

**THE ROLE OF BACKWARD CASTES IN BIHAR POLITICS
1967 TO 1985**

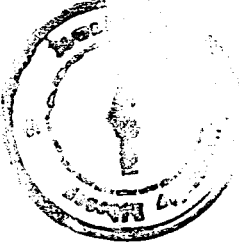
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for the award of the degree of
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DECLARATION

Certified that the thesis entitled
"The Role of Backward Castes in Bihar Politics:
1967 to 1985" submitted by Miss Kiran Shukla
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a
bonafide work to the best of my knowledge and
may be placed before the examiners for their
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P R E F A C E

The present study deals with the role of backward castes in the Indian politics in general and Bihar politics in particular. The controversy regarding reservation of posts, on the basis of caste in public employment has raised issues which are complex and have far reaching consequences. Job reservation a major demand of backward castes has been a major issue in Indian politics for a long time. In Bihar, after 1977 when State Government, tried to implement reservation of 26% of seats for the Backward Castes, in government services the entire state divided into two groups the "upper castes" and "backward castes". The caste based politics of upper and backward castes is playing effective role in the state as evidenced in the recent past riots e.g. Belchi, Pipra, Parasbigha, Saragana, Rohtas, Dhaura, Rafigang etc. In the present work, it has been tried to find out how Backward Castes emerged in Indian politics as well as in Bihar politics? What is their role and what steps has been taken by the Government of India for their upliftment. The phenomenon * has been examined both in terms of historical development as well as present political process.

In writing and completing this thesis, I owe a deal to the efforts and cooperation extended by various people.

I am extremely indebted to my supervisor, Prof.S.N.Jha, who has helped me at various stages of my academic life.

(ii)

But for his patient and unflinching help this study could not have been completed.

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Kiran Shukla
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CHAPTER-I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Statement of the Problem

Backward castes are playing a very important role in present day Indian politics.¹ Job reservation, a major demand of the backward castes has been a contentious issue in Indian politics for a long time. It is in fact the one single factor that continues to threaten efforts to create fraternity and justice in the country. Job reservation on the basis of caste has become constitutionally an insurmountable problem creating problem of social cohesion.

The controversy regarding reservation of posts in services on the basis of caste² has raised issues which

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1. See, Marc, Galanter: Competing Equality: Low and the Backward Classes in India (New Delhi, 1984), and "Who are other backward classes: An Introduction to Constitutional Puzzle", EPW, 28 October 1978, pp.1812-28, Beteille, Andre: Backward Classes and their Future (New Delhi, 1981), Blair, W.H., "Rising Kulaks and Backward Classes in Bihar Politics", EPW, 12 January 1980, pp.68-70; Shah, Ghanshyam, "Caste, Class and Reservation" EPW, 19 January 1985, pp.132-5, and "Reservation for Backward Classes", EPW, 19 January 1985, pp.132-35; and "Reservation for Backward Classes", Economic Times (New Delhi), 14 June 1978.
 2. The former Union Minister of State for Home, Mr. Dhanik Lal Mandal informed the Rajya Sabha that the State provided job reservation to backward classes other than the SC/ST in their services. The Government was collecting information on the number of jobs in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh due to agitation by anti-reservationist. He said that Kerala and Karnataka provided forty percent of job reservation to categories other than SC and ST. See Times of India (New Delhi), 22 December, 1978.

are complex having wide-ranging consequences for the nation. Over the centuries backwardness in India has got institutionalized³ as a result of rigid caste system in the social organization. Today the issue has developed into such serious proportion threatening to tear up the country's social and national structure and in fact the very existence of the state.⁴ The demand of the society to be served by talented and well-qualified persons is not disputable, but the demand to remove inequality of opportunity in public employment is equally greater. The state therefore has to direct its policy towards securing a social order in which justice - social, economic, political - should infuse all the institutions of national life.⁵ If any classification of backward classes is based on the caste of a citizen,

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3. Mandal, B.B.: Chairman, Backward Classes Commission, See The Times of India (New Delhi), ed. 22 March 1979.
 4. It is important to note that on 20 December 1978 the Central Government set up a Commission to probe the condition of educationally, socially backward classes. Headed by B.P.Mandal, the Commission decided the criteria for defining the backward classes on their social, economic backwardness.
 5. Mishra, T.S.: Chhote Lal vs State, AIR, 1979, p.145.

it will only perpetuate the vice of the caste system.⁶ On the other hand, if the classification is based on economic consideration, it will not be logical either.⁷ The problem is undoubtedly very complex.⁸ Sociological, social and economic considerations have a bearing on the issues which call for evolving proper criteria.

Though the Government after Independence have formulated various schemes and taken a number of steps to solve the problem of backward castes. They have not borne fruit. Instead the situation is worsening day by day. The various incidents which took place in different parts of country, specially in Bihar and Gujarat on the issue of job reservation, are pointers to the simmering situation.

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6. Gajendragadkar, J.: in M.R. Balaji vs State of Mysore, AIR, 1963, SC, 649, p.659.
 7. Verma, G.P.: "The Philosophical Foundations of the Adaptability of the Constitution: A Judicial Approach", Journal of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies, Vol.XII, No.2, 1978, p.152.
 8. For example after Independence the Government appointed two Backward Classes Commission on the All India Level (in 1953-1979) and many Backward Classes Commission in the state level to solve the problem of backward classes. The government also started many welfare programmes for their development.

Though the problem of backward castes is an all India phenomenon, it has taken very serious turn, even violent convulsions, in states like Bihar. When the Bihar Government announced a proposal to have 26 per cent reservation in state service and educational institutions in 1977. There was a discernible division among people into two groups i.e. upper and backward castes.⁹ On one side were people of the backward castes demanding maximum benefit of reservation while on the other, the upper caste Hindus, although not against reservation as such, wanted economic backwardness as the criterion for reservation. During 1977-78, when the State Government tried to implement the reservation policy, the faction feuds between the two groups emerged in the open forcing the State Government to withdraw it for some time. As examples of the factional feuds, we can cite the different caste riots which took place in places like Balchi, Faranbigha, Pipra, Dohiya, Daurua etc.

The backward castes of Bihar have their own unique features. Firstly, they are numerically very strong representing more than 52 per cent of the state population, but they are socially and economically weak. Their position is inferior to upper caste, but they are superior

9. International Election, Politics and Law: A Mine of Resource Information of the election archives (Institute of Election Studies).

than SC and ST. Secondly, within the backward caste there is further division between upper backward caste and lower backward caste. The former is very influential and poses a threat to upper caste people. Fourthly, though the movement among the backward class for their rights started in pre-independence India, they emerged as a strong and effective pressure group only after the 1967 election. Fifthly, despite the fact that the state government has initiated a number of schemes and programmes to solve the problem of backward castes. It has faced formidable problems at every stage. Sixthly, Karpoori Thakur emerges as the most important person spearheading the cause of the backward castes. Seventhly, it is to be noted that ~~the~~ it was the Britishers who engineered the emergence of backward castes. During the colonial rule all the top administrative posts, socio, economic and educational institutions were under the control of the upper caste, as they were the only class of people to have English education at that time. After independence opportunities have come the way of backward castes to receive higher education, and as could be expected, started demanding a share of top positions in the socio-economic educational and administrative posts. The upper castes then began to assert their positions and opposed demands of backward caste for a fair share. The opposition

of upper castes to throw open opportunities to the backward castes created a sense of awareness among the latter, and they become more and more conscious of their different rights.

Scope of the study

From the above discussion, it is clear that backward castes in India, and specially in Bihar have a very significant role to play. They are emerging as an important factor in the socio-economic and political scene of the country. It is imperative that we study the various facets of the issue. We have taken the state of Bihar for our research work.

Clarification of the Concepts

What is Caste?

Defining the caste system in India is a very difficult proposition. The enormous literature generated over the years on the caste system has created more confusion than understanding. There is a lack of distinction between varna and jati, particularly in the early literature on this system. Another source of confusion is the application of different perspectives to the analysis

of caste stratification. Barth¹⁰ and Berreman¹¹ emphasise that caste is a structural phenomenon as it reflects upon the general principle of stratification with somewhat different manifestations and functioning than the other forms of stratification. Dumont¹² and Leach¹³ consider caste as a cultural system represented through the prominence of certain ideas formed particularly in India. Bailey¹⁴ is of the view that caste is a "closed system of stratification", hence "organic in nature", whereas Beteille takes the stand

10. Barth, Fedrik: "The System of Social Stratification in Swat - North Pakistan", in E.R.Leach, ed., Aspect of Caste in South India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).
11. Berreman, G.D.: "Stratification, Pluralism and Interaction: A Comparative Analysis of Caste", in Anthony, De, Renekand Cavite Knight, ed., Caste and Race(London, I and A Churchil Ltd., 1967).
12. Dumont, Louis: Homo Hierachus (Delhi: Vikas Publication, 1970).
13. Leach, E.R.: "What should be mean by caste", in Leach, E.R., ed., op.cit.
14. Beteille, Andre: The Future of Backward Classes: The Competing Demand of Status and Power Perspective", Supplement to Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol.11, 1965, pp.1-39.

that the caste system is becoming "segmentary because of the emergence of its differentiated structure".

Caste, for the purpose of this study, has been considered as a 'status position associated with class, and position in the social hierarchy'.

Who are Backward Castes?^{*}

The backward castes are a large and mixed category of persons with boundaries that are both unclear and elastic. They are made up of three principle components, the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward castes. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are well defined categories comprising respectively a little less than seven and fourteen per cent of the population. The other backward castes are a residual category; their position is highly ambiguous; and it is impossible to give an exact statement of their number. They have started claiming job reservation on par with 'untouchables'. But as they are not well defined there are disputes regarding the criteria to be adopted to determine their backwardness. The backward castes commission set up by Union Government is primarily concerned with the other backward castes. Thus the recent usage of the term 'Backward Castes, mainly denotes other backward castes. The persons belong to other backward castes are intermediate

* In this thesis other backward castes and other backward classes have been used in the same meaning.

agricultural castes and clean functionary castes. According to Andre Beteille, "the core of the other backward castes consists of present caste of various descriptions". They have generally lagged behind higher castes in education and consequently in profession and government vocation. They occupy the low position in varna hierarchy. G.S.Aurora¹⁵ observes that "the other backward castes category is formed of all those castes who were thought to be part of the 'shudra varna' according to the Hindu varna system".

In the present work, by backward castes we mean only the other backward castes. We have taken the problem and solution of other backward castes of India in general and Bihar in particular. The focus of our study is mainly the problems of Yadava, Kurmi, Kumi and Bania.

What is Class?

In every society some men are identified as superior and others inferior, patricians and plebians, the twice-born and once born, aristocrats and commoners, masters and slaves, the classes and the masses. Except perhaps where every one lives at a bare subsistence level, some individuals are likely to be rich, others well to do and still others

15. Aurora, G.S.: "Caste and the Backward Classes", Man in India, Vol.48, No.4, October-December 1966, pp.297-307.

poor. Everywhere some rule and others obey, although the later may possess varying degree of influence or control over rulers. "These contrasts ... between higher and lower, rich and poor, powerful and powerless constitute the substance of social stratification".¹⁶

All societies in history are divided into groups, or classes and this social phenomenon might have existed even from time immemorial. For example, Aristotle observed two millennia ago that "population tended to be divided into three groups, the very rich, the very poor and those in between".

Different scholars and social thinkers generally called these groups "social classes" under different names. For instance for Karl Marx "the chief social classes were the wage workers (the proletariat) and capitalists (the bourgeoisie) with a middle group (the petty bourgeoisie)". According to Adam Smith, "society is divided into those who lived on rent of land, the wages of labourers, and profits of trade". In the opinion of Thornton Veblen, "society is divided into ... the workers who struggle for subsistence and a leisure class, which has become so wealthy that its main concern is conspicuous consumption

16. Chinoy, Ely: Society: An Introduction to Sociology (New York: London House, 1967), p.168.

with proves how far this group has risen above the laws of the usual struggle for existence. A social class is therefore defined as a strain of people of similar social position.¹⁷

Johnson gives a more clear definition of class. He says that "A social class ... is more or less stratum consisting of families of about equal prestige, who are or would be acceptable to one another for social interaction".¹⁸

There is no set criteria to know which class belongs to "wealth" or "income" as the main factor by which class is considered forward.

For the purpose of this investigation, the class position is determined on the basis of 'income' (economic sources).

Caste versus Varna System

The concepts of caste and varna have been the subject matter of a debate among scholars. Professor Ghurye has outlined four period of social development in India. During the vedic period, there was a system of relatively open

17. All the above mentioned questions are from Horton, B. Paul and Hunt Z. Chester, Sociology (New York: MacGraw Hill Book Company, 1964), p.26.

18. Johnson, M. Harry: Sociology: A Systematic: An Introduction (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1970), pp.469-70.

class, e.g. varna system. During the social development, the features of the caste society as it exists today emerged. In the fourth period, which according to him, i.e. 10th and 11th century, the caste system had come into being and has continued with consistency for hundred years. Many scholars often take caste and varna as one, but in reality there is a fundamental difference between the two. Varṇa means the four fold division of the R̥gvedic society, which consisted of three of the twice born Brahmins, Bhūmihar, Kshatriyas, Vaisya and fourth of the Sudras; below are the out caste. The twice-born are so called because of the initiation of upanayan ceremony at which they put on the sacred thread as a symbol of introduction to a life of spiritual discipline. The empirical reality is that there are not only four castes in India but numerous castes, which do not fit into varna system.

Moreover, according to varna system, these all four social groups should be uniformly found in all regions of the country. The reality is that there is a lot of diversity between caste systems from one region to another. However, there do not remain the same amount of association between caste system and varna system. It can also be said that varna has a role of integration in the caste system.

It is because of this role that varna system is still relevant even though it does not any longer correspond to the enmical reality of caste system.

What is Politics?

The word "politics" which owes its origin to the Greek word "Polis" has become a controversial concept today. In defining this concept, there are two schools of thought, viz. the traditional school and the contemporary school. Whereas the traditional school emphasises on the institutional aspect of politics, the contemporary school do not consider that politics is confined only to the institutional level. The contemporary school studies human activities in general. According to this school, politics is 'termed as a struggle for power'. Everyone, at every place desires to attain power, therefore, politics is found everywhere, at home and outside, in the school and the college, in the temple and in the mosque.

In the present study 'politics' is used as a term to mean 'struggle for power'.

Review of the Literature

Different scholars have studied the problem of backward castes in India.¹⁹ Their work is mainly confined to policies on backward classes. Regarding the backward castes of Bihar State, not much study has been done by scholars.²⁰ Most of the scholars have only examined the problem of casteism in general, not backward caste as such.²¹

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19. Dushkin, Lelah: "Backward Classes Benefits and Social Classes in India, 1920-1970", EPW (Special Article), 1980, pp.661-7; ~~Ex~~ Galanter, Marc: Competing Equalities: Low and the Backward Classes in India (New Delhi, 1984), and "Who are the other backward classes? EPW, 28 October 1978, pp.1812-1828; Beteile, Andre: Backward Classes and their Future (Delhi, 1981); See also his "The Problem", in Seminar(New Delhi), 268, December 1981, pp.10-13.
 20. Blair, W.H.: "Rising Kulaks and Backward Classes in Bihar", EPW, No.12, January 1980, pp.68-70. Srivastava, Alok: The Emerging Pattern of Caste Conflict in Bihar: A Study of Post 1977 period (M.Phil Dissertation, unpublished, JNU, SSS, 1982); Sinha, Sanjay: Backward Classes: A Sociological Study (M.Phil Dissertation, JNU, SSS, New Delhi, 1984).
 21. On casteism of Bihar, there is lot of literature. For example see Ali Sadiq, the General Election, 1951, A Survey(New Delhi, AICC, 1959), pp.40-41. Jha, C.: "Caste in Bihar Congress", in Iqbal Narain, ed., State Politics in India (Meerut:Meenakshi Prakashan, 1967), pp.86-87; Singh, N.K.: "Many Faces of Caste Politics in Bihar", EPW, 8 April 1972, p.743; Walter, Hauaer, "Dynamic of Social Ranking and Political Power among Emerging Caste Group in Bihar: A Paper presented to the Association for Asian Studies (Chicago, March 1967), p.26.

Even those scholars who have done their work on backward castes of Bihar, have not deeply studied all aspects of the problem. For example none of them in their studies has identified and the backward castes in Bihar and examined their problems. How have they emerged as a strong and effective pressure group? Who are their caste leaders? What is the role of caste association in the emergence of backward castes? How does difference occur within the backward castes because of income disparity? What is the difference between the backward castes movement of Bihar and the rest of India? What were the steps which the government of Bihar has taken for their upliftment. The present study tries to answer all these questions.

A number of research works and articles published on the subject mainly deal with the reservation policy adopted by some states in India. Five viewpoints are discernible from these studies.

One viewpoint is that merit and efficiency should be the only valid criteria for admission to educational institutions and for recruiting of personnel for government jobs. Government service is an opportunity to serve society and it cannot be misutilised by giving undue consideration to a certain section at the cost of the whole society. If

quality of the services are better, better would be the benefit. Therefore, modern recruitment policy should aim at selecting the best available persons by applying scientific procedures. Naturally any criteria which result in the recruitment of persons other than best available would not help in maintaining efficient service. This is the argument against job reservation policy. The proponents of this viewpoint like Marc Galanter²² and Andre Beteille²³ advocated abolition of reservations, whether based on caste, class, occupation, sex, or region. Alok Srivastava²⁴ and Sanjay Sinha²⁵ too in their M.Phil dissertations on the reservation policy in Bihar have expressed similar views.

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22. Galanter, Marc: Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India (New Delhi, 1984); and "Who Are the Other Backward Classes? An Introduction to a Constitutional Puzzle", EPW, 28 October 1978, pp.1812-28.
 23. Beteille, Andre: Backward Classes and Their Future (Delhi, 1981), See also his "The Problem", in Seminar (New Delhi), No.268, December 1981, pp.10-13.
 24. Srivastava, Alok: "The Emerging Patterns of Caste Conflicts in Bihar: A Study of Post-1977 Period" (M.Phil Dissertation, unpublished, JNU, School of Social Sciences, New Delhi, 1982).
 25. Sinha, Sanjay: "Backward Class Movement in Bihar: A Sociological Study" (M.Phil Dissertation, JNU, SSS, New Delhi, 1984).

The second viewpoint represented chiefly in the writings of I.P. Desai²⁶ and Upendra Baxi²⁷ is that all caste-based reservations should be abolished. Those who subscribe to this point profess faith in the Directive Principles of State Policy and are committed to social change and the upliftment of the neglected sections of society. In selecting people for preferential treatment, however, they would go by their occupations or social class and not by their castes. The door of reservation would not be closed for the poor people of the upper castes as they consider that poverty is a greater hindrance to development than anything else. The Rana²⁸ Commission of Gujarat has in its report expressed views which by and large endorse this observation. Sachchidanand in his book The Harijan Elite,²⁹ examines the development of the Harijans in the contest of the reservation policy. He

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26. Desai, I.P.: "Should Caste be the Basis for Recognising Backwardness?" EPW, 14 July 1984, pp.1106-16.
27. Baxi, Upendra: "Caste, Class, and Reservation", ibid., 9 March 1985, pp.426-28.
28. Gujarat: Report of the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes(Second) Commission (Chairman: C.V. Rane), (Ahmedabad, 1984).
29. Sachchidanand, The Harijan Elite(New Delhi, 1977).

finds that reserved jobs, scholarships and seats in the legislatures have only helped create and reinforce a dual society among the Harijans. The advanced Harijans do not care for their own community. Instead they only seek to improve their equation with the status and power groups in the wider society. Sachchidanand favours economic development for the mass of the Harijans which would foster national integration and promote articulation of interests on a class basis rather than on the basis of caste.

The third viewpoint represented by Nirmal Mukherji³⁰ and N.S.Saxena,³¹ is that the Scheduled Castes have suffered from poverty and humiliation for a long time. These castes are still considered untouchable. They remain neglected throughout history and have lived isolated from the mainstream of the socio-political life of the country. To assimilate them into our national life, reservation is a nationally accepted principle. The backward castes, however, have never suffered the curse of untouchability. In fact they are economically and politically dominant. They are, therefore, not entitled to get benefits similar to those provided to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

30. Mukherji, Nirmal: "Perspective of a Policy", Seminar, No.268, December 1981, pp.14-18.

31. Saxena, N.S.: "The Reservation Issue: A Possible Basis for a Consensus", Times of India (New Delhi), 3 May, 1985.

Their conditions are quite different. Had there been any justification for a reservation policy for them, the makers of our Constitution would have certainly provided for it. Why, after so many years of independence, when a lot of improvement has taken place and the chances of upward mobility for the backward classes are brighter than ever before, should they be given preferential treatment?

The fourth viewpoint favours extension of the benefit of reservation to certain backward classes whose conditions of life are similar to those of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. It is totally unnecessary and wrong to extend this benefit to the upper backward castes, which consist of prosperous peasants and traders. These castes have improved their economic conditions and are notorious for the atrocities they commit on Harijans in rural areas. To this school of thought belong Ghanshyam Shah,³² D.L.Sheth,³³ and Parmanand Singh,³⁴ who favour evolving a scientific

32. Shah, Ghanshyam: "Caste, Class and Reservation", EPW, 19 January 1985, pp.132-3; and "Reservation for Backward Castes and Classes", Economic Times (New Delhi), 14 June 1978.

33. Sheth, D.L.: "The Great Reservation Debate", Indian Express, 12 May 1985.

34. Singh, Farmanand: "Equal Opportunity and Compensatory Discrimination: Constitutional Policy and Judicial Control", Journal of the Indian Law Institute(Delhi), Vol.18, April-June 1976, pp.302-6.

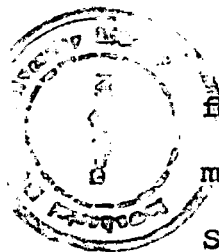
criteria for the purpose of preparing a list of backward classes to ensure that those whose conditions of life are almost comparable to those of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, should enjoy the benefits of reservation.

The fifth viewpoint, the chief protagonists of which are Ram Mahohar Lohia³⁵ and Devaraj Urs,³⁶ favours caste-based reservation. In India's unique socio-historical context, reservation is essential for improving the lot of those who are backward not only in economic terms but also in cultural and psychological terms. The Backward Classes have had to put up with low social status on account of their humble occupations. The bureaucracy, which is an important organ of socio-economic development, is dominated by the upper castes, and it, therefore, favours only the upper castes. If the fruits of development have to be distributed equally, preferential treatment for the backward castes is a must. Such treatment would then eradicate parochial tendencies and strengthen national integration.

35. Lohia, Ram Manohar: The Caste System (Hyderabad: Samata Nyaya, 1964), and also see Ishwari Prasad, "Job Reservation for Backward Classes in Bihar", Janata(New Delhi), 23 April 1978.

36. Urs, Devaraj: "The Only Way", Seminar, 268, December 1981, pp.25-26.

The findings of most of the Backward Classes Commissions constituted by the Central and State Governments by and large endorsed this viewpoint.



In the view of the present researcher only the fourth viewpoint is acceptable. The first viewpoint regards merit as the only criterion for filling up seats and posts. Such a views, however, cannot solve our age-old social inequalities. Candidates of the deprived sections of society are in no position to compete with the meritorious candidates of the developed castes. Some sort of protective discrimination is required to put them on a par with the advanced castes.

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The second viewpoint is not against the reservation policy as such. It only emphasizes the class or occupation criterion and rules out the caste criterion. Even this viewpoint cannot be accepted as it would be difficult in practice to define certain class or occupations as backward. Again, if it is defined, the beneficiaries would be the lower or middle classes of the upper castes and not the backward classes.

The third viewpoint is in favour of reservation for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes but opposes any such reservation for the other backward castes. It is a fact that in the social ladder or in government service

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some of the backward classes have suffered more than the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. At present the backward castes constitute 52 per cent of the population in India, but their representation in the various categories of Central services is just 12.5 per cent. This is much less than the representation given to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. This shows that the backward castes deserve the benefit of reservation.

Freedom of profession has been available to citizens in almost all countries. There is no bar on it except in a few countries where race has been a criterion. In India people have been enjoying freedom to choose any occupation. And it has been utilized by people intelligently. The Government jobs have failed to attract certain castes like Marwari, Suri, Teli, Sonar and Bania. The profession of trade and business in which these castes have monopolized since long has been more alluring than salaried jobs. The children of these castes receive education only with a view to managing their business and trade than to look for a job. This is a most important factor for the lower percentage of government jobs held by them.

The fifth viewpoint supports a caste-based reservation policy for all the backward classes irrespective of their economic condition. This too has some serious

drawbacks. The backward classes are not a homogeneous group; their economic and social conditions vary widely. If the reservation policy is extended to all the backward classes, the benefits would be cornered by the advanced sections among those classes. That is why this viewpoint cannot be accepted.

The research scholar feels that the fourth viewpoint is most acceptable. Preferential treatment in jobs should be given to those classes or groups of people which are backward economically, socially and politically. This would help in greater development of society without creating inter-class or inter-caste differences and struggle. Any policy based on caste would not allow national integration nor would create environment for social and economic equality. Further, the job reservation policy, with preferential treatment, would affect efficiency adversely. No society can advance by sacrificing efficiency. Therefore, from all points of consideration the fourth viewpoint seems acceptable.

Methodology

The present study is mainly based on secondary and primary sources. All the books, articles and thesis, dissertations and Govt. Reports, which are available on the subject have been reviewed for the understanding of backward castes problems of India in

general and Bihar in particular. In the present work, we prepared some questions and then tried to give answers. The main research questions are as follows:-

Research Questions

- 1) Who are the backward castes of India? and what is the difference between the backward classes and backward castes.
- 2) Who constitute the backward caste in Bihar?
- 3) How did the Backward Castes movement start in different states of India? What is the difference between the backward classes movement of Bihar and other states of India?
- 4) How did the backward castes emerge in Indian politics as a strong pressure group?
- 5) To what extent does the socio-economic condition of the backward castes helped them to become a strong and efficient caste group in Bihar as well as rest of the country.
- 6) What are the basic demands raised by the backward castes through various movements?
- 7) What are the main steps taken by the Central and State Governments for the upliftment of backward castes.

- 8) What do the Reports of Kaka Kalelkar and B.B.Mandal say about the problems of backward castes.
- 9) What is the percentage of backward castes, who would get benefits from the provisions of the reservation policy in Bihar? What has been the response of the upper caste to the reservations extended to the backward castes? In other words how does the relationship between the upper caste and middle caste turned into bitterness?
- 10) What is the reason for the increase in the conflict between the upper caste and backward caste and upper backward castes and lower backward castes since 1977?
- 11) Why has the reservation policy created much more conflicting situation in Bihar, than other states of India?
- 12) What is the report of Mungeri Lal Committee regarding the backward caste of Bihar?
- 13) Why has Mandal Commission Report raised adverse reaction in Bihar more than the other states of India?
- 14) What will be the future of backward classes in India in general and Bihar in particular. How can problem be solved?

Plan of the Thesis

The present study has been divided into six chapters. The introductory chapter outlines the plan of the thesis. This includes the statement of the problem, clarification of the concepts, methods of the thesis, scope of the study and review of the literature.

The Second Chapter deals with the socio-economic, education and political condition of the State of Bihar. While discussing the socio-economic education and political conditions of Bihar, an attempt has been made to identify the backward castes of the State. What is the main difference between backward and upper castes and upper backward caste and lower backward castes? To what extent do the socio-economic conditions of the state help in the emergence of backward classes.

The Third Chapter deals with the emergence of Backward Castes Movement in Indian politics and examines the phenomena from political, constitutional and legal perspectives. In this chapter an attempt is made to clarify who are the backward castes in India, what is the difference between backward castes and other backward castes, what is the position of other backward castes in the social, economic, educational and political fields. It also tries to find out how the backward castes movement

started in different parts of the country? What is their nature? What are the basic demands which they have raised through various movements and what are the main steps which have been taken by the Government of India and State Governments for the solution of backward castes problems. What are the findings of various commissions like Kaka Kalelkar Commission, Mandal Commission, and different states Backward Castes Commission? How do the movements of different states differ from one another? How has the abolition of feudalism given a new direction to the Backward Castes Movement?

The Fourth Chapter deals with the backward castes movement of the state of Bihar. In this chapter an attempt has been made to see why, how and from where the Backward Castes of Bihar started their movement? What was the role of caste sabha, caste leader, land reform act, educational advancement and new political system in the emergence of backward castes in Bihar? What is the reason why after 1977, the conflict between the upper castes and backward castes and upper backward caste and lower backward castes increased? Why reservation policy has created much more conflicting situation in Bihar than the other states? Why Mandal Commission has provoked more protest in Bihar than the other states of India?

The Fifth Chapter throws light on the solution of backward castes problem in Bihar. In this chapter an attempt has been made to show how the Government of Bihar is trying to solve the problem of backward castes? The Report of the Mungeri Lal Commission which was constituted to look into the social and educational backwardness of various castes in the state has been presented. The problems of reservation of seats in government services and educational institutions mainly after 1977, have been discussed. It has also been shown that how conflict erupted in Bihar on the question of reservation. An analysis is also made of the various phases of backward classes movement and some recent incidents. In the same chapter an effort is made to find out how inter-caste rivalry is emerging within the backward classes on the basis of social and economic conditions? Do all backward castes enjoy the benefit of reservation, or only those who are already socially, economically well get the benefit of reservation?

The Sixth Chapter deals with the finding of the study and a statement of the conclusion.

CHAPTER-I

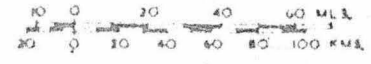
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER-II

BACKWARD CASTES IN BIHAR: PERSPECTIVE OF
SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIMENSION

BIHAR

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS



REFERENCES	
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY	— — — — —
ZONAL BOUNDARY	— — — — —
STATE BOUNDARY	— — — — —
DIVISIONAL BOUNDARY	— — — — —
DISTRICT BOUNDARY	— — — — —
SUBDIVISIONAL BOUNDARY	— — — — —
CAPITAL	★
DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS	⊙
SUBDIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS	⊙

★ HEADQUARTERS OF SUPERIOR SUBDIVISION
 ⊙ RELATED TO DISTRICT AT DHANBAD



* Some new districts and sub-divisions have been added which are mentioned in Page 35.

CHAPTER-II

BACKWARD CASTES IN BIHAR: PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIMENSION

The Geographical and Administrative Situation at a Glance

Bihar, a landlocked state, bounded by Nepal on the north, Orissa on the south, UP on the west and West Bengal on the east, was created as a separate province in 1936 carving it out from Bengal Presidency in 1912.¹ According to the 1981 Census the total area of Bihar is 56,320 square kilometres. Geographically the state is divided into two parts, the North and South Bihar bound by river Ganga, and Chottanagpur plateau covering the southern half of the state. It has nine administrative divisions: Patna, Magadh, Tirhut, Saran, Darbhanga, Kosi(Sarsa), Bhagalpur, Chhota Nagpur(South) Chhota Nagpur(North), each governed by a Commissioner from their respective headquarters, namely Patna, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, Chpara, Darbhanga, Kosi, Bhagalpur, Ranchi and Hazaribagh.² Each division is further sub-divided into thirty-three(33) districts. However, the districts are further categorized into sub-divisions, micro administrative units like Anchals, Halkas and villages.

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1. Menon, Y.P.: The Study of Integration of Indian States (New York: Macmillan Company, 1956), p.173.
 2. Bihar Information and Broadcast Department.

Density of Population

The Population of Bihar on the basis of March 1981 Census was 69,823,154 (or 10.21 per cent of the national population).³ The density of population was 402 persons per square kilometre. Bihar ranks third among the states after Kerala and West Bengal having the highest density of population. The vast alluvial belt of the Middle Ganga Plain is very densely populated. Patna has the highest density of 947 per square kilometre. The hilly region of the Chhotanagpur Plateau is, with the exception of Dhanbad, an area of low population density. The density of population in Dhanbad is 702 persons per square kilometre.

Language

There are many dialects spoken in Bihar, but three are the main - "Maithili", "Maghi" and "Bhojpuri". Maithili is the dominant dialect prevalent mostly in the Gangetic Plain. Maghi is the widely spoken dialect in the central part of the state. Bhojpuri is predominantly spoken by the people of Eastern Bihar.⁴

3. Census of India, 1981, Series 4, Bihar, p.30.

4. Griesim, G.A.: Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.V, Indian Aryan Family, Eastern Group Part II, Speciman of Bihar, Orissa, Language and Paul R. Brass, Language, Religion and Politics in North India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.5.

Social System of Bihar

Division of society on the basis of caste is a peculiar social phenomenon existing not only in Bihar, but the rest of the country. There are hundreds of castes and sub-castes within the spacious fold of Hindu religion. These are heterogeneous social units in the sense that they have been maintaining varying degrees of social distance manifested in various ways often nourishing prejudices against one another. These groups differ among themselves also because they have unequal share of advantage and disadvantages in the social, economic and political life depending on their ranks in the caste hierarchy.

The social hierarchal structure in Bihar dominated by the caste system may be studied by categorising it into five broad sections. We may place those who belong to the twice born categories, such as Brahmins, Bhumiards, Rajputs and Kayasthas, on top. They are the most privileged section of the state and occupy top positions in all fields. Then come the upper Backward Castes who are often called the intermediary castes. Mainly the four castes, Yadava, Kurmi, Koeri and Bania come under this categorisation. They are economically much better off than the lower castes. The political participation of this caste group gradually

increased since 1967 and after 1977 they emerged as a strong pressure group in the politics of Bihar state. Thirdly the lower backward castes, such as "Barthi", "Dhanuk", "Kahar" and "Lohar", exist in large numbers, but they are very much backward in all fields. Fourthly the Muslims, who constitute approximately 12.5 per cent of the population are well placed, socially, educationally and politically, but are economically very poor. During the British Rule, they received western education along with Kayasthas. The fifth category is of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, who are lagging behind in all respects - socially, economically, educationally and politically. They are at the mercy of other caste people despite the fact that the Government of India has initiated a number of schemes for their upliftment. They have not secured any substantial improvement and continued to be disadvantaged.

The position of different caste groups of Bihar in the social hierarchy and their percentage of representation are given in Table-I.

Table-I

MAJOR CASTE GROUPS IN BIHAR

(1931 for Upper and Backward Castes and 1981 for S.C., S.T. and Muslim)

	Caste	Percentage of Total Population
Upper Castes	Brahman	4.7
	Bhumihar	2.9
	Rajput	4.2
	Kayastha	1.2
	Sub-Total -	13.0
Upper Backwards	Bania	0.6
	Yadav	11.0
	Kurmi	3.6
	Koeri	4.
	Sub-Total-	19.3
Lower Backwards	Barthi	1.0
	Dhanuk	1.8
	Hajjam	1.4
	Kahar	1.7
	Kandū	1.6
	Kumhar	1.3
	Lohar	1.3
	Mullah	1.5
	Tatwa	1.6
	Teli	2.8
Others	16.0	
	Sub-Total-	32.0
Scheduled Castes		14.4
Scheduled Tribes		9.1
Muslims		12.5
	Grand Totali-	<u>100.0</u>

Source: Harry W. Blair, "Rising Kulaks and Backward Classes in Bihar", EPW., 12 January 1980, p.64, and 1981 Census Series 4.

District-wise the percentage of different caste groups differs from one another. Some districts are dominated by the upper caste while in others the backward castes are prominently distributed. The following Table gives the district-wise percentage distribution of various caste groups, tribes and Muslims in Bihar State.

Table-II

District-wise Population Percentage of Different Caste Groups, Tribes and Muslims in Bihar upto 1961

Districts	Upper Castes (%)	Lower Middle Castes or backward Castes (%)	Scheduled Castes (%)	Scheduled Tribes (%)	Muslims (%)
1. Saran	22.65	55.62	10.33	-	12.0
2. Champaran	11.79	57.75	14.56	0.10	15.80
3. Muzaffarpur	16.84	59.57	14.89	-	8.70
4. Darbhanga	15.80	56.33	14.67	-	13.20
5. Saharsa	10.00	66.08	17.18	0.44	6.30
6. Purnea	5.27	42.38	12.24	3.91	35.20
7. Shahabad	26.59	49.81	16.99	6.05	9.20
8. Patna	15	59.49	16.00	0.69	6.90
9. Gaya	16.64	49.10	24.54	0.2	-
10. Monghyer	21.28	57.23	15.81	1.38	8.30
11. Bhagalpur	10.66	62.59	11.58	3.77	11.40
12. Santhal	4.18	40.62	7.56	38.24	9.40
13. Palamau	9.24	36.09	25.93	19.14	9.50

Contd'....

Table-II Contd..

Districts	Upper Castes (%)	Lower Middle Castes or Backward Castes. (%)	Scheduled Castes. (%)	Scheduled Tribes. (%)	Muslims (%)
14. Hazaribagh	7.03	58.12	12.55	11.30	11.00
15. Ranchi	2.62	25.92	4.55	6.61	5.30
Singhbhum	2.93	43.59	2.	47.31	3.30
All Bihar	13.22	52.16	14.07	9.05	11.50

Notes: It is clear from the above Table that Bihar is a mainly backward caste dominating state, as more than 52 per cent of its population belongs to only backward castes. In some districts like Saran, Monghyer, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Bhagalpur, they are in greater in number.

Source: Ramashray Roy, "Caste and Political Recruitment in Bihar", in Rajni Kothari, Ed., Caste in Indian Politics (New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1970), p.28.

In order to find out the details about the background of different caste groups of Bihar State, it is necessary to examine the subject much more exhaustively.

Upper Castes

The Upper Castes of Bihar consisting of the Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs and Kayasthas are dominant in almost all walks of life as stated earlier. In ritual matters the Brahmin enjoys the first position. Then comes the Bhumihars and Rajputs. The Kayasthas, though low in the religious hierarchy and economically, have been more advanced in the field of education. The Brahmins, Bhumihars and Rajputs own a major share in the land unlike the Kayasthas. The zamindars, and tenant landlords, cultivators and big peasants come mostly from these three castes. As late as 1951, they constituted about 80 per cent of all land owners of the state.

There are some traditional cultural norms of this caste groups which have not changed much over the centuries. There is traditional taboo against the upper caste men actually handling the plough or physically working the fields⁵, though this is not uniform among all caste groups.

The Kayasthas, for example, are not found either as cultivators, farm labourers, or industrial workers. These upper castes have predominant control over the academic infrastructure, particularly universities and technical

5. Blair, H.W.: "Rising Kulak and Backward Classes in Bihar", Economic and Political Weekly, 12 January 1980, p.239.

institutions of the state.⁶

The caste consciousness among the upper castes developed a special dimension during the British period. They made conscious efforts for the solidarity of their castes so that the advantages of the new education and administration could be acquired in the emerging system. The process of elite formation began on caste lines and many prominent personalities took active part in this process. The caste consolidation can be traced at least in two movements during the British Rule. Firstly all the four castes established their separate caste sabhas in the state. The all India Kayastha Conference was the main association spreading the efforts to spread English education among their caste members. Similarly the 'Bhumihar Mahasabha', the 'Brahman Sabha', 'The Rajput Mahasabha', were established in 1889, 1905, and 1906 respectively.⁷ By providing scholarship, hostel accommodation and encouragement to take up English education, this caste associations had played an important role in arousing caste sentiments and bringing their members in the forefront of elite formation. Secondly all social movements in Bihar for the consolidation and prosperity have revolved around the respective castes. Their leaders took active

6. Prasad, Ishwari, Reservation - Action for Social Equality, Criterion Publication, New Delhi, 1986, p.19.

7. Ibid., p.20.

role in them. The separation of Bihar for example, in 1912 was fought in the background of a search for government jobs for the young generation of Kayastha and Muslims who were coming up rapidly in the intellectual and professional spheres of the state and had to compete to their disadvantage with Bengalis. It was for this reason that the movement for the separation of Bengal and Bihar remained throughout anti-Bengali rather than anti-British.

The political power structure of the state has been naturally dominated by the upper castes from the very beginning. They replaced the British administration after Independence. The initial advantage that Kayasthas gained was replaced by Bhumihars and it is now shared by the Brahmins and Rajputs. Due to zamindari system, they had established political and economic control over the countryside during the British rule. Since the upper caste people were the only educated during the British period they were much more politically conscious and joined the forefront of movement for Independence. After Independence, through the control of the main political party, the Congress, their political hold and administrative control got further consolidated. Their entrenched position can be seen in their predominant representation in the Assembly and Cabinet. In 1962, 59 per cent of Bihar Assembly seats and 58 per cent of major

Cabinet Ministers were comprised of upper castes as a group. In 1980 election, the upper castes had secured 46.42 per cent of the Assembly seats.⁸

From the time of Independence to 1961, Sri Krishna Sinha, a Bhumihar, was the Chief Minister of the state. He was succeeded in 1962 by Sri B.N. Jha, a Brahmin. Krishna Ballabha Sahya, a Kayastha, became the Chief Minister in 1963. He was succeeded in 1967 by Maha Maya Prasad Singh again a fellow Kayastha. Daroga Prasad Roy, a Yadav, was a non- upper caste man to become Chief Minister of the state in 1970. Bindeswari Prasad Mandal, another Yadava, was also the Chief Minister for a brief period. But again in 1972, power shifted in favour of the upper caste, when Kedar Pandey, a Brahmin was sworn as the Chief Minister, though he had to make way for Abdul Gafoor in 1973. Jagannath Mishra, another Brahmin was made the Chief Minister in 1975 and was succeeded in 1977 by Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur, belonging to the backward caste. However, after 1979, the upper castes could assert themselves once again with the return of J.N. Mishra, K.N.Pandya and Bindeswari Dube, all Brahmins. At present Bindeswari Dube is the Chief Minister of the state.

8. 1962 figures have been compiled by Blair, H.W., and 1980 figures by Sri Shyama Nand Singh, Lecturer in G.I.P.G. College, Sangaria, Rajasthan.

The Intermediary or Middle Caste

The castes which are below the upper castes but above the scheduled castes in the traditional caste hierarchy, are put in the category of the intermediary or middle range castes. They are also known as the backward castes in the state. They are the numerically strongest caste-group of Bihar, constituting more than 52 per cent of the population. Prominent among these are Yadavas, Kurmis, Koeris, Bania and Hajjams.

From the educational point of view they lag far behind the upper castes. For instance in 1981, 372 Kayastha out of 1000 were literate, whereas literacy among Kurmis, Keories, and Yadavas was 50 per thousand. However the Yadavas, Kurmi and Koeris own a large part of the land, and in many villages, they have been able to become the dominant castes.⁹ It was facilitated by migration of upper castes to town and cities in search of better educational, economic and employment opportunities. In recent decades many of the upper castes, who cannot face the arduous work of agriculture but are in a position to earn more and to lead comfortable life in cities,

9. Dominant caste is one of the important conception in understanding the village politics. This concept was the first to use systematically by Professor M.N. Srinivas in his various studies, especially in the "Dominant Caste in Rampur". American Anthropologist, 6 February 1951. After Srinivas various scholars used this concept.

have sold their surplus land. These lands have been bought mainly by these intermediary or middle range caste groups who are predominantly middle peasants. For this middle peasants cultivation is the way of life. This added advantage of these middle castes comes from their caste characteristics. They put substantial manual work themselves and cultivate the land themselves, a distinct feature when compared to the upper castes. Their unbeatable "aggressiveness, industry and profit orientation" in so far as agriculture is concerned, have been the factors that put them in a position to raise the per-centage output on the average of about 20 per cent higher than that of upper caste cultivators. The Kurmies and Bania are known to be industrious.

Despite their numerical strength the middle ranged castes played only a subsidiary role in state politics till 1977. They used to align themselves with one or other upper castes to achieve their specific ends. On some occasions they also threw up a chief minister from their ranks. Moreover in 1978, they achieved a major victory in the acceptance and subsequent implementation of the recommendations of the Mungorilal Backward Classes Commission by the State Government. This had introduced a new era of caste conflict and tension in the state. This event undoubtedly brought solidarity among the different castes and prepared them to

challenge the upper caste dominance in the state.

The backward castes have been divided into two groups on the basis of economic and educational condition: upper backward castes, and the lower backward castes. Within the upper backward castes the position of Yadava is very strong as they are numerically and economically stronger than any other castes in the Bihar State. They are socially and politically prominent and are concentrated mainly in Northern Districts of Darbhanga and Saharasha. They are the traditional traders of milk and milk products and possess a good deal of landed property.

The Yadavas have had frequent conflict with Brahmins because they have tried to identify themselves with the latter and sought recognition to practice religious rituals. They have also clashed with the Kurmis, though on some occasions Kurmis have joined with them in order to combat the Rajput and Brahmins.

The Yadavas are followed by the Koeries and Kurmis in term of their numerical strength. They are mainly engaged in cultivation work and in many parts of the state have been successfully emerging as dominant castes on account of departure of upper castes landowners. The Kurmis are concentrated in Patna, Samastipur, and Vaisali

districts, while the Koeries are found primarily in Patna, Gaya and Nawadha districts. The Kurmis were the most conscious group among the backward castes and they formed their caste association at the inter-state level much before the Independence in order to move up in social hierarchy. With regard to education the Kurmis are the leading backward caste of Bihar.

Politically too, the Kurmis have dominant and asserted their presence as early as 1937. Gur Sahailal, one of the Kurmi leaders, became a minister in the interim government headed by Sri Krishna Singh. Another leader Dev Saran Singh became the speaker of the state legislative council. Kurmis adopted the title of Singh, but it was dropped in the sixties. However, they identify themselves with Rajputs.

The Scheduled Castes

The scheduled castes constitute 14 per cent of the total population of the state. They are scattered throughout the state. But they are dominant in the Districts of North Bihar. In Chhotanagpur region they are less than 10 per cent. Their percentage in the total population is the highest in Palamau district, and closely followed by Gaya. There are twenty Scheduled Castes in Bihar, out of which,

Chamar, Dusadh, Mushar, Dobhi and Pasi together constitute 80 per cent of the total scheduled caste population in the state.

Educationally and economically they are quite backward. Their literacy rate has not shown any substantial increase even after the introduction of reservation policy in educational institutions. Majority of them make a living as agricultural workers of the upper castes and middle castes. There are innumerable cases of illtreatment meted out to. Only in a few villages of the state that they find economically stronger.

Politically also, they are not very influential, only some scheduled castes like Dusadh, Pasi, Chamars have been making efforts to acquire political position. However the state had only two scheduled caste chief ministers till the year 1987.

The Scheduled Tribes

There are twentynine major and minor scheduled tribes in Bihar State and they altogether form 9 per cent of the total population. Majority of them live in the Districts of Ranchi (60%), Hazaribagh (36%), Dhanbad, Singhbhum, Palamau

and Santhal Pargana (44%). These districts are in the hilly regions of Chhotanagpur and Rajmahal. The tribal communities are also found in certain parts of Sasaram, Bhahna, Champaran, Purnea, Bhagalpur and Mungheyr. All these tribals belong to the proto-Australoid stock, though there are slight physiological differences among them.

The important tribes of Bihar are the Mundas, Hos, Santhals, Oraons, Kharies, Birhors, Sauria, Paharias, Mal, Birjias, A-Surs, Bhumij, Cheros and Tharn. The Santhals with a population of 1,569,069 are the largest of the tribes and are found in the Santhal Parganas, Hazaribagh, Singhbhum, Mungheyr, Bhagalpur and Purnea. Next comes Oraons and are found mainly in Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Palamau and Singhbhum districts. Mundas form the third largest tribes with a population of 5,30,676 and are concentrated in Ranchi, Singhbhum, Hazaribagh and Palamau districts.

The tribes in Bihar are no longer in their primitive state. They are undergoing distinct changes due to various benefits derived from the state government as well as due to the work of Western Christian Missionaries. Their economic condition also has recorded improvement with the passage of time. Educationally they are better than scheduled castes. In spite of the fact that both have been given reservation facilities in educational institutions, legislatures and in government services

they interact well with other caste groups, and a large number of them go to different parts of the state for working in mines, factories, construction sites etc. The tribal leaders also are making their impact felt in state politics.

Muslims

The Muslims who constitute approximately 12.8 per cent of the population, are well placed, socially, educationally and politically, but are economically very poor. During the British period they received western education along with Kayastha.

Economic System of the State

Bihar is called a rich state inhabited by poor people.¹⁰ It is rich in its mineral resources, producing 45 per cent of Bauxite, 82 per cent of copper and 88 per cent of knite. There are capital intensive industrial units such as steel plants at Bokaro and Jamshedpur, the heavy Engineering Complex at Ranchi and Refinery at Barauni. Despite all, these, Bihar is one of the poorest state of the country. Its agricultural output per capita income was

10. Bose, S.R., Economic of Bihar (Calcutta: K.L. Publication, 1971), p.1.

Rs.225 in 1973-74, the lowest as compared to all other states of India. The average growth rate of per capita income was a mere 26.1 per cent over the period 1961-62 to 1968-69. Almost three fourth of the population live below the poverty lines i.e. their per capita monthly income is Rs. 20 or less.¹¹

Agriculture

Bihar is primarily an agricultural state, though it has very sound basis for industrialization. As we have stated earlier, about 80 per cent of its population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. However, agriculture in the state is not very developed as the irrigated areas form only about 26 per cent of the total cultivated areas and the modern means of irrigation are also lacking in the state.

The state is not self-sufficient in foodgrains. The main drawback is lack of adequate irrigational facilities, besides infertile soil and occasional droughts and floods. This has led to agricultural stagnation. The absence of food and agricultural raw material supply also constituted a barrier to rapid industrial growth. This is why about 80 per cent of the people are engaged in agricultural activity.

11. Shah, Ghanshyam, The Revolution, Reform or Protest: A Study of Bihar Movement, A Research Project Submitted to ICSSR, 1975.

Only 20 per cent are employed in household industries and other works.

Table-III

Occupational Pattern in Bihar, 1981

(In terms of Percentage)

Category	Persons	Men	Women
Cultivators	43.47	46.71	25.54
Agricultural Labourers	35.50	30.65	63.33
Household Industries	02.38	02.32	02.76
Other Works	18.55	20.32	08.37

Source: Census of India, 1981 Series 4, Bihar, p.xii.

Thus agriculture in the state is heavily dependent on rainfall. The Gangetic Plain forms one of the richest and most fertile agricultural tracts in Bihar and grows a variety of crops.¹² Main crops are rice, wheat, maize, Ragi and pulses of which rice is the dominant one. Principal cash

12. Diwakar, R.K., Bihar Through the Ages (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1958), p.38.

crops are sugarcane, oil seeds, tobacco and jute. The total production of foodgrains in the state was about 101 lakh tonnes in 1978-79 as compared to 97 lakhs tonnes in 1977-78.¹³

There are three agricultural harvests in Bihar. These are Bhadai (Autumn), Aghani (winter) and Rabi (Spring). Bhadai harvests include rice, maize, millets and jute; the Aghani harvest consists essentially of the winter rice, crops and sugarcane and Rabi harvest comprises crops like wheat, barley, gram, khesari, peas, archa, linseed rapeseed mustard etc.

About 64 per cent of the land- holding in the state consists of tiny plots of less than one hectares, and 15 per cent between one or two hectares. Mechanisation of the agricultural operation has been done in very few areas of the state, and production is not substantial.

There are many reasons which are responsible for the low level of production and some of them have already been mentioned above. The most important reason is the unequal distribution of land on the basis of caste. More than seventy per cent of landed property is mainly owned by the upper castes,

13. Employment News (New Delhi), 11 July 1981, p.3.

who are in a minority. The other castes, who form more than 86 per cent of the population depend for their livelihood on one-fourth of the landed property. Among non- upper castes more than 20 per cent of the land is owned by the upper middle castes specially Yadava, Koeri, Kurmi and Bania, who have emerged as a strong pressure group in Bihar politics after 1967. The unequal distribution of landed property on the basis of caste is given in Tables III, IV., V and VI.

Table-IV

Classification of Holdings According to Size, 1951.

Size Group	Percentage of total No. of Holdings
Under 1 acre	31.0
Under 5 acres	46.01
Under 10 acres	14.3
Under 25 acres	7.1
Under 50 acres	1.1
Under 100 acres	0.4

Note: The Table shows that a large number of holdings is small: 30 per cent are below 1 acre and 77 per cent below 5 acres. This pattern of holdings indicate the fragmentation that has come about. This point is more clear when the above Table is read along with Table IV, V and VI.

Source: All India Agriculture Enquiry, Rural Manpower and Occupation Structure, 1951, p.62.

Table-V

Distribution of Agricultural Holdings and Family, 1951

Families	Name of families (%)	Percentage of holdings	Percentage of area holds	Average size of holdings
Landowners	3.01	3.9	11.2	12.0
Tenants	38.8	49.6	66.8	5.6
Labour with land	25.5	34.1	13.6	1.6
Labour without land	14.2	-	-	-
Non-agricultural families	18.5	12.5	6.1	21.0
TOTAL:	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Note: Another fact brought out by the above Table in the concentration of a big chunk of land in the hands of very small section of society, 3.8 per cent, out of entire holding amounted to 11.2 per cent of the total area, i.e. 2,400,000 acres is owned by 0.3% of the family.

Source: All India Agricultural Labour Enquiry Rural Manpower and Occupation Structure, 1951, p.63.

Table-VI

<u>Caste and Agricultural Occupation, 1951</u>							
(In Percentage)							
No. of Families	Brahmins	Rajputs	Vaishyas	Backward castes	S.C.	S.T.	Others
	491	429	372	3,639	2,210		
Total number of families	5.1	4.5	3.9	38.1	23.2	2.2	23.0
Landowners	8.1	3.2	1.1	1.1	3.5	-	-
Tenants	-	78.6	31.7	4.4	15.0	-	-
Agricultural workers	-	6.3	18.0	35.2	66.6	-	-
No. of agricultural workers	19.0	6.9	49.2	19.5	14.5	-	-
TOTAL:	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.8	100.0		

Note: At is evident from the Table that the ownership of the land is concentrated to a very great extent, in the hands of the upper caste hierarchy. It can be found that dependence of the lower castes for their living in farm labour is greater, the upper castes, e.g. the Rajputs constitute only 6.3 per cent of the total agricultural labour force as compared to backward classes (85.2%) and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (66.8%)

Source: All India Agriculture Structure, 1931, pp.55-57.

All India Agriculture Labour Enquiry does not give different figures for Brahmins.

If one lumps together the different categories, it simply indicates that the main occupation about 81 per cent of Brahmins is cultivation. It does not give relevant figures in the case of a tribal and aboriginals.

In other words, the economic position of a particular caste is correlated to its position in the caste hierarchy. The higher castes, as the above table reveals, though numerically very small are economically very powerful, while the numerous lower castes do not own land, at least not to any significant extent. Among the lower castes the percentage of upper backward castes is better.

Table-VIII

Distribution of Land Holdings

<u>Size of Farms(Acres)</u>	<u>Percentage of total cultivating household, cultivating each size of farm</u>
Less than 1	21.5
1.0 to 2.4	26.7
2.5 to 4.9	23.4
5.0 to 7.4	12.2
7.5 to 9.9	5.1
10.0 to 12.4	3.7
12.5 to 14.9	1.8
15.0 to 29.9	4.2
30.0 to 49.9	1.0
50.0 and above	0.4
TOTAL:	100.0

Source: Bose, S.R., Economic of Bihar (Calcutta: K.L.Firma Publication, 1971), p.47.

It is clear from the above Table that the size of the farm of almost one half of the total households (48.2 per cent) was limited to less than two and a half acres, and more than one fifth - 21.5 per cent of total cultivating households - has less than one acre to cultivate.

Industrialization

The State occupied an important position in the industrial set up of the country especially in respect of mineral-based industries because of abundant mineral resources. The large scale industries in Bihar can be divided into five categories:

- (a) Metallic mineral industries (iron, steel, copper, aluminium and engineering industries)
- (b) Non-metallic mineral industries (cement, fertiliser, oil-refinery product, coal washeries, glass and mica industry)
- (c) Agriculture-based industries (sugar, jute, cotton, tobacco, leather and rice mills, oil mills etc.)
- (d) Forest-based industries (copper, lac and shellac silk industries)
- (e) Miscellaneous industries.

Besides the above mentioned large scale industries, there are numerous small scale and cotton industries (about

18,918 in numbers) also in the state. These include mica, splitting machine tool, hosiery, metal polish, boot polish, lamps holders, machine spare-parts, steel-trunks, locks, pottery, cutlery, hardware, khadi, oil pressing, leather, tanning, bidi-making, basket-making, soap-making etc.

The following Table shows the number of registered factories running throughout the year which have submitted returns and the volume of employment during the year 1970-75.

Table - ~~XVI~~

Factories and Workers in Bihar during 1970-75

Year	Number of factories registered	Number of factories worked during the year	Number of submitting returns	Average number of workers employed daily
1970	18,718	16,503	16,485	2,78,177
1971	20,441	18,037	18,020	2,84,611
1972	21,763	19,586	19,570	2,89,995
1973	23,028	20,636	20,620	3,04,241
1974	24,847	22,044	22,006	3,17,650
1975	27,290	24,755	24,546	3,33,538

Source: Chief Inspector of the Factories. Bihar, cited in Bihar Statistical Handbook (Patna, 1978).

In terms of the location of industries, Bihar can be divided into a number of zones.¹⁴ These are:

- (1) Northern part, where nearly two-third of rice mills in the state are located.
- (2) Sugar factory zones covering the districts of Saran, Siwan, Champaran, Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur.
- (3) Industrial centres located mainly on the south bank of Ganga; there are oil mills, tobacco factory, silk industry, shoe-factory, cycle, electric, lamps, glass factories and jute industry in this zone.
- (4) Valley of the river zones, which includes industries based on forest products, cement and sugar factories, chemical industry etc.
- (5) Mica-belt of Hazaribagh and Giridih district.
- (6) Damodar Valley having a large coal belt and some major industries.
- (7) Singhbhum region having a number of heavy metal industries.

For accelerating the rate of industrial growth in the state, six industrial area development authorities are functioning at Durgapur, Bokaro, Darbhanga, Patna, Ranchi and Muzafarpur. Besides these twenty industrial estates are functioning in different parts of the state.

14. R.R.Diwakar, op.cit., p.45.

Position of Backward Castes in the Field of Economy

On the basis of above discussion, we can conclude that the position of backward castes of Bihar is not sufficient in the field of economy. Though their position is better than the lower castes, but in comparison to upper castes, their position is very low. The upper castes have occupied more than 50% of the state property. How in the agricultural and non-agricultural areas the upper castes have captured the major part of state property. By the help of Table-X below we will also prove that how backward castes are behind the upper castes.

Table-X

Representation of the Backward Classes in the Department of Education in Bihar as on 1 January 1972

Category of posts	Total No. of Employ-ees	S.C.		S.T.		Backward Classes		Others	
		Total	%age	Total	%age	Total	%age	Total	%age
Class I	114	1	0.1	1	0.1	1	1.0	110	96.7
Class II	414	3	0.8	6	1.5	4	0.9	401	96.8
Class III	9215	259	2.8	98	1.0	742	8.1	8121	88.1
Total	9743					748	7.6		

Source: Report of the Backward Classes Commission (Chairman: Mungeri Lal); (Patna: Government of Bihar, 1976) p.128.

Why Bihar is Economically very Backward?

A number of reasons could be attributed to the backwardness of the economy of Bihar, e.g. the slow rate of spread of literacy which is only 26.0 per cent of the total population, the limited capacity of the industrial sector to create employment opportunity in order to meet the rising demands of jobs, enhancing the already considerable burden on agriculture, lack of investment and failure to motivate the agriculturist, the increasing population etc. But apart from all these, the factors which are mainly responsible for the economic backwardness of Bihar are mainly four: (1) Land Tenure System; (2) Exploitation by Bengalis, moneylenders, Hindu and Zamindars and the British Raj; (3) Unevenness between North Bihar and South Bihar and Chotanagpur plateau; (4) Unequal distribution of state property on the basis of caste.

The Permanent Settlement of 1793 had brought in a new form of landlordism and there emerged a class of zamindars. The zamindars were the tax-getters and non-cultivating tenant landlord, those who paid land rent to zamindars were tenants. The zamindars' tenants, landlord and big peasants were mostly upper caste Hindus, whereas the agricultural labourers were mainly from what is known today as scheduled caste and

backward castes.¹⁵ The main result of the British land policy in Bihar was the gradual dispossession of lands of the peasants, and the rise of a new class of agricultural labour. On the one-hand are the landless and on the other are the dominant class of zamindars who owned the vast bulk of the cultivated land. The peasant with smaller holdings and under the exeruciating burden of heavy debts were forced to till their lands for moneylenders. The zamindari system was one of the main reasons for lack of economic development. The zamindars neither invested capital for increasing agricultural production nor did they do anything else to improve the standard of production. After Independence the zamindari system was abolished, the elimination of intermediaries did not take place. As Shashisekhar Jha said: "Ex-zamindars were allowed to retain their ownership over landholdings under the category of Khudakast¹⁶ (personal cultivation) and "Sir" which alone amounted to 3-5 million acres in Bihar. According to Daniel Thorner, it is not difficult to find 500, 700 or even 1000 acre holdings in post reform Bihar.

15. Prasad, Pradhan H.: "Caste and Class in Bihar", Economic and Political Weekly, Annual Number, February 1979, p.481.

16. Jha, Shashisekhar: Political Elite in Bihar(Bombay: Vora and Co., 1972) p.250.

One also finds that after the zamindari abolition, there is still a persistence of older structure of land-owner, occupancy, raiyat, non-occupancy of raiyat under the raiyat and bataidar (cropsharer) system.¹⁷ A raiyat has been defined to mean a person who has acquired a right to hold land for the purpose of cultivating it by himself or by members of its family. Occupying raiyats are those who hold lands at a fixed rate of rent.

Furthermore various legislations have given birth to "free and Benami farmer", i.e. a farmer who is actually a fictitious person and exists only in legal records. Fake division in the extended joint family is carried out by the landlord perhaps with the help of corrupt bureaucracy. They take recourse to all possible methods to retain maximum land in their possession. Further the Batidars¹⁸ and Majdwrs¹⁹ cannot easily rise against their malik²⁰ individually. Besides being dependent on malik for economic existence, these Batidars and Majdoors are

17. Daniel Thorner: The American Prospects in India (Delhi: University Press, 1956), p.34.

18. Share croppers.

19. Landless labourers.

20. Landlords.

bound to them most of the time. The second important reason for the backwardness of the economy is regional disparity between North Bihar Plain, South Bihar Plain and Chotanagpur plateau. Seasonal flood is one of the reasons for the grinding poverty in the North Bihar plain. The unevenness in the irrigation facilities have also worsened economic backwardness. While irrigation has spread to over seventy per cent of the land in South Bihar plain, it is only around thirty-five per cent in North Bihar plain till 1980.²¹ Furthermore, industrialization is one of the major factors of regional disparity in Bihar. The Chotanagpur plateau is one of the heavily industrialized regions of the state. The region is also rich in mineral wealth, in fact richest in the country Insidib.²² It is biggest industrial complex of Bihar. Thus due to industrialization, migration, urbanization and literacy have been prime movers in the economic development of Chotanagpur plateau. Unemployment is less a problem in this region, and since the people are educated they have an edge over others in getting employment. The demand for

21. The Indian Nation, 7 April 1984, p.3.

22. It is under Santhal Paraganas Commissioner's division.

greater job opportunities for the son of soil has also contributed to localised economic prosperity.

The third most important reason for the backwardness of the economy of Bihar is the unequal distribution of state property on the basis of caste. How casteism is responsible for the backwardness of economy of Bihar is already discussed above.

Educational Set up of the State

The state of Bihar is also backward in the sphere of education. According to 1981 Census while the All-India literacy average was 34.8 per cent (excluding Jammu and Kashmir and Assam) for Bihar the figure was 26.01 per cent. This reflects the low level of educational development in the state.

The backwardness of the state on the basis of education is also different from region to region and from one caste to the other. For example in the rural area of Bihar the rate of literacy is about 16 per cent, while in urban area it comes to about 43 per cent. Districts having high rate of literacy are Patna, Dhanbad and Singhbhum. Ranchi is a leading town in terms of literacy.

Similarly among all the caste groups of Bihar, the upper castes are more educationally advanced in comparison to other caste groups of the state.

After the upper caste, the position of upper backward castes, specially the Yadavas, Koiris, Kurmin and Banias is much better than rest of the castes. The lower Sudra, SC and ST are educationally very backward. The educational level in various districts and on the caste basis of is given below in the Tables XI, XII and XIII.

Table-XI

Percentage of literacy in different towns in Bihar in 1961

Name of Towns	Percentage of Literacy		
	Persons	Male	Female
Patna	50.44	62.10	35.32
Jamshedpur	52.12	61.73	39.76
Gaya	44.99	58.44	28.85
Bhagalpur	43.40	54.72	29.55
Ranchi	57.24	66.85	44.94
Muzaffarpur	81.98	61.64	38.13
Darbhanga	89.62	54.31	22.20

Source: Roychowdhary, F.C.: Inside Bihar(Calcutta, 1962), p.30.

Table-XII

Educational Study of the Backward Classes,
1973

Caste	Number of schools in which the students of this caste study	Total number of students	Total Number of students of backward castes	Number of students of this caste
Kumhar	58	3,610	1,661	92
Koiri	86	5,053	1,950	408
Kurmi	190	14,169	4,212	815
Teli	118	6,813	2,540	381
Kumar	61	3,925	1,548	110
Bania	46	2,697	1,125	161
Hajam	196	13,141	4,613	300
Mallah	48	3,022	1,150	74
Yadava	270	15,805	5,375	1,508
Ansari	6	358	150	10

Note: The total number of high schools in Bihar is 2,800. Data collected in respect of Class X in 380 high schools.

Source: Report of Bihar Backward Classes Commission (Chairman: Mungerilal), Part II, Patna, Govt. of Bihar, 1976, pp.11-13.

(Note: Out of the forty-six castes mentioned in the Table there, we have taken just ten important castes for our purposes).

The table shows that the most backward castes were far behind in the field of education. The neo-forward castes (those who are politically dominant, but educationally and economically advanced viz. the Yadava, Kurmis, the Koirs and Baniyas) were represented in proportion to their population. Table XIII will also explain the educational advancement of advanced backward classes in comparison to most backward classes.

Table-XIII

Distribution of Secondary Schools leaving
Certificates Students in Selected Schools
of Dhanbad District, 1974

Caste	Frequency	
	Percentage	Number of students
Forward Castes	55.5	501
Advanced backward classes	19.7	178
Most backward classes	12.7	115
Scheduled Castes	7.4	67
Scheduled Tribes	4.7	42
	100.0	903

Source: Meelson, J.P.: "Class - Structure, Education and Social Change in India", Resulting an Emperical Caste Study in Dhanbad(Bihar), in J.P.Meelson ed. Social Inequality and Political Structures (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983), p.70.

On the basis of above tables, it is clear that in Bihar only the position of upper castes and to some extent the upper backward castes is strong in terms of their educational level. What is the reason for this anomalous situation.

Analysing the reason, one would realise that from the beginning, when western education was introduced in Bihar influencing factor in the educational sphere.²³ For example, when Western education was introduced people of all caste groups did not take the advantage of it, only Kayastha, Bengalis and to some extent Muslims made use of the available opportunities. Among the ^{upper} castes, the Brahmins did not initially join English education, because they were very orthodox and followed traditional Sanskrit education. The Bhumihars and Rajputs were so wealthy that they did not feel it necessary to receive English education. The rest of the caste had not received it because of their social and economic backwardness. The Kayastha and Muslims went for English education and when Bihar became independent from Bengal, all the top position in the government went mostly to the Kayastha and to some extent Muslims. Soon

23. Jha, Shasishekhar: Political Elite in Bihar (Vora and Co. Publisher, 1972), and Sinha Niroj, University Administration in India with Special Reference to Bihar (Janki Prakasan, Patna, 1979).

Bhumihars, Rajputs and Brahmins also began to take up western education. Among the other castes, only the upper backward castes started to take up western education, because their position socially and economically can be said to be better than the rest. During this time, the wealthy leaders of all these castes groups tried their best to establish educational institutions for the sake of their caste people. These are few of the reasons for the continuing educational backwardness of Bihar. Despite various programmes initiated by the Government of India to improve the standard of education, Bihar could not achieve of the stronghold of caste in the field of education. This is highlighted in the report of Sri Abraham who was appointed to investigate the functioning of Magadh University. He stated: "The terms of references were mainly the play of caste politics in the affairs of university, e.g., appointments, promotions of the teachers, caste riots among the students of the university, election of members of teaching staff to the Senate, large-scale bungling in the examination and likeage of papers etc²⁴."

24. Niroj, Sinha, op.cit.

Caste based Politics of Bihar

It is virtually impossible to speak of politics of Bihar in any meaningful way without taking into account the overriding influence of caste. Factors such as personalities, factionalism, ideology and party differences are undoubtedly important, but any serious treatment of Bihar politics finds implicitly or explicitly the influence of caste it is the most important determinant of the patterns of political process.²⁵

The caste factor is so important in Bihar politics that it is almost impossible to properly understand most of the political events of past years without a clear grasp of this aspect. Historical events like the movement for the creation of a separate Bihar and issues like the dominance of Kayasthas, the challenge to their domination by Bhumihar and Rajputs, changes in the pattern of leadership (i.e. the replacement of upper caste leadership by the backward caste leaders) politics of defection, policy of

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25. Sadiq Ali: The General Election, 1951: A Survey (New Delhi: AICC, 1959), pp.40-41; A.P. Barnabas and S.C. Mehta, Caste in Changing India (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1959), p.64; C. Jha, "Caste in Bihar Congress", in Iqbal Narain, ed., State Politics in India (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1967), pp.86-87 and R.C. Prasad, "Educational Development", Seminar, No.107, July 1962, pp.26-31.

seat reservation and caste riots during the ministry of Karpuri Thakur and the election of 1980 and 1985 can be analysed only in terms of caste dynamics.

Considering the importance of caste in politics of the state, it would be worthwhile to recapitulate the political condition of Bihar in brief, taking the period of 1912 to 1985. The caste-based politics of Bihar can be traced back to 1912 when the movement for separation of Bihar was started under the leadership of Sachidananda, a Kayastha by caste. This movement was started by Kayastha caste group because these people, who had the largest number to receive English education next to Bengalis faced tough competition from Bengalis.²⁶ These people in 1912 spearheaded the agitation to make Bihar a separate state. After separation, it provided a large number of new opportunities of employment in judiciary, administration, legislature and the economic field. The Kayasthas, who were next in receiving the English education to Bengalis got more privileges.²⁷

26. Singh, N.K.: "Many Faces of Caste Politics in Bihar", Economic and Political Weekly, 8 April 1972, p.748.

27. For example, S.N.Sinha was appointed as Executive Councillor to the Governor, he was also the speaker of Bihar Legislative Council and also Vice-Chancellor of Patna University and the member of first constituent assembly.

Only the Kayasthas benefited by the opening of employment opportunities. This was not acceptable to the other castes especially Bhumihars and Rajputs, who were the two strongest land-owning groups of Bihar. They soon began to pose a serious threat to Kayasthas. Leaders like A.N. Sinha and S.K.Sinha began to organise their caste people to participate in politics in a big way.

The Kayasthas while realising their failure to compete with the Rajputs and Bhumihars due to the lack of caste solidity and resources, adopted the policy of divide and rule. They allied themselves with the Rajputs, who were wealthy and more in number as compared to Bhumihars. Thus in 1930 three caste groups were active in Bihar politics: Kayastha and Rajputs on the one hand and Bhumihar on the other.²⁸

By the time Congress formed the Government in 1937 under the Act of 1935, the State Congress had polarised into two factions, one was headed by S.K.Sinha, a Bhumihar leader from Monghyer district and the other led by A.N. Sinha, a Rajput leader from South-Western Gaya district.

28. For this period see Prasad, R.C., op.cit.: Hauser, Walter, Dynamics of Social Ranking and Political Power among Emerging Caste Group in Bihar, A paper presented to association for the Asian Studies, (Chicago), March 1967, p.26.

By this time the Brahmins, specially the Meithelis, who were socially, economically and educationally stronger began entering the political field, but without any substantial success for many years. After the 1946 election, a struggle again developed between S.K.Sinha and A.N.Sinha.

It was believed that when India attained freedom, the menace of caste in politics would disappear but in practice it only increased. There were many charges of casteism right from the first general election. The main contributing reason was the fact that both the factions in Bihar Congress supported candidates on the basis of caste. Between the first and second general elections caste feeling was all pervading and came out on the surface. The Kayastha leader K.B. Sahaya, who had by that time left A.N.Sinha and had joined S.K.Sinha, viewed himself as the heir-apparent to S.K.Sinha. Naturally Sahaya became frustrated when the Chief Minister began to show signs of favouring his own castemen, Mahesh Prasad Sinha, one of the relatively younger Bhumihar politician.

From the first general election to the last general election, caste factor was always there in Bihar politics, but the main difference was that before 1967, the caste conflict was predominant among the upper caste people,

while after 1967 it was between the forward and backward caste people. How and why the caste conflict started between the upper and backward castes? This we will examine in Chapter-IV.

CHAPTER-III

EMERGENCE OF BACKWARD CASTES IN INDIAN
POLITICS: POLITICAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND
LEGAL DIMENSION

CHAPTER-III

EMERGENCE OF BACKWARD CASTES IN INDIAN POLITICS: POLITICAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL DIMENSION

In this chapter an attempt is made to study the comparative position of backward castes in different states of India by tracing the origin and growth of various movements among these castes people. What were the main reasons responsible for the emergence of backward castes? What are the steps taken by the government of India for their upliftment? What are the criteria was in defining backwardness? What are the modalities used by different states in extending reservation to them in educational institutions and employment, and what percentage is kept apart from them? This chapter tries to find answers to these vital questions.

A vast ocean of Indian population is still living in backward condition crushed down by illiteracy and extreme poverty. Historically speaking the root cause of their misery lies in the primitive human tendency to exploit fellow begins firstly in the name of religion backed social hierarchy and later in the name of national or political exigencies under medieval chieftans called the Raja, Maharaja, Nawab, Shah etc. Thus the plight of the poor masses has been a continuing reality for hundreds of years without any relief for them from discrimination and deprivation.

The disadvantages faced by the backward castes were based on the status ascribed to them by virtue of their birth

in a particular caste, creed, or tribal group. In the course of time the Indian society developed a social structure based on caste which further spawned a variety of sub-caste so over a period of time the caste system gained defined boundaries with privileges and disadvantages sanctioned by tradition. It also assumed another dimension when each caste began to have one or more professions assigned to them with strict adherence to caste morality and mode of behaviour. This state of affairs resulted in the development of closed status groups (based on birth) which can hardly be compared to the modern classes representing open status groups offering mobility on the basis of personal achievements.

Society developed along closed status groups, their status being ascribed to their birth in a particular caste or sub-castes and not to their economic or intellectual characteristics. Though the backward castes are made up of three categories viz. Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Castes, we will confine our discussions only to other backward castes.

Position of Other Backward Castes in India

The other backward castes(OBC) occupy a middle status in the society. We shall discuss their position socially, economically, numerically, constitutionally and politically in the following pages.

Numerical position of OBCs

It is difficult to give an exact figure of OBCs because they are not enumerated separately in the census. But some estimates can, however, be made of their strength by analysing the findings of the 1931 Census and the latest report of Mandal Commission of 1980 on the backward classes. According to Mandal's report, the OBCs constitute 3,943(52%) of the total Indian population.¹

Social position of OBCs

The position occupied by OBCs in Indian society is rather different from that of Harijans. Generally they occupy a low position in the varna hierarchy and are generally denied access to literacy. As they lagged behind in the field of Western education, they are poorly represented in government jobs and white collar occupations. In spite of as this disadvantages they occupy a dominant position in the economic and political system of the village.

Constitutional position of OBCs

OBCs are mentioned in the Constitution of India in only the most general terms. They are lumped together in

1. Government of India, Report on the Backward Classes, by B.P.Mandal, Part II, 1980, p.58.

the category of "socially and educationally backward section of the people".² Article 340 authorises the President of India to appoint a Commission to investigate and report their condition in different parts of the country. The State Government under Articles 15(4) and 16(4) can appoint a Commission to look into the social and educational backwardness of different castes and make reservation accordingly in education and government services.³

Economic and Occupational Position of OBCs

Though numerically the OBCs are a very strong caste group of India, economically their position is very low. Mandal Commission found that the representation of the backward classes (other than the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes) in the Central Services in different categories is less than that of SC and ST. Although the population of these backward classes is more than double of SC and ST, the better representation of SC and ST are due entirely to the reservation policy. For the low representation of BCs in Central Government services see Table-XIV.

2. The Constitution of India, Government of India, Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs, New Delhi, p.7.

3. Ibid.

Table XI

Representation of Backward Classes, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the service of the Central Government, 1979

	Class I			Class II			Classes III and IV			All Classes (consolidated)		
	Total	SC/ST	OBC	Total	SC/ST	OBC	Total	SC/ST	OBC	Total	SC/ST	OBC
Ministry/ Department	11,707	840 (7.18)	303 (2.59)	43,803	5,985 (13.66)	1,742 (3.98)	17,829	5,518 (30.95)	1,500 (8.41)	73,339	12,343 (16.83)	3,545 (4.83)
Autonomous Institutions	81,325	5,399 (6.64)	4,147 (5.09)	503,337	91,431 (18.16)	59,079 (11.74)	322,948	67,118 (20.78)	67,786 (20.98)	907,610	163,948 (18.06)	131,012 (14.43)
Public Corporation	80,994	9,652 (4.51)	3,719 (4.59)	365,785	68,566 (18.74)	36,242 (9.91)	143,910	45,646 (31.72)	22,689 (15.77)	590,689	117,864 (19.95)	62,650 (10.61)
Total	174,026	9,891 (5.68)	8,169 (4.69)	912,925	165,982 (18.18)	97,063 (10.63)	484,687	118,282 (24.10)	91,975 (18.98)	1,571,638	294,155 (18.72)	197,207 (12.55)

Note: Percentage figures are given within brackets. SC = Scheduled Castes; ST = Scheduled Tribes; and OBC = Other Backward Classes.

Source: Backward Classes Commission, Report (New Delhi, 1980), Parts I and II, p.88.

Political Position of OBCs

Politically the position of OBCs is very strong. Due to their numerical strength, after Independence it became necessary for every political party to seek their support as they formed a sizeable vote bank which can tilt electoral fortunes. Due to their numerical strength they organised themselves in the form of different political parties in various parts of the country. For example in Bihar in 1967, they were organised ~~the~~ under the banner of "Sosit Dal", and in Tamil Nadu in the form of Justice Party. On All India level they articulated politically as BKD. Important national political parties like the Congress(I), Janta Party and Bhartiya Janta Party bank on the support of OBC during elections. The present situation shows that no political party can form a government without seeking the support of the OBCs.

Nature of OBC Movement in India

The nature of OBC movement in different states of India is not similar. In some states the backward castes movement succeeded while in others, their movement unleashe a lot of disturbances. Broadly speaking we can divide their movement into two main categories viz.

(1) Backward Castes Movement of North India, and (2) Backward Castes Movement of south India. Analysing these two streams, we reach certain conclusions which are contradictory. The first finding is that there is no difference between the backward castes movement either in north or south India. But a further analysis would reveal that there is a great deal of difference between the two. Below, we will discuss the nature of Backward Castes Movement of both the categories.

Comparison on the Basis of Disimilarities

The comparison of Southern and Northern states indicate that the Backward Castes Movement is much more strong and successful in Southern states. Southern states have done much more work for the development of backward castes, whereas in Northern states even the modest welfare measures for the OBCs have resulted in sharp resistance. For ~~the~~ example in Bihar, the proposal for 26.1 per cent reservation of seats for OBCs provoked a great of disturbances.

There are many reasons for the success of OBCs in Southern states. Some of them are the following: Firstly, reservation schemes had much more longer history in South

than North Indian states. In South, it was started in pre-independence India, but in north it started only after 1979.⁴ Secondly, the forward castes were more divided among themselves in South in comparison to Northern states. For example, if we review the history of Backward Castes movement of South, we will find that there was only one single upper caste i.e. Brahmin in Southern States against whom the backward classes organised their struggles. All the other upper castes of South India had joined their hands with backward castes and scheduled castes and scheduled tribes under a single umbrella "Anti-Brahmin Movement" which strengthened their movement. But in Northern states there was not only one single upper caste, i.e. Brahmin, but many other strong upper castes like Rajputs, Kayasthas and Bhumihars, who were also economically strong. All these upper castes rallied against the backward castes movement. For example, in 1979, when the Government of Bihar tried to implement job reservation

4. For example in Madras, it was started in 1885, when for the first time, a step was taken by Madras Government, with the forming of grant in Aid Code to regulate financial aid to educational institutions, providing special facilities for the students of depressed classes. On the other hand, in Northern State like Bihar, it was started only after 1979, when state government tried to implement the recommendation of Mungerilal Commission for the OBCs.

policy of OBCs, all the upper castes Hindus joined together under a single "Anti-Backward Castes Movement" forcing the government to withdraw its proposal. Thirdly, in Northern states, these OBCs are not getting along well with SC and ST. But in Southern states they were drawing full support from these sections of society. Fourthly, the backward classes of South were more politicized than the backward castes of North. In South India the movement for the upliftment of backward classes was started earlier than Independence. They also gained the benefits of western education in pre-Independence India. In contrast in North this happened mainly after Independence. The rapid expansion of tertiary sector gave openings to forward castes in the South, which was not available to some extent in Northern states.

Comparison on the Basis of Equality

Though there is a great deal of difference between the backward castes movement of two regions, there are certain similarities between the two. Firstly, in both areas the people of backward castes desired to improve their social status through capturing political power. Secondly, there were many counter-responses challenging

the criteria of caste for determining backwardness. The degree of such opposition varied from one place to another and from time to time. The upper caste Hindu fought for status quo. The backward classes movement stressed social criterion to attain equality with the upper castes.

Emergence of Backward Classes Movement in different States of India.

There are two very important backward classes movements in India, which were started in pre-Independence India. These movements were: (a) Jyoti Rao Phule's movement in Bombay Presidency (1870-1930) and (b) Non-Brahmin movement in Madras(1900). According to Omvedit, "Tamil Nadu" and "Maharashtra" are states whose degree of rural impoverishment and proletarianisation are among the highest in India, "hence", produced strongest movement of cultural revolt in India.⁵ It was not so severe in the other parts of South India.

Satya Shadhak Samaj in Maharashtra

Unlike most, for the Phule movement the leadership and initiative came from the backward castes themselves.

5. Omvedit, Gail, : Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India 1873-1930, Bombay 1976, p.265.

These backward castes include "Malis", "Telis", "Kunlis" and "Sahs". In many of the earlier movements the leadership was mainly provided by the upper caste Hindus.

Phule was born in 1827 to a "Mali" (gardener). He took to social service early in his life. He tried to improve the social status of women and members of other low castes. This met with serious opposition from the Brahmins early in 1873, and in response they launched the "Satya Shadak Samaj".⁶ To improve the status of lower caste members and to fight the Brahminical supremacy and to popularise his views "Phule" began publishing a new paper called "Din Bandhu" in 1875.⁷ The Satya Shadak Samaj was a contemporary of other social religious organisations of the Hindu renaissance period like the "Prathana Samaj" started by Mahadev Govinda Pandey in 1867 (Bombay) and the "Arya Samaj" launched by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1877 (Lahore).

Phule aimed at complete eradication of caste system, superstition and inequality. He was opposed to the "sanskritic", "Hinduism", and believed "Mahabharata" and

6. "Satya Shodak Samaj", means the truth speaking association.

7. "Din Bandhu" means the brother of poor.

"Ramayana" were reflection of Brahmin domination. For a long time Phule did not cooperate with Brahmin dominated nationalist movement and continued to battle the upper castes of Brahmin. However by 1930 "Satya Shodak Samaj" ultimately collaborated with the nationalist movement.

Omvedit Gail, holds the view that "Phule's theory of exploitation was focussed on cultural and ethnic factors rather than economic and political. According to Barth; culturally and ethnically Brahmins were considered superior at that time and Phule movement was basically aimed against them. This alone is not enough to improve the socio-economic condition of the people concerned. Probably one of the reasons for the decline of the popularity of Phule's movement and Satya Shodak Samaj is the political and economic power of other upper castes.

Although Phule's contribution to the causes of welfare of backward castes in Bombay Presidency was characterised by "rigorous cultural revolution", the impact of the movement was sufficient to fulfil his desire for rationality and equality for backward castes. This was because the movement was confined to small areas around Poona and did not take a political character, which is important for any movement to succeed in India.

Non-Brahmin Movement in Tamil Nadu⁸

The non-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu was led by the economically and politically well off castes like "vellals" and "chettians" from Tamil speaking areas and "Kama and Reddis" from Telgu speaking areas. But the movement was a blessing in disguise for them. Tamil Brahmins emerged into metropolitan cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi to take up administrative, teaching and media jobs. They took the lead in this field, even among the Brahmins of other parts of India.

While Phule movement was one of the first movements of Backward castes to fight against upper caste domination, the non-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu was the most popular and successful movement in the history of modern India. One important reason for its success was its political dimension. An important consequence of politics in the former Madras Presidency was formation of caste from a guardian of traditional order to an agent of political democracy.⁹ The impact of politics on caste was first felt in the Presidency as it was one of the first regions

8. The Non-Brahmin Movement is also known as "Dravidian Movement".

9. Rudolph, Loyod I: "Urban Life and Populist Radcarism: Dravian Politics in Madras" in M.S.A.Rao, Urban Sociology in India, O.Longmans Bombay, 1914, p.418.

of the country where western education was introduced. Politicisation of caste in Madras with the formation of Justice Party in 1916, resulted in developments of far reaching consequences. A new political movement in city and villages came into being.

Brahmins have a tradition of Sanskrit scholarship, but what distinguished them from others was the striking lead they obtained over everyone else, including non-Tamil Brahmins, in Tamil Nadu in English education and entry into bureaucracy.¹⁰ According to "Beteille" between 1892 and 1904, out of 16 successful candidates for the permanent posts of districts munisiffs all were Brahmins and in 1914, 452 out of 650 registered graduates of universities were Brahmins.¹¹ Soldick gives the following figure: "In 1918 the Brahmins in Madras presidency numbered 15 million out of a total of 42 million. Many Kannada, Telugus and Malayam speaking areas, 70% of them were arts graduates. 74% of the law graduates in teaching were Brahmins. out of 390 higher appointment in educational departments, 310 were held by Brahmins, in Judicial departments 394 out of

10. Ibid., p.419.

11. Beteille, Andre, Caste: Old and New Essays in Social Structure (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1969), p.166.

679.¹² The Brahmins domination also extended to Presidency politics and national movement.

It is because of this dominant position of Brahmins that the non-Brahmins of Madras presidency revolted against the upper castes in the beginning of the century. The non-Brahmins had enjoyed some concessions and privileges at least for certain period in history, and they wanted to have a share in new opportunities. Thus the theory of social justice propagated by non-Brahmins found expression in the formation of Justice Party in 1916. This is in contrast to the emergence of the Brahmin-dominated Congress Party. In the 1920 election to the newly constituted Madras Council, the Justice Party won 63 seats out of 98.¹³ as Congress withdrew from the Poll. The non-Brahmin upper castes were able to get the support of many lower castes.

But the success of Justice Party did not last long. In the 1926 election, it won 22 seats, while the newly formed "Swaraj Party" won 41 seats. There was several factors responsible for the decline of Justice Party.

12. Irischick, E., Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Nadu Separatism, 1916-1929, University of California Press, Berkeley 1969; p.113.

13. Hardgrave, Robert, The Dravidian Movement, Popular Prakashan; Bombay, 1965, pp.16- 18.

Some of the reasons were - (1) many members of the Justice Party joined Congress after 1925; (2) after winning the election in 1920 the Upper Caste Brahmins like Vellalia, Reddy, Kamma, Naidu, Chetty and Nair alienated the Harijans and other low castes. (3) They did not give representation to the low castes. (4) The social role of Justice Party became narrower and conservative and they failed to fulfil the promises made to the lower castes. (5) Justice Party did not present the rural areas.

The next phase of non-Brahmin movement was started by E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker,¹⁴ an ex-Congressman, who broke away from the party because of discrimination and open attack against the non-Brahmin castes in the then Madras Congress Organisation. He formed his own group called "Swayam Maryada" or self-respect movement.¹⁵ He started a Tamil speaking "Kudiur"¹⁶ which became the mouth-piece of self-respect movement. The idea was to give the non-Brahmin a sense of pride based on their "Dravidian" past.

14. E.V. Ramaswamy, Naicker, Popularly known as E.V.R. and Periyas.

15. Irschick, E., op.cit., p.103.

16. "Kudiurs" in Tamil Nadu means "Government".

While Justice Party attacked the political and administrative domination of the Brahmins, the self-respect movement attacked the Brahmin Supremacy in Social spheres. In course of time, the non-Brahmins movement or Dravidian movement developed successionist tendency. The self-respect movement, in nature anti-Brahmin, later became anti-Hindu and anti-North Indians. Throughout the Second World War, Ramaswamy Naicker carried on his propaganda for separate Tamil country. To achieve this Dravida Kazhagam¹⁷ was formed. A separate party called Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)¹⁸ was formed five years later by A.N. Annadurai backed by those members of the "Dravida Kazhagam" who disliked the autocratic method of Ramaswamy Naicker. The DMK emerged as a full-fledged party and broke away from D.K. The DMK played a vital role in Tamil Naidu politics and worked for the upliftment of backward castes. Again, another split took place in 1970 after Annadurai's death, and M.G. Ramachandran broke away from Karunanidhi-dominated DMK to form the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. This came to power under the Chief Ministership of M.G. Ramachandran.

17. "Dravida Kazhagam", in Tamil Naidu means the Organisation of Dravidian.

18. Robert Hardgrave, op.cit., p.20.

There are several reasons for the success of Non-Brahmin movements in Tamil Nadu. First, to a large extent the success was due to its political nature in the form of Justice Party and then the Dravida Kazhagam. The next factor was the strong leadership. The economically strong Non-Brahmin upper castes provided the leadership and were able to carry away the non-Brahmin movement for a long time in Tamil Nadu. Although Justice Party alienated the lower castes and Harijans, later not only this group but also the lower caste. Christian converts joined the movement. In spite of assuming political dimension, the non-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu did not lose its zeal for social reforms and maintained its militant character.

19

The SNDP Movement in Kerala

In Kerala, the large chunk of Christian and Muslim populations was not educationally and economically backward. The Namboodiri Brahmin did not monopolise western education or the government services and it was the non-Brahmin Nair caste which took the lead instead. The SNDP in Kerala started by social reformer Narayana Guru helped untouchables and backward castes like Ezhavas to improve their social status.

19. The SNDP stands for Sri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalaka.

Backward Classes Movement in Andhra Pradesh

In pre-Independent, Hyderabad province and Travancore-Cochin region of present Kerala, there was no anti-Brahmin movement as they were not as backward as in rest of the country. In most parts of India the backward class movement before Independence was basically aimed at Brahmins who wielded considerable influence in the socio-political field. In Andhra Pradesh, there was no such large scale Brahmin domination of the Brahmins of Hyderabad province did not have any disproportionate representation in government services or in the field of education. Furthermore in the state of Hyderabad, with a sizeable component of Muslim officials, there was no anti-Brahmin movement.

Backward Classes Movement in Karnataka

Backward classes movement in Karnataka began during the later days of British colonial administration. Its origin also coincided with the beginning of non-Brahmin movement (around 1918). One could probably mark the decline of Brahmin power in erstwhile princely State of Mysore with the resignation of M. Visveruwarayya from the Diwanship. In the same year a deputation of non-Brahmin leaders met the Maharaja to focus his attention to their problems.

His Highness appointed a committee headed by Sir Miller to go into the problems of non-Brahmins. The report was presented for discussion in the Representative Assembly in 1919. The government passed an order on the recommendation of Miller Committee report for equitable communal representation in the Public Services.²⁰ This came as a shot in the arm of the non-Brahmin movement.

The non-Brahmin movement in Karnataka was spearheaded by the Vokkaliga and Lingayat, the two dominant castes of this region. These two were considered distinct castes before 1900 but in 1901, the census listed them as a single caste without sub-division. The leadership of the non-Brahmin movement got an opportunity of collective mobilization by this categorization. Caste associations were formed by Mysore Lingayat while the Vokkaliga established the Vokkaliga Sangha. Thus these groups held themselves together and their common platform was directed against the Brahmins.

The non-Brahmin movement finally merged with the Congress movement in 1930, when the latter was emerging as a national force. During 1930s and 1940s, the Brahmin groups began to lose their cohesion and each caste and caste category

20. Chandrashekar Bhat, "The Reform Movement among the Mahar of Karnataka" in Rao, M.S. (Ed.), Social Movement in India, Vol.I (Manohar Publication), p.170.

began to demand separate representation for itself both in the Representative Assembly and in Government services. The non-Brahmin movement began shaping the Backward classes movement from the 1940 onwards. The Vokkaliga and Lingayat began to fight between themselves for a share in political power. The newly enacted Constitution of India besides the statutory safeguard provided to the backward classes extended certain benefits, such as adequate representation in the field of education, employment, politics and welfare schemes. Both the Vokkaliga and Lingayat enjoyed constitutional benefits as Backward Classes and thus began to develop vested interests in their backwardness. This benefit has in return facilitated social reforms and enabled them to gain a better status in society.

Reasons for the Emergence of Backward Classes Movement in India

There are many reasons responsible for the emergence of backward castes in India. Some of these have already been discussed. But there are certain points which needed further assertion. They are broadly the following:

21. Ibid.

First, after Independence, the backward castes people were quick to exploit the opportunities offered by the new democratic system. In many districts the enactment of landlord abolition acts had given the backward castes economic as well as political superiority.²² According to K.L. Sharma, the proletariat zamindars had come down to the level of proletariat agricultural and manual labour. At the same time their position was filled up by the upper castes. The middle castes also benefited as the result of initial reform in early 1950.²³ Thus some of the backward classes began to occupy important positions in the economic and political system of the village.

The second important factor that even today continues to aid the efforts of the backward castes to achieve equal status with the rest of society is the operation of democratic system, mainly the electoral process. The large strength of backward castes put them at an advantage. It is clear that they have a potential not only to gain equal status, but to obtain a leading position in the political process. The third important factor which brought changes in the status of backward castes was mainly through indigenous reforms as a result of the work of religious thinkers and national leaders

22. Aurora, G.S., "Caste and Backward Classes", Man in India, Vol.48, no.4, October-December, 1968, pp.247-306.

23. Sharma, K.L., Essay on Social Stratification(Jaipur: Rawat Publication, 19), p.7.

who consistently challenged the democratic value of legitimizing inherited inequalities based upon the doctrine of "Karma and rebirth".²⁴ Religious movements such as Jainism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Sikhism and others always questioned the legitimacy of social inequality and stressed that the Hindu scriptures had preached human equality. The reformist movement launched by Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj and Ram Krishna Mission have generated the idea of equality of man. The Bhakti movement of Kabir and Ravidas presented a saintly tradition of India in which the lower castes was always venerated. Thus at every point of Indian history the social inequality sanctioned by the Hindu Dharma were systematically challenged. Prominent among those who assiduously worked to better the social status of the backward section of the society including the untouchables and Sudras were Phule, Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar. While the Arya Samaj sought to reform the caste structure in consonance with the purified Hindu theory, the Brahma Samaj and the Prathana Samaj tried to throw caste overboard. The Dravid Kazhgam Party in the South under the leadership of Periyar Ramaswami

24. The Manu Smriti and religious text such as "Veda", "Upveda", "Purana", and "Dharmasastra" are usually relied upon the validating distribution based on purity and pollution. See Hutton, G.H., Caste in India, 1963, pp.149-98 for further discussion see Chapter IV. Also see the view of Swami Vivekananda on India of Human equality quoted by Krishna Iyer, in A.B.S.K. Singh (Ed.), Union of India, AIR, 1981, p.298.

Naicker, took up the secular approach. Chatrapathi Sahu Maharaja of Kolhapur is remembered for his significant contribution made in supporting the non-Brahmin movement and in getting the principle of communal representation accepted by British Government.

All these intellectuals rejected the basis of Hindu orthodoxy and preached the gospel of equality in the national movement. Gandhiji launched a crusade for common brotherhood on behalf of untouchables.²⁵ Ambedkar espoused the causes of backward and dismissed caste inequalities as man-made rather than as originated by God.²⁶ It was largely because of Ambedkar's dramatization of the causes of dependent classes that the fathers of the Indian Constitution readily incorporated the policy of compensatory discrimination. Under the new idea of nationality, equality, and freedom, many low castes, specially backward castes, began to react and refuse to submit to man-made inequality demanding equal access and opportunities.²⁷

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25. Glen, M., and Johnson, S.B., "Social Mobility among Untouchables" , in G.R. Gupta (Ed.), Cohesion and Conflict in Modern India.
26. Quoted in Kur, Dhananjaya, Dr. Ambedkar Life and Mission, 1954, p.65.
27. Singh, Parmananda, Equality, Reservation and Discrimination in India (Deep & Deep Publication, 1982), p.2.

The most important factor which helped in the emergence of backward castes in India was caste association, a factor which we have already discussed in detail. The backward castes started organising themselves on state level, then they began to organise themselves on all India level. Today there are many all-India level backward castes associations like "All India Yadav Mahasabha", "All India Kurmi Mahasabha", "All India Moeri Mahasabha" etc. These caste associations brought solidarity and provided confidence in the backward classes. Through these Sabhas, the backward castes, who were tenant farmers, made successful attempts to fight the social and economic exploitation of the landlord of that time.

Another factor, which raised the status of backward castes in India was, as what sociologists have called, the process of "Sanskritization and Westernization".²⁸ The former only marginally, the later more comprehensively.

Constitutional Provision and Government Policy
for the Development of Backward Castes.

Even during the British days certain reservation facilities were provided to the backward classes and weaker sections of the society. In the last quarter of the nineteenth

28. "Sanskritization" and "Westernization" are two important concepts of M.N. Srinivas.

century the Government of India initiated certain measures to help those sections of society which were socially and economically at the lowest rung. In 1885, the Government of Madras extended financial grants to educational institutions providing facilities to students of Depressed Classes. In 1918, the Maharaja of Mysore acceded to the demand of certain aggrieved communities for special consideration. He appointed a commission under the chairmanship of Sir.L.C. Miller, the then Chief Justice of Mysore, to recommend steps to ensure adequate representation for the non-Brahmin in the services of the state. Later, in 1921, special facilities were extended to the backward communities in the field of education and employment.

An all parties' conference in 1928, examined the problem faced by the Non-Brahmin and the depressed classes. It was concluded that they did not require protection and their grievances against Brahmins were traceable to the ascendancy gained by the latter in the political and social life of the country. Referring to the condition of the depressed classes, the conference observed that they should be raised socially and economically so that they may take proper community.³⁰

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29. The Backward Classes Commission Report, Chairman B.P. Mandal, Parts I-II, New Delhi, 1981, p.5.
30. Report of the All Parties Conference Proceeding (Chairman, Motilal Nehru), Allahabad: AICC, 1929, pp.58-59.

A backward class commission appointed by the Government of Bombay in 1930 placed the various backward classes into three categories: (1) Depressed Classes, (2) Aboriginal and hill tribes, and (3) other backward classes. It recommended that all these three categories be given special facilities in the field of education and employment. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reform of 1919 provided separate electorate to the depressed classes in the form of few nominated seats for the first time in provincial legislative council. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were granted reserved representation under the Government of India Act, 1935, in the Federal and Provincial Legislature. They were not granted separate electorate as in the case of the Sikhs and the Muslims under the Poona Pact between Gandhiji and Ambedkar in 1932. No reservation was however made for other backward classes. The depressed classes came to be known as scheduled castes and backward tribes.

Constituent Assembly and OBCs

As leader of the Congress Party in the Constituent Assembly of India in 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru moved a resolution providing for adequate safeguards to the "minorities", backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes.³¹ The Constituent Assembly was opposed to reservation

31. Banerjee, Anil Chandra, The Making of India Constitution, 1939-1947, Vol.I (Calcutta, 1948).

on the basis of religion. It was also opposed to the according of preferential treatment to other backward classes. It, however, accepted the claim of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes for safeguards. The term "backward classes" was then in vogue. Members from North India thought that it signified that the scheduled caste members from their region including Bombay would cover tribal societies and those classes of people who were distinctly and perceptibly backward economically, educationally and socially in relation to rest of the classes of people in India. The sub-committee on fundamental rights had discussed the question of other backward classes in detail. It, however, failed to provide any reservation to them. It left it for the state government to identify the backward classes in their respective territories and to assist them.

Indian Constitution and Other Backward Classes

The framers of the Indian Constitution were aware of the discrimination being practised in society. The institution of caste was a dominant feature of the Indian social system. A large section of the people were regarded as 'untouchables'. In view of this, the Constitution of India imposed certain restrictions on fundamental rights. The Constitution contains a number of articles which deal with compensatory preferences for

the backward classes. The backward classes have been divided into three main groups viz., (1) Scheduled Castes, (2) Scheduled Tribes, and (3) Other Backward Classes. Articles 15(4), 16(4), 46, 335, 338, 340, 341, 342, 366(24) and 366(25) also have a bearing on the subject.

As regards to other backward classes, the Constitution does not provide any clear cut reservation facilities for them. The Constitution provided for protective discrimination to uplift these caste groups socially and economically from their backwardness. Backwardness is not related just with these two variables. It may be economic or in terms of wealth and opening available to new avenues of life. It may be measured with too low level of income the degree of literacy and a low standard of life as demonstrated by living conditions.³² It is the responsibility of the Government of India to improve the condition of the backward classes.

The Constitution of India has a different terminology for the backward classes. For example Article 15(4) and 340 use the words "socially and educationally backward classes". Article 16(4) speaks of just "backward classes", and Article 46 is concerned with the weaker section of the people.

32. The First Five Year Plan: A Draft (New Delhi: Government of India, Planning Commission, 1951), p.634.

Even now the term "backward classes", is differently defined in the reports of the different backward classes commissions and the judgement of the High Courts and Supreme Courts of India. Article _____ shows the Constitution of India is against any type of discrimination in educational and public public private services. It directs the Government at the same time to undertake special measures for the upliftment of Backward Classes. Article 15(4), which was incorporated into the Constitution under the first Constitution (First Amendment) Act 1851, declares:

"Nothing in Article 15 or in Clause(2) of Article 29 shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes".

Article 15(4) enables the state to make special provision for the backward classes in all areas within its jurisdiction. The expression "class"³³ in Article 15(4) implies a homogenous section of the people grouped together on account of certain likeness or common traits and by being

33. Chitale, D.V., AIR Committee - The Constitution of India, Vol.I (Nagpur, 1970), pp.12-17.

identifiable by some common attributes such as status, rank, occupation, residence in a locality, race, religion, and the like. It defines, whether a particular section forms a class or caste. At the same time a test solely based upon caste or community cannot be accepted.

Article 16(4) which relates to Government jobs says:

"Nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments of posts in favour of any backward classes of citizen which, in the opinion of the state, not adequately represented in the service under the state."

Other Articles of the Constitution too make reference to the backward classes. The Directive Principles of State Policy enjoins the Government to undertake special measures for the advancement of backward classes. There is no clear indication about the reservation for the other backward classes. In 1950 the Government of India reserved 12½ % of posts for only S.C. and 5% for S.T. in Government services.

It also extended the age limit in their case by three years. In 1952, it raised the age limit by five more years

than the maximum prescribed for others. Now in the Central and State services seats and posts are reserved in proportion to their population. In 1970, the Central Government raised the reservation for SC to 15% and for ST to 7½%.

Reservation of seats in Legislative was meant originally only for ten years. It was subsequently extended for more years through a series of amendments of the Constitution. The latest amendment extends reservation up to 1990.

Article 340 is related to the other backward classes. It makes provision for the appointment of two commissions by the President, one to investigate and report on the administration of Scheduled Areas and welfare of Scheduled Tribes and the other to investigate the condition of the socially and educationally backward classes and to make recommendation as to the steps that should be taken by the union or state government to ameliorate those conditions.³⁴

The leaders of other backward classes have been striving to get for their people benefits similar to

34. Ibid., p.610.

those granted to the SC and ST. It was possible that our national leaders had visualised that the "backward classes" were sufficiently potent politically to look after their own interest at the local level. Unlike in the case of SC and ST there is no need to control to ensure the inclusion of all deprived classes of people in the category of backward classes. The Constitution, however, made it obligatory for the Government to appoint a backward classes Commission within ten years of the commencement of the Constitution. Article 340(3) declares: "The President shall... a copy of the report so presented together with a memorandum explaining the action taken thereon to be laid before each House of Parliament."

Although the Government of India appointed two Backward Classes Commission in 1953, and in 1978, it has so far failed to implement the recommendation made by them.

Kaka Kalekar Commission Report

On 29 January 1953, under Article 340 of the Indian Constitution, Kaka Kalelkar, a well known Gandhian, was nominated chairman of the commission along with ten members.

The Commission was assigned the task to find out the criteria for determining whether any section, other than the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, needed to be treated as socially and educationally backward, to prepare a list of such classes, and to recommend steps to remove their difficulties and improve their conditions.³⁵ It realized soon enough that the problems of the backward classes were essentially the problems of rural India. Accordingly it decided that the relevant factors to consider in classifying the backward classes would be their traditional occupations or professions and the percentage of literacy or the general level of education attained by them.³⁶ It also decided that the social position which a community occupied in the caste hierarchy would have to be considered as well as its representation in government service and in the industrial sphere.³⁷ The Commission used term "classes" as it was synonymous with "castes" and "communities" and prepared a list of backward classes on the basis of caste. It used the following four criteria to

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35. Katyal, K.K., "Exercise to Perfect Old Reasoning", The Hindu (Madras), 12 January 1981.
36. Verma, 24, p.27.
37. Backward Classes Commission Report, (Chairman: Kaka Kalelkar), Parts I-II (New Delhi, 1955), p.38.

determine backwardness (1) Low position in the traditional caste hierarchy of Hindu society; (2) Lack of general educational advancement in a caste or community taken as a whole (3) Inadequate or no representation in Government service; and (4) Inadequate representation in the fields of trade, commerce and industry.³⁸

The Commission listed 2,899 castes as backward classes. It chose 837 castes as "more backward castes" for purposes of development and upliftment. It also made the following recommendations: (1) The Government of India should undertake a castewise enumeration of the population in the census of 1961; (2) it should seek to relate the social backwardness of a class to its low position in the traditional caste hierarchy of Hindu society; (3) All women should be treated as backward; (4) Seventy per cent of the seats in all technical and professional institutions should be reserved for qualified students of the backward classes, and (5) a certain minimum number of vacancies should be reserved for the backward classes in government service and in the service of local bodies in the following scales:

38. Ibid., p.46.

Class I	25 per cent
Class II	33½ per cent
Classes III & IV	40 per cent ³⁹

However, the report, due to the considerable divergence of opinion among its members, treated the status of caste on the basis of backwardness. The Commission recommended the application of "generous preference" for Backward classes in I and II services and 49 per cent reservation for all Backward classes in III and IV services.⁴⁰

The Government of India found the recommendation of the Commission impracticable and decided on 14 August, 1961 not to provide reservation to the backward classes on the basis of caste, as it would perpetuate the existing caste distinction. It, however, directed all the state governments to give all assistance mainly scholarship to the educationally backward people.

Mandal Commission

The Backward Commission under the Chairmanship of B.P. Mandal was appointed on 1 January 1979 by a

39. The Mandal Commission Report, No.1., p.1.

40. Report of Backward Classes Commission in India, 1953, VII, IX, pp. xiii, viii and ix.

notification issued by the Government of India under the orders of the President. It was a statutory Commission under Article 340 of the Constitution. The Commission had taken special care to tap a number of independent sources for the collection of primary data.

The Commission observes that "In view of the permanent stratification of society in hierarchical caste order, members of lower castes have always suffered from discrimination in all walks of life and this has resulted in their social, educational, and economical backwardness. "Backwardness would be both social and educational and not either social or educational. Caste is also a class of citizens and of the caste as a whole into the matter of social, educational backwardness of different castes and make reservation accordingly in educational institutions and government services.⁴¹ There is now an all India list of other Backward classes. Lists had earlier been prepared by the Ministry of Education and by the state government. The Backward Commission under Kalelkar reported a good deal of ambiguity in these lists. The Commission which was not a statutory body, could not in fact come to any tangible or a greed concessions. The recommendation of the committee

41. Ibid.

were not in fact accepted as authoritative and authentic. Thus, the state governments have in general been allowed to use their own criteria in drawing up lists of the other BCs. These in turn, are not always held to be binding by the Supreme Court which in the case of M.R. Balaji and other versus the state of Mysore, decided against the recommendation of the Nagara Gowda Commission.

Socially and educationally backward, reservation can be made in favour of such a caste on the ground that it is a socially and educationally backward class of citizen, within the meaning of Article 15(4).⁴² According to this Commission, the other Backward classes including non-Hindu communities (excluding SC, ST) constitute nearly 52 of the Indian population.⁴³ Keeping in view a number of Supreme Court judgements - the total quantum of reservation under Article 15(4) and 16(4) should be below 50 per cent, the commission recommended a reservation of 27 per cent for 52 of the Indian population.⁴⁴

42. Ibid., pp.21-23.

43. Ibid., p.53.

44. Reservation of 27 when added to 22% of SC, ST does not exceed the 50 per cent limit.

Scheme of Reservation

With the above general recommendation regarding the quantum of reservation, the Commission proposed the following overall scheme of reservation for other B.C.

- (1) Candidate belonging to the other BC⁴⁵ recruited on the basis of merit in an open competition should not be adjusted against their reservation quota of 27.
- (2) The above reservation should also be made applicable to promotion quota at all levels.
- (3) Reserved quota remaining unfilled should be carried forward for a period of three years.
- (4) Relaxation in the upper age limit for direct recruitment should be extended to the candidates of other Backward Castes in the same manner as done in the case of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes.
- (5) A roster system for each category of posts should be adopted by concerned authorities in the same manner as presently done in respect of SC and ST.

The above scheme of reservation in its toto should also be made applicable to all recruitment to public sector

45. Other Backward Castes

undertaking both under centre and state governments as also to nationalised banks.⁴⁶

All private sector undertakings which have received financial assistance from the Government in one form or the other should also be obliged to recruit personnel on the aforesaid basis.⁴⁷

"All universities and affiliated colleges should also be covered by the above scheme of reservation".

Lastly, to give proper effect to the recommendation, it is imperative that adequate statutory provisions are made by the Government to amend the existing enactment rules, procedures etc.

Educational Concessions

As "educational reform" was not within the term of reference of the Commission, it suggested only the palliative measure within the existing framework. It suggested:

- (a) an intensive and time bound programme for adult education in selected areas with high concentration of other backward class population.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

(b) Residential schools in those areas for Backward Caste students having facilities free of cost, the commission also recommended 27 per cent of seats for other backward castes. Students in scientific, technical and professional institutions run by central as well as state governments. Furthermore, it recommended coaching facilities for students seeking admission in these institution.⁴⁸

Financial Assistance

The Commission recommended suitable institutional finance and technical assistance to village vocational communities and other backward class candidates having special vocational training who are unable to set up small scale industries on their own. Apart from this, the commission recommended separate financial institutions for financial and technical guidance for the backward classes. It also suggested that the office-bearers of co-operative societies of occupational groups should belong to the concerned hereditary occupational group. Furthermore, the Commission suggested that all state governments should create a separate network of financial and technical

48. Ibid., pp.58-59.

institutions to foster business and industrial enterprise among the other backward classes.⁴⁹

Structural Changes

The Commission strongly recommended that all the State Governments should be directed to enact and implement progressive legislation so as to effect basic structural changes in the existing production relation in countryside. It also suggested that surplus land available in future as a result of the operation of land ceiling laws etc. should be allotted to the other backward caste and scheduled caste.⁵⁰

Miscellaneous

The Commission has noted some occupational communities.⁵¹ Listed as other backward classes by the commission, they still suffer from the stigma of untouchability in some parts of the country and therefore it has recommended for their inclusion in the lists of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes by the government. Furthermore, it advised setting up of BC development Corporation both at the Central level and state levels to implement various socio-

49. Ibid., p.60.

50. Ibid., p.62.

51. Like Fisherman, Banjaras, Bansforans, Khatwar etc.

educational and economic measures for their advancement. The Commission has also recommended creation of a separate Ministry Department for other Backward class at the central and state levels to safeguard their interests. Apart from this it has suggested that area of BC,⁵² concentration may be carved out into separate constituency at the time of delimitation with a view to giving better representation to them. Furthermore, the commission has recommended that all development programmes specially designed for other BC should be financed by Central Government in the same manner and to the same extent as done in the case of SC and ST.

Reservation for the other Backward Classes in the Different States of India

As per direction of the Central Government many state governments went ahead to study the condition of backward classes and fix a definite criterion for identification of their backwardness. The state government applied many tests of backwardness viz. economic condition, literacy, social positions and occupation. It is significant to note that whenever reservation is given to other backward classes

52. Like the Gaddir in Himachal Pradesh, No Buddhists in Maharashtra, Fishermen in coastal areas, Guggar in J&K.

the matter is taken us to court which sometimes upheld and other time struck down the government order. Hence criteria to determine backwardness have differed from region to region and state to state. For example in some of the southern states when reservation for the backward classes was introduced, the matter was challenged in the High Court and in Supreme Court. In some cases the court also turned down the government order. In 1962, the Supreme Court struck down the Mysore Government order which provided 68% reservation to the backward classes on the basis of recommendation of Nagan Gowda Committee. The reason which the court gave was that the Government order violated the fundamental rights of equality of opportunity enshrined in the Constitution. In 1964 in another case Devadarn vs. Government of India, the Supreme Court gave the ruling that reservation in Government services cannot exceed 50% of the total jobs.

Thus the other backward classes have been provided with varieties of reservation in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, U.P. etc. The percentage of reservation ranged from 15 to 68% in various states. But there was no unanimity with regard to the determination of criteria on backwardness.

As we have said earlier that there are differences between the states of South and North India, not only in the criteria chosen for determining backwardness, but also in the procedures of implementation. The backward classes are getting the benefits of reservation policy in twelve states (see Table-XV). Most of the Backward Classes Commission Reports and recommended income limit while extending special privileges to the Backward Classes. It varies between Rs. 2,400 to Rs. 12,000 per annum. In some states (like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) they are treated even on par with the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes as regards to age limit, payment of fees and the number of attempts allowed in taking competitive examinations. They have been given additional facilities in the matter of hostel accommodation and other welfare measures.

Table-XIV

Number of Other Backward Classes and Reservation Quotas for them in different Indian States

Sl. No.	State	State Govt. list of OBC's	Kaka Kalelkar Commission 1955 list of OBC's	Mandal Commission 1980 list of OBC's	Percentage of Reservation	
					in Govt. services	in educational institutions
1.	Andhra Pradesh	146	124	292	44	44
2.	Bihar	128	126	168	20	20
3.	Gujarat	82		105	10 (extended to 28 and with drawn)	10 (extended to 28 and with drawn)
4.	Haryana	64	88	76	5	2
5.	Himachal Pradesh	48	27	57	5	2
6.	J&K	19		63	42	42
7.	Karnataka	221	64	333	35	33
8.	Kerala	76	48	208	40	40
9.	Madhya Pradesh	254	110	279	25 (struck down by High Court)	25 (struck down by High Court)
10.	Maharashtra	196	360	272	10	10
11.	Punjab	63	88	83	5	5
12.	Tamil Nadu	124	156	288	32	32
13.	U.P.	58	120	116	15	15

CHAPTER-IV

EMERGENCE OF BACKWARD CASTES IN BIHAR:
A STUDY OF BACKWARD CLASSES MOVEMENT
IN THE STATE

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EMERGENCE OF BACKWARD CASTES IN BIHAR: A STUDY OF BACKWARD CLASSES MOVEMENT IN THE STATE

The spread of education, introduction of modern technology, democratic institution, land reform acts, mass communication and caste associations made the backward castes of Bihar conscious of their lower status in the social hierarchy. Many of the lower castes started demanding upliftment of their socio-economic, educational and political conditions.¹

The process of emergence of backward castes in Bihar state began as a transformative social movement and became ultimately a reformative and revolutionary social movement.

The backward castes of Bihar had made a long struggle for their upliftment. The Yadavas were the first among the backward castes who organised themselves for their socio-economic and political independence. They formed "Gop Jatiya Mahasabha" in 1909. The Sabha organized regional conferences to stimulate social awakening among cognate caste in Bihar, the United Provinces and Punjab to claim Kashtriya standing as descendents of the mythological Yadav dynasty of Lord Krishna. Ahirs, who claimed Yadava

1. Ramashray Roy, op.cit., pp.232-6.

status challenged the priestly monopoly of Brahmins, established their own temples, donned the sacred thread and educated their sons at schools and colleges established by Arya Samaj and their own caste associations. The tiny educated section of Yadavas elite, who founded the All India Yadav Mahasabha in 1923 broadened their attack on the upper castes accusing them of economic exploitation, especially the exaction of begar. These developments were intolerable for the upper castes and as a consequence they clashed with Yadavas at many places. This was the first case of direct conflict between upper castes and backward castes.

By this time, Koieri and Kurmi two other important upper backward castes started to organise themselves into a caste association in the state. In 1910 the 'Akhil Bharatiya Kurmi Mahasabha' was formed² mainly with the efforts of Dip Narayan Singh. The Maha Sabha was successful in arousing the consciousness of the Kurmi masses. At this stage the Yadavas felt the need of uniting the upper backward castes into one body in order to fight the upper caste domination in society. Thus the Kurmi and

2. Verma, K.K.: Changing role of Caste Association: A Study of Kurmi Mahasabha (Patna, 1976), pp.17-18.



Koieris were oppressed for joining with the Yadavas to fight discrimination. In 1934 "Triveni Sangh" assembly of three was set up.³ It organised the Yadavas, Kurmies, and Koieris. Gur Sahaylal, a lawyer, played a major role in its formation.

Though the "Triveni Sangam" could not last long, it spread on awareness and consciousness among the backward castes. The slogan of French Revolution of liberty, equality and fraternity started arousing the consciousness of the backward castes. The call of Karl Marx for a world revolution to overthrow capitalism inspired the backward castes to combine strongly for their own progress. The surmon of Gandhiji and the call for the upliftment of Harijans and weaker sections of society had then become a national call, a challenge to society. Thus under the national leadership of Gandhiji, the backward castes began to act collectively, though slowly, for their rights. The proclamation of Independence helped in arousing political consciousness rapidly. The political interest again brought them altogether. The Backward Castes Federation of Bihar was formed in 1947. This organization

3. Prasad, Ishwari: Reservation Action for Social Equality (New Delhi: Criterion Publication, 1945, p.23.

sought to mobilise the backward castes in the state, and they began demanding reservation of seats and posts for them. But in lacked strength.

The caste associations which made considerable progress in awakening the aspirations of educated sections of upper and backward communities could not gain however recognition from the upper castes. It should be noted that the leadership of caste associations were hardly representative; they were primarily drawn from small affluent land-owning or professional classes, while majority of their caste fellows followed traditional menial occupations. They were illiterate, experienced little spatial mobility and were in addition divided by region, sects and sub-castes.

The Yadavas leadership, however, was less concerned with improving the economic condition of majority of the Ahirs than with the removing the social disabilities that prevented the more prosperous section from gaining access to educational institutions or civil services. Moreover, they never made a complete break with the Brahminical ideology of caste hierarchy but attempted to denigrate the ritual superiority of upper castes, while aspiring to enjoy their social status. The very caste ideology of educated members of upper backward castes prevented the

political cooperation of allied sudra castes that could have allowed them to form a backward castes party. Instead the Yadava, Koieri, and Kurmi competed against each other for status and power and entered politics supporting the nationalist movement and clashed for party tickets given by Indian National Congress.

Independence and universal suffrage changed this situation only gradually. From 1946 to 1963, the Congress leadership controlled by members drawn from among the upper castes, relied on Brahmins, Rajputs and Bhumihars to act as a caste mobilizer at village level to deliver the rural vote. Despite rivalries between caste-based factions of the party, the forward castes and sufficient cohesion to maintain their overall dominance and prevent Yadava, Koieri, Kurmi politicians from emerging as an independent centres of power. Moreover, the upper caste leadership of the ruling Congress Party made every effort to ensure that a separate political organization of the backward castes did not succeed. Efforts by members of the Backward Castes Federation to form their own party were frustrated by the Congress use of patronage to co-opt Yadava and Kurmi elites.

Nevertheless, the introduction of adult suffrage had important effects on the social and political interaction

of twice-born castes and upper backward castes. On the one side the local leaders of the Congress Party, who needed the votes of this stratum, saw that their relations with Ahirs, who donned the sacred thread, was not strained. On the other hand the educated section of the backward castes awakened to the fact that they were denied opportunities for growth because of upper caste domination in educational institutions and civil services. It induced them to launch coordinated action in state legislature across caste and party line. More important the appointment by the Government of India in January 1953 of a Backward Classes Commission and its report in 1955 recommending reservation for OBCs in State services persuaded many of the younger generation to put aside the old fantasy of achieving "twice born" status through sanskritisation. Instead, they directed their efforts to the pursuit of social equality in the secular sphere via political mobilization aimed at implementation of reservation policy. Very quickly, they shifted their reference groups from the upper castes to that of the backward castes, emphasizing the need to overcome sub-caste division in order to maximize the strength of Yadava, Koileri, Kasmi. Moreover, they articulated a new democratic principle of legitimacy that number must count in constituting authoritative

governmental institutions in order to justify the demand for reservation in overcoming the social and educational disadvantages imposed on the majority by the elite "twice born" caste.

This awakening, which took place during the 1950s and 1960s fell far short of a social movement among the backward castes. It lacked both an ideology and means of collective mobilization that could bridge the social separation between the upper castes and backward castes, clean Sudra and Harijans or Hindu and Muslim. Rather leader of upper backward castes created the new slogan to strengthen their hold on their own caste group for the purpose of electoral mobilization to enhance their bargaining power for ministerial posts with Congress party leaders. The result was that the growing preoccupation with reservation policy among leaders of upper Sudra castes only perpetuated the political fragmentation of poorer classes and kept Sudra, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from making common cause against the social and economic exploitation from which the vast majority had suffered. Politics continued to be carried out through segmented group mobilization by narrow political elite who made best deals with (and for) each other. It provided new opportunities for ambitious Yadava, Kurmi and Koieri

leaders to assert their influence as caste mobilizers in localities where their own caste groups were numerically predominant than the forward castes at district and state levels.

Just as the implementation of universal suffrage widened, the competition for political power among leading members of the numerically strong upper backward castes also increased. The abolition of zamindari system had benefited the backward castes to a large extent and helped improve their economic condition it also awakened their socio-economic and political rights. Land Reforms significantly reduced the concentration of land ownership in the largest-size group of fifty acres or more leaving some resident ex-zamindars with reduced estates that narrowed their economic advantage over the occupancy tenants. The greatest beneficiaries of the redistribution of land were the upper two tier of land-owning groups. Among this class, the upper backward caste peasantry showed more receptivity than upper caste land-owners to new economic opportunities, and in areas where it was possible to sink relatively inexpensive tubewells, small to middle farms were able to adopt the profitable high yielding wheat and fertilizer technology that became available after 1966.

However, the number of these "rising kulaks" were too small and their resources too meager to significantly alter the pattern of extreme inequality characteristics of the agrarian structure. Ownership of large holdings, moreover were still disproportionately vested in upper caste households who were more concerned with preserving their social prestige by cultivating through share-croppers or hired labourers than maximizing productivity and profits from commercial farming. The negative impact on agricultural production of the socio-economic structure was reflected in very low growth rate for major food crops at a time when population growth reached about two per cent per annum. From the late 1950s the acute distress among the smallest landowners was reflected in the increasing number of annual land sales among this group. By 1971, cultivators as a proportion of workers declined to 43 per cent State-wide, while agricultural labourers formed the largest percentage of workers in eight of the eleven districts in the heartland of agricultural plain region north and south of the Ganga. The incidents of poverty which affected over 41 per cent of the population in 1960-61 increased sharply to include 63 per cent of the rural population in 1970-74.

Zamindari abolition nevertheless had one important albeit unintended impact that weakened the hegemony of the "twice born" castes. Land reform struck at the social prestige of the upper caste by denying small and petty ex-zamindars the right to collect rents from tenant cultivators. Brahmin ex-zamindars, at the apex of the social structure, were most vulnerable to this type of statuslessness. Relatively few had owned very large estates and some faced serious economic decline. Further, the occupancy tenants enjoyed virtually the same right in their holdings as the ex-intermediaries and paid rent to the state instead of "tribute" to the landlords. The "twice born" caste found it difficult to assert the subordination of economic rank to ritual status. They grudgingly acknowledged a new situation in which landed Sudra castes gained in social prestige as well as economic power. Moreover, in the village where Kurmis, Koieris or Yadavas enjoyed numerical superiority, the introduction of universal suffrage, including elections to village Panchayats, made it possible for candidates from the lower castes to displace traditional upper castes leaders. Thus, the ritual hierarchy in Bihar slowly began to diverge at its apex from the social hierarchy of economic rank and political power.

Simultaneously, those lowest in the traditional hierarchy, Harijans and landless labourers, began to experience a heightened social awareness. Outside ~~or~~ governmental authorities penetrated the villages for the first time. Rural development schemes provided symbols of possibilities of economic betterment and the mass media and periodic election campaigns widened the prospects for political change.

This alteration in social awareness occurring as it did within an extremely unequal agrarian structure dominated by upper caste, ex-zamindars, contained a dual potentiality for the articulation of political conflict. It opened the way for both heightened caste competition between the aspiring backward communities and the entrenched Forward Castes, and resulted in economic confrontation between the impoverished landless labourers and landed well to do. Yet well into 1970s the persistence of caste consciousness was the primary source of social identity and all political parties took this into their strategic planning. The caste leaders carried out electoral mobilization which led to subjective intensification of caste feelings in the competitive areas of public life.

Within the Congress party inter-elite rivalries solidified to the point that lower caste support became

crucial to the survival in the office of any Congress Chief Minister. In 1963, when K.B.Sahay took office, the Yadavas emerged as an important group in their own right.

Though the upper backward castes have showed their importance in Bihar State by this time, as an active strong pressure group, they started to play a major role in Bihar politics only after the 1967 election, as in this election, for the first time they enjoyed a majority.⁴ The Congress Party, which was the Party of upper castes earlier, lost its monopoly and many new political parties emerged in the turbinent politics of Bihar. This time the maximum votes went in favour of SSP, which was mainly the party of backward caste people.⁵ At a glance, the Congress could get only 128 seats this time. The backward caste leaders like Karpoori Thakur raised the slogan of 60 per cent reservation of leadership posts for the downtrodden in political parties, governmental services, business and armed forces.

4. Prasad, R.C.: "Bihar Social Polarisation and Political Instability", in Iqbal Narain, ed., State Politics in India (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1967), p.52.

5. Ibid.

In this election the main slogan of upper backward castes was "Pichara Jago Desh Bachao" which created more intense consciousness in the backward castes and as a result they gave their support to non-Congress parties, which had given assurance that efforts would be made to uplift them. This time Kurmi had taken successful attempts to form a federation named Raghev Smaj with Koieris. It became very successful in 1977, when they backed Karpoori Thakur.

Among the backward castes, the Yadavs, Kurmis and Koieris continued their domination. The following in Table-XVI we give a break up to show the main political parties and caste groups who fought and won the election and their number.

By August 1967, the first person from the backward caste, a Yadav, B.P.Mandal, came to power as Chief Minister to be followed by the first Harijan Bhola Paswan Sastri.⁶

6. Ibid.

Table - XVI

Membership of the Bihar Legislative Assembly, 1967 - By Party and Caste

Caste	Party	SSP	CPI	JS	PSP	CPM	JKD	SW	Ind.	Total
Brahmin	17	5	2	3	2	1	2	-	-	32
Bhumihar	15	9	5	-	2	-	2	-	1	36
Rajputs	14	13	2	3	6	-	15	-	1	54
Kayastha	7	1	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	11
Bania	6	2	1	2	-	-	-	1	1	13
Yadav	9	16	5	3	-	-	-	-	4	37
Koeri	3	7	-	1	2	-	1	-	-	14
Kurmi	11	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	13
Dhanuk	11	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
Kohav	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
Neu	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Bengali	-	1	-	4	-	1	-	-	1	7
Muslim	8	1	4	-	2	-	1	-	2	18
SC	24	8	2	5	1	2	3	-	1	46
ST	13	1	1	5	-	-	-	1	8	29
Not Available	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Total:	128	68	24	26	18	4	26	3	21	318

* Includes 7 Jharkhand MLA, who had fought election as independent in the absence of their official symbol.

Note: It is clear from the above Table that among the non-Congress Parties, the maximum votes went in favour of SSP, which claimed to represent the backward castes at that time. The party returned 16 Yadava MLAs, almost twice as many as the Congress and 7 Koeries. The other backward classes, however, did not fare well. The Harijans were reasonably represented.

Source: Dayadhar Jha, State Legislature in India, (New Delhi, Abhinav Publication, 1977, p.59.

After this election the caste-based faction between caste and backward castes increased very rapidly.⁷ Both caste groups started to take maximum benefits from politics.⁸ The manner in which the aforesaid groups were motivating caste-based voting is clear from Table XVII which show the caste composition of legislators and ministers during the Chief Ministership of M.P. Sinha and B.P. Mandal:

Table-XVII

The Social Composition of UF Ministers at the time of M.P. Sinha and B.P. Mandal's Chief Minister.

Caste	Number of Ministry during the time of M.P. Sinha	Number of MLA at the time of formation of Soshit Dal
Rajput	5	6
Brahmin	3	-
Bhumihar	4	3
Kayastha	1	-
Bania	-	2
Yadava	1	6
Kurmi	1	1
Koeri	2	3
Scheduled Caste	1	3
Scheduled Tribe	1	9
Muslims	1	4
Bengalis	1	1
Nai	1	-
Total:	21	36

Source: Jha, Dayadhar, State Legislature in India (Abhinav Publication, 1977), pp.286-300.

7. Ibid.

8. Jha, Dayadhar, State Legislature in India (Abhinav Publication, 1977), p.286.

The Table shows that the Council of Ministers was predominantly composed of upper caste members when upper caste chief minister M.P. Sinha was in power. When B.P. Mandal, a backward caste became chief minister, a majority of his cabinet colleagues were from the backward classes.

After this election, the factional feeling came to the fore that no party could survive for long,⁹ and finally the Assembly was dissolved and a fresh election was held in 1969.

At the time of 1969-mid term election, the struggle for power in the countryside expanded beyond the narrow circle of 'twice-born' Brahmin, Bhumi-hars, Rajputs and Kayastha to include the Yadava and Kurmis, provoking cases of vote fraud and booth capturing. The split in the Congress Party created important new opportunities for the Backward Castes as major upper caste faction leaders deserted Mrs. Gandhi's Congress(R) and joined the rival Congress(O). Anticipation heightened among the Yadavas when in February 1970, the Congress(R) Government headed by Daroga Prasad Rai, a Yadava, appointed a Backward Class Commission to make recommendation for reservation in educational institutions and government services for members of other backward classes.

9. After this election within two years, eight coalition governments were made and all of them failed to give the state stability.

The Yadavas were nevertheless disappointed. The Brahmin faction, which remained loyal to the Brahmin prime minister, successfully contained the power of the upper backward castes in the cabinet through an alignment with the more pliable SC and ST MLAs. The 1971 election, in which Mrs. Gandhi's Congress Party swept the polls with a commitment to abolish poverty prompted the return of most former (upper caste) Congressmen to the "real" Congress. The 1972 election to the state Legislative Assembly, however, indicated that popular support for Congress remained at the low level of 32 per cent (polled in 1967 and 1969). Nevertheless, once restored to power with a modest majority of seats, the Congress machinery returned to the control of upper castes, especially the Brahmin group. This group continued to contain the aggressive postures of backward classes by strengthening their alignment with Muslims, SC, ST MLAs.

Popular alienation from the Congress Party, a constant feature of state politics since 1967, made Bihar an ideal state from which to launch an assault on Mrs. Gandhi by the non-Communist opposition. Opposition against Mrs. Gandhi gained momentum when she centralised power in her own hands and came over with radicalized national programmes. But the situation rapidly deteriorated and the

government failed to fulfil its promise of removing poverty. Incensed student community organised protest movements against soaring prices, shortages of essential commodities, mounting unemployment, outmoded educational curricula and political corruption. Soon the students called on Jayaprakash Narayan, the Sarvodaya leader, to assume leadership of the movement and demanded the resignation of the Chief Minister and dissolution of State Assembly. The opposition leaders saw an opportunity to exploit JP's moral authority to topple the Congress government in Bihar and challenge Mrs. Gandhi's leadership.

At a time when Naxalite revolutionaries were leading landless labourers in sporadic armed attacks against landlords, JP's commitment to Gandhian non-violence had special attraction for the predominantly conservative opposition leaders. Just as half of a century earlier conservative nationalists had been attracted to Gandhi, the non-communist opposition rallied behind JP. His moral appeal to the privileged classes defused Naxalite violence and encouraged the downtrodden yet again to place their hopes for salvation in the hands of this charismatic leader. Not surprisingly, despite JP's own vision of a "people's movement" to establish an organizational base at villages for mobilizing the rural poor, the social goals of the Bihar

agitation were quickly pushed aside. Instead, the opposition diverted the movement towards defeating the Congress Party and removing Mrs. Gandhi from power. In Bihar the student leadership came overwhelmingly from upper castes (with the exception of the Brahmins) and was supported in the countryside by "rich and neo rich" peasants drawn from among the more prosperous sections of upper backward castes. The Janata Party which was mainly the combined party of all the major opposition parties got two-third majority in the state assembly. It won 218 out of 324 seats in the State Assembly.¹⁰ The Congress polled 23.53% of the votes. This means that it polled 9.7% votes than it had polled in the election held in 1972. In terms of seats it lost 110. Within the Janata Party the maximum votes went in favour of Jana Sangh Party. If we break up the voting figures caste-wise, we will find that in this election, Rajput (19.4%) and Yadava (14.27%) were the largest caste group in Janata Party legislature. The Brahmins were also in good number (10.74%). The Kayastha improved their position in the Vidhan Sabha by 5.1%. The Brahmins were

10. International Election, Politics and Law: A Mine of Resource information of the Election Archives (Institute of Election Studies).

just 4.2%.¹¹ The total percentage of vote which went in favour of upper backward castes and lower backward caste accounted for 25.7% and 2.3% of JLP votes.¹²

Most important, the abrupt emergence of Janata Party saw the unexpected surfacing of backward castes as an important force in the northern states and in national politics which symbolized the sudden rise Charan Singh, a Jat, as a candidate for Prime Ministership. The decision of the Janata Parliamentary Party to favour Morarji Desai, despite Charan Singh's grassroot popularity among the small peasantry of North India and the fact that he had been passed over because of his jat origin, won him widespread sympathy. Nevertheless as Home Minister, and head of BLD - a major constituent of Janata Party along with Jan Sangh - Charan Singh gained the support of chief ministers of three states, including Bihar. This political checkmating resulted in the renewed competition between backward castes and forward castes, which was quickly transformed into open confrontation.

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11. Why among the upper caste the lower percentage went in favour of Brahmin. N.K. Singh in his article "Many Faces of Caste in Bihar Politics" has given the reason that it happened due to the notion of voters towards Brahmin politicians like late Mrs. Gandhi and J.N. Mishra, who were mainly responsible for emergency.
 12. General Election: Bihar Legislative Assembly, Statistical Analysis (Patna, 1977).

The forward ~~gka~~ castes were unreconciled to Charan Singh's selection of Karpoori Thakur as Chief Minister. They were outraged at the composition of Thakur's Ministry which for the first time gave the Backward castes a pre-eminent position; and their caste feelings were ignited by Thakur's announcement of a reservation policy in Bihar of 25 per cent for the Other Backward Classes. Large scale street rioting and destruction of public property by Forward Caste youth, who rejected even a watered down version of the reservation policy, polarized Backward and Forward Castes in towns and villages throughout the state.

The perception by the Backwards that the Forwards were not prepared to give them justice by conceding representation in the state services at least potentially equal to their share in the population transformed the nature of the conflict. After 1976, neither side saw the conflict as amenable to conciliation and compromise. On the one side, the Forward Castes, experiencing an erosion of social status and economic strength in the aftermath of zamindari abolition, viewed the assault by the Upper Backwards on their dominant position in educational institutions, the civil services and the state government as nothing less than a challenge to their survival as the dominant social and economic class. On the other, the leaders of the Backward Classes were

convinced that only the displacement of upper caste elite from positions of power in the administration and government could achieve enforcement of constitutional provisions for social equality necessary to overcome the educational and cultural disadvantages preventing them from reaching the top rungs of the occupational ladder. Both sides prepared for an all-out struggle for power.

The most committed socialists among the leaders of the Upper Backwards, like Karpoori Thakur, began thinking of organizing all the backward castes to act on their common social and economic interests as a class. They recognized that reservations affecting about 2,000 jobs a year could never solve the economic problems of the impoverished majority. Nevertheless, they saw in the reservations issue the potentiality for breaking down the Brahminical ideology of caste superiority that prevented the Backward castes from commanding respect in society and the poor from consolidating their ranks, thereby keeping the majority powerless. The ultimate purpose of the Backward Castes movement, from this perspective, was the organization of the poor in a double assault on the caste system and the class structure.

The factional rivalry between the BLD and Jan Sangh

that soon overtook the Janata party prevented Karpoori Thakur from proceeding with such ambitious plans. His government was toppled in April 1979, after which a successor (Janata) government restored the Forwards to their strongest position in the state government since 1967. At the Centre the Janata government lost its majority in July 1979, after Charan Singh and his followers defected to form a rival group. Charan Singh, who briefly achieved his consuming ambition of becoming the Prime Minister as head of a tenuous coalition, lost majority support within four weeks, and presided over a caretaker government until elections in January 1980.

The general elections which restored Mrs. Gandhi's political fortunes by returning her to power at the Centre, also saw her new Congress-I Party rebound in Bihar where it won 36 per cent of the vote. By contrast, Charan Singh's Lok Dal Party led by Karpoori Thakur, polled less than 17 per cent. The results revealed a number of miscalculations by the leaders of the Backward Castes who believed it possible to use the reservations issue for raising political consciousness among all backward communities to mobilize the poor. On the contrary, precisely because group consciousness

still operated primarily at the caste level, the Lok Dal's identification with reservations policy was effectively manipulated by the Congress-I to isolate the party. They accused Karpoori Thakur of promoting a "casteist approach" in order to strengthen the Yadavas and Kurmis, said to be nursing ambitions of becoming the "new Brahmins".

Beyond this, the Lok Dal, hampered by lack of funds, found it extremely difficult to project their message beyond their natural support base among the Upper Backwards. This problem was compounded by the persistence of social and economic divisions among the rural poor. The Harijans, divided among sub-castes, followed the head of their own influential caste-men. There were many instances of atrocities against Harijans during Janata rule. The Rajputs and Bhumi-hars also engaged in violence against militant Harijans who resisted attempts by local landlords to take back small plots of land distributed during the Emergency. The Congress-I leaders successfully reminded the landless, many of whom were Harijans, of the economic benefits that came to them during the Emergency.

The Lok Dal also found it difficult to reach the Lower Backwards. These caste groups were occupationally

based, scattered in small numbers, enmeshed in patron-client ties, politically apathetic, and inclined to side with the upper castes to whom they were affiliated. The Muslims, for their part, feared the Janata party for its alleged communal bias, and were doubtful the Lok Dal could guarantee their security. The tribals, preferred their own Jharkhand candidates or Independents.

The same problems reappeared at the time of the 1980, 1985 elections to the State Legislative Assembly. By this time, the Lok Dal was not sure of retaining its erstwhile strong base among the Yadavas. Some leaders, concerned about political survival, joined the Congress-I. Moreover, a splinter Lok Dal (Raj Narain) set up its own Backward Caste candidates in several constituencies. Beyond this, the Janata Party split again into the predominantly upper caste Bharatiya Janata Party and the Janata which had the blessings of Jayaprakash Narayan . The Janata also appealed to the backward communities and Harijans.

Paradoxically, the social polarization between the Forward Castes and Upper Backwards which fragmented political parties, did not result in a political polarization between a party of the upper castes and a party of the Backward Classes. The Lok Dal lacked the resources to fund a

competitive campaign, and all political parties, including the Congress-I, tried to placate the Yadavas. Backward class candidates, running on rival party tickets, split the Backward Class votes among them. The Congress-I managed to win one-third of the vote and a majority of seats. The Lok Dal's strength declined somewhat to less than 16 per cent. Once again, the upper castes, benefiting from the divisions of the backward communities, reasserted their political power. The new Congress-I government, installed in June 1980 was headed by Jagannath Mishra.

Even in the election of 1985, the upper caste got the opportunity to rule the State politics. Again J.N.Mishra became the Chief Minister of State. At present Bindeswari Dubey is the Chief Minister of Bihar, who is also a upper caste fellow.

Yet, the position after 1980 appeared much the same as that at the beginning of the 1970s. The Forwards gained power once again but the caste ideology that historically legitimised their dominance had been grievously ~~damaged~~. damaged.

Bihar, in the early 1980s edged perilously close to social collapse. The moral cement which had held the old

hierarchy in place had at last given way. Politics often appeared to be little more than a naked struggle for power between opposing lathis. Moreover, no other ideology or social class came forward to fill the vacuum of authority that was created. The Upper Backwards in general, and the Yadavas in particular, could not be the successors to the Forward Castes. Their low status in the traditional social hierarchy made it impossible for them to claim elite caste privileges, either in relation to the "twice-born" castes, or to those below them in the ritual hierarchy. On the contrary, their attempts to enforce social disabilities against the Harijans and deprive them of economic gains under the Emergency met with violent resistance from younger militants.

Lok Dal leaders, struggling to find a strategy for creating an ideology and organization that could transcend communal and caste lines made slow, but significant progress. By the time Karpoori Thakur formally separated from the national Lok Dal, and led his Lok Dal (K) into a new merger with the Janata, the party was well on the way to combining programmes of social and economic reform to make common cause with all the downtrodden.

Whatever the ultimate fate of Karpoori Thakur's group, his party represented a historic watershed in the

effort to transform Bihar society. It became the first political party since Independence to attempt the social awakening of all the backward communities for the purpose of organizing the poor. Significantly, the party had its greatest strength in the northern districts where impoverished riots led the first violent agitations against planters and zamindars at the turn of the century. Moreover, the deliberate emphasis on economic reforms to attract the support of the backward communities, the majority of whom were poor, worked well enough so that the landed among the Backward Castes withdrew support from the Lok Dal in favour of the Congress-I or the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Already just below the surface of caste conflict, the outline of a new class polarization is dimly perceptible. The educated and well-to-do members of the Forward Castes (those least threatened by reservations) were signalling their willingness to share power with the tiny class of educated and well-to-do among the Backward Castes (who least needed reservations). At the same time, small sections of the Harijans and Muslims were moving away from the political parties that represented upper caste and upper class interests.

Over the long run, they may develop the ability to carry out the collective mobilization necessary for a

unified social reform movement. Over the short term, the prospect is considerably less sanguine. The danger grows that in the absence of agrarian reforms, class conflict superimposed on caste confrontation will spawn an emotional mixture of caste and class violence which can only be exacerbated by the electoral process, an outcome that must surely dissipate the remaining popular confidence in democratic institutions.

Main Points of the OBC's Movement in Bihar

On the basis of above discussion, the following conclusion comes about the OBCs movement in Bihar.

- (1) The emergence of OBC movement in Bihar was started from 1904, but as a strong pressure group, it emerged only after the election of 1967, when for the first time non-Congress Party came in power.
- (2) The OBCs movement in Bihar began with different motives, i.e. sanskritization, politicization, equalization, and now it is heading towards dominance over the other castes. For example in the beginning of 1912, the main aim of these backward caste people was to follow the life style of upper caste, so that they could get a suitably higher position in society. They made attempts to get sanskritized by using sacred

threads and calling themselves Kshatriya, but in vain. In 1930s politicization started among them with the formation of Triveni Sangam, an organization consisting largely of Yadavas, the Kurmis and Koeris. This organization, however, drew a blank in the elections held in 1937. Now they have started a movement to improve their socio-economic and political condition.

- (3) There are many reasons which helped the Backward Castes of Bihar to emerge as a strong pressure group in state politics like spread of education, introduction of modern technology, democratic institution, land reform act, and caste associations. But apart from this, there are main reasons (1) caste association, (2) universal suffrage, (3) land reform movement.
- (4) The emerging influence, mobilization and participation of OBC during 1977-79 may be called a social movement and may considered only as a pro-reservationist movement. Influential backward castes were collectively mobilized to support reservation policy and fight back anti-reservationists. They do have ideology to change caste-based exploitative social system and usherin an egalitarian social set-up with proper developments of backward classes. They wanted to make themselves equal partners in social and

political life of Bihar and not merely as camp followers. In this context they were desiring social change to enhance their own position.

- (5) Although OBCs movement of Bihar was always against the caste system dominated by Brahmin and other upper castes, yet they themselves were agitating for certain privileges on the caste grounds. Each backward caste wanted to maintain its identity and distance from the fellow backward castes. Hence in the absence of well knit organization and central leadership, the measure of protest differed from time to time, region to region. The backward classes federation was formed at a very late stage and its activities were mainly confined to the Patna district. Furthermore the functioning of the federation ground to a halt after the implementation of reservation scheme. It was the only means for the enhancement of Backward classes movement. The leaders of Backward classes should have continued working for actual Backward Class masses so that the latter would have availed of the facilities extended to them by the State government. Probably the leaders have different designs in mind. The reservation issue may or may not have brought about unity among the backward castes, but it did not bring about a

theoretical unity among the four castes in Bihar. Furthermore, the Federation composed of the elite from the less backward castes was unable to initiate any large social mobilization of the backward classes in Bihar but it satisfied itself with just a few material gains and did not have any orientation to bring about social change.

- (6) The Backward Caste movement of Bihar is quite different from the Southern state. First, there was no unanimity among the backward castes of Bihar. There was a clear cut contradiction among the Yadava, Kurmi, and Koeri. It was quite obvious from the way in which the reservation formula was announced. Secondly, in the southern states, all the non-Brahmin castes formed the backward castes category and thus they were effective in their endeavour. In Bihar, there were three upper castes apart from Brahmin, who did not support the backward classes movement on any issue.
- (7) Though the entire caste group of Bihar got itself divided into two - the upper caste and the backward Castes after the implementation of job reservation policy, in practice there were many caste divisions within the Backward Castes themselves. The upper backward castes like Yadava, Koeri, Kurmi were not very much satisfied

with the reservation policy as the benefit of reservation was not much for this group under the new scheme.¹³

Secondly, the real Backward Class people might not avail of the reservation facility, because the youth from the most backward caste group, would find it difficult to compete with backward classes who were already economically and educationally quite advanced in job market on account of their limited education.

- (8) Psychologically, the Backward Castes movement is bugging all things in order to surpass the upper castes. Instead of eradicating poverty and creating job-opportunities for the people the politicians in power decided to widen the cleavages between the two caste groups for serving their vested interest. They manipulated the unwary for fulfilling certain political ends. A state of tension and suspicions was created which blocked the development of the already poor state of Bihar. The masses became caste centered and started coming closer to each other on the basis of caste. The caste consciousness gave rise to a number of conflict situation often accompanied by violence. Caste began to play havoc with the life

13. The entire controversy centred around 4,600 jobs for other BC people out of 23,000 jobs available every year in the State.

of the general public. Probably there had not been any bitter and tense situation if the upliftment of the real backward castes was aimed at.

- (9) The leaders of the Backward Class Federation of Bihar have taken upper castes as their reference group and have formulated the theory that the upper caste seeks invariably to subordinate the backward castes and others. This has put them in a state of confrontation with the upper caste. In the 1970s, Bihar witnessed two social movements. The first is known as JP movement, and second as the movement of Backward Castes.¹⁴ In the first movement the society was not divided on the basis of caste; on the other hand the very basis of the second was caste.
- (10) During the past years, many caste riots which took place in Bihar was created mainly from the side of upper backward castes specially Kurmi and Yadava against Harijans for their self-interest.
- (11) In Bihar the unit of mobilization has already been caste, not village not region. There has never been a reform movement in Bihar in which the different castes of a region would have participated together. The formation

14. Prasad, Pradhan H., "Caste and Class in Bihar", EPW, Annual Number, February 1979, p.483; also Jha, Hetkar, "Caste Conflict in Bihar", Times of India, 15 May, 1980.

of Triveni Sangam or the Bihar Caste Federation represented only a horizontal alliance between different castes. It did not destroy the original caste identities, nor was it able to maintain solidarity. In important matters such as diet, inter-dining and marriage the various castes still follow by and large the rules prescribed for them in the traditional social order. Electioneering has reinforced caste identities and sentiments, making the horizontal caste structure a viable social entity.

- (12) The Karpoori Thakur group represented a historic watershed in the effort to transform Bihar society. It became the first political party since Independence to attempt the social awakening of all the backward communities for the purpose of organizing the poor. Significantly, the party had its greatest strength in the northern districts where impoverished riots led the first violent agitations against planters and zamindars at the turn of the century. Moreover, the deliberate emphasis on the economic reforms to attract the support of backward community, the majority of whom are poor, fairly worked so that the landed among the backward castes

withdrew support from the Lok Dal in favour of Congress(I) or Bharatiya Janata Party.

- (14) It is difficult to predict the future scenario of caste politics. One cannot legitimately venture out to surmise that the factional differences between upper and backward castes would disappear.

CHAPTER-V

GOVERNMENTAL STEPS FOR THE UPLIFTMENT OF
BACKWARD CASTES IN BIHAR: HOW EFFECTIVE
WAS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF JOB RESERVATION
POLICY OF 1977

CHAPTER-V

GOVERNMENTAL STEPS FOR THE UPLIFTMENT OF BACKWARD CASTES IN BIHAR: HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF JOB RESERVATION POLICY OF 1977

The history of Backward Castes reservation in Bihar can be traced back to the year 1951 when the state government prepared two lists of economically and educationally backward classes comprising Hindu as well as Muslim caste groups.¹ The first list included over 78 backward Hindu and Muslims castes like Dhanuk, Hajjam, Kohas and Mallah. The second list comprised about 30 backward classes like Bania, Koieris, Kurmis and Yadavas, who were economically better off but politically not as influential as the four upper castes.² Apart from the list prepared by the state government, Kaka Kalelkar Commission had listed 126 other backward classes in Bihar state.³

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1. Prasad, Thakur: Bihar Arakshan Niyanavali (Hindi) Departmental Publication, Sales Centre, New Delhi, Secretariat Patna, 1978, p.75.
 2. Blair, Harry W.: "Rising Kulaks and Backward Classes in Bihar", Social Change in Late 1970s, EPW, 12 January 1980.
 3. Report of Kaka Kalelkar Commission on Backward Class in India, Vol.3, Government of India Press, New Delhi, 1955, pp.16-22.

These lists were made keeping in view the need of special assistance, including allotment of educational institutions by the Government of India. But no follow up action was taken by the State Government.

In 1961 an independent study group headed by the Sarvodaya Leader Lahduja Prakash Narain explored the possibility of provision of reservation for educationally and socially backward classes of Bihar. The report of the group favoured reservation on the basis of economic criterion (income of a person) for determination of backwardness.⁴

Meanwhile, the list of OBC prepared by the state Government in 1951 was challenged in the Patna High Court. After long hearing in 1969 the court declared the list unconstitutional, for it had taken into account the caste criterion for determining backwardness rather than education or income.⁵

During the period 1964-70, the state Government did not take any formal step to uplift the Backward Classes.

4. Katyal, K.K.: "Politics of Job Reservation", The Hindu (Madras), 20 March 1978.

5. Blair, Harry W.: op.cit., p.65.

Certain less backward caste leaders were gradually becoming influential on the political scene but they did not take up the matter. The activities of caste associations of Yadavas, Kurmis, Koieri etc. went on as usual. The BC, as a whole, had some expectation from the first backward castes Chief Minister of Bihar BPC Mandal, but he was unable to do anything significant from their welfare due to his short stay of 47 days in power. Another reason of disinterestedness on the part of the state government was probably the period of political instability which witnessed the rise and fall of nine governments between 1967 and 1971.

The Mungerilal Backward Classes Commission

In 1971 the state government appointed a Backward Class Commission under the chairmanship of Mungerilal to look into the condition of Backward Castes in Bihar and recommend measures for their upliftment. The interesting point to note here is that the Commission was appointed by the Congress(R) government, headed by Bholu Paswan Shastri, who himself comes from scheduled caste (Dunadh).

Besides the chairman, 20 members were nominated to the Commission. Soon the State Government realised that

the member would be too big. Hence, it was decided on 25 June 1971, to have only seven members in Commission. The notification of its appointment was made on 23 December 1971 and the Commission was asked to submit its report by 23 December 1974.

The Commission did an in-depth study of the condition of Backward Classes in Bihar. The members favoured some welfare programmes for the upliftment of backward classes. The Commission submitted its interim report in February 1973 and Final Report in February 1976.

Following the recommendation of Kaka Kalelkar Commission, the Mungerilal Commission decided caste as the basis of determining backward classes. It brought out two lists of backward castes.⁶ The first list included 128 other backward classes in the state, while the second list comprised 94. Here it is interesting to note that those included in the first list were declared as backward classes (although they were castes) and those in the second list were considered as the backward castes.⁷

The Commission gave a number of recommendations for the welfare of backward classes in Bihar. Important

6. Prasad, Thakur: op.cit.

7. For a complete list of Backward Caste in Bihar See Appendices II and III.

among them were a uniform reservation of 33% for the socially and economically backward castes and classes in state government departments. (It was besides 14% reservation for Harijans and 10% for adivasis in Bihar) and creation of a separate ministry for backward castes.

Consequently, the other backward castes in the state government became quite optimistic about reservation for them in government services but then the Congress government in the state did not implement the report. Owing to the state of emergency all over the country no one from the backward classes, dared to raise the matter. Moreover, all political activists were in jail during the Emergency.

Implementation of the Recommendations of the
Mungerilal Commission, 1977-78

The year of 1977 brought a ray of hope for those looking forward to the implementation of the recommendations regarding reservation. In January, the Emergency was relaxed and Lok Sabha elections were announced. Five major opposition parties joined hands to form the Janata Party in order to provide a viable alternative to the Congress(R) Party. The Janata Party promised in its manifesto, 25 to 33 per cent reservation for backward classes in government services. This was keeping with wishes of the late

Ram Mahohar Lohia, the Socialist Leader, who had demanded 60% reservation for backward classes and women in government services.

In 1977, the elections were fought for the first time not on the basis of caste, but on the basis of major issues that was the imposition of Emergency. It brought about temporary unity among all caste groups in Bihar which sided with Janata Party. Janta Party got a two-third majority in the State Assembly. Karpoori Thakur became the Chief Minister. He enjoyed the support from the backward classes. So after the elections of 1977, the backward class MLAs pressurized him for implementing the Janata Party's election pledge by adopting reservation policy for the benefits of backward classes.

On 29 June 1977 the Government of Bihar announced that it was considering the recommendation of Mungerilal Commission Report and would be implementing that very soon.⁸ This was also mentioned the address of Bihar legislative Assembly and Council. The reservation was for 26 per cent of the jobs for OBcs. As recommended by the Mungerilal Commission and in fulfilment of the pledge

8. Prasad, Thakur: op.cit.

contained in the Janata election manifesto.⁹ With the announcement of reservation scheme, a cold-war began between the upper caste and backward caste.

On 12 November 1977 the state cabinet met to discuss the proposal of reservation.¹⁰ After a prolonged discussion, the cabinet authorised the Chief Minister to take a decision on the matter. At this stage, however, no percentage was fixed. The Chief Minister expressed satisfaction and stated that he would meet Jayaprakash Narayan soon to know his views on the issue. By now, it became crystal clear that the state government would go ahead with the reservation proposal. Gradually the masses belonging to the upper caste and middle caste groups started expressing bitterness towards each other.

Karpoori Thakur encashed his reservation formula finally on the eve of the Phule Powan Assembly Constituency by election from where he was seeking the election to state Assembly.¹¹ While campaigning in the constituency in

9. Bihar: Address of the Governor, 1947-82 (in Hindi), (Patna, 1982), p.324.

10. The Indian Nation(Patna), 13 November, 1977.

11. The Indian Nation(Patna), 13 December, 1977.

December 1977, he announced the state government will give 26 per cent reservation to backward classes as recommended by the Mungerilal Commission. The constituency had a majority of middle caste voters, and he won the election as expected.

Public Reaction

The announcement of the proposal for reservation was followed by a series of confrontation between the upper caste and middle range castes. The legislatures started uniting on caste lines. Political affiliations vanished and caste affiliation emerged as the unifying bond. Street fights involving upper caste and backward caste began to be witnessed all over the state. The castes were no longer confined to the urban areas. The rural areas soon came under its grips. Anti-reservation demonstrations followed quickly by destruction of public and private property. Entire educational and administrative system in the state ground to a stop.

The upper caste protested against the reservation policy because their share of government jobs was taken away by what they called "less competent" backward caste men. They argued that under the new scheme the reservation benefits would not go to backward caste (as provided in

the Constitution), but to certain affluent classes like Jadava, Kurmi and Koieris, who were economically and numerically stronger than some of the upper castes like Brahmin and Kayastha. On the other hand pre-reservation fully supported the government decision to consider caste for determining the Backward Classes.

The upper caste and middle caste confrontation had its impact also on politics in the state. The members of the ruling Janata Party started fighting among themselves openly. Many upper caste leaders started working for the ouster of Karpoori Thakur. About 80 Janata legislatures sent telegram to the Party President on 14 March 1978, threatening to resign if the government went ahead with the implementation of the reservation proposal.¹² All this gave the impression that widespread indiscipline existed in the ruling party.

The situation thus became very tense by March 1978. On 14 March 1978, the Governor's speech to the joint session of the legislature mentioned the reservation policy. It declared that the State Government would reserve 26 per cent of jobs for OBCs as promised in the election manifesto of the Janata Party with effect from 1 April 1978.¹³

12. The Hindustan Times(New Delhi), 15 March 1978.

13. Bihar Governors Speech (1947-82), Patna, 1982, p.336.

Further, on 21 March 1978 the state cabinet approved the decision to reserve 26% of government jobs for OBCs, with income limit of Rs. 12,000 per annum.¹⁴ It was only for initial appointment not promotion. The reserved seats and posts were divided between Annexure I and Annexure II in the ratio of 60 and 40 per cent.

The announcement led to open confrontation between the backward caste and the upper caste. There were armed clashes, arson and destruction. A caste-based movement arose which was spearheaded by students belonging to the middle classes. The whole movement was activated by the caste-consciousness. The upper castes who were opposing the reservation, formed the "Forward League", while the backward caste united under the banner of the "Backward Classes Federation". These organizations staged demonstrations and dharnas in support of their demands. The Backward Classes Federation under the leadership of Ram Avadhesh Singh (MP) intensified its action to press for the demand of expanding the implementation of reservation policy for the backward classes. The Federation leaders ensured the full support to the Chief

14. Indian Nation, 22 March 1978.

Minister and held demonstrations. The agitation launched anti-reservationists also continued. All this put the state government in a dilemma. The caste-based reservations thus strengthened caste consciousness instead of class consciousness. The caste war weakened the social environment.

Karpoori Thakur, who was facing the opposition from both upper caste and advanced upper backward castes went ahead with the policy of reservation to unite the backward caste legislature behind him.

Bihar thus moved into an ugly phase of caste riots over the question of reservation. In contrast to other states were seeking to settle the question of reservation through the legal process. Bihar became the scene of street fights. Karpoori Thakur faced strong opposition from students belonging to upper caste who outnumbered backward castes. The bureaucracy was dominated by upper caste,¹⁵ expressed resentment, it was the pro-reservationists who happened to be the deprived group in society agitated first for their betterment. It was anti-reservationists who cornered all available opportunities

15. "Design to Divide People on Caste Line", Link (New Delhi), 26 March 1978.

for a long time and nurtured their socio-economic advancement with better education and government jobs. The pro and anti reservation movements were compared to the Quit India Movement of 1942 and J.P. Movement of 1974. Buses and trains were burnt down, post office and telephone exchanges were razed to the ground, telegraph and telephone lines were snapped, government offices were raided, public property looted, places of learning were destructed, fish-plates were removed from railway tracks, railway wagons were derailed. All universities were closed, rail and road traffic was disrupted, there were ever increasing group clashes in which the victims were generally Harijans and other weaker sections. Curfew was imposed on many towns.¹⁶ Karpoori Thakur had never imagined the upper caste would unite so firmly to oppose his reservation policy.

The backward classes, also came together, however, temporarily to fight the anti-reservationists. Some of the leaders of the backward classes criticized Jayaprakash Narayan for suggesting economic criterion in place of caste criterion. Some youngmen of the backward classes

16. Economic Times(New Delhi), 6 April 1978.

threw chappals and stones at the ailing leader at a function held on 12 March 1978 at the Patna Gandhi Maidan to celebrate his seventy-fifth birth anniversary 'Amrit Mahotsav'.¹⁷

In the tense atmosphere¹⁸ seventeen Janata legislators, Jai Narain Mishra, Vikram Kunwar, Ram Prit Paswan, Md. Sahabudin and others belonging to the upper castes, harijans and muslim warned the Bihar Government about the explosive situation if economic backwardness was not adopted as the basis for reservation of posts in government services. They suggested that the Government might reserve all jobs, if it wished, for economically poor after drawing a line of demarcation between the haves and have-nots of society. But the Government turned down this suggestion.

The different caste organizations of upper caste and backward caste underlined the aspirations of their people through a series of conferences, seminars and meetings. They helped shape decision-making at national and state levels and also functioned as pressure groups.

17. Times of India (New Delhi), 13 March 1978.

18. Rao, M.S.A.: "Political Elite and Caste Association: A Report of Caste Conference", EPW, 18 May 1968, p.779.

In Bihar, both the Forward Caste League and the Backward Caste Federation were formed for their respective causes in 1977 and worked as pressure groups in regard to reservation policy. These organizations were organising demonstrations, bandhs and destroying government properties. Their activists were engaged in a caste-war. In the legislative Assembly and Legislative Council they voiced pro and anti-reservation views. Some of the legislatures were engaged in lobbying central leaders in favour of their viewpoints. These leaders pointed out that some castes like Yadavas and Kurmis were economically better off than Brahmins in the Maithili area. "The poverty of the Brahmins had to be seen to be believed",¹⁹ they said.

In October 1978 the reservationists of Bihar came in touch with the leaders of Backward Castes of South India. Some black-shirt leaders of the Dravida Kazhagam of Tamil Nadu visited rural and urban areas of Bihar.²⁰ They advised the backward castes to unite and fight for reservation. Narrating their achievements, they said that it was only through united strength that the backward classes of Tamil Nadu had been enjoying the benefits of reservation

19. Times of India (New Delhi), 14 March 1978.

20. Indian Express (New Delhi), 20 October 1978.

for the past fifty years. Their influence increased the intensity of the pro-reservationist agitation.

The legislators too fought, inside the Assembly during the 1977-78 session, some for reservation and others against it. They were active either in Forward Caste League or the Backward Caste Federation. These organizations opened branches all over the state to organise agitation even at Tehsil and district levels. The move of the government to reserve jobs on caste basis had a long and deep impact on society. It vertically divided the society into forward and backward caste groups irrespective of the fact that who were really backward or not.

Finding their influence less within the Assembly, the legislators started mobilizing the people for their cause. Public pressure began to take shape on both fronts. This was a unique political development in Bihar.

The reservation issue swept the whole State. Opinions for and against the subject started appearing in daily newspapers. The legislators from forward groups were not against reservation policy but they favoured to base it on economic ground rather than on caste ground. The backward class legislators were favouring caste-based reservation policy, and the differences between them gradually sharpened.

The Government decision was not well thought out nor was it based on well accepted formula of backwardness. Consequently, its decisions produced unforeseen consequences. The present crisis was the product of a number of factors. First, the government failed to take the consent of S.N.Sinha's faction of the Janata legislature party of Bihar. Second, the policy of reservation was not formulated or debated in the legislative Assembly. Third, a few of the dominant backward castes were wrongly included in the list of the backward classes. This infuriated the upper castes. Fourth, the policy of reservation was announced without dividing the backward classes into backward and most backward classes. Fifth, no step was proposed for checking the abuse of privileges by those sections of the backward classes which did not actually suffer from any special disability. Sixth, the upper castes were placing hurdles in the way of implementation of the reservation in order to check the emergent threat to them from the backward classes in the field of technical education and government services. And, lastly, the emotions of all classes of people - backward and not so backward - were aroused by casteist rhetoric freely traded on the occasion.

Fresh Discussion on Reservation Issue

The gradual deteriorating law and order situation was becoming a day-to-day problem. That forced the political parties to give fresh thinking on the whole situation particularly on the main issue of reservation policy. No Government could function well in a continued atmosphere viciated by law and order problem, dislocation of trade and business, social breakdown and general turmoil. Naturally the deteriorating situation in Bihar under the Janata Party Government compelled the Party leaders and the Government at the centre to intervene.

The Janata Parliamentary Board on 13 March 1978 discussed the explosive situation in Bihar arising from the announcement of the reservation policy. It made it clear that reservation would be limited strictly to initial appointments and admissions in technical institutions but not for promotion.²¹ It advised the Government of Bihar to extend the benefit of reservation to those who were economically poor among the upper castes and to exclude prosperous members of the castes, whose family

21. Times of India(New Delhi), 14 March 1978; Indian Nation(Patna), 22 March 1978.

income exceeded Rs. 5,000 a year, or whose families owned more than two hectares of land. It further advised the State leadership to frame rules in the matter and place before the State legislature for a full discussion.²² The Government notification regarding reservation should be issued only after discussion and after approval by the State legislature.

The situation was not favourable for the Chief Minister. He was not sure of getting the approval of the State legislature and so he preferred to issue an executive order. His Government thus virtually arrogated to itself the power of the State legislature. He preferred to rule through ordinances rather than statutes passed by the legislature which in fact showed his weak position in the house. He even by passed his own Council of Ministers.²³

The President of the Janata Party, Chandrashekhar paid a visit to Patna on 2 April 1978 for discussing the problem with Jayaprakash Narayan, the Chief Minister and other important leaders. He asked the Janata legislators of the upper castes to support Karpoori Thakur's proposal.²⁴

22. Gandhi, P.C.: "Proposals to Diffuse Bihar Situation", Times of India(New Delhi), 18 March 1978.

23. Sahay, S.: "Bihar Constitutional Fraud", The Statesman (New Delhi), 6 October 1983.

24. The Statesman (Calcutta), 4 April 1978.

The pressure from the President of the Party was vehemently opposed. In utter disgust from the unwanted pressure from the top and undemocratic functioning of its Government, the legislators belonging to upper castes started getting ready to submit their resignations from the Party. At a meeting of the Bihar Cabinet held in Delhi, the Ministers of the upper castes were asked to support reservation. They gave their consent to support any new modified reservation plan. Differences thus continued to plague the Bihar cabinet. The Cabinet was divided into upper caste and backward caste ministers. Even staunch socialists were against the caste criterion. Some of them did not want reservation of any kind.

The Central Parliamentary Board of the Janata Party discussed on 5 April 1978 three aspects of the job reservation issue at the meeting. First, should reservation be confined to those who belonged to the backward castes? Second, should reservation cover only those among the backward classes who were economically backward? And, third, should reservation be extended to all those who were economically weak whatever their caste?²⁵

25. Times of India(New Delhi), 6 April 1978.

The Shanti Bhushan Committee

After long discussions, the party felt the necessity of a further detailed study of the problem. Consequently a committee with 27 members was appointed on 6 April 1978 under the Chairmanship of the Union Law Minister, Shanti Bhushan, to examine the demand of the pro-reservationists and the anti-reservationists and make recommendations. The Committee consisted of Central Law Ministers, five party general secretaries of central organisation of the party, and eight Bihar Ministers and eight legislators from both the warring groups. It held a meeting in Delhi on 17 April 1978 to discuss the problem and put forward a new proposal. The Committee regarded caste as a relevant factor but it could not be the sole factor. It took note of the social, educational and economic criteria and subsequently suggested²⁶ reservation of 11 per cent for the most backward classes, 6 per cent for the backward classes, 4 per cent for the economically backward among the upper castes; and 5 per cent for women. Thus, it also favoured reservation of seats up to 26 per cent, but the leaders of the backward classes rejected the whole formula as inimical to their interests.

26. Hindustan Times, 18 April 1978; Indian Nation, 19 April 1978.

There is a strong apprehension that if separate quotas were not fixed for the backward and the most backward classes, the relatively advanced backward castes like Bania, Kurmi, Koieri and Yadava would enjoy the benefit from the reservation policy. Fixed quotas of this kind for different backward classes were in practice in Andhra Pradesh, Kamataka and Kerala.

Karpoori Thakur was in favour of reservation of 26 per cent for the backward classes, 5 per cent for the economically backward members of the upper castes, and 5 per cent for women, raising the reservation quota to 36 per cent. This was wholly unacceptable to the central leaders and the State Cabinet. He was pressurized not to go beyond the limit of 26 per cent. The leaders of the backward classes resented this pressure. Thus, strong divergent views continued to pose problems for the State. Even the central leaders had no one opinion.

Change in the Decision, 1978

The reservation issues had gradually drawn the attention of all sections of the people. Reservation campaign and anti-reservation agitation to arouse public consciousness continued. The pressures were operating from both sides. Academicians, particularly experts of

human resources, and economists, analysed the pros and cons of the proposed reservation policy. The politicians had a difficult task ahead. The legislators had a difficult time how to please voters of both forward and backward classes. The inter-class clash of interests posed problems for the policy makers.

Ultimately accepting a suggestion made by the Central leadership, particularly by Chandrashekhar, Karpoori Thakur declared a modified reservation plan²⁷ on 1 November 1978, effective from 31 October 1978. The plan contained reservation of 12 per cent for the most backward classes; 8 per cent for the backward classes, 3 per cent for the economically backward among the upper castes and 3 per cent for women. According to him, this plan would benefit the following sections of society: (1) socially and educationally backward people; (2) socially and educationally backward Muslims; (3) women belonging to all castes and communities; and (4) all poor people even if they were not otherwise backward.²⁸

The Bihar Backward Classes Federation did not seem to be satisfied with a reservation of 20 per cent. It

27. Indian Nation, 2 November 1978.

28. Bihar Gazette Extraordinary (Patna), 31 October 1978; Indian Nation, 2 November 1978.

demanded reservation of 26 per cent of the jobs for the backward castes. It clarified that if the Government wanted to reserve jobs for women and other weaker sections, it should do so without touching the quota of the backward classes.

The new formula ensured that the well-to-do among the backward castes did not appropriate the benefits meant for the most backward classes. It benefited only those backward classes whose income did not exceed a thousand rupees a month. It thus, sought to prevent abuse of privilege by those sections of the backward classes which did not in practice suffer from any special disability.²⁹

The economically dominant and politically powerful social group of upper castes legislators, thus compelled the Chief Minister to change his stand on the reservation policy. In contrast the numerically larger but unorganized backward castes failed to maintain the status quo in respect of the reservation policy. This meant that in terms of organizational ability, technical knowledge, financial power, social dominance, and access to decision-makers, the backward castes were still no match for the

29. Prasad, Ishwari: op.cit.9.

upper castes. The decision-makers favoured a sharing of Government jobs and educational opportunities rather than the establishment of a monopoly over them. A dispersion of economic power led to a dispersion of political power and ultimately to a dispersion of Government jobs in favour of the backward castes.

It has been said that in liberal democratic societies, the Government institutions and their decision-making structures benefit the dominant social groups and that this looks legitimate to the less powerful and unorganized masses.

The new formula was certainly better than the earlier one, and more scientific. It took note of developments in the social, educational and political life of Bihar.

By agreeing to the new formula Karpoori Thakur showed his flexible approach. He had accepted the suggestions of the Central leaders and State legislators. He noted the deprivation of the poor section of the upper castes. At last he declared the new reservation formula within the limits of 26 per cent. His new plan was good enough to satisfy all sections of people. Of course some Yadav and Kurmi leaders were unhappy about reservation

being restricted to 8 per cent but excluding income tax payees. On the other hand the upper-caste legislators kept up their demand for the implementation of the Shanti Bhushan formula which contained reservation of 11 per cent for the most backward classes; 6 per cent for the backward classes; 4 per cent for the economically backward among the upper castes; and 5 per cent for women.

One of the features of the reservation policy in Bihar was the inclusion of some Muslim groupings in the list of backward classes. The Muslims never talked of oppression by those who were better placed among them though they confessed to differential behaviour based on differences in secular positions.³⁰ Mungerilal Commission listed some of castes from the Muslim community in the list of OBCs. They were socially and educationally backward and noting this reservation was extended to them.

There was a controversy over the procedure to be adopted in implementing the reservation policy. The relevant notification said simply that the "procedure" would be the same as the one being followed in the case of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. This meant that backward

30. Desai, I.P.: "Should 'caste' be the Basis for Recognising Backwardness?", EPW, 14 July 1984, p.1106.

class candidates would be debarred from competing for the general vacancies. This, according to the leaders of the backward castes, was tantamount to granting 56 per cent reservation to the upper castes. The changes levelled by the Backward classes that 56 per cent of seats were reserved for the upper class were misleading. Till now nowhere in the country posts or seats have been reserved for the upper class. There is free competition in which even backward class candidates do compete. And if the backward class candidates compete in open competition they are not counted in reserved quota.

Many recruiting agencies also misconstrued the provision for reservation as prescribing the upper limit for the intake of backward class candidates.³¹ In July 1979, therefore, Bihar Government headed by new Chief Minister Ram Sunder Das made it clear that the reservation percentage indicated the minimum quota, not the maximum, and that candidates of the backward classes selected on merit should not be shown against the quota reserved for the backward classes.

31. Report of the Backward Classes Commission(Chairman: B.P.Mandal), Vols.I-II(New Delhi, 1981), p.7.

New JLP Leadership and Reservation Policy

Karpoori Thakur became a target of attack by different sections of society on the ground that he had divided the people on caste lines. The Janata Party legislators were demanding the resignation of Thakur. At last the central leaders asked him to secure a fresh mandate on 19 April 1978 from the Janata Legislature Party. Karpoori Thakur lost the leadership of the Janata Party legislators by 105 votes to 135. His ministry was replaced by a new ministry headed by Ram Sunder Das.

Commenting upon the change of leadership of Bihar State Legislature Party S.N.Sinha said that Karpoori Thakur had failed to provide a good, efficient and clean administration.³² Although there were many allegations of corruption against his Cabinet colleagues, Karpoori Thakur had refused to take any action. In fact, he had stoutly defended his corrupt ministers. In the context of the reservation policy, Krishna Choudhary, a member of the Legislative Council, who had been elected on the ticket of the Communist Party of India, had observed that "although he supported the policy of reservation, it was clear from

32. The Current(Bombay), 28 April 1979.

the manner in which the policy was being implemented that the Janata Party was more interested in caste conflicts than in removing the backwardness of the people.³³

On 21 April 1979 Ram Sunder Das was unanimously elected leader of the Janata Legislature Party. The meeting was attended by 168 members out of a total of 246. Of the 168 members who attended, 144 were Members of the Legislative Assembly. The replacement of Karpoori Thakur by Ram Sunder Das, a backward class legislator, was a political move of the forward class legislators. It was an indication of split in the Janata Party with class and caste colour. The reservation policy had become a major source of friction. Not that the other legislators were against reservation policy but the manner in which it was announced by Karpoori Thakur showed it to be undemocratic and arbitrary. After the split in the Janata Party in August 1979, the group led by Karpoori Thakur demanded Ram Sunder Das, resignation as he was not in a majority in the House. On two occasions, in August and December 1979, the Congress(I) had supported the Das Ministry during the trial of strength. After the elections to the Lok Sabha,

33. Patriot(New Delhi), 17 March 1978.

when the Congress(I) decided to oust the Janata Ministry, the Lok Dal, after its defeat in the Lok Sabha election, came to the rescue of the Das Ministry. Dr. Jagannath Mishra called it a double stand by the Lok Dal leadership. The Lok Dal supported the Janata Party Ministry during the trial of strength in the Legislative Assembly on 24 January 1980.

Ram Sunder Das was under consistent pressure from a few Janata Legislators for withdrawal of the reservation policy. Those legislators had played a dominant role in changing the state leadership of the Janata Party made it with a view that Ram Sunder Das would correct the reservation policy eliminating their objection. But he made it clear that since it was a matter of policy with the Janata party, the question of withdrawal did not arise. This infuriated the leaders of the Forward Castes League. The withdrawal of reservation policy was not easy as one would think of. Once a decision is announced by the Government, the people or organisation or class benefited by such announcement always remain vigilant and demand maintaining the status quo. Pressures, for and against, operate on the Government with arguments and counter-arguments. Further Chief Minister Ram Sunder Das was a backward and

was not willing to do any harm to himself by withdrawing the reservation policy.

Continuity of Reservation Policy during the Rule of Congress(I)

The Congress(I) Ministry, which succeeded the Das Ministry, accepted the policy of reservation. Dr. Jagannath Mishra, the new Chief Minister, even accepted the Mandal Commission's report when he was about to be replaced. The acceptance of Mandal Commission's report by Mishra Ministry had been interpreted in different ways. When Dr. Mishra apprehended downfall of his ministry, he had accepted Mandal Commission's report in order to win over the support of backward class legislators of Congress(I) Party. He also showed his progressive outlook by accepting measures for the upliftment of backward classes. Really speaking Dr. Mishra's acceptance of the report was more a political game than anything else. This reflects further the strength of the backward classes in the politics of Bihar. Indeed no political leader can dare to go back from the decision on the reservation policy introduced by the Janata Government in 1977-78.

All agree that a reservation policy is required for upliftment of the backward classes. The controversial

issue is who are the backward castes? What are the rational criteria in identifying backwardness? Is it caste or class or economic or educational or something else? It is clear that caste or class is not a rational criterion for reservation. Backwardness should be decided on economic, social and academic basis irrespective of the caste factor. Differences had arisen on this point, which if accepted, would be the best.

The emergence of the backward castes into politics has a long history. The leaders of these castes succeeded in building up a strong movement for upliftment of their castes. But these castes are fragmented in different political parties, from the Congress(I) to the Janata Party, then the Bhartiya Janata Party and the Bhartiya Lok Dal to the Communist Party of India. Among the advanced backward castes the Yadavas support legislators of their caste, whatever be the party label.

Bihar is a caste ridden state. Every issue is viewed from caste angle which does not allow the state to prosper. However, the issue of reservation brought to the fore caste interests. Fortunately there has been no exclusive political party for any class, backward or forward. Every political party has members from all classes. Every party aims to preserve the interests of

backward and weaker sections of the society. This has strong political implications. No political party would like to displease the backward classes and castes, which jointly represent a major group of voters. But the political parties also would not like to lose the support of forward class and castes as they still are in the forefront of political field. Reconciling the interests of both the groups as well as going ahead with development of the society including upliftment of backward castes and weaker sections are ticklish problems before the political parties in India, particularly the State of Bihar.

Why Anti-Reservationist Movement in Bihar?

In the third chapter, while discussing the problem of Backward Classes Movement in different states of India, we have seen that job-reservation policy has created nowhere such a great problem as it has in Bihar. Hence a question arises why anti-reservation policy.

There are many reasons responsible for it and some of the important reasons have already been discussed in Chapter-III. We are presenting below some of the other important points.

In comparison to other states of India, specially with Southern Indian states, the upper castes are in great number in Bihar. For instance, there are more than one upper castes in Bihar. Besides the Brahmins, there are three other important upper castes in Bihar - Bhumihar, Rajput and Kayastha. These twice born castes in Bihar account for about 12.8% of the total population (in 1931 Census). On the other hand in South India the Brahmins, who are the only upper castes, account for just 3 per cent of the total population in Southern states like Tamilnadu. In Bihar the Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs and Kayastha occupy a higher social ritual status and enjoy greater economic power. The Bhumihars and Rajputs are main land-owning groups of Bihar. They own more than half of the State. The influential position of upper castes make them capable of resisting any move by the backward castes to end their domination.

Regional caste profiles affect the nature of political cleavage and mobilization.³⁴ In its early years the nationalists in the South were dominated by the Brahmins. The Brahmins also enjoyed the benefit of

34. Rudolph and Rudolph, op.cit., p.52

education and were conspicuous in the administrative field. Subsequently, when other castes came into the picture they felt that they were equal to the Brahmins and resented being excluded from leading positions in political and professional life. They opposed the domination of the Brahmins by forming an anti-Brahmin party called the Justice Party.³⁵

In Bihar, the situation is quite different. The Kayasthas dominated the educational field in the early twentieth century. The Bhumihars and Rajputs were in a better position in the political and economic fields. The leadership of the freedom struggle too was not in the hands of Brahmins. As an intellectual caste the Brahmins devoted their time to English education in addition to their traditional scholarship. However, the Rajputs and the Kayasthas respected the superior social status of Brahmins. It was only in the second quarter of the twentieth century that the Bhumihar peasant leader, Swami Sahajananda Saraswati, challenged the ritual superiority of the Brahmins and claimed that Bhumihars too were Brahmins. The cooperation

35. The Justice Party, the organ of the Non-Brahmin Movement in Madras, was founded in 1916.

of other three strong upper caste saved the Brahmins of Bihar from the hostility of other castes unlike in south India and they all challenged the implementation of seat reservation policy for BC and ultimately due to their strong pressure it w could not succeed.

In Bihar there is considerable social intercourse among the upper castes. They have distributed power among themselves and control the political, social and economic system. It is the infighting among the upper castes which has paved the way for emergence of backward castes in politics.³⁶ The fight of backward castes is not so much with the Brahmins as with the Brahminical theology which countenances or sanctions the dominance of upper castes.

In South India the differences between R SC and ST on one hand and backward caste on the other hand are not much. They were all united, in fact, in the first half of the present century. In Bihar, however, the upper backward castes were among the traditional oppressors of the scheduled castes and the latter depended upon the upper castes more than the BC. This is borne out by the

36. Blair, W.H.: Caste, Politics and Democracy in Bihar State, India: The Election of 1967 (Ph.D. Thesis, Duke University, N.C., 1969).

recent atrocities on the Harijans. In 1977-79 there were twenty major outrages on the Harijans and as many as fifteen of them were perpetrated by Yadava and Kurmi.³⁷ The Backward castes are also divided among themselves as there are difference among them in economic and social status. In the Nalanda District the main rivalry in the political field continues to be between Yadavas and the Kurmis, and the two frequently clash. The upper castes generally keep away from such clashes. In fact, the backward castes are not a monolithic entering in Bihar.

Another fact which the Mandal Commission also noticed, is that the feudal and semi-feudal traditions in Bihar enabled the upper castes to keep a tight control over the smaller backward castes and to prevent them from joining the mainstream of the backward classes movement. Till recently, under the zamindari system in Bihar there was paternal-filial relationship between the landlords and the peasants. This kind of relationship is unknown under the ryotwari system of South India. Also in Bihar the backward castes were never oppressed and humiliated in

37. "North Reacts More to Job Reservation", Patriot (New Delhi), 10 April 1983.

the same degree as in the south. This helped prevent any anti-upper caste feeling from assuming menacing proportion. It is only now for the sake of the political benefits that the Hindu educated backward caste-leaders of the upper and upper middle classes have inflamed such feelings. Industrial establishments, both public and private sectors, employ a fair percentage of working hands in Bihar. There are big industries - coal, iron and steel, sugar, power, transport and many others. Big factories like Tisco, Bokaro Steel Plant, Telco, HEC provide good employment where reservation policy is not applicable. The Government services, though provide not much employment opportunities but the status and power add importance. The power of the government servant has attributed importance to government jobs. This importance has been a most pinching factor for those affected by the reservation policy. In Bihar the jobs are confined by and large to the government sector. Young men of the upper castes are, therefore, unable to accept reservation. It is an immediate threat to their own existence, they fear.

CHAPTER-VI

C O N C L U S I O N

CHAPTER - VI

C O N C L U S I O N

This research work entitled "The Role of Backward Castes in Bihar Politics: 1967-1985" attempts to study in depth the extent of influence of backward castes on the politics of the State. The role of the backward castes is analysed primarily on the postulates mentioned in the first Chapter. In the opening Chapter certain basic questions on the issue of caste influence have been raised and in the second, third, fourth and fifth chapters, efforts are made to find answers. Here, we will mention in brief the overall conclusions derived from all the chapters, regarding the interplay of backward caste and the politics in Bihar.

Main Findings of the Study

- (1) Bihar is a caste-ridden society. Its politics is also dominated by the caste factor. Since 1912, when Bengalis and Biharis demanded the separation of Bihar from Bengal province, to the present time, it was mainly the caste factor which had influenced the politics of the State. In this state, caste is

playing a very effective role in almost all activities related to politics. Caste is taken into account before making any political decision, appointment or transfer. In the field of political recruitment it plays an important role. Even those who can be said to have shaken off the shackles of casteism do not oppose caste consideration in the functioning of the organizational set up of the party in the selection of candidates for the election and in the distribution of patronage.

On the basis of the discussion in earlier chapters, it has been observed that from the very beginning caste is influencing the politics of Bihar State. Before 1967 period its politics was totally controlled by the four upper castes and they themselves clashed with each other for the share of political benefits. Sometime the Bhumihar group would be fighting with Rajput group and sometime Rajput would be clashing with the Kayastha and Brahmin group so up to this time the Backward Caste had only very few seats here and there in the Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha. But after 1967 the backward caste and some SC and ST also started to come into politics. In the election of 1977 they came in great numbers and started to challenge the domination of upper caste people. They

launched a movement for the implementation of job/reservation policy. The politics of job reservation initiated by the Janata Government in Bihar in 1977-78 divided the society into two mutually hostile camps - one of the upper castes and other of the backward castes. This group fought for and against reservation, agitating at the level of the legislative and in public. The reservation controversy is still continuing. A large numbers of legislatures are members of either one or the other of these two antagonistic camps.

- (2) It is not only the caste which influences politics but politics also has its effect on caste. We have seen that participation of people belonging to different castes in the Bihar politics has been different. At first only a limited group of upper castes, who were numerically very small, but, socially, economically more powerful, had started taking part in politics. Afterwards, the backward castes specially Yadava, Kurmis, Koieris, whose socio-economic politics is better than any other castes and almost parallel to the upper castes came forward to participate in politics. Gradually, the rest of the caste group also joined in. While analysing the factors behind this unequal

participation, we have concluded that it happened due to the effect of politics on the caste system. As in due course of time, the politics had awakened the people in understanding the importance of franchise and other gains of politics, different caste people gradually started taking part in politics.

- (3) Bihar has vast deposits of minerals, Giant steel plants are located in the State. Raw materials are available in abundance for feeding these industries. And yet the per capita income in the State is desparately low. Large numbers of people are languishing in poverty. About 60 per cent of the people are living below officially defined poverty line. Agriculture is the basic source of income and about 80 per cent of people are dependent on it entirely. Agriculture is not mechanized. Distribution of land is unequal. Land reforms have failed to bring about any significant change in the countryside. Green revolution has not much contribution in its development.

The benefits of such progress, as Bihar has made since independence, are being cornered by certain groups favoured by age-old, hierarchial social structure. They have failed to reach the toiling rural masses. All the

fruits of development, innovation and invention are just fairy tales for the ignorant and illiterate rural poor. The main reason for this is that political power is still in the hands of upper castes, upper classes politicians and their political parties. These politicians are least interested in bringing about any socio-economic transformation. These social and economic inequalities have made the life of millions miserable.

- (4) Bihar is not only socially, economically backward state, but it is also educationally very backward and the main reason for this can be said to be the caste factor.

In the beginning when Western educational system was introduced in Bihar, only the Kayastha and to some extent Muslims, benefited. These sections of Kayastha people were motivated by a desire to raise their standards. Consequently, they considered it better to make themselves more effective through English education.

As in the beginning of Western education, only Kayastha and Muslims had received the English education, so when the state of Bihar became independent from Bengal, all the top position in Government departments went mostly in favour of Kayastha and to some extent Muslims. Soon the Bhumihars, Rajputs, Brahmins also began to take up Western

education. The richer leaders of Bhumihar, Rajput and Brahmin started many educational institutions for the benefits of their own caste people. Among the other castes, only some caste like Yadavas, Kurmis, Koieris began to receive the English education. During this time the wealthy leaders of all upper castes and backward castes tried their best to establish educational institutions for the sake of their caste people.

As in the beginning of Western education only a few castes received the education, and the educational institutions were established on the basis of caste consideration. This has contributed to the educational backwardness of Bihar in education. Today, after the effort of Government of India to improve the standard of education it could not do so because of the debilitating caste is playing in the field.

(5) The OBCS movement in Bihar was started from 1904, but as a strong pressure group it emerged only after the election of 1967, when for the first time a non-Congress party came in power.

(6) There are many reasons which helped the Backward Castes of Bihar to emerge as a strong pressure group in

state politics, like spread of education, introduction of modern technology, democratic institution, land reform act and caste association. But the three main thrust points that helped them immensely in their struggle are: (1) caste association, (2) universal suffrage, and (3) land reform movement.

- (7) The emergence of OBCs movement in Bihar began with different ideology, i.e. sanskritization, politicization, equalization and now it is heading towards dominance over the other castes. For example in the beginning, the main aim of these backward castes was to follow the life style of upper castes people. Other Backward Castes like Yadava, Koieri, Kurmi, by this time began to wear sacred thread and started sending their children to schools and colleges, which were meant for upper castes only. After following the life style of upper castes, they changed their ideology and formed their caste associations in order to capture political power. Now their main aim is to improve their socio, economic and political condition so that they can hope to match the upper caste people.

- (8) The Governor in an address to the joint session of the two Houses of the State Legislature in June 1977 announced the reservation policy for the backward classes irrespective of their economic condition. The condition of

large sections of some of the backward classes was better than that of the lower and middle classes of the upper castes. These classes depended heavily on Government jobs for their livelihood. The poor economic conditions of some sections of the advanced classes forced them to raise voice against reservation policy on purely caste basis. The changing conditions necessitated changes in reservation policy and they opposed the policy.

- (9) Neither the upper castes nor the backward castes are homogeneous. Among the upper castes, some enjoy a higher social status and command greater economic resources. Among the backward castes too there are social and economic differences. It is, therefore, necessary to try and avoid the pitfall of relying wholly on caste as the basis of reservation and offer a helping hand to all needy individuals irrespective of their caste or class affiliation. Among equals the law should be equal, and all should be treated alike.

- (10) The policy of reservation was not the result of any process of decision-making in the Legislative Assembly. It was not the decision of the Legislature in 1971 to appoint a Backward Classes Commission. The implementation of the policy was effected by means of an executive order of the Bihar Governor and not by an Act of the Bihar Legislative

Assembly. It was announced by the Governor at a joint session of the Bihar Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council.

The Government of Bihar modified its policy of reservation a number of times, but it preferred to announce all the modifications from public platforms, never in the Legislative Assembly. This may even be regarded as amounting to contempt of the legislature. The Government of Bihar avoided facing hostile legislators in the Assembly. It preferred to get the support of the people rather than that of the legislators. This divided the people into two hostile camps.

Instead of supporting the Government, a number of Janata legislators belonging to the upper castes openly criticized the reservation policy and participated in the anti-reservation demonstrations. The legislators of the backward classes participated in the pro-reservationist demonstrations. The pressure tactics used by the legislators compelled the Government of Bihar to modify its policy and make it broad-based. Thus, it can be said that the Government of Bihar used the limited rationality method of decision-making and benefited from the feedback. It did not take the Legislative Assembly into confidence before making this vital decision.

(11) The Government of Bihar's decision to implement the recommendations of the Backward Classes Commission mobilized all the backward castes behind the Chief Minister for the time being. The pro-reservationist movement consisted of students, legislators and bureaucrats of the so-called backward castes. They belonged to the upper and middle classes of the backwards. This meant a change in the traditional balance of power relations, altering the social and political super-ordinate-subordinate relationships. The numerically strong , economically prosperous and politically conscious backward castes like the Yadavas and the Kurmis refused to own their subordinate status.

The backward castes cast off their subordinate position in the social hierarchy and joined together to oppose the protest movement of the upper castes. For the first time after Independence the Government's reservation proposal brought about the mobilization of the people and the legislators in Bihar. In the Legislative Assembly most of the legislators worked as a united caste group irrespective of their political affiliations. That was why the mobilization of the backward classes to support the Government decision

could be considered a social movement although it was dominated by the upper and middle classes belonging to the backward castes.

Before Independence education and Government jobs were mostly patronised by the upper castes. After Independence, the phenomenal expansion of educational facilities provided opportunity to the backward castes to get higher education. But the number of Government jobs did not increase in proportion to the development of higher education. About 80 per cent of the limited jobs available were cornered by the four upper castes, who constituted just 13 per cent of the total population. In the Legislative Assembly the upper castes accounted for 45 per cent to 60 per cent of the total strength during 1962- 80. The backward classes in contrast constituted just 30 to 40 per cent in the Legislative Assembly.

The problems of unemployment, poverty and illiteracy among the backward castes generated a feeling of hatred among them against the upper castes. They started blaming the upper castes for all their problems. Consequently, the politically conscious, economically sound and educationally advanced men of the backward castes raised demand for their share in all spheres of life. In this process they snatched away some of

the benefits in the name of preferential treatment under reservation policy.

Their newly acquired economic prosperity enabled some backward castes to control political power. They also sought to control the bureaucracy as that was an important means of acquiring social prestige and domination.

- (12) Job reservation for the backward classes in Bihar had two important consequences. First, it divided the whole society of Bihar into two camps -- the upper castes and the backward castes. Secondly, it influenced politics and voters' decision. The Congress(I) was able to exploit the sentiment of the upper castes on this issue and capture their votes and active support. The solidarity of the backward castes did not prove to be of permanent nature. They were divided among different political parties. Their votes were fragmented, and this helped the Congress(I) to regain political power in the election to the legislative assembly held in 1980 and 1985. Indeed, in the election of 1985, it increased from 167 to 194.

In their manifesto during the Lok Sabha election of 1984, the Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party (Lok Dal) and Janata Party pledged to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission for reservation of 26 per cent of jobs

in the Central Services for the backward classes. However, they failed to mobilise total support of the backward castes in Bihar.

On the other hand the Congress(I) pledged to increase the percentage of reservation for the backward classes in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. It was able to win impressive electoral victory. However, the moment it set about the task of implementing its electoral pledge, it found that it had stirred up hornets nest. A mighty wave of protest arose and a situation reminiscent of the anti- reservation movement in Bihar was precipitated.

In the election to the Assembly in 1985, Karpoori Thakur again made job reservation an issue. He announced his intention to reserve 36 per cent of the jobs in favour of the backward castes if returned to power. Even then his party could manage to win only forty five seats in a House of 327 members. The motive behind the announcement was to make sure of their support for political gain. The issue of reservation was more political and emotional than socio-economic. If the political decision-makers were really interested in the upliftment of the down-trodden, they would have used the method of inclusion and exclusion in the lists of backward classes. They

were not ready to oppose dominant social groups among the backward classes.

- (13) Whatever be the value of caste-based reservation, it was not the remedy to socio-economic malaise. Bihar's greatest problem is economic backwardness, but the mounting pressure for enhancing the percentage of caste-based reservation only added to the delay in the implementation of land-reforms and the much needed development work, including irrigation and industrial development.

In fact it created one more acute problem, viz., escalating social discontent. Even if the Government of Bihar had found in the reservation policy an important way of solving the age-old problem of social inequality and deprivation of backward classes, it failed to shore it up with a proper infrastructure: for without a large number of scholarship, hostel facilities and extra coaching of the students of backward classes they were not going to benefit from the policy of reservation. If the educational standard of backward classes did not improve, they would not be able to utilize the benefit of reservation of Government jobs. Most probably it would be enjoyed by the advanced sections among the backward classes.

(14) The emerging influence, mobilization and participation of OBCs during 1977-79 may be called a social movement with an overwhelming interest reservation issues. Influential backward castes were collectively mobilized to support a favourable reservation policy and fight back anti-reservationist. They do have ideology to change caste-based exploitative social system in an egalitarian social system with proper development of backward classes. They wanted to make themselves equal partners in social and political life of Bihar and not camp follower. In this context they were desiring social change in the process of enhancing their own position.

(15) Although OBCs movement of Bihar was always against the caste system dominated by Brahmin and other upper castes, yet they themselves were agitating for certain privileges on the caste grounds. Each backward castes wanted to maintain its identity and distance from the fellow backward castes. Hence in the absence of a well knit organization and control leadership, the measure of protest differed from time to time, region to region. The backward classes federation was formed at a quite late stage and its activities were mainly confined to the Patna district. Furthermore the functioning of the federation came to a halt after the implementation of the reservation scheme and it was the only means for

the enhancement of backward classes movement. The leaders of Backward Classes should have continued working for the welfare of the actual Backward masses so that the latter would have availed of the facilities extended to them by State government. Probably the leaders had different designs in mind. The reservation issue might or might not have brought about unity among the backward castes but it did not bring about a theoretical unity among the four castes in Bihar. Furthermore, the Federation composed of the elite from the less backward castes was unable to bring about large social mobilization of the backward classes. The agitation by Backward classes in Bihar was just for few material gains and did not have any orientation to bring about social change.

- (16) The Backward castes movement of Bihar is quite different from the Southern State. First, there was no unanimity among the backward castes of Bihar. There was a clear cut contradiction among the Yadava, Kurmi, and Koileri. This was quite obvious from the way in which the reservation formula was announced. Secondly, in the Southern States, all the non-Brahmin castes formed the backward castes category and thus they were effective in their endeavour. In Bihar, there were

three upper castes apart from the Brahmin who did not support the Backward Classes Movement on any issue. Thirdly in South India the differences between the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the one hand and backward castes on other hand are not large. They were all united; in fact, from the first half of the present century. In Bihar however, the upper-backward castes were also among the traditional oppressors of the SC. The S.C. therefore, depended more upon the upper castes than on the backward castes. This is borne out by the recent atrocities on the Harijans. In 1977-79 there were twenty major outrages on the Harijans and as many as fifteen of them were perpetrated by the Yadavas and the Kurmis.*

The backward castes are also divided among themselves as there are differences among them in economic and social status. In the Nalanda district the main rivalry in the political field is between the Yadava and the Kurmi, and the two frequently clash. The upper castes generally keep away from such clash. In fact the backward castes are not a monolithic entity in Bihar.

* 'North Reacts - Move to Job Reservation,' Patriot (New Delhi), 10 April, 1983.

(17) Though the entire caste group of Bihar after the proposal of implementation of job-reservation policy was divided into two groups - that of upper caste and Backward castes - in practice there were many caste divisions within the backward castes themselves. The upper backward castes like Yadava, Koieri, Kurmi, were not very much satisfied with the reservation policy, as the benefit was not much for this group under the new scheme.¹ Secondly, the real B.C. people might not avail of the reservation facility, because the youth from the most backward centre group would find it difficult to compete with backward classes who were already economically and educationally quite advanced in job market on account of their limited education.

(18) Psychologically, the backward classes movement is hugging all things in order to surpass the upper castes. Instead of eradicating poverty and creating job opportunities for the people the politician in power decided to widen the cleavage between the two the two caste groups for serving their vested interest. Emotions of the innocent people were aroused for fulfilling certain political ends. A state of

1. The entire controversy centered around 4,600 jobs for other Backward Classes people out of 23,000 jobs available every year in the state.

tension and suspicion, was created which put a drag on the development of an already poor state like Bihar. The masses became caste-centered and started coming closer to each other on the basis of caste. The caste consciousness gave rise to a number of conflicts situation often accompanied by violence. Caste began to play havoc with the life of the general people. Probably there had not been any bitter and tense situation if the upliftment of the real backward castes had taken place.

- (19) The leaders of the B.C. Federation of Bihar have taken upper castes as their reference group and have formulated the theory that the upper castes seek invariably to subordinate the backward castes and others. This has put them in a state of constant confrontation with the upper castes. In the 1970s, Bihar witnessed two social movements. The first is known as the J.P. movement, and the second the movement of the Backward Castes.² In the first movement the society was not divided on the basis of caste; on the other hand the very basis of the second was caste.

2. Prasad, Pradhan H., "Caste and Class in Bihar", EPW: Annual Number, February 1979, p.483; also Jha, Hetukar "Caste Conflict in Bihar", Times of India, 15th May, 1980.

- (20) During the past years, many caste riots which took place in Bihar were created mainly by the upper backward caste specially Kurmi and Yadava against Harijans for their self-interest.
- (21) In Bihar the unit of mobilization has always been caste, not village, not region. There has never been a reform movement in Bihar in which the different castes of a region would have participated together. The formation of Triveni Sangam or the Bihar Caste Federation represented only a horizontal alliance between different castes. It did not destroy the original caste identities, nor was it able to maintain solidarity. In important matters such as diet, inter-dining and marriage, the various castes still follow by and large the rules prescribed for them in the traditional social order. Electioneering has reinforced caste identities and sentiments, making the horizontal caste structure a viable social entity.
- (22) Karpoori Thakur and his party represented a historic watershed in the effort to transform Bihar society. It became the first political party since Independence to attempt the social awakening of all the backward communi-

ties for the purpose of organizing the poor. Significantly, the party had its greatest strength in the northern districts where impoverished riots lead the first violent agitations against planters and zamindars at the turn of the century. Moreover, the deliberate emphasis on the economic reforms to attract the support of backward community, the majority of whom are poor, worked well enough so that the landed among the backward castes withdrew support from the Lok Dal in favour of Congress(I) or Bhartiya Janata Party.

(23) In future it cannot be said the factional rivalry between upper and backward castes will disappear.

(24) Class consciousness has not as yet emerged among the poorer sections of society. The formation of classes is a slow process. In India there has to be a caste revolution before there can be a class revolution. As long as the ritualistic, economic and social superiority of the upper castes continues, they will generally be considered to constitute the upper classes. The lower and lower middle classes among the upper castes have no feeling of affinity with the lower and lower middle classes among the backward castes.

Upper and upper-middle classes are in the process of being united among some of the backward castes. They have

social interaction with the upper and upper- middle classes of the upper castes, but this is not true of the lower and lower-middle classes of the two categories of castes.

The present reservation policy is a hindrance in the way of class stratification. If the social development policy based on preferential treatment fails to bring about the desired results, it would generate class-based politics. The privileges given separately for the scheduled castes, Scheduled Tribes and backward classes do not allow them to feel as belonging to one class. The proponents of class-based politics are seeking to consolidate their position among the deprived sections of rural agricultural labourers and the urban working class. Although they have failed to organize them as a class for themselves, they are becoming a class-in-themselves. Caste is a great barrier in the way of the emergence of class consciousness. It stops the working class from becoming a class in itself.

Caste is indeed a vital factor in the present backwardness of Bihar and it is also a bar to the development of the State in future. The caste system which receives its sanction from the Hindu scriptures and social practices,

is an obstacle in the way of class stratification.

When the society is not stratified on the basis of class, the reservation policy based only on caste or class basis will fail to ameliorate the traditional social, economic and political domination of upper castes. If caste-based reservation policy with certain modification continues for a few years, it will give confidence among the backward classes and germinate class consciousness among the poor sections of the upper castes. The casteism of upper caste is counter-balanced by the casteism of backward classes. Presently this is in process in Bihar obstructing as it does the all round development of Bihar. Our fifth hypothesis is thus validated.

(25) Further, if one wishes to develop a just, egalitarian secular and progressive society, he shall have to eradicate caste consciousness from the minds of the people. However much people talk of checking casteism, it is gaining strength day after day. This is because the backward classes are not balanced among the rival groups of upper castes, but it contends for power. It reflects the strengthening of caste consciousness.

(26) The strength of the upper castes in the Legislative Assembly has been slowly declining while that of the

backward classes has grown. Leaders of the backward classes have become Chief Ministers, Speakers and Cabinet Ministers time and again. Now in politics the backward castes are the equal partners of the upper castes, not their camp followers as in the 1950s. The dominant position of the backward castes in Bihar politics today is due to the realization of their strength due to population increase, growing education, growing general and political consciousness and increased representation in both the houses. The political value of caste has increased very sharply.

- (27) The Indian Constitution envisages only social and educational backwardness, not economic backwardness. The Constituent Assembly accepted the need for reservation for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes but turned down the demand for the institution of similar reservation for the other backward classes.

The national leaders were aware of the deplorable economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. These people were not only socially and educationally backward, but also economically weak. That is why they found it logical to employ the test of economic backwardness in identifying backward classes.

Some of them even equated social backwardness with economic backwardness.

In recent years the leaders of the backward castes have worked as pressure groups to secure for their castes the same benefits of protective discrimination as those available to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. In fact thirteen States in India have already granted their demand, and they are now engaged in an effort to get such benefits in the Central services as well. In these circumstances, the anti-reservationists and those who are in favour of rationalizing the reservation policy, have mounted their pressure upon the Government of India to use economic backwardness as one of the criteria of backwardness.

The backward classes listed by the Government of Bihar includes a number of trader castes. These castes such as Marwari, Bania, Teli, Sonar etc. are economically strong and control the trade and commerce of the province. In fact, in some other States like Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, they are categorized as upper castes. The Yadavas, Kurmis and Koieris are agriculturist castes, and are economically well-to-do. By any yardstick of social backwardness they cannot be called backward. To remove

the injustice entailed in this, it would be necessary to consider economic condition along with social and educational backwardness. It would not do good to ignore anyone of the three yardsticks.

This proposition has a strong basis at the level of the legislature too. A traditional society like Bihar cannot be stratified on the basis of class because caste is a big obstacle in the way of formation of classes. Millions of families in Bihar live in such miserable economic conditions that their way of life and their interests are so utterly different from those of the other classes that they find themselves in hostile opposition to those in other classes. Still, they are not in a position to form a class as stratified on the basis of caste and religion. Thus, it is not possible to formulate a policy of reservation only on the basis of economic conditions.

If economic condition is to be the only criterion, reservation will be enjoyed fairly by a large number of those who belong to the upper castes. If social and educational backwardness alone is considered and the economic criterion is given the go-by, it would help only the prosperous sections of the backward classes, not the sections that are weakest.

After discussing the conclusion of the thesis on the basis of present research work a few suggestions are placed for better implementation of the reservation policy. Views of a number of scholars on reservation policy have been collected and assessed. By and large they are opposed to the caste criterion and favour merit, economic backwardness and occupation as the right judging points for extending preferential treatment.

To limit reservation strictly to the most backward classes is the only way. The criterion of extreme backwardness would exclude the advanced backward classes from the benefits of reservation and safeguard the interests of the most deprived sections among the backward classes. It is based upon the caste-cum-class criterion and also permits reservation of a few seats for the economically backward among the upper castes. It would satisfy the poor sections among the upper castes and thereby prevent the growth of any anti-reservationist feeling among them.

Suggestions for an Equitable Reservation Policy

(1) Caste and Class as Criteria

Observation reveals that caste is still one of the important factors which determines the chances of an individual in life. The backward classes are socialized in a culturally inferior social situation and fail to learn about the new avenues and opportunities available in life. They are represented much less than even the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the central services and in the service of the State Governments.

They are in no position to compete with the candidates of the upper castes. In view of this it is only fair that caste should be used as one of the important criteria for identifying backward classes.

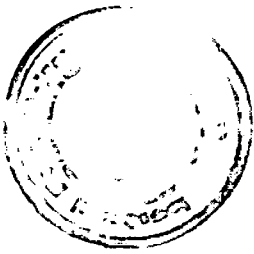
However, caste cannot be the only criterion. The Indian Constitution talks about socially and educationally backward classes. All the Backward Classes Commissions and the different Indian States have considered these two variables in their reservation policies. They have, however, failed to recognize the importance of the economic criterion along with the caste criterion. Reservation should be extended only to the poorer sections

of the backward castes and not to those who are advanced in respect of the economic and educational variables and backward only in the context of ritual status. An income limit of Rs.8,000 per annum should be laid down for each family to be considered qualified for preferential treatment. This would exclude the advanced sections of the backward castes from the benefits of reservation.

This criterion is in practice in most of the Indian States. Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, however, do not lay down any income limit. The reservation policy in Bihar is based on caste as well as income limit.

2. Check on Elite Benefit

Certain advanced sections and families among the backward classes, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes have taken advantage of the reservation policy. This is also one of the causes of heart burning among the lower and middle-class categories of the upper castes. This calls for exclusion of certain beneficiaries by adopting a new reservation policy. If certain castes, which are traditionally called backward, are not



in fact socially, educationally and economically backward, then they should be excluded from the list of backward classes after a proper investigation. This would provide an opportunity to a wider sections to enjoy the benefits of reservation.

This process would check the elite trying to corner all the benefits. It would help contain the anti-reservationist feeling to some extent. It would also minimise illiteracy, poverty and ignorance in which the masses are sinking slowly.

(3) Reservation Only for One Generation

If the Government really desires to uplift the backward classes by means of the policy of preferential treatment, it has to devise a way of excluding from the ambit of reservation all those families who have already benefited from reservation. The number of jobs is limited, but the number of aspirants is ever on the increase. There is also much competition among the candidates of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. Sections of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, which have already benefited from reservation, tend to monopolize all the available opportunities. Other sections among them remain where they have always been.

It is a travesty of justice to provide special facilities to the kith and kin of highly placed officers of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes. It is necessary to place some checks on the present reservation policy. The benefits should be restricted just to one generation of backward castes. Subsequent generations should be made to compete with the general categories.

(4) Periodical Evaluation of Reservation Policy

The reservation policy should be evaluated from time to time with reference to the number of people recruited. The results of this evaluation should also be made available to the public. Now there is general talk about the deterioration of administrative standards and efficiency. It is also true that students of the reserved categories are not able to pass medical examinations even after four or five attempts. Besides, only certain castes and families have cornered the benefits of reservation. If specific cases of such miscarriage of justice are brought to light, remedies can be hammered out.

(5) Reservation: Never More than 50 Per cent

The policy of reservation is intended to achieve an egalitarian society. If so, it should not be pursued at the expense of merit and the stability of the social, political and economic systems. If reservation is made in proportion to the population even in the case of the backward classes, it would lead to a collapse of the social, political and economic systems. That is why the Mandal Commission has not recommended that more than 50 per cent of the available vacancies should be reserved for the backward classes. A number of High Courts and the Supreme Court have also said that reservations should not exceed 50 per cent of the total number of vacancies.

(6) Reservation Policy should be Sanctioned by the Legislature

In most Indian States it is customary to appoint a backward classes commission headed by a legislator. Later, on the basis of the recommendations of such a commission, the Government tries to implement its policy of reservation by means of an executive order. It avoids getting the reservation policy ~~re~~ scrutinized

and debated in the legislature; it tries to bypass the elected body of people's representatives. This enables the ruling elite to formulate policies to suit its narrow political ends. Sometimes this generates a public upsurge against the Government order.

If the reservation policy gets the sanction of the legislature after being duly debated in the House, it would get wide publicity, and the Government would also stand to gain from the feedback from the public. The legislation would then be more acceptable to all concerned.

(7) Need for Infrastructure

Reservation cannot help in achieving an egalitarian society unless it is supported by a suitable infrastructure like adequate scholarships, hostel accommodation, educational facilities, extra coaching, pre-selection training, etc. These measures improve the merit and efficiency of the students of the backward classes and give them confidence. Education can then improve their socio-economic conditions and make them effective participants in the social and political systems. Reservation by itself can hardly benefit the backward classes.

(8) Out-Off Point

It has been observed that in many Indian States students in the general category do not get admission into a professional educational institution or secure a coveted job even with 80 per cent marks. On the other hand candidates of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the backward classes with 30 or 35 per cent marks manage to make it. If this is what reservation is in practice, it would spell disaster for the country. There must be a reasonable cut-off point for giving benefit to the weaker sections. In any case, the cut-off point should not be more than 10 to 15 per cent for admission into technical institutions or for appointment to Government or semi-Government jobs.

(9) No Roster System

At present rosters are maintained in the central services and even in the State services for candidates of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. If the vacancies meant for those categories are not filled up in a certain year, they are kept vacant for three years before being dereserved. In certain years 80 or 85 per cent of the posts are reserved for them.

This facility is extended to the backward classes too in certain States. The anti-reservationist movement, which took place in Gujarat in 1981, was particularly the result of the inequality of the roster system. It has to be scrapped to check the anti-reservationists feelings among different sections of society.

(10) No Reservation for Promotions

Reservation at the time of appointment is acceptable, but it is certainly unjust and unacceptable in the matter of promotions. It is in fact subversive of merit, efficiency and social justice. In the service all employees are equal, and they must be treated equally. If a man gets a promotion just because he is a Harijan or a member of a backward class and is placed above others, it would be unjust and would cause frustration among those who are passed over. It would also undermine efficiency. Demoralization due to policy of promotional reservation has long-range effects on efficiency of any service. An efficient, experienced and older person suffers humiliation to work under an inefficient, unexperienced and young person, if such person is promoted. Such a feature can be assessed by social scientists and not a Judge or a Chairman of a backward commission.

(11) The Limit for Reservation Policy

Backwardness has a tendency to perpetuate itself. To check this tendency, a time-limit has to be set. One view is that when the backward classes become the equals of the advanced classes, the reservation system should be scrapped. Another view is that it would continue for as long as the caste system continues. Our own view is that it must have a time limit of ten to twenty years. At the end of this period, it should be re-evaluated from the viewpoint of the desirability of its continuance.

(12) National Consensus

Recently the issue of reservation generated a number of clashes among different social sections. At the national level the spokesmen of the backward classes are continually pressurizing the Government for the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations. Instead of accepting the demand for such implementation some leaders have expressed the need for a national consensus on the reservation policy. There can be no such consensus unless the Government and the different political parties take a firm, rational and scientific stand - a stand not based on any political motive.

Reviews of reservation policy necessitates a change in policy particularly its adverse impact on efficiency of services. Efficiency should not be sacrificed as that would lead the economy into crisis. On the other hand upliftment of weaker section is also desirable. In such case it is advisable that the children of weaker sections should be provided full infrastructure, such, as free education, free boarding and lodging, cloths, tuition fee, books etc. so that they are provided better environment to learn and acquire higher knowledge so that they would be able to compete in the open labour market. This would also force them to devote greater attention towards study rather waste their time and resources on mere talk about facilities and rights. The security of job through reservation policy does not encourage them towards study, ability and efficiency.

As stated earlier, there are five major schools of thought about the reservation policy. Different social sections have different opinions in line with their own interests. The upper castes and the upper classes are championing the theory of merit and efficiency, whereas the backward classes are in favour of the reservation policy. Some of them favour the economic criterion; and the others, the caste criterion. In these circumstances to achieve a national consensus is a very difficult task.

If the suggestions given above are taken into account in the formulation of a reservation policy, a consensus may be worked out. These suggestions are aimed at making the reservation policy more scientific. The policy should benefit the needy sections of society without undermining efficiency and merit. The policy should not allow the advanced sections of the backward castes to take undue advantage. The poor and the needy among the upper castes too should be enabled to secure relief. Nobody should be allowed to develop a vested interest in the name of backwardness.

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