andhra Pradesh in Hyderabad and repealed by a five-judge bench on a majority of 4:1. An appeal was made to the Supreme Court, which also struck down the Act in 2001. The court held that the legislation, apart from being beyond the legislative competence of the state, was also violative of Article 14 of the Constitution. More important, it pointed out that once the castes are put in the Presidential List, these castes become one homogeneous class for all purposes under the Constitution; therefore, there could be no further division of the Scheduled List by any Act of the State legislature.\footnote{CASE NO.: Appeal (civil) 6758 of 2000. With civil appeal no. 6934/2000.}

Despite these court rulings given the increasing importance of Dalit support, political leaders in AP have not given up efforts to introduce the categorisation. On 9 May 2001 all the Telangana district unit branches of Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti decided to stay away from the Congress and merged with the Telangana Rashtra Samiti. In December 2004 the state legislature adopted a unanimous resolution to impress upon the centre the need to bring about central legislation/Constitutional amendment that would enable the state to effect sub-classification of the castes mentioned in the list of SCs (The Hindu, New Delhi, 12 August 2005). An all-party delegation from AP led by the Andhra Pradesh Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development, K. Ranga Rao, met the Prime Minister and other central leaders in 2005 and argued for the need to pass a bill at the earliest to make suitable amendment to Article 341 by introducing Subsection 3 that would give the states the power to make suitable laws for social justice. ‘The move is to ensure social justice and not to divide castes,’ Rao pointed out at a press conference. He said the all-party delegation reflected the all-round acceptance of the measure by political parties
in AP. Agitations continued, the Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti activists held a rally, shouting slogans near the Ambedkar Statue in Hyderabad on 14 April 2005, demanding the ABCD (The Hindu, New Delhi, 15 April 2005).

Recently, SC MLAs and MLCs of the Congress party have formed a six-member coordination committee as part of an initiative on behalf of the ruling party to resolve the conflict. They consist of two members from each of the three regions of AP; three are Malas and three Madigas. Party leader Subramaniam, who convened the meeting, later told reporters that it was decided to request Chief Minister Y. S. Rajasekhar Reddy to undertake regionwise enumeration of the caste composition of SCs to analyse the backwardness of different groups. He said the objective of the meeting was to enable the Congress take the lead in resolving the issue so that other parties did not take advantage of the issue. Subramaniam said an extended meeting involving several ministers, MPs, MLAs and other senior leaders of the Congress would be held to strengthen these efforts. However, the Mala Mahanadu President and MLC, J. Prabhakar Rao, said his organisation was opposed to the collection of region-wise data of SC population. Thus the issue has become highly politicised and difficult to resolve.

However, with liberalisation and the shrinking of the public sector, not many job opportunities in the state sector are likely to emerge in the future. The categorisation orders issued by the state government, even if upheld by the courts, does not apply to the posts under the central government or central public undertakings that account for the larger proportion of the jobs in the public domain. Moreover, most are clerical or lower category jobs that do not substantially enhance social status. The Madigas hence may not gain much from their victory. At the same time, the granting of a separate quota may lead to more such demands. In fact, a section of the Koyas, a Scheduled Tribe in AP, has also begun to make similar demands. Thus, affirmative action has not led to equalization of opportunities for all sections of the SCs in AP, rather a small section consisting mainly of the Malas has gained, leading to resurgence of ascriptive identities, discontent and violence.

**Summing Up: Democracy and Group Rights**

Our study has shown that the goal of the Constitution makers to introduce equalisation of opportunity for disadvantaged groups by granting affirmative action has not been fulfilled. It argues that the
historical, social and economic context in which group rights and affirmative action was introduced is important. In the West, the establishment of the basic rights of citizenship and universal values preceded the demand for recognition of groups. As a result, there exist clear limits to demands based upon perception of difference, preventing clash between group rights and the equality of the individual. In contrast, in India, a society emerging from colonialism in which the principles of equality and universal citizenship had yet to be accepted, the impact of affirmative action has been contrary to what was envisaged by the makers of the Constitution. The latter did not address the issue of intra-group equality as a result of which individuals in certain situations feel discriminated against within a group. Consequently, rather than equalisation of opportunity, reservation has created a small privileged class from among the already better-off sections who were able to make use of the policy, creating competition and, in recent years, conflict. Moreover, as affirmative action was based not on class but on ascriptive identities, these conflicts have emerged along subcaste lines, thereby providing caste-based identities and politics a new lease of life.

Our Andhra case study affirms that the social and economic context in which the policy has been implemented can determine its impact. Reservations have increased historical antagonisms, existing inequalities and competition between the subcastes of the Malas and Madigas. In the colonial period, official policies and social reform movements benefited the former, residing mainly in the coastal regions which came under British rule, providing them education and social and political awareness, while the latter in the interior areas under princely rule, remained relatively backward. In the post-independence period, capitalist economic development and differential patterns of Dalit mobilisation have accentuated these differences. Affirmative action has contributed to an awareness of these differences between the two groups, creating competition along ascriptive identities and demands for special quotas.

These developments have significant implications for democracy in India. The Constitution makers saw affirmative action as an interventionist tool of the larger social policy of the state addressed to the longer-term goal of creating a civil society through extending substantial citizenship rights to a vast section of a historically deprived and marginalised group. With its implementation, inequality of opportunities and ascriptive identities were expected to disappear. However, in actual practice they have become more marked and beneficiaries today see affirmative action as a remedial measure that
compensates for past social disabilities and improves economic and social status in the present. Existing divisions have become more marked and new social and economic divisions have appeared both between SCs and non-SCs and between sections of the former.

While removal of discrimination and exclusion through equalisation of opportunities was the principle on which affirmative action was based, these issues are no longer significant today. Social groups are demanding division and extension of specific quotas to smaller groups. Meant to be a temporary measure, affirmative action has become a continual feature used by political leaders to gain support. The central and state governments, by agreeing to the demands of such groups, are encouraging this trend, as a result of which more groups are demanding special quotas to safeguard sectional interests. The result has been a shift in the discourse and practice of group rights from equality of opportunity and inclusion of marginalised groups to appropriate representation or ‘fair shares’ for subcaste groups, based upon a principle of equalisation or social justice. As a result, affirmative action today, contrary to the expectations of the members of the Constituent Assembly, is based upon ascriptive identities and representation of social communities. It has not worked as a ‘common good’ but has become the source of divisions and consciousness of separate rather than plural identities, creating fissures in our democratic society.

This situation has initiated a debate between those who argue that affirmative action policies should be continued and those who feel that it has failed because it was based on caste and not the economic criterion. After 60 years, it would now be difficult to shift to a class-based system of affirmative action. At the same time, it would be wrong to apply only the logic of economic criteria to SCs. As Sheth has suggested, the backwardness of the SCs is of a ‘systemic nature arising out of their social condition … and is not a random occurrence’ (Sheth 1999: 504). Rather, there should be greater stress upon minimum needs of all individuals together with attention being paid to the special needs of disadvantaged groups. It is not that disadvantaged groups do not have abilities or the potential to make use of affirmative action, but they lack the minimum requirements to do so, which in fact should be provided to all citizens. This would provide a broader and more substantial base to Indian citizenship and universal values to democracy and prevent the emergence of new divisions due to the present stress upon only group rights. The state should not grant recognition to fresh demands of groups based upon purely caste categories because the use of the
language of rights in the public debate for and against reservations is bound to lead to increase in the consciousness of caste and defeat the basic objective of affirmative action, which is to reduce and not increase caste consciousness.

For building of a more egalitarian and democratic society, reservations are clearly not enough. Even after more than half a century of reservations, a negligible number of SCs occupy Class I position in the government. For reservations to improve the life chances of disadvantaged groups, other components of affirmative action will have to be better operationalised. The capacity of beneficiaries to make use of affirmative action will have to be strengthened to prevent the benefits of affirmative action from reaching only a small section, creating new inequalities. Strengthening of Indian democracy requires this most urgently. In the specific context of AP, this would enable all sections of the SCs to make use of affirmative action and the present demand for separate quotas would not be raised.

References


**Reports**


Census of India, 1981.


Caste and Marginality in Punjab: Looking for Specificities

RONKI RAM

The article aims at exploring the complexities of caste hierarchies and Dalit identity in different regions in the state of Punjab. It further aims at capturing the specificities of caste hierarchy and Dalit identity, if any, in the respective regions. Thinking of Punjab as a geographic entity, we are reminded of the processes of political remapping it has repeatedly undergone since partition. Undivided Punjab in colonial India occupied a vast territory lying between two rivers — Sindh (now in Pakistan) and Yamuna (India). The truncated Punjab that an independent India inherited in 1947 was much smaller in terms of the territory and people than the one that became a part of Pakistan.

The communal bloodbath that followed the partition witnessed the emergence of two separate and artificially carved territorial regional states with hostile boundaries. The partition was not merely a geographic event; it deeply transformed the ethnic posture of the newly created regions on both sides of the border. The Indian Punjab underwent further re-territorialisation as Haryana and Himachal Pradesh were carved out as separate linguistic regional states in a larger and volatile north-western region of India.

It was in the reorganised post-1966 Punjabi Suba that the Sikhs found themselves in a majority for the first time in the history of India. The Scheduled Castes (SCs) (both Sikhs and Hindus), popularly known as the Dalits, became the second largest group in the state with the highest percentage of the total population of Punjab in comparison

---

1 Dalits is a ‘politically correct’ nomenclature for the ex-untouchables who traditionally have been placed at the lowest rung of the Hindu caste hierarchy and were contemptuously called by different names like Shudras, Atishudras, Achhuts, Antyajas, Chandalas Pariahs, Dheds, Panchamas, Avarnas, Namashudras, Adi-Dravida, Ad Dharmis, Mazhabis, Harijans, Depressed Classes and Scheduled Castes.
Caste and Marginality in Punjab

...to their counterparts in the rest of the states in the country. Ironically, the reorganised and truncated Punjab failed to emerge as a unified socio-cultural and linguistic region as was expected popularly. Indian Punjab, as of now, is divided into three distinct cultural regions: Majha, Malwa and Doaba (for an overview of the electoral politics pattern across these regions see Kumar 2007: 269–70). The rivers mark the natural boundaries of these three distinct regions. Over time, each region has come to acquire a specific social set-up, economic structure and cultural pattern that turn Punjab study into a most complex as well as an interesting case for the critical exploration of the phenomenon of caste hierarchy and Dalit identity.

It is in the above context that caste hierarchies and Dalit identity in Punjab assume critical importance. While Dalits in Punjab constitute almost one-third of the total population of the state, the largest proportion of the SC population in the states of India (28.85 per cent, Census of India 2001), ironically, they are left with the lowest share in the agricultural land in the state in the country (2.5 per cent). Less than 5 per cent of them are cultivators. Why have they been so severely deprived of land in the state with an agrarian economy? How does it affect the pattern of caste hierarchies in Punjab? Which avenues are available to the Dalits in the state to assert their human rights? These are some of the research questions that this article intends to take up.

The enormous gap between their numerical strength and their meagre share in the agricultural land of the state assumes further importance in the wake of the ensuing significant sudden increase in their population as Rai Sikh/Mahatam — another downtrodden community — has recently been included in the SCs list of the Indian Constitution (Constitution (Scheduled Castes) order (Amendment) Act, 2007, No 31 dated 29th August, 2007 (Punjab Government Gazette, Regd. No. CHD/0092/2006-2008, No. 45, November 9, 2007).

For a correct understanding of the phenomenon of caste and untouchability, an understanding of the specificities of a region is of critical importance. Though caste is prevalent throughout the country, it has never been monolithic and unilinear in its practice. Every region

It is a broad term that incorporates the SCs, the Scheduled Tribes (STs), and the Backward Castes. However, in current political discourse, it is mainly confined to the SCs and covers only those Dalits who are classified as Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists, but excludes Muslim and Christian Dalits.
Ronki Ram has its specific and unique characteristics that closely impact its socio-political and economic structures. In this section, an attempt is made to explore the regional specificities of Punjab and their impact upon the phenomenon of caste and untouchability in the region.

The phenomenon of untouchability was never considered so strong in Punjab as in many other parts of the country (Ibbetson [1883] 1970: 15). Punjab has generally been known as a ‘notable exception’ to the dominant view of caste and untouchability in India. But this does not mean that untouchability is alien to this part of the country. Dalits were never spared social oppression and economic deprivation in Punjab. The repeated references to and loud condemnations of caste-based discriminations in the teachings of the Sufi saints and the Sikh gurus in the region is a case in point. The social reform movements led by the Arya Samaj, Singh Sabha and Chief Khalsa Dewan further vindicated the presence of the institution of caste in the social set up of Punjab (Ram 2007: 4068–4070). Moreover, the roots of caste hierarchy were so well entrenched in the society that the reformatory measures undertaken by various social reform movements failed to weed them out. However, what distinguished it from the other parts of India is the material factor of the caste-based discriminations in Punjab as against the overall dominating pattern of the purity–pollution syndrome.

Another feature that distinguished Punjab from the rest of the regions in the country was the phenomenon of widespread landlessness among the Dalits and the absolute monopoly of the Jats (a dominant peasant caste) on the agricultural land in the state. The Punjab Land Alienation Act (1901) favoured the agricultural communities (mainly Jats) against the non-agricultural castes as it deprived the latter, including the Dalits, the right to purchase the land. Since Punjab happened to be primarily an agricultural state, the ownership of land assumed significant importance in determining social status (Barrier 1965). Nowhere in India are Dalits so extensively deprived of agricultural land as in the case of Punjab. Despite their highest

However, the main concern of these movements was to transform the attitudes of the individuals rather than striking hard on the asymmetrical structures of the society (Grewal 1994: 116). The socio-religious movements had never taken up the issue of disproportionate landholdings that has been the crucial cause of social inequalities and economic deprivations of the Dalits in the state. Whatever small impact the saints and the socio-religious movements were able to bring in the minds of the people faded away with the passage of time.
proportion in the country, less than 5 per cent of them were cultivators (lowest in India, 1991 Census). They shared only 4.82 per cent of the number of operational holdings and 2.34 per cent of the total area under cultivation (1991 Census). Consequently, till recently, the landlessness rendered a large majority of them (60 per cent, 1991 Census) into agricultural labourers and made them subservient to the landowners, who invariably happen to be Sikh Jats. However, a significant change has taken place over the last few decades. Dalits have entered into a number of professions which were traditionally considered as the mainstay of the artisan castes (Ram 2004b: 5–6). This has led to a sharp decline in the share of Dalits in the agricultural work force in the state, which came down from 24 per cent in 1991 to 16 per cent in 2001 (Singh 2005: 3).

The hold of the Jats on the land was so strong that the lower castes were even denied the access to village common land (shamlaat). In fact, Dalits were never considered a part of villages, as their residences were located outside the main premises of the villages so much so that the land on which the Dalit houses were built also considered to be belonged to the Jats (Virdi 2003: 2, 11). This kept the Dalits always afraid lest the Jat landowners ordered them to vacate the land. The abysmally low share of the Dalits in the land seems to be the major cause of their hardships and social exclusion. It is also an indication of the historical denial of political and economic rights to them (Thorat 2006: 2432). The slightest sign of protest by the Dalits for the betterment of their living conditions has often provoked the Jats to impose social boycott on them.³

The patterns of domination by the Jats and that of the subordination of the Dalits also distinguish Punjab from rest of the country in a significant way. In Punjab, the scale of social measurement differs from

---
³ Social boycott, a form of social exclusion, involves a ban on the entry of the Dalits in the fields/agricultural lands of the Jats. It involves severe deprivation of the landless Dalits who are dependent on the lands of the Jats for fuel, fodder and even to answer the call of the nature. The Jat landowners used to employ social boycott, during the wheat harvesting seasons in the early 1970s, as a weapon of suppression against the landless agricultural labourers who demanded hike in their wages. Nowadays, it is being used in the villages of Punjab by the Jats against the agitating Dalits who ask for equal participation in the formal and informal institutions of power at the local level. 'It is the means to remind them that despite their improved conditions, they continue to be low caste' (Judge 2006: 12).
that of the other parts of the country. The social measurement scale in Punjab is not based on the purity/pollution principle of Brahminical orthodoxy. Instead, it is based on the hold of land, martial strength and allegiance to Sikhism, a comparatively new religion that openly challenged the rituals and dogmatic traditions of Hinduism and Islam. Unlike the system of caste hierarchy in rest of the country, the top-down rank grading of Brahmin (priest), Kshatriya (soldier), Vaishya (trader) and Shudra (menial worker) carries no meaning in Punjab. In Punjab, the Brahmins are not placed at the top of the caste hierarchy. The Sikh Jats, who otherwise have been Shudra as per the varna system, have considered themselves to be socially superior to the Brahmins (Tandon 1961: 77; Ibbetson [1883] 1970: 2; Saberwal 1976: 10). In fact, Jats in contemporary Punjab have replaced Brahmins in terms of domination. The ideological undercurrents of social domination based on the principles of purity/pollution and wisdom failed to hold ground in Punjab due to various historical reasons (Ibbetson [1883] 1970: 1–87; Puri 2004b: 1). Interestingly, the phenomenon of the domination of Jat Sikhs in Punjab is a combined outcome of their numerical, economic and religious as well as political preponderance. Jats significantly hold multiple identities, as they are Jats by caste, Sikhs by religion and landowners by their hold on cultivation. All these different identities reinforce each other, strengthening the position of the Jat community in the state.

Historically, the factor that has strengthened the domination of the Jats in the state of Punjab has been their numerical preponderance in the Sikh religion. Their large-scale entry into Sikh religion not only rescued them from the labyrinth of their lower status in the Hindu society, it also turned them into a powerful community within Sikhism. According to the records of the 1881 Census, 66 per cent of those who converted to Sikhism were Jats. The second largest community

---

4 The rise of militancy in Sikhism in the 16th century was generally attributed to the martial nature of the Jats (Habib 1996: 100; see also Mcleod 1996: 12). The ranks and leadership of the Khalsa from this period onwards were deeply predominated by the Jats so much so that the history of the Sikh religion that follows came to be known as ‘the history of the Jat section of the Sikh community’ (Pettigrew 1978: 26). For counterarguments on this theme see Singh 1985 and Singh 1986, especially the sixth part). In the rural areas of Punjab, a Jat is often heard saying that he would survive even if cut in half when suggested to take medicine in case of sickness.
within Sikhism was that of the Tarkhans/Ramgarhias (the carpenter caste) who constituted just 6.5 per cent of the total Sikh population in Punjab. Next to the Ramgarhias were the Chamars/Ramdasias with 5.6 per cent, followed by the Chuhrs/Mazhabis who constituted 2.6 per cent. If clubbed together, these two outcaste groups (Ramdasias and Mazhabis) becomes the second largest group (8.2 per cent) of Sikhs within Sikhism. Thus, the numerical dominance of the Jats within Sikhism combined with their martial and self-willed nature and monopoly on the land ‘elevated them well above their humble origins’.

Such a combination and reinforcement of multiple identities and their concentration in the community as is with the case of the Jats is, however, conspicuous by its absence among the Dalits. Dalits in Punjab have been categorised into 39 castes (Punjab Government Gazette, Regd. No. CHD/0092/2006-2008, No. 45, November 9, 2007). Out of these, more than 80 per cent of the total SC population belongs to the two major caste groupings of the Chamars (leather working castes) and Chuhra (sweepers). These two caste groups consist of four castes—Mazhabi (30.7 per cent), Chamar (25.8 per cent), Ad-Dharmi (15.9 per cent) and Balmiki (11.1 per cent). The Chamar caste group includes Ad-Dharmi, Jatia Chamar, Rehgar, Raigar, Ramdasias and Ravidasias. The Chuhra caste group clubs together the Balmiki, Bhangi and Mazhabi castes. The Chamar caste group is largely confined to the Doaba region of the Punjab (comprising Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala and Nawan Shahr districts lying between two rivers, the Beas and the Sutlej). The Chuhra caste group is mainly concentrated in the smaller Majha region and the much bigger Malwa region of the state. At the district level, Mazhabis are largely concentrated in Ferozepur, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Faridkot, Mansa and Bhatinda districts of Punjab. Apart from their heavy concentration in the Doaba region of Punjab, Chamars are also numerically strong in Gurdaspur, Rupnagar, Ludhiana, Patiala and Sangtur districts. Among the Chamar caste group, Ad-Dharmis far outnumber other SCs in Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts in rural as well as urban settings. Mazhabis in the Chuhra caste group outnumber other SCs in Faridkot and Ferozepur districts (for more details see Gosal 2004: 26–39). Though traditionally they have been condemned as polluted and impure because of their occupational contact with animal carcass and hides, Chamars are basically chandrawanshi by clan and are also considered as the highest caste among the SCs in Punjab (Deep 2001: 7). Thus Dalits in Punjab are scattered in multi-identities that weaken their collective strength.
and unity. Under the influence of Sikhism, while the Jats of Punjab have enhanced their social status and achieved spiritual coherence, the same could not happen in the case of Dalits who remained divided within different religious orders. Dalits are found in almost all the popular religions in Punjab. Their presence in Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity not only proves the presence of the institution of caste in all these religions, but also weakens chances of solidarity among them.

The subjugation of the Dalits was further deepened during the course of the capital-intensive Green Revolution that ushered in post-1966 Punjab. The process of the Green Revolution transformed the traditional subsistence character of the agriculture into commercial and mechanical farming. The market-oriented agriculture pattern favoured the landowners, which further marginalised the landless Dalits and widened the already existing divisions between them and the dominant peasant caste in Punjab. Interestingly, it was also during this phase of market-oriented agriculture that a new middle class of educated Dalits emerged in Punjab, being the beneficiary of the affirmative policies of the government (Ram 2010). The advent of this new class among the Dalits coupled with the rise of the Ambedkarite movement in the region led to the formation of Dalit consciousness in the state.

The emergence of the Dalit consciousness induced the Dalit agricultural labourers to ask for higher wages in the rural settings of Punjab, especially in its Doaba region. The Dalit struggle for higher wages often employed pressure tactics of refusal to work unless the landowners increased the wages. In fact, it was during this very phase of transition in the agrarian economy of Punjab that the process of Dalit immigration to Europe, North America and the Gulf got streamlined. The process of Dalit immigration from Punjab also coincided with the phenomenon of the influx of migrant labour from Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh into Punjab that further sharpened the contradiction between the dominant peasant castes and the landless Dalits. The migrant labour was much cheaper and was vulnerable to exploitation. Moreover, the changed cropping system under the Green Revolution patterns of agriculture squeezed the extant of farm labour to a few peak periods — paddy transplantation, paddy harvesting-cum-threshing and wheat harvesting. The traditional agriculture system, capable of providing almost round-the-year regular work, was changed into a commercial agriculture set-up that did not offer more than
75 days work annually (Singh 2001: 5). So now they had to perforce seek employment in other sectors for the rest of the year.

It was inevitable under the circumstances that Dalit labourers, sandwiched between the influxes of cheap migrant labour on the one hand and capital-intensive, mechanised farming on the other would begin to look for jobs in sectors other than the agriculture. The alternative job opportunities reduced the dependence of the Dalits on landowners. The weakening of the traditional association of caste with occupation and the disintegration of the old structure of jajmani or \textit{balutedari} ties has marked the relative emancipation and social mobility among the dalits in rural Punjab on lines similar to that of Karnataka (Jodhka 2010: 163). The sustainability of this assertion drew strength from the politicisation of caste on the one hand and from the failure of the asymmetrical caste structures to accommodate Dalits into its social space as equal citizen on the other (Judge 2006: 11). This new form of Dalit assertion and its recent exhibition in the form of Jat–Dalit clashes in the villages of Punjab is of critical importance for an understanding of the emergent political sociology and economy of recent Punjab in the throes of ‘upsurge from below’.

Yet another feature that has distinguished the Dalits of Punjab from their counterparts in other parts of the country is their community-wise heavy concentration in some regions of the state. The Ad-Dharmi and Chamar of the Chamar caste group are not only numerically preponderant in the Doaba region of Punjab, they also happen to be the most resourceful caste in comparison to all other castes among the SCs of Punjab. ‘Ad Dharmi Chamars are on the top of virtually every parameter — education, urbanisation, jobs, occupational change, cultural advancement, political mobilization’ (Puri 2004a: 4). The famous Ad-Dharm movement of the 1920s also emerged in this very region of Punjab. In the early 1930s, some of the Ad-Dharmi Chamars established a prosperous leather business town (Boota Mandi) on the outskirts of Jalandhar city. Ad-Dharmi Chamars of Boota Mandi were among the early supporters of the Ad-Dharm movement. Seth Kishen Dass, a leather business tycoon of Boota Mandi, who won the 1937 Assembly election from Jalandhar constituency in Punjab, financed the headquarters building of the Ad-Dharm Mandal in Jalandhar city (Ram 2004c). Nowadays, this building houses the Guru Ravidass High School and Sewing Centre. It is again from this caste group of the subregion that maximum emigration took place to Europe, North America and the Middle East. The Ad-Dharmis abroad have not only excelled in
business and skilled labour professions, they also established a strong networking of social organisations, international Dalit conferences, Ravidass Sabhas and Ravidass gurdwaras throughout Europe and North America (Ram 2008: 1342–1344).

Caste discrimination in Punjab is unique in comparison to its observance in other parts of the country. The Brahminical tradition of social stratification, as discussed above, has never been so effective there. The word ‘Brahmin’ did not carry a sacerdotal connotation in Punjab. It was used, rather, in a derogative manner. The negation of the Brahminical order in Punjab, earlier by Islam and later by the hegemonic hold of the dominant caste’s cultural patterns, might have diminished the purity–pollution practices of Hinduism to the benefits of Dalits (Saberwal 1973: 256), but it failed to improve the socio-economic condition of the Dalits in the state. The centre of power in Punjab revolves around the axle of land. Much of the land is owned by the Sikh Jats, a throwback to the creation of canal colonies by the British under the Land Alienation Act, 1901. Although SCs in Punjab constitute the high proportion of the population in comparison to the all-India average of 16.3 per cent, their share in ownership of land is negligible. Their being landless forced them to depend on the landowning castes in the absence of alternative jobs in the agrarian economy of rural Punjab in the pre-Green Revolution phase. Since cultivation required the services of the Dalits in its various operations, it was not feasible to strictly follow the system of untouchability based on the principle of purity–pollution. This does not mean that the Dalits were not discriminated against in Punjab. However, the context of their discrimination was different from that of many other parts of India. The practice of untouchability in Punjab was based the scheme of keeping the Dalits bereft of land ownership and political power in the state. Dalits were forced to confine to their lowest status in the villages of Punjab, lest they dare to ask for a share in the power structures (Puri 2003: 2698). In other words, despite the absence of the purity–pollution syndrome in Sikhism, the presence of the deep asymmetrical structure of power in the agrarian village economy of Punjab has kept the Dalits subordinated to the landowning upper castes (Jodhka 2002: 1815).

Rural Punjab, like the rest of the country, is divided into upper-caste and Dalit settlements. Dalit settlements were located, invariably, on the side towards which the dirt of the village flowed. Dalits were not allowed to build pucca (concrete) houses because the land on which they
lived did not belong to them. In the villages, Dalits were often involved in what has been traditionally considered unclean occupations — carrying and skinning dead animals, scavenging and working as attached labourer-siris. Such type of work is now performed on a non-
jajmani basis. In Malwa region, there are many Dalits who have still been working as siris. According to a study of 26 villages in Malwa region, 21 had Dalits working as siris (Jodhka 2002: 1816). Another study found six Jats working as siris with other Jats in a village in the district of Sangrur (Singh 2001: 3). The situation, however, is entirely different in the Doaba region of Punjab where the majority of the Dalits have dissociated themselves from such types of menial work. Although Dalit had interactions with Jat-Sikhs, being agricultural labourers and siris, they used to keep their own tumblers and plates to take meals or tea or water from the upper-caste Sikhs. As Singh has observed: ‘the upper castes Sikhs are a separate identity and like the upper caste Hindus they also follow the ideology of a graded human society … The Sikhs may take food with the dalit-Sikhs in Gurdwaras, but they have no bond of fraternity with them’ (2002: 333). To quote Singh again, ‘the impact of Hinduism and caste is visible on the adherents of Guru Nanak and they monopolised Sikhism and could not accord an equal social status to the lower caste Sikhs in Punjab’ (ibid.). Dalit Sikhs in Punjab are cremated on separate cremation grounds along with their counterparts in the Hindu religion. In some villages, even the land meant for cremation grounds in the shamlat (common land under the control of panchayats) has been grabbed by the upper castes. In a recent case, some persons belonging to the dominant caste in village Todder Majra of the Mohali district of Punjab grabbed the cremation lands of the Dalits in the village (Desh Sevak, 2 January 2005). This shows that the social position of the Dalit Sikhs in Punjab is no better than their counterparts elsewhere within Hinduism in the country.

Dalit Sikhs never received equal treatment in the gurdwaras of the upper-caste Sikhs. ‘Mazhabis were forbidden to enter the Golden Temple for worship; their offering of karah prasad was not accepted and the Sikhs denied them access to public well and other utilities’ (Singh 1933: 146–47, 156–57 cited in Puri 2003: 2697). Dalit Sikhs were not allowed to go beyond the fourth step in the Golden Temple and the members of the four-fold varnas were instructed not to mix with them. Evidence of untouchability against the Dalit Sikhs is vividly reflected in a number of gurmatas (resolutions) adopted by the
Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee from 1926–33. Although removal of untouchability figured in the Singh Sabha movement, no strenuous effort was made in that direction, which can be attributed to the fact that the Jats, who constituted 70 per cent of the Akalis, and other high-caste Sikhs, were not inclined to remove untouchability.

Over the years, the continuation of caste-based discrimination has forced the Dalit Sikhs to establish their own cultural centres like religious shrines, community halls and separate gurdwaras, which in turn has resulted in a process of further strengthening of the already existing caste divisions among the Sikhs\(^5\) (Oberoi 1994: 2700; Jodhka 2002: 1818; Muktsar 2003). The observance of caste prejudices against the Dalit Sikhs, moreover, has compelled them increasingly to ‘search for alternative cultural spaces’ in a large number of deras, sects and dargahs of Muslim pirs and other saints (Puri 2003: 2700). Dalits constitute a very large majority of the followers of the various deras in rural Punjab (Ram 2009).

The rapid mobilisation of the Dalits evidenced in the form of the mushrooming growth of the deras in Punjab clearly reflects on the prevalence of the deeply hierarchical social structure in the state, which ironically was witness to the emergence of a progressive religion that rejected the caste-ridden Brahminical system outright. The pressure of asymmetrical social structures has been so intense that even conversion from Hinduism to other mainstream religions in the state failed to rescue the Dalits from the curse of untouchability. It is at this juncture that deras of various nomenclatures cropped up in Punjab to offer a new space, free from the constraints of caste hierarchy, discrimination and oppression. Moreover, another factor that has made these deras more accessible to Dalits is the absence of the constraint to change their religion. One can be follower of a dera without compromising on her/his religious faith. The deras essentially expect a follower to observe rather strictly certain moral and ethical codes devoid of any

\(^{5}\) Dalits have separate gurdwaras in about 10,000 villages out of a total of 12,780 villages in Punjab (Dalit Voice, 22 (17): 20, 1–15 September 2003). A survey of 116 villages in one tehsil of Amritsar district showed that Dalits had separate gurdwaras in 68 villages (Puri 2003: 2700). Yet another field study of 51 villages selected from the three subregions of Punjab found that Dalits had separate gurdwaras in as many as 41 villages (Jodhka 2002: 1818); see also Muktsar 1999, 2003: 21–22).
sort of ritual paraphernalia. Arguably, deras have emerged as a source of right remedy to cure the wounded psyche of the Dalits (Rajshekar 2004: 3).

In geographical terms, deras in Punjab defy regional variegance in the sense that all the three regions of Punjab have had deras of various nomenclatures. Since these deras are organised around pristine traditions of religious syncretism in the state, they provide respectable space to Dalits who are not subjected to any form of social exclusion neither within the precincts of the deras nor among the community life of their followers. Whether the egalitarian life patterns within these deras across the regions in Punjab or the emerging communitarian social behaviour among their large following would facilitate in the emergence of a viable unity among the various Dalit castes in the state is a moot question.

**Summing Up**

As caste as a political category becomes central to Indian politics with the rise of lower-caste movements challenging the age-old dominance of the upper and middle castes in the social and political space, we needs to underline the fact that though caste and social exclusion are prevalent throughout the country, they have distinctive features across the different regional states. The article argues that Punjab is

---

6 One of such deras is situated in village Ballan in the Jalandhar district of the Doaba region of Punjab. This dera of Sant Sarwan Dass, popularly known as Dera Ballan, has become a paragon of the Ravidass movement in entire north-west India. It has been playing a leading role in promoting cultural transformation and generating social consciousness among the Dalits of the region. The dera has a library on its premises, publishes a tri-lingual weekly (*Begumpura Shaher*), distributes free Dalit literature, honours Dalit scholars, runs a model school and also a hospital for the service and uplift of the downtrodden. It has played a pivotal role in constituting and disseminating new religious and ritual practices for Dalits in Punjab. The sants of Ballan have developed their own religious symbols, flags, prayers, dress, salutations and rituals of worship. Of all the major contributions that Dera Ballan has made, the construction of a mammoth Temple of Shri Guru Ravidass at his birthplace at Seer Goverdhanpur in the vicinity of holy city of Varanasi (UP) is most significant. The temple has acquired pilgrimage status for the Dalits. On 30 January 2010, the 633rd birth anniversary of Guru Ravidass, the sants of Dera Ballan announced a separate religion (Ravidassia) for the followers of Guru Ravidass from the premises of the temple.
unique, as the Brahminical tradition of social stratification has never taken deep root in the state (Ram 2004a: 896). Sikhism followed by the majority in Punjab does not sanction the caste system. However, the recurrence of caste violence in the recent past has destroyed the myth that untouchability is alien to Punjab and indicates the growing assertiveness of the Dalits in the regions against the social oppression and humiliation that has been the result of the skewed nature of land relationship in this primarily agrarian state. The emergence of the deras in all the three regions of Punjab is a pointer to the search of the Dalit masses having different religious allegiance to look for alternative autonomous social and spiritual space. It is a matter of time when such assertions would acquire the political overtones putting up grave challenge to the lopsided polity of Punjab.

References


Part IV

State Electoral Politics — Regional Variance
This article argues that even after more than five decades of its inception as a modern and unified state, Rajasthan continues to be influenced by its pre-independence and pre-integration subregional identities. The impression and impact of these different identities is reflected in the manner in which people of the state express their electoral and political preferences as members of a competitive electoral system. Structurally, the article is divided into three parts. Part I seeks to introduce different subregions within the state. This is done by drawing upon colonial history, demographic variations, cultural diversities, geographical distinctiveness, land tenure systems and the post-independence administrative organisation of the state. Part II presents a social and development profile of the subregions as these exist today. For this, a generous use of survey data has been made to explore the extent of continuity and change in the areas. Part III examines political attitudes and preferences in these subregions on the basis of the survey data.

---

1 The survey data being used here is from the State Election Study of the 2003 State Assembly elections in Rajasthan. The 2003 survey was a post-poll exercise conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi. Proper care was taken to ensure geographical representativeness of the entire state. The survey was executed in 50 Assembly constituencies (ACs) spread all over the state out of a total of 200 constituencies. These ACs were sampled by using the PPS method (probability proportionate to size), starting from AC number 1 on a random basis and picking every fourth AC after that. In each AC, four polling booths were sampled on the basis of the PPS method and at each such location 15–20 voters were interviewed on the basis of a structured schedule. The achieved sample size of the survey was 3,102 respondents.
On the eve of independence, the Rajputana Agency\(^2\) comprised of 19 independent states, one chiefship and one estate. These were grouped together for their political and administrative relations with the Government of India through the Agent to the Governor General of India.\(^3\) Apart from these Crown provinces, the only part of Rajputana which was under direct British rule was Ajmer-Merwara, which was located almost in the centre of the Rajputana Agency. It was a Chief Commissioners’ province. The Rajputana states differed from each other. In fact, they never constituted a common political unit. After independence, one of the challenging tasks before the Indian state was to integrate these independent entities into one administrative unit and also to give the integrated unit a place in the Indian Union. This was by no means a simple task keeping in view not only the personal ambitions of the rulers and their entrenched sense of protocol but also due to socio-cultural diversities and the variations in the land tenure systems that existed in these Crown estates. The princely states also varied greatly in size, population and social and economic development.\(^4\)

---

\(^2\) Rajputana Agency was the name given to the Rajput and a few other states of western India by the British rulers. It was later renamed Rajputana province before being rechristened as Rajasthan after independence.

\(^3\) The 19 independent ruling houses were governed by different Rajput clans, Jats and Pathans. The Chauhan Rajputs ruled Bundi, Kota and Sirohi; the Gehlot Rajputs ruled Banswara, Dungarpur, Mewar, Pratapgarh and Shahpura; the Jadon Rajputs ruled Jaisalmer and Karauli; the Jhala Rajputs were the rulers of Jhalawar; the Kachhawaha Rajputs controlled Alwar, Jaipur and the Lawa Estate; and the Rathore Rajputs looked after Bikaner, Marwar, Kishangarh and the chiefship of Kushalgarh. Bharatpur and Dholpur were under Jat rule and Tonk was ruled by the Pathans.

\(^4\) The 1931 Census provides useful information about the different provinces of the Rajputana Agency. The total population of the Agency at that time was a little over 1.1 crore. Jaipur reported the highest population among the states with a little over 2.6 million people while Shahpura, with a population of only 54,000, was the smallest. Marwar and Mewar were the only two other states which had a population of more than 1.5 million. The mean density of population per square mile was 87 for the whole state. The variation here ranged from a highest density of 247 in the eastern province of Bharatpur to a lowest of five in the western province of Jaisalmer. The male–female ratio for the whole state was 908. Here, the most favourable ratio for the females (1,010) was in the southern tribal-dominated
Geographical and Linguistic Division of Rajasthan

It is common to divide Rajasthan geographically into eastern and north-western parts on the basis of their location on either side of the Aravalli ranges. The four main zones on the eastern flank are the Dhoondhar, Mewat, Haroti and Mewar and on the western/northern side it is the Marwar. These major zones are further divided into a number of subzones. Table 14.1 below illustrates this traditional geo-cultural division and also the corresponding modern day areas.5

These zones and subzones also had their distinctive subcultures. Their identity was determined by the language which was spoken by their inhabitants. The 1931 Census adopted Sir George Grierson’s classification of Rajasthani into four sub-languages: Marwari, Central Eastern Rajasthan, North Eastern Rajasthan and Malvi (Table 14.2). To these, the Census added two more: Western Hindi and Bhili. However, this demarcation does not delineate clearly the linguistic identity of different princely states. A more effective classification is the one adopted by Ahuja (1994). He has made a six-fold classification: 1. Marwari which is spoken under different influences over different parts of Marwar — thus in central parts of Jodhpur (Pali, Sirohi and parts of Jalore) it is spoken with Gujarati influence; in Nagaur with Shekhawati influence; in Barmer and Jaisalmer with Sindhi influence; in Churu, Sikar and Jhunjhunu with Shekhawati and Haryanvi influence; in Bikaner and Ganganagar with the influence of Bikaneri and Punjabi; 2. Mewari: this is spoken in Udaipur, Chittorgarh, Bhilwara and Ajmer;

province of Banswara and the lowest was in Jaisalmer (801). Literacy levels per 1,000 males for the whole state was 76 and the variation was between a highest literacy rate of 128 for the south-eastern province of Jhalawar and a lowest of 50 in Banswara. Interestingly, the smaller provinces of Kishangarh, Shahpura and Pratapgarh enjoyed a better literacy rate than the bigger provinces like Jaipur, Marwar or Mewar. In the economic field, 72 per cent of the population was engaged in agricultural occupations. In the tribal areas of the southern parts of the state this dependence on agriculture was nearly 90 per cent. Of every 1,000 persons in the Rajputana Agency only 139 lived in urban areas. Bikaner had the highest urban population at 241 and Mewar the lowest at 71 only. In the entire Agency only 10 towns had a population of more than 20,000 persons. Jaipur was the biggest city with a population of more than a lakh. Jodhpur and Bikaner were the other two cities which housed a population of over 50,000.

5 For details see Mathur (1986).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. no.</th>
<th>Major zones</th>
<th>Subzones</th>
<th>Modern areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Dhoondhar</td>
<td>Dhoondhar, Torawati, Kathera, Gorawati, Chaurasi,</td>
<td>Jaipur, Jobner, Amber, Srimadhopur, Neem-Ka-Thana, Kotputli,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nagarchal, Rajawati, Dangbhang, Kalimal, Dang,</td>
<td>Sambhar Lake, Bardoti, Rahlana, Kishangarh, Tonk, Malpura,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dungarwara, Jadonwati</td>
<td>Lawa, Uniara, Deoli, Newai, Sawai Madhopur, Gangapur,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bamanwas, Hindon, Bayana, Toda-Bhim, Weir, Rupbas, Dausa,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Karamui, Saputra, Dholpur, Bari, Rajakhera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mewat</td>
<td>Mewat, Ahirwati, Machheri, Nahera, Kather</td>
<td>Alwar, Bharatpur, Kot Qasim, Tijara, Bhiwadi, Behror,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Neemrana, Giglana, Thanagazi, Raigarh, Nagar, Kaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Haroti</td>
<td>Hadoti, Sondhwar</td>
<td>Kota, Bundi, Jhalawar, Pirawa, Baran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Mewar</td>
<td>Mewar, Sanwar, Bhorat, Bhomat, Chhappan, Vagar,</td>
<td>Udaipur, Bhilwara, Ajmer, Kumbalgarh, Gogunda, Kotra-Falasia,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Balnot, Kherad, Uparmal</td>
<td>Pindwara, Pratapgarh, Kushalgarh, Banswara, Dungarpur, Kotri,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandalgarh, Jahazpur, parts of Bundi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Marwar</td>
<td>Marwar, Thaal, Tharel, Dhat, Tirrud, Khaawar,</td>
<td>Jodhpur, Phalodi, Pokhran, Jaisalmer, Sheo, Chohtan,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Khairalu, Thalaicha, Eendowati, Mehwo, Sewanchi,</td>
<td>Jaisalmer, Shergarh, Balotra, Jasol, Gudha, Sanchor, Sirohi,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mallani, Bhakar, Seath, Reath, Nyar, Godwar,</td>
<td>Bali, Desuri, Kharchi, Nadol, Beawar, Nasirabad, Todgarh, Sikar,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mewara, Shekhawati, Baggar, Mohilawati, Bidawati,</td>
<td>Lachhmangarh, Khetri, Bissau, Fatehpur, Jhunjhunu, Nawalgarh,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Godara, Bhagore, Pugal, Johiaywati, Asagarh, Saran,</td>
<td>Mandawa, Chirawa, Churu, Sri Ganganagar, Hanumangarh,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bhatner, Beniwal</td>
<td>Sujangarh, Ladnu, Bidasar, Bikaner, Nohar, Bhadra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ISCR, Udaipur.
Table 14.2: Distribution of the Population by Languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>1931 Census figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marwari</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Eastern Rajasthani</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern Rajasthani</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malvi</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Hindi</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhili</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Speakers</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1931, p. 106.

3. Vagri: this is spoken in the tribal belt of Dungarpur, Banswara with Gujarati influence
4. Dhundhari: this is spoken in Jaipur Centre, Tonk, Bundi, Kota, part of Jhalawar, Sawai Madhopur and Dang;
5. Mewati: this is spoken in Alwar, Bharatpur, Karauli, Dholpur; and
6. Malvi which is spoken in Chittorgarh and Jhalawar.⁶

Taking help from both these classification schemes we venture to propose a third one, primarily to make a firm dialect-based division of the state corresponding to geographical regions while also addressing the territorial demarcations between different traditional ruling houses (Table 14.3).

The purpose of making this nine-fold linguistic division of the traditional ruling states is to emphasise the regional variation in the

Table 14.3: Distribution of Languages by Geographical Region and Former States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages spoken</th>
<th>Geographical region</th>
<th>Former states</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagri</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Bikaner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwari</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>Jodhpur, Jaisalmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekhawati</td>
<td>North-east</td>
<td>Jaipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhundhari</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Jaipur, Lawa Estate, Kishangarh, Ajmer-Merwara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mewati</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>Alwar, Bharatpur, Karauli, Dholpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merwari</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>(British province), Tonk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mewari</td>
<td>South-central</td>
<td>Udaipur, Chittorgarh, Shahpura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haroti</td>
<td>South-east</td>
<td>Kota, Bundi, Jhalawar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagri</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Banswara, Dungarpur, Kushalgarh, Pratapgarh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author.

Regional Dispersion of Caste Groups

What adds further diversity to the socio-cultural mosaic of the state is the social profile. Caste is the most important social category in Rajasthan and it has been one of the most important factors in political and electoral contestations in Rajasthan since independence. Structurally, the social composition of the state can be described as a non-homogeneous, dispersed groups system. Castes are numerous, widely scattered and marked by multiple hierarchy. Neither a single caste nor a common grouping of castes constitutes a numerical majority or even a dominant plurality of the state’s population. Most caste groups in Rajasthan are small and confined to particular areas. No caste group, except to some extent the Brahmins, Jats, Rajputs and the Chamars, enjoys a pan-Rajasthan character.

---

Footnotes:

7 The *Mayad Bhasha* movement was conceived and carried forward by the Pragatisheel Lekhak Sangh almost two decades back by noted Rajasthani writer Laxmi Kumari Chundawat. However, two factors have hampered the progress of the movement: first, the fear of Marwari dominating other versions of Rajasthani and second, lack of standardisation to ensure effective transition of a *boli* (dialect) into a *bhasha* (language).

8 Both *Rajasthan Patrika* and *Dainik Baskar*, which together account for more than 90 per cent of news readership in the state, publish special city editions and supplements from a number of places.
Sociologically speaking, the major castes of Rajasthan can be clubbed into three groups. The first group, consisting of the Rajputs, Brahmins, Mahajans and Kayastha, can be termed as the feudal castes. The second group of castes consists of the emergent landowning peasant castes that were the actual tenants either on khalisa or on jagir lands. They were the ones who benefited from land reforms in the 1950s. The Jats, Yadavs, Vishnois, Danigs, Dhakars, Kachis, Gujars and Sirwis are prominent among these. Some of these have been categorised as the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the post-independence phase. The third set of castes in Rajasthan combine artisan and service groups who depended upon the feudal castes for their socio-economic survival. Notable among these are Malis, Kumhars, Chamars, Meghwals, Balais, Raigars, etc. They belong both to OBC and Scheduled Caste (SC) categories. To the third group of castes we may add the two major Scheduled Tribes (STs), namely, the Bhils and the Minas, who constitute more than 12 per cent of the population today.

The 1931 Census, the last in which caste enumeration took place, found 393 different castes and tribes in the Rajputana states. Of these only 10 caste groups, with a population of more than 3 lakh each, accounted for roughly 59 per cent of the total population whereas 297 caste groups had a population of less than 10,000 persons. Table 14.4 gives an indication of the strength of the major caste groups and the subregions where these are concentrated. It throws light on the strength of major caste groups and their geographical concentrations. The Jats are the largest of the lot who reside primarily in the north-western parts of the state and constitute the numerically dominant social group in Bikaner, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Shekhawati and a big part of Bharatpur. They were the moving force behind most of the peasant movements in the pre-independence period and have been quite assertive in post-independence democratic politics. The Brahmins comprise the second largest social group and are fairly evenly spread all over the state. Members of this caste are further divided into a large number of jatis. Benefiting from modern education, they have been among the most prominent public leaders during both pre- and post-independence periods in administrative, professional as well as political fields. Like the Brahmins, the Rajputs are also spread all over the state. As the ruling caste in most parts of the Rajputana states, different clans of the Rajput caste enjoyed a dominant position in the pre-independence era. After initial hiccups in the post-independence phase, the community has adjusted itself well to the demands of
Sanjay Lodha

democratic politics. The Mahajans are the traditional merchant castes in the state and more than 80 per cent of their population is distributed among four major social groups: Oswal, Agarwal, Maheshwari and Khandelwal. Each of these is concentrated in different parts of the state. Thus we can see that all the three major non-peasant caste groups, i.e., the Brahmins, Rajputs and the Mahajans, do not constitute a solidarity group and are not confined to a few pockets of the state. Their social fragmentation and regional segmentation has prevented them from asserting themselves as a single political bloc in electoral politics.

Though the Rajputs, as rulers, were at the helm of affairs, they occupied an inferior position to the Brahmins in terms of caste hierarchy as well as religious and cultural order. Such a situation created a conflicting system of relations indicating gaps between the normative and existential order and a conflict between the priestly order and the kingly model was quite frequent. In one of their seminal papers Narain and Mathur (1990) have categorised the social and cultural configuration in the princely states of Rajasthan as ‘Rajput Hinduism’ wherein the rulers absorbed both secular politico-military superiority as well as religious legitimacy. The uniqueness of Rajput clans was not pronounced by the Brahminic rituals and cultural norms but by

---

Table 14.4: Major Castes/Tribes and their Regional Dispersion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. no.</th>
<th>Caste/tribe</th>
<th>Per cent share</th>
<th>Regional dispersion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jat</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Matsya, Dhoondhar, Marwar, Shekhawati, Bagar, parts of Mewar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chamar</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Matsya, Dhoondhar, Haroti, Bagar, Merwara, parts of Mewar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bhil</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mewar, Haroti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mina</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Matsya, Dhoondhar, Haroti, Merwara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rajput</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Marwar, Mewar, Bagar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gujar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Matsya, Dhoondhar, Haroti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Matsya, Dhoondhar, Haroti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Matsya, Dhoondhar, Haroti, Mewar, Marwar, Bagar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mahajan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dhoondhar, Marwar, Bagar, Matsya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kumhar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Matsya, Mewar, Marwar, Bagar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1931, Rajputana Agency.

---

self-glorification through construction of genealogies tracing origins to Vedic deities. The Rajput rulers, while paying customary respect to the Brahmins, bothered little for rituals of purity–pollution. For political purposes they struck marital chords with Muslims and also cemented relations with tribal leaders in their territories. Constant warfare required them to have amicable relationships with Mahajajan communities who were their major financers. Narain and Mathur have opined that all this produced an alternative model of social stratification and cultural values within Hindu society where the Rajputs, occupying the apex position, ruled in alliance with the wealthy Mahajans and Jains. The ritual supremacy of the Brahmins, if not challenged directly, had few buyers as the bulk of the peasantry lived in villages without resident Brahmins. In the post-colonial and post-integration period, with the introduction of democratic politics, the situation has changed considerably and not much credence can be given to analysts who still have romantic notions of ‘Rajput ethic’ as the *sine qua non* of participatory politics. These can be viewed as a major departure from the feudal past.

The other major caste groups mentioned in Table 14.4 constitute the bulk of the SC and ST population today. In the pre-independence phase, most of these caste groups maintained a low profile. However, in the post-independence period, with the introduction of reservation in the State Legislative Assembly, these groups have become increasingly mobilised. From being passive in the first few decades of electoral politics, the leadership of these groups is now more assertive. However, these groups also suffer from excessive social fragmentation and regional segmentation. Traditional socio-economic marginalisation has further affected their political dynamism. Most of the socio-political churning in the state after independence has taken place among the peasant and the former artisan as well as service caste groups. Many of them have been categorised as OBCs. Since they are localised in their concentration, they have effectively used this for ensuring political representation and also for political mobilisation among themselves.

**Nature of Land Ownership and its Political Impact**

During the princely period, political power in the different provinces of the Rajputana Agency was an outcome of the amount and value

---

of landholdings. As agriculture was the mainstay of the economy, both the nobility as well as the common man was heavily dependent on land. The nobility extracted land revenue from their tenants to lead an extravagant lifestyle while the peasantry had no option but to suffer the excesses of both weather and the landlord. Land relationship, therefore, was immensely significant. Land tenure was of two types: *khalsa* or the crown lands which were under the direct control of the king, and *jagir* or the estates which were granted by the king to the subordinate rulers. At the time of integration of the princely states in 1949 more than 60 per cent of the total area was under the *jagirdari* system. However, there were important variations here. In the bigger states of Jaipur and Jodhpur, *jagirdari* tenure was as high as 88 and 73 per cent respectively. On the other hand, there were sizable *khalsa* landholdings in the eastern states of Bharatpur, Alwar and Dholpur and the south-eastern state of Kota.

It is interesting to look at the rights and obligations of the *jagirdar* to the king. The rights in a *jagir* were not transferable at the will of the *jagirdar*. It was a grant for a single life only and on the death of the holder the property reverted back to the king who then recognised the new holder. However, in respect of Rajput *jagirdars*, the grants were hereditary for all practical purposes. Inheritance was governed by primogeniture. The inheritor had to pay a *nazarana* to assume the title and the rights which were enjoyed by his ancestors. These *jagirdars* had to pay an annual tribute to the king and in some cases were responsible for a military cess as well as the supply of a number of soldiers. These were determined keeping in view the rental value of a particular *jagir*. The *jagirdari* system was characterised by a high degree of rack-renting and overexploitation. The tenants suffered from insecurity of tenure and also from indefinite rents. They also had to pay additional cess in as many as 175 different types of taxes which were mostly illegal extractions. Even the practice of forced labour was not uncommon. In *jagirdari* areas, therefore, conflict between the

---

11 Out of 34,648 villages, 16,573 were *khalsa* and 18,075 were non-*khalsa*. In terms of area, out of a total of 1, 31,943 sq. miles of land 44,458 sq. miles was *khalsa* land and 87,485 was non-*khalsa*. The areas which were predominantly *khalsa* were Bharatpur, Alwar, Sawai Madhopur, Kota, Jhalawar, Bundi and Ganganagar and the major non-*khalsa* land was in Barmer, Jaisalmer, Jalore, Bikaner, Churu, Jhunjhunu, Nagaur, Sikar, Pali, Chittorgarh and Udaipur. For details see Singh (1964: 44).

12 Ibid., pp. 34–36.
Rajput jagirdar and non-Rajput tenant was often intense and bitter. This was particularly evident in the western provinces of Marwar and the Shekhawati belt of Jaipur where the dominant peasant caste, the Jats, resisted the oppressive social and political subjugation by the Rajput jagirdars. What added to their woes was the perception that before the arrival of the Rajputs they were the masters of these lands.

The condition of the tenants was better in the other major type of land tenure, i.e., the khalsa lands. This system had five kinds of tenancy: absolute occupancy tenant, occupancy tenant, fixed-term tenant, subtenant and tenant-at-will. In the first category, tenants had proprietorship rights given by the king and the former could sale, lease, mortgage or otherwise encumber it. In the second category were those who got the land from the king on the promise of making some improvement on the holding and were evicted only when another applicant promised a very large sum for the land. The fixed-term tenants could be evicted during the period of tenancy if they failed to fulfil their engagement. All the above tenants could lease out their land and the lessees were subtenants who were liable to pay liable to pay the proprietor’s share to the bagidar (landholder) and to the state. Tenants-at-will were ordinary tenants who were engaged to cultivate on payment of a stipulated share to the state. In the khalsa land, thus, the position of the tenant was better as far as their tenancy rights and rent obligations were concerned. Besides, most of the states introduced land reforms in the khalsa area after World War I.

Apart from khalsa and jagir land tenures, three other kinds of land ownership patterns also prevailed. Under the zamindari and biswedari systems, the zamindars or biswedar paid fixed revenue to the state but they themselves realised cash rents from their tenants-at-will who had no rights on the land they were tilling. These systems prevailed mostly in Alwar and Bharatpur. The other form of land tenure was bhumia or freehold tenure. This system was peculiar to Rajputs only. A bhumia was a holder of land which had descended to him by inheritance, subject to no burden but that of military service. These landholders were to pay a fixed annual nazarana (gift) and also furnish a horseman and a footman.13

In the immediate aftermath of independence and even today, political competition and social dynamics in rural Rajasthan bears a

---

13 Regarding the rights and obligations of the bhumias there are conflicting reports. Richard Sisson, in his work The Congress Party in Rajasthan (1972), has mentioned that the bhumias had no obligation to the state whatsoever and that
strong reflection of land relationships described above. In provinces where the *jagirdari* system was dominant, socio-political relationships emerged in a conflictual mode. The oft quoted example of this is the Jat–Rajput rivalry in north-western Rajasthan. In *khalsa* estates, firm land titles in favour of the tiller resulted in less political conflicts. The eastern parts of the Rajputana Agency, especially in the Jat provinces of Bharatpur and Alwar, progressive forces took deeper roots once electoral politics commenced. In the first four general elections, the major electoral challenge to the Congress came from the former rulers, *jagirdars* and other sections which were either dethroned after the introduction of a democratic system or were dispossessed of their land after the series of land reforms initiated in the 1950s. In the major urban centres of the state like Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kota, and Bikaner and also in areas in the vicinity of these cities, the influence of the former rulers was writ large on the electoral outcome.\(^{14}\) In both the State Assembly as well as Lok Sabha elections from 1951 till 1967 many of the winners were either these rulers themselves or contestants supported by them.

As we moved from the cities and areas near these urban centres to the interiors the nature of political contestation varied. In many instances, these were *jagirs* which were affected by land reforms. Consequently, political polarisation took place between those who were either the losers or the immediate beneficiaries from the process. The *jagirdari* protest found its ventilation in the formation of the Ram Rajya Parishad (RRP) which confronted the Congress in different parts of the state but particularly in those areas where the *jagirdari* system was dominant. Worse affected by the land reforms were the small *bhumi*as who not only lost their relatively smaller landholdings but were also rendered jobless with the abolition of the traditional state administration and forces. Their discontent was reflected in the emergence of the Bhumiswami Andolan (movement of the landowners).\(^{15}\)

---

\(^{14}\) For details about the electoral outcome see Statistical Reports on both Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha Elections published election by election by the Election Department, Rajasthan, Jaipur. These contain a wealth of information about the changing nature of electoral contest in Rajasthan.

\(^{15}\) For deeper insights into this movement see Rudolph and Rudolph (1968: 93–128).
Speaking geographically, we can decipher clear-cut political crystallisation in different parts of the state. In the north, north-east, western and central parts of the state (Bikaner, Ganganagar, Shekhawati, Marwar and parts of Jaipur), where the jagirdari system was dominant, the initial political tussle was between the Congress and the RPP. The space left by the RRP was subsequently filled up by the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra Party and in more recent times, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has emerged as the major political player. Similar contestation was also found in the south-eastern parts commonly referred to as Haroti (Kota, Bundi, Baran, Jhalawar) as well as in Tonk and the non-tribal parts of Mewar. In the eastern parts (Alwar and Bharatpur), where the Jats ruled over much of the geographical area, there was greater influence of the socialists and communists. These were khalsa areas where land tenure was more settled and a greater degree of internal freedom prevailed. Similarly, in the tribal south (Banswara and Dungarpur), there was greater influence of the socialists. The challenge to the Congress therefore came from different players in different parts of the state at different points of time. The Congress itself was a collaborative enterprise of political players from different parts of the state and its leadership was also segmented. As Sisson observed, ‘Unlike the Congress in the British provinces, the party in Rajasthan was created by a political contract between various organisations of political protest active in the traditional states of Rajputana. Each of these organizations has autonomies origins, with separate elites, separate bodies of political workers and bases of political recruitment, and had shared different sets of political experiences.’

Integration and New Administrative Formations

The persistent identification of Rajputana province with the Rajput ethic and Kshatryia caste culture establishes the historical importance of Rajput presence in the state. According to Rudolph and Rudolph, ‘Rajputs in Rajasthan more than Rajputs elsewhere were reared to cherish the virtues of valour and honour of a warrior ruling aristocracy.’ However, the local chieftains never used these virtues either to forge a united front against external aggressors or to cement
a single homogenised Rajput identity for political and administrative unity of the region. Perceptions of commonality housed in shared history, common traditions and inter-clan marital relations was almost entirely an elite phenomenon. More often than not mutual conflict, suspicion and intrigues marred this sense of regional consciousness. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the task of integrating different warring units has always been achieved by external forces, i.e., the Mughals unifying the area as a subah of Ajmer, the British forging together the Rajputana Agency thereafter and, finally, the nationalist leadership integrating the various princely estates as the modern state of Rajasthan. In the words of Lodrick, ‘Rajasthan was thus first conceived as an instituted region, administrative and later political space, for purposes and according to criteria that held far greater meaning for the outsider than for area’s inhabitants.’

The Mughals can be credited for drawing up a faultline around the region approximating the modern state of Rajasthan. In 1594, the Rajput states subdued by Akbar were clubbed together to form the ‘subah’, of Ajmer representing the first formal delineation of Rajasthan as a political space. The Mughal conception of Rajasthan as a ‘region’ was based not on any arbitrary decision but on cultural, social, political and historical factors. However, this ‘administrative region’ was lost after the swift decline of the Mughal Empire and once again the Rajput chieftains were back to mutual distrust and rivalry. For almost a century, till the British firmly set their feet in Rajasthan, the Marathas and Pindaries plundered most of the Rajput kingdoms.

By the 1818, the British East India Company concluded treaties of alliance with almost all the states of Rajasthan. This meant an end to terror from the Marathas and the Pindaries as well as complete internal freedom of administration. The total disinterest shown by the Rajput rulers in the 1857 uprising further endeared them to their British masters. Picking threads from where the Mughals left, once again an external power perceived sufficient similarities between the different Rajput-ruled areas to group them into an informal administrative unit under the Rajputana Agency, later renamed the Rajputana Province. Following the Mughal system, the British also refrained from interfering in the internal administration of the princely states of Rajputana. While much of British India was under the direct control of the Imperial Government, local polities, methods of administering

---

justice, land tenure systems, caste relations in the Rajputana Province with all the ingredients of a feudal milieu continued as before.

In the post-independence period, the process of integration of the princely states in the modern state of Rajasthan was also affected by issues of precedence among the various rulers, their internal rivalries and questions pertaining to the nature of relations between the Union and the federating units. It was left to the vision and clairvoyance of national leaders like Sardar Patel and his associate V. P. Menon to achieve the integration of 19 Rajput, two Jat and one Muslim princely states, riding over all parochial sentiments and power ambitions. During the integration process there existed a strong sentiment which thought that Kota, Dungarpur and Jhalawar should be clubbed with the central Indian states and Bharatpur and Dholpur be merged with the United Provinces. Many of the Rajputana states were formed into several smaller Unions, such as the Matsya Union and Rajasthan Union, before these were finally integrated into Rajasthan on 1 November 1956 by the States Reorganisation Act.

Post-independence administrative organisation of Rajasthan into different divisions more or less coincided with the major subcultures of the princely states distinguished by land ownership pattern, language, location, social organisation and population distribution. Table 14.5 gives a clear picture of this distribution. The seven administrative divisions, 33 districts and 25 parliamentary constituencies more or less correspond to the former princely states. We have also distributed these in terms of nine major subregions of the state based on geo-cultural distinctiveness. Despite this administrative unification, perception of a regional identity of Rajasthan and identification of the people within the area with this regional entity has been minimal. Consequently, even today the vision of Rajasthani regionalism or any kind of a chauvinistic identification with a regional culture is non-existent. To quote Lodrick, ‘For many Rajasthanis a poorly developed sense of Rajasthan as a region and perhaps, the greater hold on their loyalties of other kinds of socio-cultural and geographic space have inhibited development of a well-defined regional consciousness or regional identity.’

What is peculiar to Rajasthan is that while people still declare their subregion as the place where they hail from, this sense of belongingness has not resulted in any separatist agenda based on cultural

---

19 For details see Menon (1961: 238–60).
20 The process of integration took more than eight years, starting 17 March 1948 and completing on 1 November 1956.
21 N. 19, p. 34.
distinctiveness or economic deprivation or even social exclusion. There have been muted demands for a Bhilisthan in the southern part of the state by a few tribal groups but it has failed to emerge as a mass-based agitation. In the more immediate context of post-independence competitive politics, the absence of any strong political mobilisation based on subregionalism has prevented the possibility of the emergence of any regional political formation and has also contributed to a more plural and secular politics in Rajasthan.

---

22 The parliamentary constituencies are on the basis of the delimitation order passed on 25 January 2006.
The discussion in Part I strived to establish subregional identities in the modern state of Rajasthan. On the basis of history, geographical location, linguistic distinctiveness, social demography, land tenure systems and post-independence administrative reorganisation, we have sought to highlight the influence of feudal Rajputana on present-day Rajasthan. Keeping these factors in mind we have divided contemporary Rajasthan into nine subregions, i.e., Bagar, Shekhawati, Marwar, Dhundhar, Merwara, Matsya, Haroti, Mewar and Vagar. Table 14.5 has thrown light on these subregions and the corresponding administrative units which fall within the influence of these areas. In this section of the article we focus our attention on the social and development profile of the nine sub-regions by using survey data gathered during the State Election Study of the 12th Vidhan Sabha Elections held in November 2003.\textsuperscript{23}

In Table 14.4 we had discussed the regional dispersion of caste groups as provided by the 1931 Census. A comparison of Tables 14.4 and 14.6 reveals a remarkable degree of continuity in the caste profile

\textbf{Table 14.6: Distribution of Respondents by Castes and Subregions (Per cent)}\textsuperscript{24}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregion/ Castes</th>
<th>Upper castes</th>
<th>Jat</th>
<th>Gurjar</th>
<th>Craftsman OBC</th>
<th>Service OBC</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagar</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekhawati</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwar</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhundhar</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merwara</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsya</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haroti</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mewar</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{23} For details of this survey see n.1.

\textsuperscript{24} In this table the upper castes comprise mostly of the Brahmins, Rajputs, Mahajans, Kayastha; craftsmen OBCs comprise of \textit{bunkar} (weavers), \textit{darzee} (tailor), \textit{lakhera} (bangle makers), \textit{suthar} (carpenters), \textit{sunar} (goldsmith), \textit{lohar} (blacksmith), \textit{kumhar} (potters) and a few others; service OBCs are \textit{dhobi} (washermen), \textit{nai} (barbers), \textit{teli} (oil pressers), \textit{jogi} (mendicants), \textit{mali} (gardeners), \textit{kewat} (fishermen); bigger groups among SCs are Jatav, Mochi, Meghwal, Balai, Chamari, Regar and Balmiki; major ST groups are Bhil, Mina, Saharia, Garasiya and Nayak.
of the erstwhile princely estates and the subregions mentioned here. Thus upper castes, craftsmen OBCs and the SCs are spread all over the state. Jats are heavily concentrated in Bagar, Shekhawati, Marwar and parts of Dhundhar as well as Merwara. Merwara and Matsya are also areas where Gurjars are in good number. These areas were a witness to a vociferous movement by the Gurjar community very recently demanding scheduled tribe status. In the Vagar subregion nearly two-third of the population is that of STs. Parts of Haroti, Merwara, and Dhundhar also have sizable ST population. Muslim concentration can be seen in Shekhawati, Marwar and Matsya. What explains the lack of change in the caste profile of these subregions over the last seven decades is the predominantly agricultural nature of the economy of the state. More than 70 per cent of the inhabitants of the state own agricultural land of different sizes.

According to the 2001 Census, 77 per cent of the state population is rural. Table 14.7 gives us information about the distribution of the Table 14.7: Distribution of Respondents by Locality and Subregions (Per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregion/Locality</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>City (1,00,000+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagar</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekhawati</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwar</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhundhar</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merwara</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsya</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haroti</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mewar</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagar</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


25 There is a considerable continuity in the composition of population if we look at the figures provided by the censuses of 1931 and 2001 and also the data generated by the 2003 survey for SC and ST groups only. The 1931 Census described the SC as ‘depressed castes’ which were more than 15 per cent of the total population at that time. Both the 2001 Census and the 2003 survey show their share as 17 per cent. Similarly, STs constitute 12.6 per cent of the population of the state according to the 2001 Census. The 1931 Census also found a similar share and the 2003 survey accounted for 13 per cent of the tribal population.

26 As found in the 2003 State Election Study. This study found that only 29 per cent of the respondents were landless.
state population on the basis of locality. It shows that 81 per cent of the people live in villages, 10 per cent in towns and the remaining 9 per cent in cities. The subregions which are predominantly rural in nature are Vagar, Haroti, Shekhawati, Merwara and Matsya. The region which is least village-based is Bagar, which has an urban population of 43 per cent. Interestingly, the 1931 Census also found the heaviest concentration of urban population in Bikaner state which corresponds to the Bagar subregion here.\(^{27}\) Marwar, Dhundhar and Mewar are the other three subregions of the state which have urban population above the state average. This is due to the location of three big cities in these areas, i.e., Jodhpur, Jaipur and Udaipur respectively. Since the British period these cities have been the hub of development not only for their subregions but also for the whole state. These cities provided a home to the urban-based Praja Mandal movements against the feudal forces during the freedom movement and in the post-independence phase these have been the major nurseries of democratic leadership.

The areas which have a major share of rural population are those which are less developed and also more dependent on agriculture. These subregions also have a relatively higher share of SC, ST and peasant communities categorised as Backward. Thus, more than 60 per cent population in Shekhawati is SC and OBC; in the case of Haroti their share is as high as 83 per cent; Matsya has more than 70 per cent residents from these social categories; in Vagar the ST constitute nearly two-thirds of the entire population; while the combined strength of SC, ST and OBC in the Merwara subregion exceeds 80 per cent.

What substantiates the relative backwardness of these regions is the land ownership pattern. Table 14.8 gives us information about the nature of land occupation in the different subregions of the state.\(^{28}\) The per cent share of landless people in the subregions of Shekhawati, Matsya, Merwara, Haroti and Vagar is less than the state average but quite a big chunk of landowners in these areas are small in nature. It is apparent that the series of land reform legislations which took


\(^{28}\) The landowners have been divided into four categories on the basis of the amount of land owned: owners of 1–5 acres of land have been labelled as small, 6–15 as medium, 16–25 as large and those who own more than 26 acres of land have been categorised as big landowners.
place in the 1950s have not had much impact upon the tillers in these areas. The deprived social groups have been the worst sufferers of this imbalance in land ownership. This has forced them either to depend upon casual labour within their villages or to engage in daily as well as seasonal migration to nearby urban areas and even outside the state. The exploitative nature of economic relationship gave rise to progressive political mobilisation in some of these regions, i.e., Shekhawati, Matsya, Vagar and Haroti, in the pre-independence period.

Geographically speaking, we can say that there is a clear-cut divide between areas situated to the north-west of the Aravalli hills and areas to the east and southern parts of the ranges. In Bagar, Shekhawati, Marwar and parts of Dhundhar, which lie to the north and western parts of the ranges, more than one-third of the landowners possess more than six acres of land whereas in the eastern and southern subregions of Matsya, Merwara, Haroti, Vagar and Mewar 70 to 90 per cent of the population is either landless or owns less than five acres of land. In Vagar, which is predominantly tribal as well as hilly, more than three-fourth of the landowners own less than five acres of land. Most of these land plots are uncultivable and the absence of other local economic avenues has compelled the men of this region to migrate and the women to depend upon government welfare schemes. This region is also the most backward in the state. At the other extreme is the Bagar subregion where more than half of the population owns more than six acres of cultivable land.

Table 14.8: Distribution of Respondents by Land Occupation and Subregions (Per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregion/Land occupation</th>
<th>Landless</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Big</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagar</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekhawati</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwar</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhundhar</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merwara</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsya</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haroti</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mewar</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagar</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bagar is agriculturally prosperous due to the impact of irrigation facilities since the British period. Agricultural prosperity has also led to diversification of the economic base of this region and a consequential lesser dependence on agriculture. Another region which has shown greater pace of development is Shekhawati. The exploitative nature of the jagirdari system in this region led to the consolidation of peasant communities in the first few decades of the 20th century. This area is also marked by the enterprising spirit of the trading community, many of whom migrated to distant parts of the country in pursuit of trade, commerce and industry. Many of the corporate families hail from Shekhawati. Table 14.9 presents the occupation categories of the nine subregions in the state. It is clearly discernible that compared to all other regions, Bagar and Shekhawati are less dependent on agriculture. The relative backwardness of Vagar, Matsya, Haroti and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregion/Occupation categories</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
<th>Managerial and clerical</th>
<th>Trade and commerce</th>
<th>Service class</th>
<th>Peasants and agro-based</th>
<th>Non-workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekhawati</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhundhar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merwara</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsya</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haroti</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mewar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


29 During the British period the Gang Canal provided water to farmland and in present times the Indira Gandhi Canal Project irrigates a big area.

30 Professionals include scientists, doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, artists and also trained subordinates in these professions; Managerial and clerical category includes elected officials, managers, administrators, clerks in Class II and III and also Class IV employees; trade and commerce comprises of businessmen, shopkeepers and salesmen; service class includes skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled service providers; peasants and agro-based workers are cultivators and non-cultivators; and non-workers include house wives, students and employment seekers.
Merwara is again established by the lesser number of people involved in the first three occupational categories. That social deprivation has also resulted in economic backwardness is proved by the fact that a substantial proportion of population in these four areas belong to SC and ST categories. These locales also suffer from low literacy levels as well.

There is therefore strong evidence of subregional disparities in Rajasthan. Bagar and Shekhawati are more developed than Dhundhar, Marwar, and Mewar while Vagar, Merwara, Haroti and Matsya are the least developed. That this has been an outcome of the cumulative impact of the social profile of these subregions; the kind of land ownership pattern and occupational base prevailing there has been established strongly in the above discussion. Perhaps income is the most conclusive indicator of poverty and backwardness. Table 14.10 seeks to distribute the people on the basis of their monthly family incomes. In Vagar, Haroti and Matsya a substantial number of people earn less than ₹2,000 in a month while in Mewar, Merwara and Marwar nearly one-third fall in this category. It is only in Bagar, Shekhawati and Dhundhar that nearly three-fourth of the people earn anywhere between ₹2,000 and ₹8,000.

**Table 14.10: Distribution of Respondents by Monthly Family Income and Subregions (Per cent) (₹)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregion</th>
<th>Monthly family income</th>
<th>&gt;2,000</th>
<th>2,001 to 5,000</th>
<th>5,001–8,000</th>
<th>8,000+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagar</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekhawati</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwar</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhundhar</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merwara</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsya</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haroti</td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mewar</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagar</td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: State Election Study, 2003.*

The nine sub-regions of Rajasthan can thus be divided into three categories on the basis of their development levels: developed, developing and less developed. Bagar, Shekhawati and Dhundhar fall in the first group, Marwar, Mewar and Merwara fall in the second; and Haroti, Matsya and Vagar fall in the third category.
Part I of the article divided Rajasthan into nine subregions on the basis of history, geographical location, linguistic distinctiveness, social demography, land tenure systems and post-independence administrative reorganisation of the state. Building upon this categorisation, Part II brought to the fore distinctive features of these subregions on the basis of survey data generated by the State Election Study, 2003. In this concluding section the article seeks to reflect on political choice, political participation and people’s opinions on key political issues. For this we have once again drawn upon the data gathered during the post-poll survey conducted during the 2003 State Assembly election. It will also be our endeavour to find out as to how the distinctiveness of each subregion has affected the political preferences and attitudes of the people.

One of the prominent characteristics of political competition in Rajasthan is that in spite of strong subregional affinity which the people generally feel, this has not led to any political movement for establishing a separate state. Nor has there been any demand for integration of a particular subregion with any neighbouring state which has considerable influence on that particular area. Thus, Matsya has close cultural interaction with Braj region of Uttar Pradesh; Haroti has close links with Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh; Bagar is under the influence of Punjab; and parts of Marwar, Mewar and Vagar have close cultural and economic ties with Gujarat. But these connections have not culminated in any push or pull factor for redrawing of the boundaries of the state.

What has prevented such consolidation has been the deeply entrenched social fragmentation and regional segmentation in the state. On the social plane only the Brahmins, Rajputs and the SCs have a pan-Rajasthan presence. The Brahmins have been the major beneficiaries of modernisation and democratic politics. They were at the helm of pre-independence Praja Mandal movements and after that have occupied top posts in administration as well as leadership of the major political parties. The community, therefore, has had no visible grudge against the state and its governance. The Rajputs are a community torn apart by issues of precedence and purity. Their internal dissension and mistrust for each other are a part of the state’s cultural history. These factors affected any caste-based consolidation of the group. Similarly, the SCs failed to unite to protest against their social marginalisation and economic deprivation. Benefits of positive
discrimination, co-option of leadership by major political parties and a sense of fear among the common people obstructed organised political consolidation of these depressed groups. Most of the other caste groups are local in nature and therefore could not mobilise themselves for any political purposes.

One notable exception has been the Jat community in the state which, as we have seen, enjoys a presence in quite a few subregions. The group had been politically active even before independence and after independence put its combined strength behind the Congress party to reap the fruits of state power for a long time. Due to this political unity and sustained support to one political party, the Jat community ensured its representation in the State Assembly and Lok Sabha in excess of its share in the population. The community, however, had two grudges. First, it felt that in spite of its steadfast support to the Congress no one from the community could ever become the Chief Minister of the state. Its second complaint has been that its representation in the state bureaucracy is inadequate. The demand for reservation as an OBC group arose from these grievances. The BJP’s promise to fulfil at least the second demand and the actual grant of OBC status to the Jats in 1999 fundamentally changed the nature of political competition in the state. It not only marked the ascendance of the BJP but it also catapulted a number of caste-based movements demanding state protection in the matter of education and employment.

The success of Jat agitation for protective discrimination has led to similar assertion by a number of caste groups which includes both hitherto forward social groups like the Rajputs and Brahmins and also, more recently, depressed castes like the Gurjars. Soft handling of these movements by the state government has also been resented by those groups which fear that any concessions to the agitationists will adversely affect their position. Commentators have even feared that the state is on the brink of a caste war. While these fears may be exaggerated, we cannot remain oblivious to the growing political consolidation of a few social groups, compelling others to engage in counter consolidation. This process is making politics more inclusive and plural in nature which is a clear departure from the feudal era when the political space was confined to a few feudal castes. Democracy has taken deeper roots in Rajasthan and politics is becoming increasingly

31 For details see Lodha (2004: 5456–5462).
competitive. More and more groups are joining the political process, ensuring both a deepening as well as a broadening of the democratic enterprise.

In terms of party political competition we discern a growing bipolar contestation in the different subregions of the state. The rise of the BJP’s fortunes has caused increasing marginalisation of other non-Congress opposition in the state. It has also diminished the social support base of the Congress. What makes the position of the BJP formidable is the simultaneous vertical and horizontal expansion of its base. Vertically, it is now drawing support from more and more social groups on the caste ladder and horizontally it is spreading to subregions in which it had negligible presence for a long time.\(^\text{33}\) The catch-all nature of both the major political contestants has made it ever so difficult for new players to enter the arena. Political mobilisation outside the purview of the two political parties has either got co-opted or has fizzled out. The more enterprising ones have failed to grow beyond a certain terrain.\(^\text{35}\)

### Table 14.11: Distribution of Respondents by Vote and Subregion\(^\text{34}\) (Per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagar</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekhawati</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwar</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhundhar</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merwara</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsya</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haroti</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mewar</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagar</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^\text{34}\) The question — Whom did you vote in the 1998 and 2003 Assembly Elections? — was put to the same respondents.
\(^\text{35}\) The Jat agitation succeeded after receiving the blessings of the BJP; the Social Justice Front waged a lone battle and ultimately fizzled out; different kinds of non-party political movements are more visible in the national media than on the field.
In this backdrop of state politics we can seek to understand the changing nature of political competition in the state and the main contours of people’s political opinions and preferences by resorting to the application of survey data. The issue which attracts immediate attention is that of voting behaviour in different subregions of the state. We have already mentioned that there has been a considerable realignment of political competition after acquiescence to Jat demand for OBC status. Table 14.11 gives a clear picture of shifting political bases. The outcome of both the 1998 and 2003 Assembly elections were totally distinct. The Congress secured 153 seats out of a total of 200 seats in 1998 and the BJP could manage only 33 seats. In the 2003 elections the Congress gained only 56 seats whereas the BJP won 120. Table 14.11 provides a key to understand the total reverse of electoral fortunes in the two elections. The Congress experienced a sharp decline in its support in Bagar, Shekhawati, Marwar, Dhundhar and Haroti subregions which have concentrations of Jat and Gurjar communities. Its decline was less pronounced in other areas. On the other hand, the BJP gained in Bagar, Marwar, Dhundhar, Mewar and Vagar. Table 14.11 also suggests that the loss of the Congress has not always been a gain for the BJP. More than the BJP, it is the others who have damaged the electoral prospects of the Congress. In fact, the BJP suffered reverses in Matsya and Merwara subregions which have a sizable number of SC voters. If we look at the subregions from the perspective of their level of development, a clear-cut pattern seems to emerge. The Congress has suffered heavily in the more developed subregions of Bagar, Shekhawati and Dhundhar. The BJP has not been able to do well in the less developed regions of Merwara, Matsya and Vagar.

Table 14.11 also poses the question as to why there is such a heavy support for ‘others’ in the subregions of Bagar (27 per cent), Shekhawati (32 per cent), Matsya (26 per cent) and Vagar (26 per cent) in the 2003 elections. The presence of spoilers like the Social Justice Front explains the story in Bagar and Shekhawati while in the other subregions party rebels contesting as independent candidates secured local support. The survey data also suggests that in Shekhawati and Matsya a good number of people tend to vote on the basis of their caste/community.\(^{36}\) While Shekhawati has a substantial Jat population,

\(^{36}\) The question which was posed to the respondents was: While voting, which factor do you give more importance to: candidate, party, caste–community, others?
Matsya has good chunks of SCs and Meo Muslims. In Vagar, socialists have a considerable presence due to the influence of Mama Baleshwar Dayal who worked among the tribals for a long time before his death. These are also the areas where the performance of the candidate is a more important factor in determining people’s political preference than the performance of the state or the central government.\textsuperscript{37}

It will be interesting to explore the changing support base of the two major political players on the basis of caste only. Table 14.12 provides a clear picture of the social realignment which has taken place in the state. The Congress has suffered a decline in its support not only among the Hindu caste groups but also among the Muslims. The BJP has not only managed to hold on to its core support constituency among the upper castes but has gained greater support among all the others. But, as mentioned earlier, among most of the social groups the gains of BJP are nominal but the erosion of support for Congress is much sharper. It is, however, not a zero-sum game where the loss of the Congress is a direct gain for the BJP. More than the BJP, it is either the dissidents within the Congress party or other smaller players who have spoilt the electoral performance of the party.

In Rajasthan, the transition from centuries of feudalism to democracy, though sustained, has not been a very smooth one. In the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper Caste</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jat</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurjar</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen OBC</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service OBC</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalit (SC)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{37} The question which was posed to the respondents was: While voting in this election, whose performance did you give most importance to: central government, state government, candidate, others or both? The responses in favour of the candidate was 36 per cent in Shekhawati, 54 per cent in Matsya and 42 per cent in Vagar.
first few decades after independence, the challenge from the erstwhile rulers and the lesser feudal lords was formidable. This challenge and the compulsions of electoral politics compelled the Congress to adopt a soft stand on issues of radical reforms. After the dilution of the impact of feudal forces it was expected that the state would focus more on issues of social justice, welfare and development. But the rise of communal and casteist forces has once again put brakes on the developmental agenda. Consequentially, while the idea of democracy and the import of universal adult franchise have received significant support from the people of the state, this support has been a little skewed in the different subregions.

Table 14.13 gives some insights about peoples’ response to the introduction of democracy in the state.\(^{38}\) While democracy has received an overwhelming support in the state as a whole, the extent is less enthusiastic in Shekhawati, Merwara, Matsya, Haroti and Mewar. This might be a result of the dissatisfaction among the deprived groups in these regions or it may even be a backlash from beneficiaries of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregion/Opinion</th>
<th>Democracy is better</th>
<th>Dictatorship better occasionally</th>
<th>Makes no difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bagar</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekhawati</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwar</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhundhar</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merwara</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsya</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haroti</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mewar</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagar</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{38}\) The question which was posed to the respondents was: People think about democracy differently. Some feel that democracy is better than any other form of government. Some people say that in certain conditions dictatorship is better than democracy. And some people feel that it makes no difference whether it is democracy or dictatorship. What is your opinion?
feudal and the British era. A cynical view has also emerged among some sections that democracy is responsible for rampant corruption, lawlessness and the rise of the subaltern groups. These people tend to extol not only the feudal and British times but also the Emergency period. However, the commanding support for democracy gives a clear impression that people have developed stakes in this system. This is further strengthened by the people’s belief that their vote has an impact on the manner of governance.\footnote{On being questioned whether their vote has an impact on the manner in which governance takes place an overwhelming 91 per cent people felt that voting does effect the process of governance. The subregions in which the response was not as conclusive as in the overall state were Shekhawati (83 per cent), Merwara (84 per cent) and Vagar (85 per cent).}

To conclude, it can be said that while democracy has jelled well with the people in Rajasthan, the impact of pre-independence sub-regional identities is clearly visible on their political choices and opinions. People in different subregions continue to have close affinities with their respective domicile. However, it goes to the credit of the political process that such regional identification has not emanated in the form of any demand for separatism from the state. The ‘instituted region’ has survived well and needs to be consolidated further. What assumes importance here is the nature of governance and the process of policy making as well as its implementation. This article has employed survey data to identify the areas which are less developed and has also established that it is in the less developed subregions that enthusiasm for democracy is less vocal. The challenge, therefore, is to meet the demands of development voiced by the deprived communities in these regions. The onus lies on the major political players who have to make politics and development in the state more plural, inclusive and secular.

References


Regions within Regions —
Negotiating Political Spaces:
A Case Study of Karnataka

SANDEEP SHAstri

Karnataka politics has witnessed significant developments since the 1980s. This period has seen as many as nine Lok Sabha elections and seven Assembly elections, each election ushering in a new trend and triggering off a series of political developments of far-reaching political significance. In the 1980 Lok Sabha poll, the voters unequivocally endorsed the claims of the Congress. Within a few years, in early 1983, in the Assembly poll, the results threw up a House with no clear party securing a majority. The Janata Party was able to form a minority government. The next year (1984), the Lok Sabha polls saw the Congress once again doing well in the state. Within a few months (1985), the same voters now gave a mandate to the Janata Party to form a government in the state by giving it a clear majority. Later, in 1989, when simultaneous polls were held, the Congress secured a landslide victory in the Assembly polls and did well in the Lok Sabha poll from the state. If in the 1991 polls the voters once again sent a large Congress team to the Lok Sabha, it decided to endorse the claims of the Janata Dal in the 1994 Assembly Elections. The 1996 Lok Sabha elections witnessed the twilight of Congress hegemony with the Janata Dal securing a majority of the seats and within two years, in 1998, the BJP/Lok Shakti alliance was favoured by the Karnataka voters. The very next year, 1999, the Congress won a majority of the seats in both the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the state. In 2004, the state once again witnessed simultaneous polls and the voters made a clear distinction by sending a majority of BJP MPs to Delhi but elected an Assembly where no single party enjoyed a majority. In the Assembly elections held in 2008, the BJP fell short of a majority by just three seats and managed to form the government with the
support of independents. In the Lok Sabha election held in 2009, the BJP maintained its winning streak and further consolidated on its 2004 Lok Sabha performance.

It is interesting to note that, since 1991, in every Lok Sabha election the Karnataka voters have supported a different political party/alliance, save in 2009. The same is true of the Assembly elections held in the state since the 1980s. In the five major Assembly elections held in the last two decades (1983, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2009) the electorate in the state has rejected the ruling party and paved the way for another party to come to power.¹ The message the voters wished to convey, especially to the ruling party (both the one voted out and the one voted in), is categorical: non-performance and intra-party squabbles will not find favour² (see Shastri 1999b). A more nuanced analysis of the results would show that the ‘regions’ within Karnataka played a major role in defining the nature of the results.

¹ It is important to dwell at some length on the classification of castes in Old Mysore/Karnataka. The upper-caste category is mainly composed of the Brahmins. The concept of ‘backward castes’ has a long history of use in India. It is normally used to refer to those caste groups which have historically been denied opportunities to equip themselves and thus have failed to benefit from education or acquiring wealth and status in society. In the princely state of Mysore, as early as in 1921, the term ‘backward’ was defined as ‘all communities other than Brahmins, who are now adequately represented in the public service’ (as quoted in Galantar 1984: 1812). With the organisation of the Backward Castes in Old Mysore, the major landowning communities among the backwards — the Lingayats and the Vokkaligas — gradually organised themselves and benefited significantly from the non-Brahmin movement in the state. Gradually, the two castes, both in terms of their political influence and economic power, came to acquire the status of dominant castes. With the government offering preferential treatment to the backwards, the backward castes became a zone of much controversy. Several commissions have been recommended that either one or both the dominant castes be excluded from the category of backwards. Such recommendations have immediately evoked an adverse reaction from the effected dominant caste. While preparing the list of Backward Castes, the government has always succumbed to the pressures from the dominant castes and continues to allow them to be a part of the Backward Caste basket. Thus, in this article, the term ‘OBC’ refers to the non-dominant backward castes; it does not include the SCs and STs as they are listed separately.

² The 1985 elections are not being considered as they was held within two years of the 1983 Assembly elections. In the 2004 elections it would be difficult to
Nature of Political Competition in the State

An analysis of the Lok Sabha election results in Karnataka prior to the 1996 elections clearly demonstrate that the voters strongly endorsed those who had contested on the Congress party ticket. In the first 10 general elections to the Lok Sabha held between 1952 and 1991, the Congress party won nearly 90 per cent of the seats. Even on the four occasions when the party fared badly at the national level (1967, 1977, 1989 and 1991), the relative performance of the party in the state was appreciably better (see Shastri 1999a: 2440). In the 1967 Lok Sabha elections, though the Congress won only 54 per cent of the seats at the national level, its candidates were elected in 67 per cent of the Lok Sabha constituencies. In the 1977 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress had secured just 28 per cent of the seats at the national level, but won more than 90 per cent of the seats in the state. In 1989, the party secured merely 37 per cent of the seats at the national level but captured 96 per cent of the seats in the state. In 1991, the party won 44 per cent of the seats at the national level and 81 per cent of the seats in the state. Karnataka was verily considered a bastion of the Congress when it came to the Lok Sabha elections.

Yet another trend that can be discerned in Karnataka is that when it comes to who should come to power in the state, the voters have acted differently as compared to the national electorate. In 1978, the Karnataka electorate emphatically endorsed the claims of the Congress even as the Janata Party was in power at the centre. In 1983, though the Congress was in power at the centre, it was voted out of power in the state. In 1985, the Assembly elections were held in the backdrop of the Congress sweep at the national level. The Karnataka voters, however, voted the Janata Party back to power. In the 1989 Assembly elections (Lok Sabha and Assembly elections were held simultaneously) the Congress formed the government in Karnataka while the National Front came to power at the national level; though Narasimha Rao headed a Congress government in Delhi, the voters in the state preferred the Janata Dal as the ruling party. In 1999, while the Congress was voted to power in the state, the NDA argue that the Congress did not lose the elections (Shastri and Ramaswamy 2009). In the 2009 poll it is difficult to argue as to which was the incumbent government as the state was under President’s Rule and it was preceded by a string of short-lived coalition governments.
formed the government in Delhi. In 2004, with the UPA forming the government at the national level, the state has witnessed two coalition governments, one involving the Congress and the Janata Dal (S) and the other involving the Janata Dal (S) and the BJP. In 2008, with the UPA in power in Delhi, the voters paved the way for the formation of a BJP government in the state. In 2009, though the national verdict went in favour of the UPA, the BJP won a majority of the Lok Sabha seats in the state.

It is also interesting to note that the electoral contest in Karnataka has generally involved two major formulations, with the third force being rarely favoured by the voters. If in 1978 the Congress (Brahmananda Reddy) was rejected as a third force, the same fate awaited the Janata Party (JP) in 1989, the Karnataka Congress Party in 1994 and the Janata Dal (S) in 1999. In every election, the two major political formulations have cornered more than 70 per cent of the votes polled. The 2004 electoral verdict was in tune with the 1983 verdict when the nature of electoral competition in the state appeared to be in a transition and is linked to political realignments within and between the regions. The 2008 Assembly elections proved this point with the Janata Dal (S) being relegated to a ‘faraway’ third position in this election (Shastri and Padmavathi 2009).

The Karnataka electorate has also not favoured regional parties, either in Lok Sabha or Assembly elections. Till the late 1960s the electoral competition in the state was largely between the Congress on the one hand and the Socialist Party/Swatantra Party on the other. After the Congress split in 1969, the two factions of the Congress were the principal political forces in the state. With the formation of the Janata Party in 1977, it became the main opposition party. Subsequently, the Janata Party/Dal and the BJP have emerged as crucial players in the electoral politics of the state along with the Congress. Though regional parties have occasionally been formed they have had limited electoral success. Devraj Urs floated the Kranti Ranga in the 1980s but the party later merged with the Janata Party. Bangarappa formed the Karnataka Congress Party but this party largely played the role of a spoiler (for the Congress) in the 1994 Assembly elections. He subsequently merged the party with the Congress. The Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) has also achieved limited electoral success in Karnataka, winning two seats in 1989, one seat in 1994 and drawing a blank in 1999. While the Lok Shakti did emerge in
Karnataka in 1998, the analysis later in the article draws attention to the limited role and the advantage it derived from the alliance with the BJP.\(^3\) Prior to the 2004 polls, the season of cross-party migration and merger of parties was clearly evident and the formation of a regional outfit was not seen as a viable option. Bangarappa’s joining the BJP was a clear reflection of this trend. In more recent times, his formation of the state unit of the Samajwadi Party is more a reflection of the limited nature of political options he had. Bangarappa once again decided to return home to the Congress and contested the 2009 Lok Sabha poll on the Congress ticket. Siddaramiah’s deciding to join the Congress and not form a regional political outfit also endorses the point being made.

### Table 15.1: Caste and Religious Composition of the State of Karnataka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Percentage of state population**</th>
<th>Percentage of state population*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>85.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Castes</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lingayats</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vokkalingas</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Backward Castes</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scheduled Castes</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scheduled Tribes</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Minorities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>85.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Drawn from 2001 Census data.

**Based on figures in the Chinnappa Reddy Commission Report on Backward Classes. Even in the earlier report, the percentage of those belonging to the different castes was more or less the same.

---

\(^3\) Two surveys conducted during the 1999 elections point to interesting trends: A survey on political attitudes and preference of the Karnataka voter that I conducted revealed that more than 54 per cent of the respondents were not at all satisfied with the performance of the Janata Dal government in the state. A DRS poll on performance rating of state governments found that 61 per cent of the respondents (in Karnataka) were dissatisfied with the state government’s performance (*The Hindu*, 12 August 1999).
A Case Study of Karnataka

The composite state of Karnataka (earlier called Mysore) came into existence in 1956 subsequent to the reorganisation of states on linguistic lines. Four principal regions became part of the state: 1. Old Mysore region (formerly a part of the princely state of Mysore); 2. Hyderabad-Karnataka region (formerly a part of the territory of the Nizam of Hyderabad); 3. Bombay-Karnataka region (formerly a part of Bombay Presidency of British India); and 4. Old Madras region (formerly part of the Madras Presidency of British India) and Coorg. The Old Mysore region accounts for half the Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies in the state. A quarter of the Lok Sabha seats are in the Bombay-Karnataka region and the rest of the seats are distributed in the other two regions. This article focuses on the regional variations in the state and its implications for the nature and direction of state politics.

The caste profile of the state is distinct in significant ways and caste considerations have played a crucial role in the electoral politics of the state. The Lingayats and Vokkaligas are considered the dominant castes and have been the major players in state politics. Both the Lingayats and Vokalligas are landowning communities in rural Karnataka. The traditional stronghold of the Lingayats has been the Bombay-Karnataka and Hyderabad-Karnataka region while the Vokkaligas are a major force in the Old Mysore region. The other backward castes (OBCs) — which account for more than one-third of the state’s population — have attempted to emerge as a major political force ever since Devraj Urs (the first backward caste leader to become Chief Minister of Karnataka — 1972 to 1979) sought to unite them and break the hegemony enjoyed by the dominant castes. Since the late 1970s, the OBCs have had a powerful impact on the electoral outcomes and their representation in the legislature and state council of ministers has increased (Shastri and Vinod 1990; Shastri 1995). The important OBCs (in numerical terms) include the Kurubas (shepherds) and the Idigas (toddy tappers).

Over the past five decades, electoral politics in the state has witnessed major changes, the most important being the movement from a one-party dominant system to a competitive party system,

---

4 It is my contention that the success of the BJP–Lok Shakti alliance in the 1998 elections was largely due to the BJP, with the Lok Shakti playing a minimal role (see Shastri 1999a: 2444–2445).
paving the way for the possible emergence of a bipolar alliance system. Their implications for state politics and more specifically be composition of the Legislative Assembly have been far reaching.

An Overview of Karnataka’s Electoral Politics

An ideal backdrop for the study of Karnataka’s politics in the 1990s would be the outcome of the 1983 Assembly elections and the subsequent political developments in the state. Till 1983, the Congress had a near monopoly over power in the state. In the 1983 Assembly elections no party was in a position to secure a clear majority, and the Janata Party (the single largest party) formed a minority government under the leadership of Ramakrishna Hegde, with the outside support of the leftist party and the BJP. The maturity of the Karnataka electorate was strikingly demonstrated in 1984–85 when it elected 24 Congress candidates (out of 28) in the Lok Sabha poll from the state in December 1984 and within a few months in March 1985, expressed a desire that the Janata Party government continue in the state and even gave it a clear majority in the Assembly elections. It is interesting to note that the performance of the Janata Party minority government (1983–85) was more effective as compared to the Janata Party government between 1985 and 1989 when it enjoyed a clear majority in the Assembly. In its second innings, the government was plagued by infighting and an intense internal power struggle. In August 1988, Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde resigned, accepting moral responsibility for the tapping of telephones of political leaders. S. R. Bommai was elected as the leader of the Janata Party to succeed Hegde as Chief Minister. Bommai’s government appeared to stumble from crisis to crisis. Even before it completed a year in office, it faced a major crisis when dissident activity surfaced (in April 1989), culminating in the dismissal of the Janata government and declaration of President’s Rule.

The 1989 Assembly elections, held after a seven-month spell of President’s Rule, saw the Congress return to power in the state with a three-fourths majority in the Assembly (winning 178 of the 224 seats). Never before had any party in the state bagged such a high percentage of seats in the Assembly. The Congress had all the factors going in its favour after the 1989 election results — a fund of goodwill, a steamroller majority and an opposition which had been decimated and was in total disarray. However, gradually the party seemed to lose direction. The voters sounded a warning in the 1991 Lok Sabha
poll by electing only 23 of the 28 Congress candidates. The party did
little to remedy the situation.

Having changed its legislature party leader and chief minister thrice
in five years, the Congress was plagued by infighting and internal
discord, which contributed to a lacklustre performance at the gov-
ernment level. One of the major problems that both Bangarappa and
Moily faced as chief ministers was that they had to silently accept a
situation where their senior ministers, time and again, expressed their
lack of confidence in their leadership. It was the familiar story repeated
once again — a public mandate not respected, a public mandate
treated with insensitivity and the gradual but sure evaporation of public
support — all self inflicted.

It was against this backdrop that the 1994 Assembly elections
were held. The emergence of the Janata Dal as the ruling party took
many observers by surprise. A party which had just managed to win
24 Assembly seats in 1989 and drew a blank in the 1991 Lok Sabha
poll was hardly expected to return to power in spite of the dismal
performance of the Congress government. While many attributed the
Janata Dal victory to the ‘anti-incumbency syndrome’, it needs to be
remembered that even if the voters were unhappy with the Congress
party they had a choice of opting either for the Janata Dal or the BJP.
The fact that the Janata Dal secured a majority was indicative of a
positive vote for the party (see Shastri 1995).

It also needs to be noted that the Janata Dal victory in Karnataka
had little to do with the national agenda of the party. The state leaders
made a conscious effort to distance themselves from the development
at the national level. The electoral verdict was essentially dictated by
local factors and considerations. The emergence of the Janata Dal
as a credible alternative to the Congress needs to be viewed in the
backdrop of the efforts of the leadership ‘troika’ (Hegde, Deve Gowda
and Bommai) demonstrating their unity and collective leadership (The
Times of India, Bangalore, 10 December 1994). The effort of these
leaders to project the Janata Dal as a ‘federal party’ found favour with
many sections. It must also be said, to the credit of the Janata Dal, that
the groundwork for a spirited and well-planned election campaign had
been laid long before the formal announcement of the elections.

The 1996 Lok Sabha elections were held within a year and a half
of the Janata Dal coming to power in the state. The three major political
parties in the state — the Congress, Janata Dal and BJP — had evolved
elaborate electoral strategies for the Lok Sabha poll. For all the three,
success in Karnataka was crucial both regionally and nationally. For the Janata Dal, winning a sizable number of seats in the state was vital for the survival of its state government. Earlier, in 1984, Hegde had resigned as Chief Minister on moral grounds, when his party won just four of the 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka. For the Congress, a large contingent from Karnataka was vital as it considered it a ‘safe state’. For the BJP, Karnataka was its launching pad in the south and a good performance in the state would help the party inch towards the majority in the Lok Sabha it was hoping to realise.

For the first time in Karnataka, a party other than the Congress secured a majority of the seats in a Lok Sabha election. The Janata Dal won over 57 per cent but secured a little less than 35 per cent of the votes. The Congress, on the other hand, polled just over 30 per cent of the votes but secured only 18 per cent of the seats. It is also interesting to note that there was not much variation in the percentage of votes polled and seats won in the case of both the BJP and the Karnataka Congress Party (KCP).

The percentage of votes polled and seats won by the Congress were the lowest ever polled by the party. In previous Lok Sabha elections, its vote share in the state never fell below 40 per cent. Even in the Assembly elections in the state, the party managed to secure more than 40 per cent of the votes save in 1994 when it polled 27 per cent of the votes. The BJP, which polled less than 25 per cent of the votes in 1996, had secured a higher percentage of votes in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections — nearly 29 per cent — though it secured only four seats than as compared to the six in 1996.

That the Congress secured fewer seats but a higher percentage of votes as compared to the BJP needs to be viewed in the context of the nature of the electoral contest in the 28 constituencies. While the Janata Dal candidates emerged victorious in 16 constituencies, their nominees came second in as many as six other constituencies. Thus, the party registered its presence in 23 of the 28 constituencies. While the Congress won five seats, its nominees came in the second position in as many as 15 constituencies, making a principal contestant in 20 of the 28 constituencies. The BJP, on the other hand, won six seats and came second in another six constituencies, making it a principal contestant in only 12 constituencies. Thus the Congress was a principal contestant in more than 70 per cent of the seats and the BJP was in the first or second position in only a little over 40 per cent of the constituencies. It is also worth noting that while only two of the Janata
Dal and three of the Congress candidates forfeited their deposits, as many as 8 BJP candidates lost their deposits.\(^5\)

The political developments after the 1996 Lok Sabha elections need to be taken into account in any analysis of the 1998 verdict in Karnataka. The Janata Dal’s creditable performance in Karnataka in 1996 had important national ramifications, including the elevation of Deve Gowda to the position of Prime Minister. However, the suspension of Ramakrishna Hegde from the Janata Dal, within days of the Deve Gowda government winning the confidence vote, totally shattered the unity which had been so tenuously maintained since 1993. The unity that had been demonstrated by the party leadership had played a crucial role in ensuring the parties victories in 1994 and 1996. The clear erosion of the support for the Janata Dal was apparent from the results of the by-elections to the State Assembly held between 1996 and 1998.

After the 1996 poll, the Congress did make attempts to rethink its electoral strategy in the state. In terms of seats in the Assembly, the party was relegated to the third position. In terms of votes, it managed to come second, way ahead of the BJP. The party made serious attempts to increase its support base among the OBCs and minorities, sections that appeared to have move towards the Janata Dal (see Shastri 1999a). However, the party was unable to capitalise on the failures of the state government. The party also found it difficult to effectively and convincingly explain its support to the United Front (Janata Dal being the main party in the front) at the centre and opposition to the Janata Dal in the state. Above all, serious infighting and absence of an effective leadership at the state level plagued the party.

The 1998 elections heralded the ‘true arrival’ of the BJP in the south, more specifically, in Karnataka. With the BJP–Lok Shakti alliance winning 16 of the 28 seats in the state, the Congress was once again relegated to the second position with nine seats. The Janata Dal secured the remaining three seats. The BJP–Lok Shakti alliance benefited the BJP more than the Lok Shakti. While assessing the Congress performance it must be noted that though the party registered a 5 per cent increase in its vote share, it was not able to regain its

\(^5\) Section 158 of the Representation of Peoples Act 1951 states that a candidate who secured less than one-sixth of the valid votes polled forfeits the security deposit.
pre-1996 status in the state. Yet it registered its presence in as many as 27 of the 28 constituencies, with its candidates coming in either the first or second position. The relegation of the Janata Dal to the third position had important implications for state politics, especially as it was the ruling party in the state.

In the past, whenever the ruling party in Karnataka fared badly in the Lok Sabha poll, political compulsions either necessitated the dissolution of the Assembly and holding of fresh elections (1971 and 1984) or resulted in mass defections to the party that emerged victorious in the Lok Sabha poll and the formation of a new government (1980). After the 1998 poll, it was anticipated that with the Janata Dal faring badly, either the ruling party MLAs would join the Lok Shakti in large numbers, resulting in the formation of an alternative government, or the Assembly would be dissolved resulting in fresh elections. However, no such development took place. With Hegde joining the Vajpayee government as a Cabinet Minister, the Janata Dal MLAs in Karnataka were reluctant to join the Lok Shakti in view of their reservations about who would head the alternative government. Further, the BJP was not very enthusiastic about the formation of a Lok Shakti–BJP government with the help of Janata Dal legislators crossing over to the Lok Shakti as such a government would have the Lok Shakti in the driver’s seat with the BJP having to play second fiddle. Both the BJP and the Lok Shakti did not appear too keen on an early Assembly election, as this would have resulted in tensions with the alliance. Neither party was willing to take any step that would adversely affect the stability of the BJP-led government at the centre. With the State Assembly elections due in a year, both parties felt that the status quo would be in their best interests.

Sitting in the opposition (both at centre and at the state levels), the Congress saw itself as the ‘natural choice’ of the electorate in the upcoming Assembly elections. In order to garner the support of the dominant castes, an influential leader from one of these castes was made the KPCC President. Leaders from the other dominant castes and those from backward communities were appointed to important positions in order to balance social equations.

Two developments need to be noted in this context. First, the Congress admitted to its fold several Janata Dal leaders who had joined Hegde’s non-political organisation, the Nava Nirmana Vedike. This caused a sense of unease among ‘loyalist’ Congress workers. Second, internal differences among party leaders continued to surface from time to time.
The split in the Janata Dal on the eve of the 1999 elections was a development of immense political significance. The realignment of political forces was a natural corollary to this development. The split in the Janata Dal was the end of a process that began with the expulsion of Hegde from the party. It needs to be borne in mind that in 1996, Hegde had played a major role in ensuring that Patel became the Chief Minister of the state. Deve Gowda had favoured the candidature of Siddaramaiah, who had to finally remain content with the Deputy Chief Minister’s position. Patel had for many years been considered a Hegde loyalist. The blatant interference in the administration by the supporters of Deve Gowda and the inability of the Chief Minister to arrest this trend, the anointing of Siddaramaiah as Chief Minister-in-waiting should the party be returned to power, were all developments which were indicative of the increased tension between Deve Gowda and Patel. With the formal split in the Janata Dal, the group led by Chief Minister Patel — the Janata Dal (U) — decided to align with the Lok Shakti and support the National Democratic Alliance. There was an intense and stormy debate both within the BJP and Lok Shakti on the emerging alliance in the state. The state-level BJP leaders were against the new alliance. Ananth Kumar, a prominent BJP leader from Karnataka who was also a Union Minister, expressed his reservations about the BJP aligning itself with the discredited Janata Dal (U) and favoured the continuation of the BJP–Lok Shakti alliance (Deccan Herald, Bangalore, 29 July 1999). The Janata Dal (U) appealed to the state leadership of the BJP ‘not to be greedy and desist from aspiring for what was beyond their reach’ (Ramakrishna Hegde as quoted The Times of India, Bangalore, 7 August 1999). Finally, in the interests of unity in the NDA and keeping in mind the importance of the Janata Dal (U) support in Bihar, the Janata Dal (U) was admitted to the NDA (The Times of India, Bangalore, 10 August 1999). Heeding the advice of the national leadership of the party, the state BJP leadership too, in spite of its reservations, decided to support the alliance under special circumstances and in the national interest (State BJP President Yediyurappa, Deccan Herald, Bangalore, 25 August 1999). Karnataka was thus moving towards a tri-polar contest in the 1999 poll — Congress–BJP–Janata Dal (U) alliance and Janata Dal (S).

However, the fragility of the BJP–Janata Dal (U) alliance was obvious from the day it was forged. Differences between the alliance partners surfaced at regular intervals and no serious effort was made to iron out the differences. The problem becomes even more complex in
Karnataka, with simultaneous elections to both the Lok Sabha and the State Assembly. The internal contradictions in the NDA alliance were clearly apparent in the State Assembly poll. The NDA was not able to reach an agreement on seat sharing and, as a result, in several of the Assembly constituencies more than one partner in the NDA had put up a candidate. Of the 224 constituencies in Karnataka, the BJP was to put up candidates in 129 and the Janata Dal (U) in 95. In reality the BJP put up candidates in 149 constituencies and the Janata Dal (U) in 112, resulting in both the BJP and Janata Dal (U) candidates remaining in the fray in as many as 38 constituencies. The problem was less acute in the case of the Lok Sabha poll, where the conflict was over the sharing of only one of the 28 seats.

The elections results saw the Congress securing a clear majority in the Assembly and winning a majority of the Lok Sabha seats from the state. The election result clearly indicated that the electorate had not endorsed the BJP–Janata Dal (U) alliance. The voters once again rejected the third force — the Janata Dal (S). Soon after the poll results came trickling in, the state BJP leadership claimed that the party had lost due to the tie-up and the results were a verdict against the Patel government (Deccan Herald, Bangalore, 9 October 1999).

The election results clearly indicated that the Congress had succeeded in recovering much of the ground it had lost over the last decade. As compared to the previous Lok Sabha elections, the party registered a 9-percentage point increase in its vote’s share and the number of seats it won doubled from nine (in 1988) to 18 (in 1999). If the 1994 Assembly elections were to be taken into account, the Congress votes registered a significant increase of over 18 percentage points. In the 1994 Assembly elections, the party had won 36 seats and had increased its tally to 132 (a near four-fold increase) this time around. The BJP–Lok Shakti alliance had polled 38.4 per cent of the votes in 1998. This time around the BJP–Janata Dal (U) polled 40.4 per cent of the votes. However, in 1998, the alliance won 16 of the 28 seats in 1998 and had to be content with 10 of Janata Dal (U) in 1999 — three seats. The decline was in the seats won by the BJP, a fall from 13 seats to seven seats. In the Assembly poll, the BJP increased its tally by four seats (it won 40 seats in 1994 and secured 44 seats in 1999).

While the BJP–Janata Dal (U) alliance failed to secure the endorsement of the electorate, its performance merits attention. First, the Lok Sabha elections. As mentioned earlier, the tally of the BJP partner
A Case Study of Karnataka

(Lok Shakti in 1998 and Janata Dal U in 1999) remained the same. The BJP tally declined by six seats. However, the alliance was a principal contestant in all but two of the 28 constituencies (it won 10 and came second in 16). The trend of bipolar electoral competition in the state has been confirmed by the 1999 electoral verdict.

With the return to power of the NDA at the national level and the formation of the government under Vajpayee’s leadership, the non-inclusion of Hegde in the Union Council of Ministers had a major impact on the Janata Dal (U) in the state. Hegde went on record to state that he did not blame the BJP for this development but held his own colleagues in the Janata Dal (U) responsible (Rediff On the Net, 18 October 1999). This state unit of the Janata Dal (U) too distanced itself from the NDA. The BJP suffered serious internal divisions, with its legislature party splitting into two. The Congress faced a divided opposition during the five years of its government.

The verdict of the Karnataka voters in the 2004 elections was significant. Opinion polls/exit polls had more or less predicted that the BJP would do well in the Lok Sabha elections in the state while the race for the Vidhana Soudha in Karnataka would be close. This was the second time that the state witnessed a split verdict following simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabha. The results in the state became crucial for all the major political parties for a wide range of reasons. For the Congress, it was imperative that it retained its status as the ruling party in the state and provided those vital seats in the Lok Sabha for forming government at the centre. For the BJP, Karnataka was verily its launching pad in the south (Shastri 1999a). This was the only state in the south where it not only had a presence but was also the main partner in the alliance. It hoped to increase seats in the NDA kitty by its contribution from Karnataka. Winning power in the state would have come as a welcome added bonus. For the Janata Dal (S) this was a do-or-die battle. Its continued relevance depended on its reasonably good performance in these elections, especially at the Assembly level. The verdict of the Karnataka voters draws special attention because of the fact that they have clearly distinguished between the Lok Sabha and the Assembly polls. The BJP won 18 of the Lok Sabha seats (60 per cent), the Congress secured eight (30 per cent) and the Janata Dal (S) notched up the remaining two. The Assembly verdict was more divided, with the BJP securing 79 of 224 seats (35 per cent) and its ally, the Janata Dal (U), winning five seats, the Congress nominees being elected in 65 seats (30 per cent);
and the Janata Dal (S) winning 58 seats (26 per cent). Clearly, what the BJP lost at the Assembly level, the Janata Dal (S) gained. There is not much difference in the percentage of seats that the Congress won in the state in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections (Shastri and Ramaswamy 2009).

In 2004, Karnataka witnessed a clear ticket-splitting, with a significant percentage of voters supporting different parties in the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls. The survey data reveals that 84 per cent of those who voted for the Congress candidates in the Lok Sabha poll endorsed the candidates of the same party in the Assembly polls too. In the case of the BJP, this percentage dropped to around 66 per cent (if the votes transferred to the ally the JD (U) are taken into account). This implies that 34 per cent of those who voted for the BJP in the Lok Sabha poll voted for other candidates in the Assembly polls. The shift was more or less in equal proportion to the Congress, Janata Dal (S) and independents. In the case of those who voted for the Janata Dal (S) at the Lok Sabha polls, around 73 per cent continued to vote for the same party candidates in the Assembly polls also. The balance shifted in equal measure to the Congress, BJP and other smaller parties. This vote split explains the fact of a Legislative Assembly in Karnataka with no single party with a clear majority on the one hand and on the other, a Lok Sabha contingent from the state with nearly two-thirds majority for the BJP.

After this election, the state saw the formation of a Congress–JD(S) coalition government with the Chief Minister’s position going to the Congress and the Deputy Chief Ministership being with the Janata Dal (S). Soon there was a split within the Janata Dal (S) and a section of the party decided to align with the BJP and form a government. Though the BJP had greater numerical strength in the Assembly it conceded the chief ministership to the Janata Dal (S). When the time came for the Janata Dal (S) to hand over the chief ministership to the BJP, it went back on its commitment and the government collapsed. A short-lived BJP-led government could not survive as the Janata Dal (S) withdrew support, paving the way for President’s Rule and another election.

These political developments provide the backdrop to the 2008 Assembly election. The BJP fell just three seats short of a majority in this poll. It was able to form a government with the support of the independents. If the performance of the BJP is to be assessed in this poll, its success is linked to its spectacular performance in some regions
and its inability to garner a majority on its own is also linked to its poor showing in some other regions. The story of the 2008 Assembly elections is a story of the politics of the regions in the state (Shastri and Padmavathi 2009). The same trend was further entrenched by the 2009 Lok Sabha poll (Shastri et al. 2009).

It would be useful to analyse these election results from a micro-perspective by examining it region-wise. Each result indicates a region-specific trend.

**Regions within Regions**

To analyse the differences across regions, only the Assembly elections held since 1978 are taken into account. As mentioned earlier, Karnataka has been traditionally divided into four regions: 1. Old Mysore region — that part of Karnataka which was part of the princely state of Mysore; 2. Hyderabad-Karnataka region — the part of Karnataka which was part of Hyderabad state; 3. Bombay-Karnataka region — the part of Karnataka which was part of the Bombay Presidency; and 4. Madras Presidency regions and Coorg. The Old Mysore region accounts for half the Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies in the state. A quarter of the Lok Sabha seats are in the Bombay-Karnataka region and the rest of the seats are distributed in the other two regions.

Each region has its distinctiveness drawn largely from its past. The regions also have a clear caste matrix which impacts on the nature of political competition and the expression of political choices across regions. The argument in this article is that in critical elections the nature of the result has been defined by the performance of the major players in different regions.

If the 1978 poll is taken into account, the two main players in that election were the Congress and the Janata Party. Table 15.2 clearly indicates that the performance of the Congress was more or less uniform across regions. The reduced percentage of seats it won in the Bombay-Karnataka region was compensated by its better performance in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region. The reverse trend was seen in the case of the Janata Party.

---

6 In this article the argument has been made that Karnataka verdicts are increasingly a response to local considerations. It is for this reason that while understanding the analysis of regions, the Assembly elections alone are taken into account.
Table 15.2: Karnataka Assembly Elections, 1978–2008 Region-wise Seats won by Congress, BJP, Janata Party/Dal (All Figures in Percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Old Mysore</th>
<th>Bombay-Krtk</th>
<th>Hyd-Krtk</th>
<th>Madras Pres.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CSDS Data Unit.

The 1983 poll saw an Assembly with no single party securing a majority. A region-wise analysis shows clear winners. The Congress did reasonably well in the Hyderabad-Karnataka and Bombay-Karnataka regions but fared poorly in the Old Mysore region. The Janata Party was not able to secure majority on its own simply because its good
performance was limited to the Old Mysore region. It was able to capture a little over one-fourth of the seats in the crucial Hyderabad-Karnataka and Bombay-Karnataka regions. The trend changed in 1985. The Janata Dal was able to secure a majority because it improved upon its earlier performance (albeit marginally) in the Old Mysore region but showed a spectacular improvement in the Bombay-Karnataka region (from 30 to 72 per cent of seats) and to a lesser extent the Hyderabad-Karnataka region (27 to 50 per cent).

The Congress record in 1989 was largely because it did well in the four regions. In the Old Mysore region (which accounts for more than half the seats) it pushed back the Janata Dal and in the Madras Presidency and Coorg regions it trounced the BJP.

Similarly, in 1994, the return of the Janata Dal to power was largely because it was able to register its presence not merely in Old Mysore but in the Hyderabad-Karnataka and Bombay-Karnataka regions. The rise of the BJP too is linked to its registering its presence in all the four regions. The party did exceptionally well in the Madras Presidency region but was still to gain a firm hold in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region.

The Congress return to power in 1999 was again on account of its good performance in all the four regions. It is important to note that while the BJP seat share did not change much (1994–1999), it improved its performance in the Hyderabad region.

In 2004, the story that explains the inability of any one party to secure a clear majority lies in the regions. The Congress decline was uniform across the regions. The BJP, which came up with its best ever performance in the Assembly polls, failed to consolidate in the Old Mysore and Hyderabad-Karnataka regions. Its inability to secure a majority on its own is linked to this factor. The Janata Dal (S), on the other hand, fared poorly in the Madras Presidency and Bombay-Karnataka regions and did exceptionally well in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region. It can be argued that the good performance of the JD (S) in this region was at the cost of the BJP and prevented the BJP from being able to secure a majority on its own.

2008 saw an interesting trend. The BJP improved on its previous performance in the Bombay-Karnataka region. It did marginally better in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region and slipped slightly in the Madras Presidency region. Though it improved in the Old Mysore region (at the cost of the Janata Dal [S]), its record here prevented it from securing a majority on its own (Shastri and Padmavathi 2009).
Thus, in two critical elections, 1983 and 2004, the unclear verdict is explained by the fact that the party which emerged as the single largest party was not able to consolidate its presence in one of the regions of the state. In 2008, the BJP fell short of the majority because of its gaining a limited number of seats in the Old Mysore and Hyderabad-Karnataka regions.

The analysis also shows that even though the Old Mysore region accounts for half of the Karnataka seats, a party that secures a majority needs to do well not merely in this region but in Bombay-Karnataka and Hyderabad-Karnataka regions also. In a sense, it is these two regions which tilt the verdict.

The ‘regions within regions’ are also linked to the social composition of the state. The two dominant castes of the state have a significant influence in different regions. The Vokkaligas are largely a force in the Old Mysore regions while the Lingayats are a force to reckon with in the Bombay-Karnataka and Hyderabad-Karnataka regions. The non-dominant OBCs have pockets of influence in each of the regions. The capacity of parties to generate support across caste groups also plays a role in defining their performance.

**Conclusion**

The analysis above draws attention to the fact that the nature of electoral verdicts in Karnataka is verily a by-product of the trends in the regions. The dynamics of the social coalitions that emerge in a region and the nature of the electoral context (bipolar or tri-polar) in the regions significantly define and determine the final electoral verdict.

Elections in the country today, as pointed out by Yadav (2009), can be understood only when the centrality of the role of the states in the emerging national trends is taken into account. Similarly, within each state, the impact of the regions is an important point of reference. The election results in Karnataka appear to be a vindication of such a postulate. With the 2004 elections, the state has moved from an earlier bipolarity towards a competitive multi-polarity, which has once again been confirmed in the 2008 Assembly elections.

**References**

———. 1994. ‘10th Karnataka Legislative Assembly: Details Results’. Bangalore: DPAR.
Part V
Politics of Public Policy
Introduction

States of the Hindi heartland,1 inhabited by 42.12 per cent of India’s population and represented by 37 per cent of the seats in the popular house of Parliament (Lok Sabha), have widely been perceived as the largest drag on social, political and economic development of post-colonial India. Their lack of growth and development has been unintelligible to the various theories of economic and social development. The slow and retarded development of these states has not only defied the logic of the planned developmental strategy, but remains a challenge for the free market economy as well. Their socio-cultural traditions have been considered as being hostile to change and progress (slow pace of emancipation of Dalits and Backward Classes and empowerment of women). The nature of their politics and governance has been vilified for being non-progressive. Their regional identities are supposedly chequered by the presence of massive poverty, poor demographic characteristics, secular resistance to high growth rate, inegalitarian society ridden with violent caste

---

1 Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are the states belonging to what is called the ‘Hindi heartland’. The new states of Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Chattisgarh were carved out from Bihar, UP and MP respectively in November 2000. However, these states may not be placed in the Hindi heartland category, as tribal population with distinct languages and culture dominates the first two and the last one also stands different on regional and cultural grounds. Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, despite being Hindi-speaking areas, are normally excluded from the states of the Hindi heartland, as they were formerly part of the Punjab.
wars and governance and politics infested with crime and corruption. Their group identity is more often invoked for pejorative purposes. For example, their poor demographic characteristics have invited the labelling of the pejorative term BIMARU\(^2\) (sick) states, and, probably, they were the inspirational source for the concept of ‘Hindu Growth Rate’.\(^3\)

With the unfolding of economic reforms in the 1990s which was accompanied with decline in the federal control over governance and development at the state levels, the constituent states acquired greater autonomy in the framing of economic policy. In the context of the new economic regimes, whereas some states adopted reform policy to change the paradigms of governance and development, some others remained passive receivers of the new transformation. This may be one of the reasons for the varying performance of states in the laggard states.\(^4\) For example, states of coastal and southern India have improved their economic growth and development records during the reform period, whereas states of the Hindi heartland have remained laggard. Moreover, inter-state disparity has also increased among the laggard states.

Bihar (except for the recent phase JD (U)–BJP coalition government) and Madhya Pradesh (MP) are examples in contrasts. While MP has, over the years, improved its growth rate (moderately high) and bettered its demographic features, Bihar has been witness to stagnation, negative growth and overall decline in the quality of human life, especially during the 1990s. While the former has received laurels for democratic decentralisation, strengthening of the Panchayati Raj, decentralised development process, massive literacy drive, drinking water programme and introduction of e-governance, the latter has drawn attention for deteriorating economic and demographic features.

\(^2\) BIMARU stands for Bihar, MP, Rajasthan and UP. Ashish Bose has framed this acronym by clubbing them together on the basis of their similar poor demographic features. However, the term has become popular indicating sick states. For the word ‘BIMARU’ sounds like beemar, that means sick in Hindi language.

\(^3\) The term ‘Hindu Growth Rate’ was used by Raj Krishna for the average national annual growth rate of 3.5 per cent that India obtained for nearly three decades in the post-independence period. See Ahluwalia (2000: 1637–1648) and Kurian (2000: 538–50).

political resistance to reform and change, inability of state to perform basic functions, criminalisation of governance and politics, massive corruption and incessant social tensions. A survey of 19 major states of India over 46 indicators across eight categories indicates that Bihar was the worst state to live in the year 1991 and it remained so in 2001. Bihar stayed at the bottom of the ranking regarding five categories; second from the bottom regarding one; and third from the bottom regarding two categories.\(^5\) With the formation of the JD (U) and BJP coalition government in the state in November 2005, there has been some improvement in the above scenario. Thus, the contrast between Bihar (pre-Nitish and primarily Laloo–Rabri duo phase) and MP continues to provide a rationale for the comparative study of the two states in the post-reform period, and poses the following research question: Why is it that despite sharing common historical experiences, viz., colonial rule, absence of sub-nationalities,\(^6\) social similarity in terms of structural and cultural practices, low level of economic development characterised by underdeveloped agrarian economy, same source of political aspirations guided by the philosophy and objectives of the Indian constitution and same political–bureaucratic structure, the two states have responded quite differently to reforms in governance and development in the post-reform period (liberalisation phase)?

This article attempts to explore the possible answers to the above question while basing the analysis on the following assumptions: First, whatever might have been the influence on growth and development in the pre-reform period, it is presumed here that economic and

---

\(^5\) Debroy and Bhandari (2003: 22–43).

\(^6\) It is argued that the absence of the sense of sub-nationality in both Bihar and MP has such a significant influence on political class, ruling elite, intelligentsia and civil society at large that their concerns for the political and economic development of the states are not galvanised by the sense of sub-nationality, as happens in states like Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bengal, etc. Both Bihar and MP were bifurcated in the year 2000 with serious implications for economic development of both the states. However, bifurcation of these states was neither influenced by any sense of history and sub-nationality, nor was the discourse negotiated through the concerns for development. It was a knee-jerk political reaction, as political considerations were the prime movers. For, the RJD-ruled Bihar preferred the bifurcation of the state, as southern Bihar, now the state of Jharkhand, had become a strong foothold of the BJP and anti-Laloo (RJD) forces. Its separation made the RJD more comfortable in the state of Bihar where it was ruling.
governmental reforms have piloted the growth and development in the post-reform period. Even when there is hardly any general theory that establishes a direct and positive correlation between the growth rate and economic and governmental reforms, the post-reform variations in the performance of states, particularly the case of high achievers, may be safely attributed to economic and governmental reforms. The flow of the foreign and private investments, in particular the FDI, identified as the most critical factors of growth and development in the post-reform period, depends on the level of economic and governmental reforms that promote investment friendly industrial and taxation policies, better infrastructure, least interventionist state, removal of license and permit restrictions, labour reform and cordial state capitalist relations. Other factors are to be treated as constant variables and political factors as changed variables. In other words, it explains political determinants of reforms, as other conditions are given.

The article is divided into five parts. The first part presents a synoptic overview of economic and demographic development of the two states (under the study) during the pre- and post-reform periods. Then, the political economy of the pre-reform period and the transition to the reform regimes has been analysed in the second part. The third part seeks to analyse the reasons for the varying performance of the two states. The fourth part draws upon the parallel story of UP and Rajasthan to strengthen the argument further. The last part concludes the main arguments of the article.

I

Indicators of Demographic and Economic Development in Pre- and Post-reform Periods

Up to 1990, Bihar and MP shared common demographic and economic features, with similar trends in development indicators. Between 1981 and 1991, for example, the decadal population growth rates of Bihar and MP were 23.4 per cent and 27.2 per cent respectively, which was almost equal to the national average of 23.9 per cent in the case of the former, and a bit higher than the national average in the case of the latter. The sex ratio (number of females per 1,000 males) was 907 in Bihar and 912 in MP: this was also lower than the national average of 927, as recorded in the 1991 Census. The overall literacy rate was
37.5 per cent in Bihar and 44.7 per cent in MP; this was lower than the national literacy rate of 52.22 per cent. Even the male–female break-up of literacy rate of both the states was lower than the national average. Infant mortality rate, another important demographic indicator, was higher than the national average in both the states.

In terms of economic development, both the states shared similar trends in growth rate, poverty, unemployment and fiscal indicators up to 1990. Between 1980–81 and 1990–91, MP and Bihar achieved average annual growth in Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) at the rate of 4.56 per cent and 4.66 per cent respectively, which was lower than the all-India average (14 major states) of 5.24 per cent. During the same period, the growth rate in per capita State Domestic Product (SDP) was 2.08 per cent in MP and 2.45 per cent in Bihar, whereas the national average of 14 major states was 3.03 per cent. In 1983–84, the all-India figures of people living below the poverty line were 44.48 per cent, which was 49.72 per cent in the case of MP and 52.22 per cent in the case of Bihar. The two states were primarily agrarian economies facing problems of low productivity, surplus labour, massive unemployment and migration of labour from the rural to urban areas in search of livelihood and employment.

However, the story started changing during the post-reform period. Major demographic features of MP registered marginal to substantial improvement during this phase. Its decadal population growth rate declined from 27.2 per cent during 1981–91 to 24.3 per cent during 1991–2001. The sex ratio improved from 912 females per 1,000 males in 1991 to 920 females per 1,000 males in 2001 (still below the national average). In terms of literacy rate, however, MP registered tremendous progress during this period. Its literacy rate jumped from 44.7 per cent in 1991 to 64.1 per cent in 2001. The trend was equally visible in male and female literacy rates that increased from 58.5 per cent and 29.4 per cent in 1991 to 76.8 per cent and 50.3 per cent respectively in 2001. This was higher than the national average and quite a bit better than the figure of some of the BIMARU states.

In comparison, the decadal population growth rate of Bihar increased by almost 5 per cent, from 23.4 per cent in 1981–91 to 28.4 per cent in 1991–2001. With respect to sex ratio, literacy rate and

---

7 Ahluwalia (2000).
8 Ibid.
9 ‘Census of India 2001’, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India.
infant mortality rate, there was only marginal improvement. Hence, it remained at the bottom of the BIMARU states in terms of major demographic indicators.

Even in terms of economic indicators (performance), MP performed better than Bihar in the early phase of the reform. Between 1980–81 and 1990–91, the GSDP of MP grew at the rate of 4.56 per cent on an average per annum that increased to 6.17 per cent in the post-reform period between 1991–92 and 1997–98 (which was higher than the national average of 5.94 per cent for the same period). The average annual rate of growth in the GSDP of Bihar declined from 4.66 per cent between 1980–81 and 1990–91 (marginally higher than that of MP’s 4.56 per cent) to merely 2.69 per cent on an average per annum for the period 1991–92 to 1997–98, which was not only half of the national figure of 5.94 per cent but almost one-third of MP’s 6.17 per cent for the same period. The per capita growth in GSDP was 2.08 per cent in MP and 2.45 per cent in Bihar between 1980–81 and 1990–91 that increased to 3.87 per cent in the former but declined to 1.12 per cent in the latter between 1991–92 and 1997–98. In 1983–84, the number of people living below the poverty line was 49.78 per cent in MP, which declined to 42.52 per cent in 1993–94 and further to 38.9 per cent in 2004–2005. However, in the case of Bihar, the number of poor people increased from 52.22 per cent in 1983–84 to 54.96 per cent in 1993–94 that was 20 per cent higher than the national figure of 35.97 per cent and 12 per cent higher than that of MP.10 Though the number of poor persons (below poverty line) declined from 55.22 per cent in 1993–94 to 42 per cent in 2004–2005, it was still higher than the figures of MP and all India. Contrary to the trend in increase between 1983–84 and 1993–94, the percentage of poor people declined between 1993–94 and 2004–2005. On the other hand, the distributional effects of growth rate in MP were not widespread as revealed by only marginal decline in poverty ratio. Despite robust growth rate; the state remained lethargic in fiscal resource mobilisation and maintaining fiscal discipline; and the level of infrastructural development remained poor. Nonetheless, it responded positively to the major issues of reforms in governance and development.

---

10 Ahluwalia (2000).
II

Political Economy of Reforms

In the pre-reform period, the model of ‘state-centric-centrally-commanded-planned economy’ was the dominant model at both the centre and the state levels. The states were further tied to the above model institutionally and politically. This allowed little flexibility for the states either in terms of development policy or in terms of the way of governance. The Planning Commission of India, under the final authority of the National Development Council, was the nodal agency that decided major development policies and fixed the goals of socio-economic development. It was instrumental in deciding the nature and course of investments, which were mostly in state sectors, and was guided by the principle of balanced regional development of the country. Moreover, the industrial and fiscal policies of the federal government earmarked the space for the private sector and the operational arena of states. As a whole, this model allowed little space for the state actors to influence the course of development in their respective states. Besides that, federal uniformity in policy of governance and development at the state levels was politically ensured through the simultaneous rule of the Congress Party at the centre and state levels, largely until the late 1960s, and continued to be so in some states even later on. However, with the formation of the non-Congress governments in some states after the third general elections (1967), the elements of politically induced federal uniformity in the policy through the rule of the same party had disappeared. Yet, most of the states remained tied to the federal model of centrally controlled commanded economy, as institutional arrangements remained the same.

However, in the 1990s, the situation changed dramatically. First, the Nehruvian model of state-centric planned development strategy lost ideological and practical appeal after the onslaught of the International Monetary Fund–World Bank led structural adjustment programme, which propelled India on the road of a free-market liberal economy, with the motto of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. Second, decline in the dominance of the Congress at the centre and in states, formation of coalition governments (United Front led by the Janata Dal, National Democratic Alliance led by the BJP and United Progressive Alliance led by the Congress) at the centre, emergence of regional parties at the states and their strong
representation at the centre resulted in greater federalisation of the Indian polity.\textsuperscript{11}

The above transformations have two implications for development and governance at the state levels. First, state governments obtained considerable autonomy in terms of the economic and development policy, as institutional and policy rearrangement necessitated by economic reforms created greater space for the state actors. For the first time after independence, chief ministers of Indian states were seen hopping to western capitals to persuade foreign capital to invest in their respective states. They also came out with attractive industrial and investment policies to get domestic and foreign investments in their respective states. Some states even indulged in tax war with the neighbours to attract large investments. Second, with the decline in the dominance of the Congress and formation of governments at state levels by regional parties, state actors were able to build political pressure for greater autonomy in economic and development policy.\textsuperscript{12} Moreover, with coalition governments at the centre depending on regional parties for their survival,\textsuperscript{13} states vied for more space in a federal arrangement for economic and industrial development. Their demands duly coincided with the agenda of economic and governmental reforms unleashed by the federal government in the early 1990s.

Thus, simultaneous unfolding of the forces of economic reforms and political federalisation enlarged the scope for the state actors to influence the course of governance and development at the state levels. However, different states articulated different policy responses. Some of them (AP, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Orissa, Karnataka) responded quite enthusiastically to the new transformation; some of

\textsuperscript{11} M. P. Singh has argued that India has became politically more federal due to the changed political scenario, particularly coalition politics and coalition governments. See Singh (2001, 2003: 187–204).

\textsuperscript{12} CPI-M ruled West Bengal and Dravidian parties-ruled Tamil Nadu were the first to articulate demand for greater fiscal and other autonomy to states in the Indian federal system. With the proliferation of regional parties in the 1980s, other states also voiced their concerns for more fiscal and other kinds of autonomy. Even political commentators have favoured this idea for reconciling regional insurgency (north-east), militant sub-nationalism (Punjab) and secessionist movements (Jammu & Kashmir).

\textsuperscript{13} The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA 1998–99 to 2004) government at the centre was dependent on the crucial support of regional parties like the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) of Chandra Babu Naidu, Akali Dal of
them demonstrated political and ideological hostility to the reforms (like Bihar and the left-ruled states of West Bengal and Kerala, though ironically West Bengal remained a leading recipient of private domestic and foreign investment in this phase); and still some others (like UP) preferred to receive it passively. Since the new transformation created wider space for state actors to influence the course of socio-economic development and since states responded quite differently to the new opportunity, the inter-state variations became more widened in this phase, as some states performed better than some others did. Thus, in the post-reform period, we have high performer- (reformer) states like Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, moderate achievers (performers) like Orissa and MP, and the worst performer like Bihar. Even among the states of the Hindi heartland, the gap has increased in this phase, as MP and Rajasthan have done better than UP and Bihar. Rajasthan initiated a few reforms during the tenure of Ashok Gehlot, but its pace was not as fast as it was in MP.

III

Explaining Politics of Reforms

The varying performances of states in the post-reform period and their different responses to the issues of governance and development have been explained through a plurality of factors and perspectives.¹⁴

Prakash Singh Badal, Indian National Lok Dal of Om Prakash Chautala, Trinamool Congress of Mamata Banerjee and first, the All India Dravida Munnetra Kadgam (AIDMK) of Jayalalitha and then, the Dravida Munnetra Kadgam (DMK) of M. Karunanidhi. Though these parties failed to raise the issue of federal devolution of power as a common cause, they were successful in extracting their particular demands from the NDA government. For example, in 2001–2002, the agrarian surplus-producing states of Punjab (headed by Parkash Singh Badal of the Akali Dal), Haryana (headed by Om Parkash Chautala of the Indian National Lok Dal) and Andhra Pradesh (headed by Chandra Babu Naidu of the TDP), coalition partners of the NDA government coerced the NDA government at the centre to enhance minimum support price of paddy and other kharif crops and compelled the Food Corporation of India (FCI), the federal food procurement agency, to buy paddy and other crops at enhanced prices to the extent of creating problems of storage and wastage apart from budgetary enhancement of food subsidy. Similarly, issues like enhancement of railways fares and creation of railways zones were subject to the pressure of coalition partners.

¹⁴ For some of the perspectives on economic reforms in India see the Introduction and the first two chapters of Jenkins (2004).
Economists have in general focused on the institutional capacity of states, level of foreign and domestic investment particularly the foreign direct investment (FDI), infrastructural facilities, and industrial and investment policy of states in this phase. Political analysts have searched the roots in party politics, nature of regime and electoral base of the ruling party.

While asserting the centrality of political factors, it is argued here that the RJD government in Bihar that ruled the state from 1990 to 2004, the most part of the reform phase, remained indifferent and even hostile to reforms, as it was committed to a populist, pro-poor, state-centric and left-oriented political agenda. Moreover, the regional character of the ruling party, political agenda of governance, OBCs-based political electorate constituency of the ruling party, absence of the popular pressure and weak and divided opposition were other factors. However, with the change of guard in November 2005, the formation of the JD (U) and BJP coalition government led by Nitish Kumar, there has been a change in the situation. Yet, it is not a pro-reform (economic) government, as the JD (U) shares ideological and political affinity with the RJD. The BJP, a coalition partner, is definitely more pro-reform, but is unable to push the reform agenda beyond a point. On the other hand, the Congress that initiated economic and governmental reforms in India at the federal level, pushed the agenda of economic and governmental reforms in MP. The Congress government in MP had to work under the leadership and policy guidelines

---

15 Loraine Kennedy, in a comparative study of AP and Tamil Nadu, argues that the TDP in AP has openly embraced economic and governmental reforms because of its upper and middle castes/classes-based political constituency, whereas the lower castes-based political constituency of the DMK and AIDMK is a constraint for these parties to openly embrace reforms despite deeper reform commitment. Similarly, Aseema Singh, in a comparative study of West Bengal and Gujarat, finds that reforms committed bureaucracy of Gujarat and industrial expansion to the rural areas in the state have been factors to the greater economic reforms in Gujarat than in West Bengal. See Part I of Rob Jenkins (ed.), Regional Reflections, 2004, pp. 29–108.

16 See Kennedy (2004).

17 John Harriss, in his paper ‘Comparing Political Regimes Across Indian States’ (1999), has differentiated political regimes in Indian states on the basis of the balance of caste/class power and the nature of party organisation and argued that policy preferences of the states particularly poverty alleviation projects have been subject to the influence of the nature of the regime.
of the central authority of the party, reply to the popular pressure well articulated by a strong opposition and was desperately trying to regain its Dalit and OBCs vote bank by attractive packages (decentralisation). The BJP that succeeded the Congress government in 2004 continued with the reform policy. While political factors were the movers of reforms in Bihar and MP, a number of other factors facilitated or constrained the pace of reforms in these two states.

IV

Explaining Political Factors of Reforms

Since the commencement of the reform period, the Janata Dal, a conglomeration of the erstwhile socialist leaders (1990–98), and its splits — the RJD (1998–2005) and the JD (U) (the JD [U] led the JD [U]–BJP coalition since 2005) governments have ruled Bihar. Political and ideological positions of the Janata Dal (1990–98) and its various splits favoured state-controlled economy, public sector undertakings, small-scale industries and positive intervention of the state for socio-economic development. In terms of fiscal and budgetary policies, they remained committed to the development of social sectors on priority basis, continuing of subsidies, investment in the public sector, limited space for the private actor and a people-friendly tax regime. More importantly, since they have implemented the Mandal Commission report (a commission established to suggest measures for the socio-economic development of OBCs, specifically job reservation for the OBCs their main political plank), political exigency demanded continuity of the state-centric development model for the efficacy of the job reservation policy. The RJD and JD (U) inherited these policies as political and ideological legacies. Thus, the ideological and political positions of the ruling parties in the state stood against economic and governmental reforms that demanded dismantling of the state controlled economy and public sector undertakings, phasing out of all kinds of subsidies, taxation and investment policy based on the principle of laissez faire, minimalistic state and thinning out of the government machinery.

On the other hand, since the beginning of the reform phase, the reform-friendly governments of the Congress (1993–2003) and the BJP (2003–the present) have ruled in MP. The Congress initiated economic and governmental reforms at the federal level first by making
dramatic changes in its own principles and ideologies in the early 1990s and then its provincial satraps followed the reform policies. When the Congress formed a minority government at the centre in 1991 after remaining out of power for nearly two years — 1989–91 — only the second time at the centre, the first time in 1977–79, it faced two serious political challenges by the Mandal politics of the Janata Dal and the right-wing Hindutva agitation of the BJP. In the states of north India, it had already lost a major chunk of Dalit and OBC votes to the Janata Dal, and the upper castes votes to the BJP. It failed to obtain majority in the 10th Lok Sabha in spite of the sympathy generated in its favour by the assassination of its prime ministerial candidate, Rajiv Gandhi. The Congress was desperately trying to arrest its deescalating political graph through changes in ideological and political positions. Though the impetus for reforms came from the IMF–World Bank-led structural adjustment programme (imposed as a part of conditionality for borrowing from these institutions that was necessitated to tide over the foreign exchange crisis), it was desired for domestic political purposes as well. The Congress hoped to neutralise Mandal and Hindutva effects through economic and governmental reforms by creating political space for dialogue on economic issues that had lost democratic appeal after the onslaught of Mandal and Mandir (Ramjanam Bhoomi–Babri Masjid) politics. Varshney (1999) puts it differently and argues that economic and governmental reforms were introduced without much political resistance, as Indian politics in the 1990s was preoccupied with identity politics triggered by the Mandal and Mandir–Masjid issues. In the light of the changed positions, the Congress launched economic and governmental reforms at the federal level and its provincial satraps followed suit. The Congress-ruled government in MP was ideologically and politically inclined towards economic and governmental reforms. The Congress lost power to the BJP in 2003 and since then the BJP has been in power in the state. It has been found that the BJP and the Congress are ideologically convergent towards reforms.\textsuperscript{18} Sarangi (2005) and

\textsuperscript{18} A close examination of the principles and policies of the Congress and the BJP and their respective governments indicates ideological convergence towards economic reforms. Rather, the BJP pleads for bolder reforms than the Congress. The best illustration of the matter is the fact that the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre created a separate ministry headed by a cabinet minister for disinvestment of the public sector undertakings.
Panagariya (2004) argue, quoting election manifestoes of the BJP and the Congress, that both the parties and their respective national alliances (NDA and UPA) are committed to economic reforms. The most illustrating example of the reform commitment of the BJP government in MP is the decision\cite{19} to dismantle the loss-making State Transport Corporation and its restructuring into multiple small viable units that the Congress could not do in its tenures.

Second, an important influence on the differential reform commitment of Bihar and MP has been the regional and national character of the ruling parties. The Congress and BJP-ruled governments have alternatively propelled the engine of reforms in MP, as they have been made to work for economic and governmental reforms under the policy guidelines and authority of the central leadership of their respective parties.\cite{20} On the other hand, Bihar, being ruled by a regional political party with anti-liberalisation ideology, is not inclined towards reforms. Even during the tenure of the Janata Dal, it was the regional and parochial outlook of the then Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav that reigned supreme in government policy. The national leaders of the Janata Dal were helplessly dependent on Laloo Prasad Yadav for political and electoral mobilisation, resulting in complete control of the former over the affairs of the party and the government in the state. Therefore, the advantage of being ruled by the outlook of a national party was not available in Bihar even during the Janata Dal government. The JD (U) and BJP coalition government that came to power in the state in 2004 has improved the performance of the government with respect to law and order, infrastructural development, social sector development, service delivery and even resource mobilisation. However, it has not been able to attract private

\cite{19} Babulal Gaur, the then incumbent Chief Minister of MP, declared the dismantling of the Madhya Pradesh State Transport Corporation and restructure it in small operational units. See \textit{The Times of India}, New Delhi, 3 January 2005.

\cite{20} Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, used to write frequently to the state chief ministers on various issues and policies making them aware of the priority of the Federal government and the Congress party. This tradition declined after Nehru. But the Congress maintained the practice of writing to the Congress chief ministers in the states. Even the BJP seemed to learn this practice. A report with a photograph of MP Chief Minister Babulal Gaur and Vijay Kapoor, former Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, who, as a member of four-member committee appointed by the party president Lal Krishna Advani to review the working of the BJP governments in states, was shown taking a review of the performance of the BJP government in MP. See \textit{The Hindu}, New Delhi, 18 January 2005.
investment, increase the level of industrialisation and attract service industries. The BJP, the junior coalition partner in the state, is more inclined towards economic reforms, but is unable to push its agenda. The Nitish Kumar-led government in the state is more inclined towards reforms in governance than economic reforms, as it has political and ideological hesitation in following economic reform policy. At the same time, it has had to improve the records of governance and service delivery to strengthen its political–electoral constituency. Unlike the RJD that had nurtured a dependable and sizable Muslim-Yadav vote bank, the JD (U)’s support base consists of a plurality of castes and communities and is hooked on the performance of the government. The 2009 parliamentary elections, that gave a massive victory to the JD (U) and its coalition partner, the BJP, demonstrate that its political fortunes can swing with the performance of the government in the state.

Based on the two case studies (Bihar and MP), it can be argued that the ideological and political positions of the parties and their commitment towards economic and governmental reforms work as an important influence on their respective governments. A close examination of the reform commitment of different state governments indicates that Congress-ruled states have generally responded positively to reform policies. For example, MP under Digvijay Singh, Karnataka under S. M. Krishna, Delhi under Sheila Dixit, Rajasthan under Ashok Gehlot have demonstrated greater responses to reform and performed better during the period. However, a similar case of generalisation is difficult in the case of regional parties. Of course, there are certain regional parties like the TDP led by Chandra Babu Naidu that, despite being ideologically positioned left of centre, have made radical reforms in governance and development. Similarly, the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M is a national party)-ruled West Bengal did not allow its ideology to stand in the way of attracting private investment.

Third, the political–electorate base of the RJD,²¹ consisting mainly of OBCs but also of Muslims, Dalits and the poor, makes economic

²¹ Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi has been conducting national election surveys that provide a wide range of data on socio-economic issues of political and electoral significance. They also explain the social base of various political parties. See ‘National Election Study 2004’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39 (51), 2004 for the 2004 parliamentary elections and *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*, 15 (1 & 2), 2004 for comprehensive data on elections in states.
and governmental reforms politically unrewarding. For the major segments of the RJD vote banks are economically and socially backwards who are dependent on the state for health and education, their socio-economic development and public and government sectors for protection of job reservation policy. Since the RJD has built its political career largely on the issue of job reservation for the OBCs, economic and governmental reforms leading to the dismantling of the state sector, redefining of a welfare state apparatus and thinning of the government machinery would have negated the effects of job reservation policy. But, more importantly, since social and economic justice through job reservation has been fundamental to the political and ideological mobilisation strategy of the RJD, the negation of the same would have been tantamount to political hara-kiri by the RJD and its supremo, Laloo Prasad Yadav. Thus, the apparent hostility of the RJD and its chief to economic and governmental reforms is much more politically understandable than otherwise. The Nitish Kumar-led government in Bihar has similar ideological and political reservation towards reforms, though its partner, the BJP, may have an urge to introduce liberal economic reforms in the state.

On the other hand, the electorate base of the Congress in MP largely consists of upper castes, urban middle classes, Dalits and tribals.\(^{22}\) Since the upper castes and urban middle classes found new opportunity in economic reforms and were not adversely affected much in terms of job opportunity in the government sector, as 50 per cent of the seats fell in the reserved category, their hope and prospect lay in the new economic regime. Apart from that, the Congress in MP was desperately trying to regain its Dalit and tribal vote banks by attractive packages.\(^ {23}\) Therefore, almost all major development programmes (Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission, Universal Literacy Programme under Padho Aur Badho Scheme, democratic decentralisation through Panchayati Raj, etc.) of the Digvijay Singh-ruled Congress government in MP paid special attention to Dalits and tribals. Since the upper castes and middle classes found economic and governmental reforms potentially beneficial and the Congress government in MP promised better prospects for Dalits and tribals through new packages under the

\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) Christophe Jaffrelot has argued that in response to the Backward Classes upsurge, the MP Congress has revived its old strategy of the coalition of extremes consisting of upper castes and Dalits and tribals. See Jaffrelot (2003: 427–35).
reforms regime, it was able to reconcile economic and governmental reforms with its electorate base. The BJP that succeeded the Congress government in the state continued with the reform policy, as it had a similar social and political constituency. However, it learnt a lesson from the loss of the Congress that was indifferent to delivery of basic services and lost on the issue of bijli, sadak aur pani (electricity, roads and water) in the 2003 Assembly election.

Interestingly, political commentators (Kumar 2004; Suri 2005) are unable to locate economic reforms in electoral politics. Election surveys clearly indicate the apparent lack of discernible relationship between economic reforms and electoral verdicts. Suri comments in the context of the electoral support base of the TDP: ‘There is little evidence to suggest that sections of the population that were thought to be negatively affected (women, poor farmers, other marginalised groups) have massively turned away from the TDP or that sections of the population that supposedly benefit from the reforms (urban middle/upper class people) have become overwhelmingly TDP supporters’ (2005: 161).

Nonetheless, political economists have argued that economic and governmental reforms in India are elite-driven and are sustained by the support of the dominant interest groups. Varshney (1999) examines the content and scope of economic reforms in India and argues that reforms that touch and affect elite politics have gone much forward. But reforms that affect the masses negatively have not moved. This, in a sense, indicates that social and electoral support base matters to the sustainability of economic reforms. Corbridge and Harriss (2000) take the position that economic reforms in India are a concern of urban, industrial and even agricultural and political elite, as they are the main beneficiaries of reform policies. But at the same time, it has not been opposed massively as it has not run counter to the interests of the masses. Kochanek (1996) and Pederson (2000) find a close nexus between economic reforms and organised industrial and business classes. They argue that industrialist and business groups in India both through their institutional organisation like the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and in their individual capacity have developed close relations with the policy makers. They have not only lobbied strongly for economic and governmental reforms but have been instrumental in generating policy debates in favour of reforms. Bardhan (1998) takes the position that the Indian state still works largely for the three dominant propertied classes even though its composition and alliances have changed slightly.
Fourth, the divided and weak opposition in Bihar, their unstable social support base, their vulnerability to defection and co-optation by the RJD, their inability to mobilise the masses on the issues of governance and development and their failures to elevate these issues to the main political plank during democratic elections had removed the pressure of parliamentary democracy from the RJD government to reform and perform. Moreover, the important opposition segments represented by the then Samata Party and other splintered groups of the Janata Dal like the JD (U) (the Samata Party is now merged with the JD [U]) shared ideological fraternity with the RJD due to common parentage and similar social base. The Samata Party was also a splintered group of the Janata Dal, and its socio-political constituency consists of OBCs, mainly Koeries and Kurmis. Moreover, none of the Assembly elections in Bihar since 1990 (ascendancy of Mandal politics), including the last one held in February and November 2005 (the November re-elections were necessitated because of a hung Assembly and inability of political parties to form government after February elections), were contested largely on development issues. The November 2005 elections ended the rule of the RJD and the JD (U) and BJP formed a coalition government in the state. The erstwhile ruling RJD was able to keep alive the issue of social justice as its main political–electoral plank and contested elections on that very issue. Opposition parties attacked the RJD’s regime mainly on charges of crime and corruption. Though they highlighted the non-development of states during the RJD regime, issues of economic development and performance of government remained peripheral to the electoral politics of the state. Moreover, forging caste-based political alliances has become instrumental to electoral victories in Bihar. For example, the BJP–Samata–JD (U) alliance achieved a massive electoral victory in the 1999 parliamentary elections and led to the defeat of the RJD and its allies. However, in the 2004 parliamentary elections, the alliance of the RJD–Congress and Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) emerged victorious. Even the results of the February 2005 Assembly elections appear to be much more influenced by the factors of caste and political alliances than by other factors. For example, the electoral loss to the RJD in the 2005 Assembly elections has been attributed to the breaking of its alliances with the Congress and the LJP that had swept the 2004

24 See Pankaj (2009).
Lok Sabha elections. The November 2005 Assembly election was not very different. The RJD supreme accepted it publicly after the massive loss in 2009 parliamentary elections that its inability to forge an alliance with the Congress was a major factor and its alliance with the LJP did not work. The point is that the alliance-centric electoral politics in Bihar, which has become a dominant feature in recent years, also eroded the prominence of issues-based electoral politics.

Moreover, in a democratic party set-up, the leadership is accountable to internal peer pressure. The RJD remained free from such pressure as well, as the Laloo dynasty had absolute control over the party and government. More importantly, its supreme, Laloo Prasad Yadav, was able to pull off a victory in the parliamentary and Assembly elections by his own political charisma. He was brilliantly successful in maintaining intact his Muslim–Yadav (M–Y) combination of vote bank that constituted approximately 33.5 per cent of the popular votes and was exceptionally canny in forming political alliances. The party forged alliances with the Communist Party of India (CPI), CPI-M, Marxist Coordination Committee (MCC) and Congress in the 1998, 1999 parliamentary and 2000 Assembly elections, and, further, broadened it in the 2004 parliamentary elections by roping in LJP of Ram Vilas Paswan (the Congress and the LJP walked out of their alliance in the 2005 Assembly elections), leading to victory in 19 out of 23 seats contested by the RJD. The RJD–Congress–LJP alliance together won 26 out of the 36 seats contested. But more importantly, since the RJD supreme Laloo Prasad Yadav was able to sustain his party’s vote share constantly at 31.88 per cent of the popular votes in the 1998 parliamentary elections, 33.92 per cent in 1999 and 32.70 per cent in the 2000 State Assembly elections (though it was eroded substantially in the 2005 Assembly elections), he enjoyed absolute supremacy over the affairs of the party and government, and also established political superiority over his opponents and opposition.

The Nitish Kumar led JD (U)–BJP coalition government can ill afford to ignore the issue of governance and development. First, its social–political base consists of a plurality of castes and communities and is, hence, inherently instable. Second, this coalition has come into existence partly disenchanted with the poor performance of the RJD

government over 15 years of uninterrupted rule and partly in search of its own political space (Koiris, Kurmis and other lower OBCs as the main social base of the erstwhile Samata Party and now JD [U]). Third, because of the above factors, only through the performance of its government can the JD (U)–BJP coalition can hope to win the elections. The performance of the JD (U)–BJP coalition in the 2009 parliamentary elections testifies to this.  

On the other hand, governments in MP have to respond to the popular pressure well articulated by a strong opposition party. With the fizzling out of the socialist and other groups, it appears that party politics in MP has polarised on the line of the two-party system, as the Congress and the BJP have alternatively formed the governments in the state since 1990. The BJP came to power in the 1990 Assembly elections, but it lost successively to the Congress in 1993 and 1998. However, in 2003, it once again came to power by defeating the Congress. Apart from that, voters in MP have given a clear mandate either to the Congress or to the BJP in the successive elections held in the 1990s. This apparent two-party system in MP has the advantage in the sense that the strong opposition is able to raise the performance of government and the issues of development to the mainstream of politics. For example, the issues of government performance and economic development came up prominently during the recent Assembly elections. In 1998, the Congress, under the leadership of Digvijay Singh, sought a mandate on economic and governmental reforms, and was re-elected to power. However, in the 2003 Assembly elections, the BJP made a big issue of the shortage of power, drinking water, poor road and infrastructural development. The BJP repeated its victory in 2008 on its performance. The Congress lost badly to the BJP, as it had not given proper attention to these issues over the last 10 years despite its reformist zeal. We could thus argue that political parties in MP have been able to elevate the issues of governance and development to the arena of electoral politics that gives political significance to the reform policy.

Apart from that, the successive Congress and BJP governments in MP have had to respond to the internal pressure within the party mounted by the aspirant chief ministers and their combatant factions. Sometimes they are more critical of the performance of the government.
than even the opposition. As a whole, the elements of opposition and internal peer pressure have also moved the governments in MP to perform and deliver, but not so in Bihar throughout the long rule of the Laloo–Rabri duo.

Fifth, the two parallel socio-political movements, triggered by Mandal and Mandir politics, doubly challenged the Congress party in MP. The BJP was trying to consolidate its position among the upper castes, urban and middle classes. The BSP and the Janata Dal were mobilising Dalits and OBCs who were basking in the new political awakening generated by Mandal politics. The Congress had already reduced to a minor political force in UP and Bihar, the two most populous states of the Hindi heartland. However, it was still formidable political force in Rajasthan and MP, the other two states of the Hindi heartland. The Congress was desperate to retain its political base in these two states.

The Congress in MP responded to this new challenge through economic and governmental reforms packaged in a manner to revive the ‘coalition of extremes’. The upper castes and urban middle classes were frustrated with the reservation in government jobs and disenchanted with the reservation policy that denied merit based on individuality. Market economy was a consolation for the upper castes and urban/middle classes who found new opportunity in economic reforms. On the other hand, these reforms in MP were mixed with special policies and programmes for Dalits and tribals. The Digvijay Singh government also launched a special drive for mass literacy programme called Padho Aur Badho; recruited a large number of para-teachers called guruji for the purpose; initiated the Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission; and launched specific programmes for the

---

27 Political scientists (Kochanek 1968, Kothari 1970) have written about a system of internal opposition working in the Congress party. But this system seems to operate in other national parties sans cadre, like the Janata Dal. But even in the cadre-based BJP this has become an obvious feature amidst the widening open base of the party and declining ratio of cadres. A report in The Times of India appeared on 19 January 2005 that writes that former Chief Minister of MP, Uma Bharti, appeared in an official meeting of the government chaired by the incumbent Chief Minister Babulal Gaur. She reportedly took stock of the performance of the government and criticised the Babulal government for not taking proper care of the ‘Panch-J’ project launched by her and that targeted development of the state through five ‘Js’ namely, jan (people), jal (water), jungal (forest), janwar (animals) and jamin (land).
upliftment of Dalits, women and weaker sections of the society, leading to an overall improvement in the Human Development Index (HDI) of the state. But more importantly, for successful working of these programmes and meaningful participation of the society in development process, Panchayati Raj institutions were strengthened and involved in the grassroots development; government offices were computerised on a large scale; rules and regulations were made people friendly; e-governance was experimented with; land records were computerised; and licensing policies were simplified. Drastic structural changes in the set-up of district administration was implemented that engaged officials, representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and Members of Parliament (MPs) in a participatory administration. Digvijay Singh came up with the concept and practice of district administration headed by a minister in charge of the district.

Bihar, during this phase, remained obsessively engrossed in pursuit of political agenda dominated by the concern for political and social empowerment of Dalits and backward classes. Its populist obsession with the social and political empowerment of Dalits and backward classes pushed the issue of governance and development of the state on the margin. More significantly, the then ruling RJD believed that since the benefits of governance and development were cornered by traditional elite/groups (upper castes) in the existing dispensation, there was no point in bringing about economic development without effecting drastic transformation in the nature of socio-political structure. Therefore, the issues of governance and development were a posteriori to political and social transformation. At least the RJD and its supremo believed so.

Sixth, generating political and social consensus through democratic process is not an easy task, given the fragmented nature of society and politics of Bihar. There is so much of fragmentation and social cleavages that even the OBCs and Dalits, generally considered as a homogeneous social and political community, are not as such. For example, the OBCs are politically divided between the RJD and the JD (U). Similarly, the political allegiance of the Dalits are split between

---

28 Christophe Jaffrelot (2003: 435–52) has elaborated on the strategy of the Digvijay Singh-led Congress government in the state of MP towards mobilisation of Dalits and tribals through special programmes and projects.
the LJP of Ram Vilas Paswan, RJD of Laloo Prasad Yadav and the ultra-leftist groups like the Communist Party of India-Marxist Leninist (CPI-ML), Marxist Coordination Committee (MCC) now CPI-MO (Communist Party of India Maoist) and conservative left like the Communist Party of India (CPI). Moreover, the multiplicity of political actors — a mosaic of national and regional parties, Congress, BJP, RJD, JD (U), CPI, CPI-M, CPI-ML jostling each other for political space in the state — make the politics of state inherently unstable. At the same time, it creates hurdles in reaching consensus through democratic process. And therefore, since the late 1960s’ decline in the dominance of the Congress, politics of the state has remained unstable even though the Congress, Janata Dal and RJD have ruled through majority governments in the 1980s and 1990s.

MP has remained politically and socially least fragmented. Unlike Bihar, the OBC movement has remained very weak in MP for a variety of reasons. First, there is no single caste among OBCs in MP that is numerically dominant and has all-state presence. Second, upper-caste leaders have generally led the socialist and backward class movement in MP. This did not allow generation of leadership among the OBCs and Dalits in the state. Moreover, there has been absence of a leader caste among OBCs and Dalits in the state. Third, the Congress party has been successful in the politics of co-option of Dalit and OBC leaders and the traditional pattern of political mobilisation has not broken much. The Congress is still able to work with the ‘coalition of extremes’.

Seventh, party politics in MP has polarised in terms of the two-party system. Political power in the state over the reform period has alternated between the Congress and the BJP. They have formed governments without depending on the coalitional support of other parties. Political verdict in the state has been divided between the Congress and the BJP. There are other parties like the SP and BSP, yet they do not enjoy significant political clout in the state. Moreover, they have only local influence in some regions of the state, say Bundelkhand. Also political contest in the state is largely bipolar, i.e., between the Congress and the BJP. Since both are inclined to economic and governmental reforms, chances of reforms are better in MP.

Bihar remains a political battlefield for almost all the national parties and a number of regional parties. Party politics in the state has neither taken the shape of two-party systems nor has coalition politics been institutionalised. The coalitions that have been experimented in some recent elections are politically unstable and ideologically incongruent.
Though the JD (U)–BJP coalition government in the state has worked without much friction, yet their ideological positions make them unnatural partners. It is more of a pragmatic political necessity that they are working together.

Arguably, the prevalence of the two-party system in MP and its absence in Bihar has implications for economic and governmental reforms in the two states. Politics in Bihar has been unable to generate pressure for development and governance. Pai (2005) seems to argue, based on her study of UP, that competitive populism and fragmented politics in the state did not allow the reform wheel to move on. Politics in Bihar in this phase featured both populism and fragmentation. Though the 2005 November elections ushered a different phase, yet it is unlikely that the Nitish Kumar-led JD (U)–BJP coalition government in the state would make a decisive break with the past to move on the roads of economic reforms. The chances of this government to pursue reforms in governance are greater than its chances of pursuing economic reforms.

It is difficult to generalise that the state with the two-party system is more prone to economic and governmental reforms than the state with the multi-party system. Nonetheless, it is easy for the state with the two-party system to generate social and political consensus over economic and governmental reforms. Moreover, because of the intensity of political competition, the two-party system is able to generate greater political pressure for better governance and development than the multi-party system.

A number of other factors have also affected the pace of reforms in the two states of Bihar and MP; some have facilitated it while some others have constrained it. For example, the excess of politics in Bihar has triggered a paradoxical situation, leading to tremendous mismatch between demand and delivery. The populist plebiscitary politics triggered by Mandal politics and let loose by the RJD had raised the expectations of numerically large sections of the society on a high level. But politicisation of the issues and process of governance and the lack of fine-tuning of administration in the changed scenario had not only enhanced the gap between demand and delivery, but in the process also strained the existing institutions of state leading to erosion in its capacity to perform.\(^\text{29}\)

\(^{29}\) Atul Kohli has developed this argument prominently in his *Democracy and Discontent: Growing Crisis of Governability* (1990).
structure was encouraged to manoeuvre demands and agitations of the employees. The state administration was in constant seizure by the frequent agitations of the state employees. The administrative machinery had become so rotten that the Supreme Court intervened to ensure the payment of the salary of the public sector employees of the states. The state government was unable to spend development grants received from the central government under various plans. For example, Kanshiram Rana, Union Minister for Rural Development in the NDA government, revealed that in 2000–2001 the Federal Ministry of Rural Development released rupees 150 crore to Bihar under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (rural road scheme), of which only 50 per cent was spent. Out of 250 work orders placed for road construction in 2000–2001, only 70 were completed. Similarly, ₹ 250 crore was released for the same scheme in the fiscal year 2002–2003 and not a single rupee was spent by December 2003. The construction of the rural road under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana launched by the Vajpayee government had to be entrusted to the external agencies (National Hydro Power Corporation), normally performed by the local administration or PRIs. Even basic functions of the administration were ensured through the judicial intervention. The power situation was grim, as plant load factor of thermal stations in the state was merely 15 per cent as against the national average of 64 per cent. The infrastructure development was ignored and law and order was a big problem. While reflecting on the collapse of infrastructural and institutional capacity of the state, one columnist in a leading newspaper had drawn up Bihar and Haiti in a comparative pair. The point is that the structural conditions in Bihar had declined to a stage where reforms could not be experimented successfully. Since economic reforms are generally negotiated through reforms in governance, the former cannot succeed without the latter. Moreover, a check on crime and corruption and better law and order and good infrastructure are other requisites that facilitate reform process. While Bihar, during the long tenure of the RJD, faced these problems, MP remained largely free from such problems.

30 The Hindu, New Delhi, 19 December 2003.
31 Aiyar (2004).
Parallel of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan

A parallel story of UP and Rajasthan can be drawn to strengthen the argument. These are the other two important states of Hindi heartland that shared similar demographic and economic characteristics in the pre-reform period but changed differently in the post-reform period. While Rajasthan has been able to improve its economic and demographic performances, UP has remained laggard throughout the reform period. The performance of the latter has been only slightly better than that of Bihar.

Extending the framework of analysis that explained political reasons for differential performances of Bihar and MP in the post-reform period, it may be argued that the political situation in Rajasthan has remained conducive to reforms whereas the same has remained adverse in UP. Throughout the reform period, reform-friendly governments of either the Congress or the BJP, committed to reforms and the free market economy, have ruled Rajasthan. Though the Ashok Gehlot government did not launch any major reform measures, his government improved performance through better administration and improved delivery of services. Nevertheless, it was open to reforms and able to attract investments. The BJP, that remained in power between 2003 and 2008 in the state, largely followed the policies of the previous government. The Congress has regained power from the BJP and Ashok Gehlot is at the helm of affairs. Like MP, party politics in Rajasthan has taken the shape of the two-party system and the Congress and BJP have alternatively formed the government. Like MP, it has the advantage of being governed alternatively by the national party — the BJP and the Congress — where the state leadership is accountable to the central leadership and that influences its performance. Moreover, the Congress and BJP governments in the state have to respond to the internal pressure generated by the aspirant chief ministers and political factions.

The political situation in UP, like that of Bihar, has remained unfriendly to reforms and development during this phase. First, through the major part of reform period, the state has been ruled by the various coalitions of the Samajwadi Party (SP)– Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) (5 December 1993–3 June 1995), BSP–BJP (3 June 1995–17 October 1995, 21 March 1997–21 September 1997, 3 May 2002–28
August 2003), BJP–BSP (21 September 1997–11 November 1999), BJP and others (24 June 1991–6 December 1992, 12 November 1999–7 March 2003) and SP–Congress (August 2003–2008). Consequently, political stability and the rule of a single party have eluded the state though in the 2008 elections, the BSP won a clear majority and formed the government. Between 1990 and 2003, 10 chief ministers headed the state, each one enjoying an average tenure of approximately one year. President’s Rule has also punctuated this period (1992–93 and 1995–96). Second, most of the governments in this phase were either led by the BSP and SP or dependent on them for survival. The BSP and SP are ideological and politically opposed to reform policies and continue to subscribe to the policy and principles of state-controlled economy, socio-economic development through state intervention, welfare state and socio-economic empowerment of the Dalits and backward classes through positive discrimination. Though the reform-inclined BJP had formed the government in the state four times since the 1990s, it was unable to push reform policies as it remained dependent on the support of sometimes the BSP, sometimes splintered faction of the BSP, sometimes independents and other minor groups. Third, due to a fragmented political mandate and shaky and unprincipled coalitions, it was practically very difficult for any government in the state to generate socio-political consensus on the issues of governmental and economic reforms demanding a politically hard decision. Fourth, most of the governments in this phase were formed by or with the support of parties (BSP and SP), which are more committed to social change than economic and governmental reforms. Like the RJD in Bihar, the SP and BSP in UP have the priority of social justice, and treat economic and governmental reforms a posteriori to social transformation. Last, the electorate support base of the SP and BSP, consisting mainly of Dalits and backward classes, has been a major political constraint, as their interests lie not in liberalisation but in the state-controlled economy. Thus, the political situation of Bihar and UP has remained similar as far as responses to reforms in governance and development are concerned.

VI

Summing Up

With the help of the case study of Bihar and MP and a parallel reference to the analogous story of UP and Rajasthan in a comparative framework, the article argues that economic and governmental
reforms at the state level are not regime neutral: political factors like the nature of party politics, political and ideological positions of the ruling party, its electoral support base and the forces of opposition and leadership structure of the party remain significant influences, apart from other factors. In contrast to MP and Rajasthan, the political situation in both Bihar and UP has remained largely unfriendly to reforms, which explain the lack of economic growth in these states.

In a more general mode, the recent phase of regionalisation of polity and economy has been marked by declining federal control over economic and development policies at the state levels, which in turn has allowed widening space to the state actors to influence the course of socio-economic development in their respective states and also take different ideological and political positions and differential responses to economic and governmental reforms. In the emerging scenario, it is our argument that regional disparities in India are bound to increase further in the post-reform period with serious political and economic implications, particularly for the Indian federal polity.

References


Note on the Editor

Ashutosh Kumar is Professor of Indian Politics at the Department of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh. He has earlier served as a lecturer at the Department of Political Science, University of Jammu, Jammu after commencing his academic career with short stints at colleges of the University of Delhi. His research interests are in the area of state politics with a focus on the politics of north-western states. He has been associated with the Lokniti network, CSDS, Delhi as state coordinator for Punjab. Dr Kumar has been a Visiting Fellow at ISSS, University of Tampere, Finland and at CDD, Lagos, Nigeria. He is the author of Political Economy of the State in India (1993) and has co-edited Globalization and Politics of Identity in India (2008); Burning Issues in Jammu and Kashmir (1999); and Politics of Autonomy in Jammu and Kashmir (1998). Besides these, he has contributed several papers and reviews on Indian politics in edited volumes and national and international journals such as Economic and Political Weekly, International Journal of Punjab Studies, Journal of Asian and African Studies, Contemporary India, Indian Journal of Political Science, Teaching Politics, Vanguardia Dossier, Pacific Affairs, Contemporary South Asia, Seminar, Book Review and Mainstream.
Notes on Contributors

**Muzaffar Assadi** is former Chairman and presently Professor of Political Science at the University of Mysore, Karnataka. Recipient of the prestigious Rockefeller Postdoctoral Fellowship from the University of Chicago, he graduated from Mangalore University and subsequently received his MPhil and PhD degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Before joining Mysore University as Reader and subsequently as Professor, he served the universities of Mangalore and Goa as lecturer. He has written three books including *Peasant Movement in Karnataka* and *Innodu Mukha* and contributed more over a hundred articles to such reputed journals as *Journal of Peasant Studies, Economic and Political Weekly, Alternatives* and *Indian Journal of Political Science*. He has been the editor of such journals as *My Society, Indian Journal of Human Rights and Social Justice* and *Karnataka Journal of Politics*. Dr Assadi has presented papers and chaired sessions at over a hundred national and international seminars and conferences. His areas of interest include new social movements, regional politics, globalisation and civil society.

**Rama Rao Bonagani** received his PhD from the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; he was recipient of the Jawaharlal Nehru Scholarship for his doctoral research. His thesis was on ‘Economic Reforms and Rural development: A Study of the Janmabhoomi Programme in Three Districts of Andhra Pradesh’. He has taught at Gargi College and Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi. Dr Bonagani has published a number of book chapters and articles in academic collections/journals.

**Samir Kumar Das** is Professor of Political Science, University of Calcutta, Kolkata. His recent publications include *Ethnicity, Nation and Security: Essays on North-eastern India* (2004); *Regionalism in Power* (1998); and *ULFA — A Political Analysis* (1994). He has edited *Minorities in Europe and in South Asia* (2010) and *South Asian Peace Studies II: Peace Accords and Peace Processes* (2005) and co-edited *Terror, Terrorism, States and Societies* (2009); *Autonomy: Beyond Kant and Hermeneutics* (2008); and *Internal Displacement*
in South Asia: Relevance of UN Guiding Principles (2004), among many others.

**Rajeshwari Deshpande** is Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Pune. Her research interests are in areas such as political thinking in 19th- and 20th-century Maharashtra, Maharashtra’s political process, regional political economy, rise of urban centres and the caste–class situation and, more specifically, issues related to politics of the poor. She has completed research projects on politics of the urban informal sector workers, life and politics in slums and, more recently, on the role of caste associations in the post-Mandal era. She has been associated with the CSDS-Lokniti network of Indian political scientists and has worked on issues related to women’s vote using the National Election Studies data. Dr Deshpande has published a number of book chapters and articles in academic collections/journals and is currently working on a manuscript titled ‘Caste, Class and the City’, focusing on the social profile of the city of Pune.

**Arun K. Jana** is Reader in Political Science, University of North Bengal, Darjeeling, West Bengal. He obtained his MA, MPhil and PhD degrees from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), Kandy, Sri Lanka in 2005. His areas of specialisation are Indian politics, political economy of development and politics of developing areas. He has contributed several articles to various journals and edited books, apart from co-editing ‘Development and Disorder: The Crises of Governance in Northeast and East India’ (forthcoming) and *Class, Ideology and Political Parties in India* (2002). He has also contributed several book reviews to international journals like *Journal of Contemporary Asia, Millennium, Journal of Peasant Studies, Journal of Development Studies* and *Contemporary South Asia*. He was awarded the Manas Chatterjee Award of Excellence in Research on Regional Science by the Indian Regional Science Association in 2008.

**Dharmendra Kumar** is Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Government J. H. Post-Graduate College, Betul. He has co-edited a book titled *Proselytisation in India: The Process of Hinduisation of Tribal Societies* (2008). His areas of research include the study of
proselytisation in different areas of Indian society (currently engaged in the study of neo-Buddhist Ambedkarite conversion), political economy of globalisation and its impact on working-class politics and globalisation and the nation state.

Sanjay Lodha is Associate Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur. His research interests relate to areas including state politics, democratic decentralisation, human rights and politics of the voluntary sector. He has been coordinator for the state of Rajasthan in all electoral studies conducted by Lokniti-CSDS after 1998. Dr Lodha has completed a number of research projects related to development politics at the grassroots level, peoples movements, voting behaviour and has written extensively on these issues. At present he is involved in a major research project on the 2009 Lok Sabha elections in Rajasthan with UGC support and is one of the principal investigators in a project related to informal local governance institutions being funded by the Centre for the Future State at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, Sussex.

Pampa Mukherjee is Reader, Department of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh. She received her PhD from the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She specialises in developmental and environmental politics, common property resources, public policy and local-level institutions. She has published extensively and has also undertaken several independent national and international research projects. She has been involved in conducting UGC- and ICSSR-funded national seminars and workshops on quantitative and qualitative methods in social science research. Dr Mukherjee is currently working on a manuscript tentatively titled ‘Uttarakhand: Politics of Identity and Development’.

Sudha Pai is Professor, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her interests include state politics in India, Dalit politics, politics of Third World societies, globalisation and governance; she has published extensively in these areas. She has been Senior Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti, New Delhi (January 2006–2009). Her recent books are ‘Developmental State and the Dalit Question in Madhya Pradesh: Congress Response’ (forthcoming 2010); Political Process in Uttar

**Ashok K. Pankaj**, Senior Fellow, Institute for Human Development, specialises in the area of political economy of development with a focus on the socio-economic development of marginalised groups. His major areas of research include rural development, decentralisation and local institutions of governance and development and public policy. Dr Pankaj’s important publications have appeared in leading professional journals such as *Contributions to Indian Sociology, Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, South Asia Research, Journal of Asian and African Studies, International Studies* and *Economic and Political Weekly.*

**Amit Prakash** is Associate Professor, Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has earlier served as Assistant Research Professor at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. He received his PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London after completing his MA and MPhil in Political Science at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Recipient of the Felix Scholarship, he has published widely in reputed national and international journals in the area of political analysis, discursive structures of the Indian state, electoral patterns and trends in India and some of its units. He is the author of *Politics and Internal Security* (2004) and *Jharkhand: Politics of Development of Identity* (2001) and has co-edited *Local Governance in India: Decentralisation and Beyond* (2006). He has recently completed a research project on ‘Mapping Indicators of Governance for India’ funded by the Ford Foundation, the manuscript of which is under preparation.

**Ronki Ram** is Associate Professor and Chairman, Department of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh. He was educated at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Uppsala University, Sweden; and Panjab University, Chandigarh. He has published articles in peer-reviewed journals like *The Journal of Asian Studies, Asian Survey, Contributions to Indian Sociology, Journal of Punjab Studies, Economic and Political Weekly, Dalit International Newsletter and South Asian Review.*
Neeru Sharma Mehra received her PhD from the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her research interests focus on the political economy of policies that aim at increasing the socio-economic and political participation of disadvantaged sections of society and the role of institutions and governance reforms and effective policy interventions that aim at improving the service delivery.

Sandeep Shastri is the Pro Vice Chancellor, Jain University and Director of its Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education (CERRSE). He was earlier Director of the International Academy for Creative Teaching, a wing of the Jain Group of Institutions (2005–2009); Dean of Social Sciences and Research at the same institution (2002–2005); and faculty at the Post Graduate Department of Political Science, Bangalore University (1985–2002). Dr Shastri’s areas of research specialisation are electoral studies, federalism and survey-based opinion studies. He has authored and edited six books and written more than 70 research articles in edited books and refereed international and national journals. He is currently National Coordinator of the Lokniti network, a national network of political scientists involved in a survey-based study of Indian elections. Dr Shastri has served as an international consultant for the Forum of Federations for its Democracy Capacity Building Projects in the Sudan. He has presented papers at conferences and seminars in universities in over 40 countries.

Jagpal Singh is Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi. He received his PhD from the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His areas of specialisation are democracy and development; identity politics; politics of recognition; and rural politics. He is author of Capitalism and Development: Agrarian Politics in Western Uttar Pradesh 1951–1991 (1992. He has also contributed articles to Economic and Political Weekly and chapters in edited books.
Index

Abdullah, Farooq 284, 286
Ad-Dharm movement 389; in Tamil Nadu 329
Adi-Andhra 22, 363, 366–69, 373
Adi-Dravida Mahajana Sangam 334
adivasi 104, 180, 181
Adivasi Cobra Force 262
ADMK 334, 335, 350
Advani, L. K. 233, 466
affirmative action 352; Constituent Assembly debate 358; and group rights 355–62; historical trajectories 356; programme, India 357; state intervention 358–59; in USA 355; see also Mala–Madiga conflict
agricultural productivity: average landholding 164; landlessness, issue of 164; rate of growth 163; welfare-oriented programmes, lack of 164
AIADMK 335, 337, 340, 341, 343, 344, 345, 347–49
Akali Dharam Yudh Morchas 295
Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Mahasabha 103
Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad 180, 181
Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League (ABGL) 175–76
Akhil Bharatiya Veershaiva Mahasabha 315–17
Alienation of Land Act (1901) 277
Ali, Justice Fazl 144
All-Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU) 257–60
All-Dimasa Students’ Union (ADSU) 253
All India Forward Bloc 191, 344
All India Gorkha League (AIGL) 169, 171, 176
All India Gurudwara Act 294
All Kamtapur Students Union (AKSU) 187
aluminium industry 86
Aluminum Employees Union (AITUC) 99
Ambedkar, B. R. 12, 353, 356, 357, 370
Ambedkar Memorial Society 370
Ambedkar, Prakash 225, 241
American Political Science Association 3
American society, mainstream 264
Anandpur Sahib Resolutions 276, 293, 294, 295, 297, 298
Andhra Mahajana Sabha 198
Andhra Pradesh Radical Student Union 90
Andhra state, formation of 198; chief ministers 207; dalit movement 372; demand for 209; districts 199–200; rapid expansion of SCs 364; reservations for SCs 364; Scheduled Caste population 362–63 see also Mala–Madiga conflict
Angami, Neidonuo 269, 270
Anglong, Karbi 253, 254, 260
anti-Brahmanism 247
anti-Brahmin movement 367–68; in Tamil Nadu 329
anti-Naxalite campaigns 103
Appaduriar 331
Armed Forces Special Powers Act 268, 287
Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) 257
Asom Sahitya Sabha 256
Rethinking State Politics in India

Assadi, Muzaffar 17, 131
Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) 251
autonomist politics: in geographical terms 277–78; Jammu & Kashmir 280–90; Punjab 290–98; in sociological terms 278–79
autonomy movements 158, 165, 169 see also Gorkhaland; Greater Cooch Behar, movement; Kamtapur movement
Awadh Pradesh 13, 224, 236
Ayothidas 331

Backward Districts Initiative-Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana 159
backwardness of North Bengal: agriculture 163–65; Cooch Behar 164, 167; Darjeeling 161–62, 166; and ethnic composition 156–57; formation of separate states 165–66 see also Gorkhaland; Greater Cooch Behar, movement; Kamtapur movement; growth of Naxalite/Maoist violence 156; identity politics, prominent forces in 156, 165; industrialisation 161–63; Jalpaiguri district 166–67; parameters for considering 159–60; Planning Commission definition 160; political articulation of 158, 167–82; population growth 159; poverty, incidence of 163–65; regions of 158–59; resentments 156–57; Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, percentage of 159, 164, 166–67; small sector industries 161; tribal population of 159
Baghel, Khubchand 91
Bahujan Republican Paksh-Bahujan Mahasangh (BRP-BMS) 225
BALCO Bachao Sanyukta Abhiyan Samiti 99
Balco Captive Power Plant (BCPP) 89
Balco Karmachari Sangha (BMS) 99
bandh 99, 140, 157
Bangla Bhasa Bacho Committee 180
Bardoloi, Rajani Kanta 259
bargadar, issue of recording of 183
Barooah, Nav Kanta 255
Basumtary, Binay Khungur 257
Bathukamma festival 206
Belgaum 142, 143
Belgaum Municipal Corporation 143
Bhakti Movement 140, 313, 320
Bharat Aluminium Co. Ltd. (BALCO) 86, 89, 98, 99
Bharat Aluminium Employees Union 99
Bharat Aluminium Mazdoor Sangha (INTUC) 99
Bharatiya Kisan Kamgar Party (BKKP) 223, 224, 236
Bharat Jan Andolan 103
Bhilai Steel plant 85, 86, 92, 99; Indo–Soviet Agreement on Techno-economic Collaboration 87; promotion of small-scale industries 100; reduction in workforce in 96; regularisation of contract workers 97
Bhindranwale 295
Bhojpur 13
bhoomi jammadalu 139
Bihar: caste politics 5; economic and demographic development of: demographic features of 457;
issues of governance and development 461–63; political factors 463–76; population growth rates 457–58; pre- and post-reform periods 456–58; FDI-approved support 95; and formation of Jharkhand 158; patterns of consumption 44; Reorganisation Bill (2000) 40; RJD-led coalition 237; Santhal Pargana 166

Bihor tribe 65

bijli, sadak aur pani, issue of 468

Blue Star, Operation 295, 296

BNC Cotton Mill 83

Bodoland 19, 186, 257–61, 271

Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) 261–62

Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) 260

Bodo movement/insurgency 248

Bodo Peoples’ Action Committee (BPAC) 257

Bokaro Steel Plant 96

Bombay plan 83, 84

Bommai, S. R. 436

Bonagani, Rama Rao 18, 197

Bonalu festival 206

Borai Industrial Area 87

Brahma, Rabi Ram 258

Brahminical Hinduism 20, 313

Braj Pradesh 13

Bretton Woods institutions 32

‘build–own–operate–transfer’ programme 101

Bundelkhand 13, 18, 220, 222, 224, 235, 236, 474

caste-based identity-centred politics see Dalit movement, in Tamil Nadu; Lingayats; Mala–Madiga conflict

caste-based mobilisations 308, 312, 319

caste-class linkages 7

caste hierarchies, in Punjab: Ad-Dharm movement 389; Brahminical order 390; caste prejudices 392; Dalit identity 382–83; Dalit Sikhs 391–92; dera 392–94; patterns of Jats domination 384–88; phenomenon of untouchability 384; rural areas 387–89; SC population 387

caste politics 5, 20, 307–308, 320, 324, 325; in Maharashtra 310–12

caste system in Tamil Nadu, impact of 330–31

casual workers 97

Cauvery River 135
cement plants 86

Chandragiri River 143, 145

chhengulli 139

Chhattisgarh 15, 220; under British rule 82; cement industry 86; development of capitalism 83–86; Korb–Bilaspur conurbation 87–89; Raipur–Bhilai conurbation 86–87; forest area 79; geographical profile 79; industrial development 86; inflow of capital 96; interaction with modernity 80–83; kinds of demand for creation of 90; Mahabandh 99; phases of capitalism 78; policies of globalised capitalism 89–90; capital inflow and its problems 102–104; creation of Chhattisgarh 90–92; period of globalisation 92–101; thermal power generation 86

Chhattisgarh All Party Manch 91

Chhattisgarh Asmita Sangathanand 91
discrimination, ‘reverse’ 2, 19
Disturbed Areas Act 287
Dixit, Sheila 466
Dixon plan 283
DMK 334–35, 461–62; Democratic Progressive Alliance 344
Dogra dynastic rule 282
Dravidian ideology 332–33
DRDA scheme 174
Durgapur Steel Plant 96

Economic and Political Weekly 7
economic empowerment, of Dalits 338
economic policies 1, 17, 24, 288
educational empowerment, of Dalits 338
educational inequalities, among SCs 360
education guarantee schools (EGS) 51
Ekka, Alexius 70
Ekta Parishad 103
Elayaperumal Committee report 363–64
electoral bipolarities 8
electoral democracy 8, 121, 326
electoral representation 1, 13
Essar Steel 102, 103
ethnic cleansing 253, 261, 262
ethnic identities: classification of 36; difference with national identities 37; socio-economic and political equality 37
ethno-cultural diversity 35
ethno-cultural neutrality 35

‘failed developmental state’ 10
Five Year Plans 84, 88, 111, 112, 113

Food Corporation of India (FCI) 142, 461
foreign capital 93, 94, 162, 460
foreign direct investment (FDI) 94, 124, 462
forest areas, classification of 66
Forest Survey of India 66
Foucault, Michel 247
free sale quota (FSQ) 139

Gandhi, Rajiv 464
Gehlot, Ashok 466
Gentleman’s Agreement see Telangana
Ghishing, Subhash 174, 175, 177–78
Girgliani, J. M. 210
Global Kodava Friendship Association 140
Goa Konkani Rajya Ekikarakan Manch (GKREM) 143
Gohpur riots 258
‘golden handshake’ scheme 92
Gomathinaygam Commission 338
Gopal, Neerja 119
Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha (GJMM) 156, 165, 177–82
Gorkhaland 13; accounts of movement 174–82; communist-led movements 169; demand for 165; economic factors 170–72; educated middle class, role of 169; genesis 168–69; GNLF, emergence of 169–70, 174; Gorkhas and adivasis, conflicts between 181; IRDP beneficiaries, issue of 174; oppositions against GJMM 180; post-Accord period 176–77; protests, forms of 179; pull factors of Darjeeling 171–72; rural economy 173–74; scholarly studies 170; Sixth Scheduled status, demand of 177–78, 181; unemployment, problem of 172–73
Gorkhaland Sanjukta Morcha 175
Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) 18, 156, 165, 168–72, 174–77, 179
Gowda, H. D. Deve 134, 437, 439, 441
Greater Cooch Behar 13, 165; movement 188–92; economic contents of 190; form of agitation 189–90; Left Front attitude 191
Greater Cooch Behar Democratic Party (GCDP) 156, 182, 188, 189, 191
Greater Cooch Behar People’s Association (GCPA) 18, 156, 182, 188–91
Greenhunt, Operation 103
Green Revolution 232, 297, 388, 390
Gross Domestic Product 124
group rights and affirmative action, relationship between 352–62
Guha, Kamal 191
Gupta, Ram Prakash 233
Gurjars 360, 415, 416, 422, 424, 425
Gurumukhi script 279
Gurung, Bimal 169, 177, 179

Hamid, Kokab 224
Harit Pradesh Nirman Samiti (HPNS) 223
Hegde, Ramakrishna 436–41, 443
Hindu Mahasabha 131
Hindutva 140, 146, 149, 297, 308, 311, 321, 323, 324, 464
Hmar Peoples’ Convention (HPC) 253
Hmar Students’ Association (HAS) 253
homeland doctrine 144
horizontalisation, of SC groups 359
Hul Jharkhand Party 158
identity politics 1, 12, 18–21, 35, 76, 156–58, 165, 170, 192, 216, 248, 265, 292, 297, 307, 308, 309, 322, 323, 464
Illich, Ivan 33
Indian Farmers Fertilisers Cooperative Ltd (IFFCO) 102
Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) 201
Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) 86
Indian monopoly capitalism 84
Indian National League (INL) 344, 346
Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) 344
Indiramma Scheme 213
individuation, process of 357
Indo–Soviet Agreement on Techno-economic Collaboration 87
industrial capitalism 32
Index

Industrial Growth Centre 87
Industrial Policy Resolution (1956) 83, 84
Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) 100
Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) 173–74
internal colonialism 2, 19, 114, 208, 226
internally displaced persons (IDPs) 253
investments, private 2
iron mines 85
Iron Work Company 86

Jalayagnam 204
Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) 287
Jammu & Kashmir, autonomist politics of: agrarian sector 288–89; Article 352, application of 282, 284; Article 370, application of 281–82; autonomy package 287–88; communal campaigns 286; constitutional basis of autonomy and interference 281–82, 284; Constitution (application to Jammu & Kashmir) Order (1958) 284; Delhi Agreement 282–83; loss of land 277; militancy and demonstrations in valley 289–90; plebiscite, issues with 280–81; Praja Parishad movement 283; President’s Constitution (application to Jammu & Kashmir) Order (1954) 284; ‘Quit Kashmir’ movement 281; Sheikh Abdullah-led ruling National Conference (NC) 281–82; in sociological terms 279; State Autonomy Committee (SAC) 284; Urdu/Hindi divide 279
Jan Andolan 103, 120, 224
janapada songs 206, 213
Jan Jagran 103
Jaswant Singh Commission 229, 239
Jayalalitha 335, 339
Jenkins, Rob 9, 10
Jharkhand 15, 31, 220; alienation of tribal land 63; destruction of forest area for developmental projects in 69; development deficit 38; displacement of tribals from 71; district-wise land utilisation in 64; district-wise number of teachers and pupil teacher ratio (PTR) in 53; efforts for development of tribal population 39–40; enrolment of Scheduled Tribes in primary education in 54; forest cover in 67–68; schools in 51, 52; status of tribal rights 39; demography 40–44; displacement and rehabilitation 69–73; literacy 44–55; socio-economic status 55–69; ST population 42–43; teacher–pupil ratio 51; tribal population 40–44
Jharkhand Movement 158
Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) 158, 237
Jogi, Ajit 91, 92, 99
Joshi, P. C. 103, 116, 238
Justice Mohan Commission 338
JVP Committee 116, 198
Kakatiya University, Warangal 205, 212
Kamma caste 21, 205, 216, 367
Kamtapur 13, 17, 18, 156, 165, 168, 182, 184, 185–88, 190, 191
Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) 187
Kamtapur movement 165, 185–88; demands 186; momentum of 188; organisations 187
Kamtapur People’s Party (KPP) 18, 156, 165
Kamtapur Progressive Party (KPP) 165, 185–86, 187, 188, 190, 191
Kamtapur Vasha Sahitya Parishad (KVSP) 187
Karbi National Volunteers (KNV) 254
Karimnagar constituency by-election (2009) 211–13
Karimnagar Dhoom Dham Programme 205
Karma, Mahendra 103, 104
Karra, G. M. 283
Kavita incidence 234
Keynesian–Fordist policies 85
khayam 139
Kisan Vikas Party (KVP) 223
Koch-Rajbangshis 185, 261, 262, 271
Kodagu Ekikarana Samiti 133
Kodagu Praja Vedike 148
Kodagu Rajya Mukti Morch (KRMM) 134
Kodava Hegge Samaj 148
Koel Karo hydel project 69, 73
Kohli, Atul 6, 9; notion of India 10
Korba–Bilaspur industrial belt 87–89
Korba thermal power plant 85
Krishna, S. M. 466
Kuki Inpi 253
Kumar, Dharmendra 16
Kumar, Nitish 462, 466, 467, 470, 475
Kumar, Pradeep 117
Kunzru, Hridaynath 144
Ladenla, S. W. 169
‘laggard’ states 1
Lalchand, Chaudhary 225
Land Alienation Act 278, 386, 390
land distribution programmes 155; appreciation of 154–55; critique of 155; in rural West Bengal 155
landlessness, issue of 164, 184
Land Reforms Act (1995) 138
Left Front government, performance and non-performance in Bengal 18, 153–55; focus, shift in 156; land reforms 154–55
liberal democracies: fundamental principles of 35; western 35
liberalism 32, 36, 355, 356
liberal state, and discourse of autonomy 35–38
Liberation Panthers 342–43
Liberation Warriors of Kodagu State (LIWAKS) 134
LIBRA (Lingayats and Brahmins) 150
Lingayats 20, 150; Akhil Bharatiya Veershaiva Mahasabha of 315–17; artisan subcastes 318; caste politics, role of 310–12; cluster-like identity of 322; demands of 317–20; Gawalis 317; Kakkyyas 317; in Karnataka 313–14; in Maharashtra 312–15; Movement 140, 141; political role 317; and process of othering of Muslims 323; religious identity 316; reservation discourse 319–20;
Shiva Sanghatana, politics of 320–25; social divisions 312–13; in Solapur 314–15; status of 313; subcastes 317–18; Veershaivism 312, 315

literacy, of tribal population in Jharkhand 44–55

Lodha, Sanjay 23, 399

Lokniti 6–8, 11


Maduraiar 331

Madhya Bharat 91

Madhya Pradesh Aluminum Mazdoor Panchayat and Balco Shramik Sangha (HMS) 99

Madhya Pradesh, economic and demographic development of: demographic features of 457; Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) 457; issues of governance and development 461–63; political economy of 459–61; population growth rates 456–58; pre- and post-reform periods 456–58; State Domestic Product (SDP) 457

Madiga, Krishna 213, 365

Madiga Reservation Poratta Samiti (MRPS) 365, 373–74

Madikeri Declaration 134, 138

Madiwal Machayyas 318

Mahajan Committee 143

Mahanadu, Mala 365, 373, 376

Mahanta, Prafulla 257

Maharashtra: electoral contestations 311–12; landownership, patterns of 311; Lingayats in 312–15; Maratha dominance 311; OBC politics in 312; political ideology 311; see also Lingayats

Maharashtra Ekikarna Samiti 143

Makalli Tamil Desam (MTD) 344

Makara Sankranti festival 206

Mala–Madiga conflict: and Adi-Andhras 369, 373; anti-Brahmin movement 367–68; atrocities 366; constitutional orders 375; historical background 366–72; influence of Christian missionaries 368; relationship between group rights and affirmative action 362–66; state response 372–76

Mallanna festival 206

Mandal Commission 118, 360, 374, 463

Mandal, politics of 308–309, 360, 464

Mandi, Boota 389

Mandir (Ramjanam Bhoomi–Babri Masjid) politics 464, 472

Maratha–Kunbi caste 310–12, 314

Maru Pradesh 13

Masilmani 331

mass rallies 99, 157

Mayawati 222, 228, 234, 241

MBC Commission 360

M. D. Nanjundappa Committee 142

Meenas 360

Mehra, Neeru Sharma 21, 329

Menon, V. P. 413

Minimata Hasdeo Project 89

‘minority’ states 1

Mishra, Kalraj 233

Mithilanchal 13

Mitra, Subrata K. 10

Moga declaration 296

Mohammed, Bakshi Ghulam 283

Mookerjee, Shyama Prasad 283

Mukherjee, Pampa 16, 107

Mukherjee, Prabab 211

Mukherjee, Pranab 211

Mulayam Singh-led coalition government 234

mulki rules 208

Muslims, political–electoral constituency 24

Muslim United Front (MUF) 286
Nadar movement, in Tamil Nadu 329
Naga Mothers’ Association (NMA) 268–70
Naga National Council (NNC) 250
Nagpur resolution 249
Naidu, Chandra Babu 210, 460, 461, 466
National Aluminum Mazdoor Sangha (NLO) 99
National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) 260
National Development Council 123, 459
National election studies (NES) 6
National Federation for Small States (NFSS) 134
National identities 37, 264
National Land Reform Council 103
National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) 103
National Planning Committee 83
National Sample Survey (NSS) 44
National Socialist Council of Nagaland (now Nagalim) (NSCN) 250–51, 269
National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) 88, 89
National Union of Plantation Workers 175
Nava Nirmana Vedike 440
Naxalite movement 103, 371
Nehru, B. K. 286
Nehru, Jawaharlal 198
Nehru–Mahalanobis model 84
New Economic Policy (NEP) 94
New Tamil Nadu 342
Nijikaran Virodhi Sanyuktta Sangharsh Samiti 99
Nithari incidence 234
Niyogi, Shankar Guha 90, 92
Nizamshahi 198, 352
non-Brahmin manifesto 333
non-Brahmin movement: during colonial period 333; emergence in Tamil Nadu 331; policy of 335; in Tamil Nadu 329
non-timber forest produce (NTFPs) 56, 71, 83
north-eastern India, reorganisation demands of: Assamese hegemony 252–53, 271–72; assimilation and expulsion 255–56; Bodo Accord 259–60; Bodo language 257; Bodo movement 254–63; Census operations 266–67; ethnic cleansing 253; ethnic community and territorial space, issues 250; ethnic groups 248; Hmar–Dimasa clashes 253; immigration and settlement of foreigners 257–58; Miris (Mishings) 259; Naga insurgency 250–51; Nagaland 250; politics at micro levels 268; reorganisation of Assam 249–50; Santhals 261; segregation of population 267; Sixth Schedule status 262–63; states 248; Sylhet district 250–52; tribal population 248–49
North Karnataka Separate State Struggle Committee (NKSSSC) 142
OBC politics 308, 312
Old Bombay Presidency 141, 142, 149
‘One Vote–Two States’ slogan 210
open cast mining 88
Osmania University 206, 212
Other Backward Classes (OBCs) 45, 46, 118, 405; political–electoral constituency 24
Oudh Pradesh/Madhya Pradesh/Madhyanchal 220

Padho Aur Badho 467, 472
paharis 111, 114
Pai, Sudha 22, 352, 361, 475
Panchamas 21, 382
Pande, Badridutt 115
Panikkar, K. M. 144
Pankaj, Ashok K. 24, 453
Pannicker, K. M. 116
Panthic agenda 296
Pashchimi Uttar Pradesh Rajya Nirman Morcha (PUPRNM) 223, 225, 226, 228, 238
Patel, Vallabhai 198, 282, 413, 441, 442
Pawar, Sharad 211
Payaswini River 143
PCR Act 339
peasant-warrior caste clusters 311
People’s Democratic Front (PDF) 176
PESA 73
Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) 257
Planning Commission 83, 118, 159, 160, 161, 163, 164
Pochamma festival 206
political coalition of social groups 150
political development, development discourse and challenges 31–40
politics: ‘Congress system’ 2, 3, 4; emerging trends in India 8; regionalisation of 2; working-class 90
Poorvanchal 13, 220, 224, 227, 233, 235, 236, 241
post-colonial state 3
post-development theory, concept of 33
post-independence politics 308, 309
power-generating units 87
Praja Mandal movements 417, 421
Pranta Parishad 169, 170, 175
‘progressive’ states 1
protective discrimination 38, 309, 354, 355, 356, 422
Punjab, autonomist politics of: Akali Dal 291–92; anti-Sikh riots 295–96; Blue Star, Operation 295–96; centre–state relations 293–95; in geographical terms 277–78; Hindu majority vs Sikh minority 290–91, 295; loss of land 277; Panthic agenda 296; post-Green Revolution Punjab 297; Punjabi–Hindi divide 279; Punjabi Suba movement 292–93; Rajiv–Longowal Accord 296; Sikh shrines and pilgrimage centres 279; in sociological terms 278–79; socio-political systems 277
purity–pollution syndrome 23, 384, 390
Qasim, Mir 284
Radcliffe, Sir Cyril 251
Radius Water Limited 101
rail roko agitation 99
Raipur–Bhilai industrial belt 86–87
raiyyat lands 73
Rajah, M. C. 333, 334
Rajasthan, electoral and political preferences 399; administrative formations 411–14; bhumi or freehold tenure 409; Bhumiswami Andolan movement 410; Brahmins, ritual supremacy of 407; caste groups 404–407; geographical and linguistic division 401–404; jagirdari system, issue of 408–11; Jat–Rajput rivalry 410, 422; khalsa and jagir land tenures 409; land ownership and its impact 407–11; major tribes 406; OBCs and SCs 415–17; people’s opinions on political choice 421–27; political competition 421–27; post-independence administrative organisation 413, 415, 421; Rajputana Agency 400; Rajput identity 412; subregional identities 415–20
Rajbansis community 166, 182–85, 188–91
Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission 467, 472
Rajiv–Longowal Accord 296
Ramchandra Raju Judicial Commission 366
Ram, Chhotu 225
Ram, Ronki 22, 382
Rao, K. Chandrasekhar (KCR) 211, 215
Rao and Frankel 5
Rao, K. Ranga 375
Rao, N. T. Rama (NTR) 210, 372
Rao, P. V. Narasimha 93, 370, 432
Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) 19, 221, 223, 224, 243
Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS) 283
Rawls, John 36
Rayalaseema regions 198, 202, 203, 204, 208, 214, 352
Reddy, Chenna 207, 209
Reddy, Y. S. Rajasekhara (YSR) 201, 213
region: concerns associated with development of 34–35; defined 34, 76–78
regional identity 197, 247; ethnic articulations 254–63; hegemony of 249–54; limitations 263–72
religious conversion ordinance 339
reorganisation of states, need for 199
representation in Parliament, SCs 361
reservations 353–57, 359, 361–66
‘reverse’ discrimination 2, 19
River Valley Agitation 101
Rourkela Steel Plant 96
Roy, Atul 185, 187, 190
rural poverty 160, 163, 164, 184, 190
rural–urban linkages 7

Sadar-i-Riyasat 282, 284
Sadiq, Ghulam Mohammad 283–84
Saikia, Hiteswar 261
SAIL 96, 97
Salwa Judum (SJ) 103, 104
Sanmilit Janagoshthi Sangram Samiti (SJSS) 262
Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act 63
Satyanarayan, M. 203, 212
Saurashtra 13
‘secession of the rich’ 2
Second Five Year Plan 84
Second States’ Reorganisation Commission (SRC) 214
Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) 98
Self Respect movement 333, 335, 368
‘seven sisters’ states 19
SFDA scheme 174
shared sovereignty 2, 295
Sharma, Gyanendra 223, 225–26, 228
Shastri, Sandeep 24, 430
Sheonath River 100
Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) 291, 392
Shiva Sanghatana, politics of 320–25
Shourie, Arun 99
Shukla, Ravishankar 91
Siddaramaiah 441
Sikhism 23, 279, 291, 386, 387, 388, 390, 391, 394
Siltara Growth Centre 87
Simon Commission 133
Singh, Ajit 19, 223, 226–28, 234, 239, 242
Singh, Amrinder 298
Singh, Beant 296
Singh, Chaudhary Charan 223, 231, 242
Singh, Digvijay 24, 466, 467, 471, 472, 473
Singh, Jagpal 18, 220
Singh, Kalyan 224, 228, 233, 236
Singh, Maharaja Hari 281
Singh, Pyarelal 91
Singh, Sant Fateh 292
Sinha, Aseema 10
Sinha, Kedarnath 187
Sitaramaiah, Pattabhi 198
social capital 77, 78
social divisions 19, 263–66, 271, 313
social justice, principle of 354
social measurement scale 23, 385–86
social reform movements 22, 367, 377, 384
socio-economic development 15, 39, 40, 55, 56, 62, 366, 459, 461, 463, 467, 478–79
socio-economic status of tribals 55–56
socio-political construction, of ‘region’ and development imbalance 38–40
Soren, Shibhu 224
South Eastern Coal Fields Ltd 87
Soviet Union 85
‘special police officers’ 104
Special Services Bureau (SSB) 258
SPTA 73
Srikrishna Commission 214
Sriramulu, Potti 198, 236
State Agrarian Relations and Unfinished Task of Land Reforms 103
state elections 8
state politics 4; idea of plurality and diversity 31; and myth of ethnocultural neutrality 35; and patterns of political transformation 5; and separatism/regional movement 149–50
State Reorganisation Commission (SRC) 116, 144, 191, 199, 249, 291
State Reorganisation Committee 91
States’ Reorganisation Act (1955) 199, 215
suba system 81
Subramanian, Narendra 6, 335, 336
sudra kazhagam 335
Swatantra Party 411, 433
‘take-or-pay’ contract 101
Talladilluthunna Telangana 206
TAMBRAS 335
Tamil nationalism 334–35
Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) 86
Tata Steel 102, 103
tea plantations 161–62; closures of 163; employment in 162–63; growth 162; policy of liberalisation, impacts 163
Tehri Garhwal 109, 115, 222
Telangana 13; agitations 209; agriculture 203; availability of irrigation facilities 203; cultural factors 205–206; current scenario 214–15; developmental issues 200; festivals, cultural distinctiveness related to 206; Gentleman’s Agreement 207–209; Girglani Commission 210; G.O. 610 210, 216; Karimnagar constituency election 211–13; literacy level 200–201; Lok Sabha elections (2009) 213–14; medical facilities 202; mulki rules 208; N. T. Rama Rao (NTR) phenomenon 210–11; number of irrigation projects 203–204; political history of 198–200; power sector reforms 204; social dimensions 200–202; Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS), emergence of 211; Telugu film industry 205–206; water sharing issue 202–205
Telangana Development Forum 201, 213
Telangana Dhoom Dhaam 206
Telangana Ghosha 206
Telangana Praja Samiti (TPS) 208–209
Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) 201, 211
Telangana Talli 205
Telangana Vidhyavanthula Vedika 212
Telangana Prajaa Garjana 206
Telugu film industry 205
thermal power plant: BALCO 89; Chhattisgarh State 88; Korba 85; KSTPS (NTPC) 89
‘third world’ political theory 3
Title VII 357
Tiwari, Narayan Dutt 123
Tomar, Om Singh 223
Tomar, Sohan Veer Singh 225–26
Trade Union Congress 83
trade union(s) 99; movement 103
tribals: on forest resources 65; socio-cultural rights 38–39; socio-economic development 40, 55–56; employment 56–57; health patterns 57–62; land and forests 62–69; socio-political rights 34; status in Jharkhand 39; demography 40–44; displacement and rehabilitation 69–73; literacy 44–55; socio-economic status 55–69
Trinamul Congress 187
Tulu Nadu see Tulu Rajya
Tulu Rajya 144, 145
Tyagi, Bireshwar 233

‘Udayachal’ state 257, 271
Udham Singh Nagar 109, 110, 235
underground mining 88
United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) 271–72
United Progressive Alliance (UPA) 214, 459
United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF) 257
Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (1966) 285
untouchability, issue of 330–31
UPPRNM 223, 225
Uttarakhand 15, 220; birth and identity 115–21; ‘development’ funds 120; development in 122–24; geographical indicators 110; history of neglect 111–14; introduction 109–11; pahari communities 108; regionalism and regional movements 107; road transport 123
Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD) 117, 121
Uttar Pradesh 220, 222; academic institutions 227; Bundelkhand 220; caste politics 5; Chhattisgarh 237; demand for separate states 223–25; districts 222–23; legal machinery, issues related to 228–30; need for separate states 226–30; Northwest Provinces 222; Oudh Pradesh/Madhya Pradesh/Madhyanchal 220; political situation in 477–79; Poorvanchal 220, 224, 233; related federal demands for separate state 229; spatial discrimination, in terms of 227; states of Rampur and Tehri Garhwal 222; Uttarakhand 237–38; West vs East 228
Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Bill (1998) 224
Vadheras 278
Vaipayee, A. B. 92, 189, 285, 440, 443, 476
Varna-Hindu Assamese society 256
varna system 21, 386, 391
Varshney, Ashutosh 8, 9, 464, 468
Veerashaiva Movement 141
Vellalas 334
Vidartha 13, 226
Village Industries Associations 83
Visveswaraya Iron & Steel Limited (VISL) 87
vote banks 24, 463, 466, 467, 470
voters participation, in parliamentary elections 348
VRS scheme 92, 96
Washbrook, David 336
Washington consensus 33
West Bengal 153; CPI (M)-led Left Front government, domination of 153; implementation of land reforms programme (LRP) 154–55; redistribution programmes 154; see also backwardness of North Bengal
Wills, C. W. 80
Wood Rose, Operation 295

working-class movements 16
working-class politics 90

Yadav, Laloo Prasad 237, 241, 465, 467, 470, 474
Yadav, Mulayam Singh 118, 121, 228, 231, 234, 235, 241
Yadav and Palishkar 7, 8
Yellamma (goddess) festival 206

zilla panchayat 148