

SOURCES OF POLITICAL POWER : A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF RURAL BIHAR

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UPENDRA MISHRA



**CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF THE SOCIAL SYSTEMS
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067**

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जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067


CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES


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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "SOURCES OF POLITICAL POWER : A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF RURAL BIHAR", submitted by UPENDRA MISHRA is in partial fulfilment of eight credits out of the total requirements of twenty-four credits for the award of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M.Phil.) of this University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University and is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


K.L. Sharma
Chairperson


K.L. Sharma
Supervisor

*Dedicated to
my Parents*

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PREFACE

In last few years emphasis on the empowerment of people, emphasis has taken precedence over the status-determining variables such as education, occupation and mobility. Power has become an all-inclusive concept for understanding social and economic relations. In the present dissertation perspective on power have been discussed in detail. Besides, general connotations, power has specific cultural and contextual meanings. It is in this context we have briefly discussed the political scenario in Bihar since independence.

Bihar is one state in North India in which challenge to the authority and power of upper caste has been unparalleled. The backward castes have occupied the centre-stage. Caste alignments and their transformation in to power-blocs has become the main mode of achievement of political power. The forwards have been relegated to the background. The backwards and Muslims alongwith other groups have aligned with other groups for seeking power successfully. Such a process of political alignment based on caste configurations has generated rivalries and heart burning among different castes and communities. How long such a process would survive ? What will be the future of Bihar regarding socio-economic development? One has to wait to seek answers to these questions.

CHAPTER I

POWER : CONCEPT AND APPROACHES

Power is an important concept in the study of political science and sociology. However, it is difficult to define it in precise terms. Generally, power involves an action by a person or a group against the will or desire of other person(s) and group(s). Parsons writes, "Unfortunately the concept of power is not settled one in the social sciences, either in political Science or Sociology".¹ David Easton considers power a "a relationship in which one group of persons is able to determine the actions of another in the direction of the former's own ends".² Thus, power has two dimensions :

- 1) Assertion of ones capability and superiority over others, and
- 2) to influence actions of other individuals and groups in the manner one thinks appropriate from ones own point of view.

Power as a Complex Phenomenon

The problem of defining the term 'power' in very precise terms arises from the diverse viewpoints. As a

¹Parsons, T. 1957, "Distribution of Power in American Society", in World Politics, p. 10.

²Easton, D. 1953, The Political System, New York, pp. 143-144.

result its real meaning seems to hover from Friedriche's description of power as a certain kind of human relationship³ to Tawney's emphasis on the identification of power with the 'capacity of an individuals or a group of individual, to modify the conduct of others in the manner which one desires'.⁴ Hobbes identifies power with 'some future apparent good', Harold Lasswell links it with 'influence'. We also find that while Mao Tse-tung thinks that 'power comes from the barrel of a gun', an apostle of peace, truth and non-violence like Gandhi substitutes the force of gun and bomb with the power of love and truth emanating from the will of the people.

The source of this difficulty lies in the fact that the word 'power' is used in different senses. Power is ascribed to different things on different grounds. For instance, we speak of power of ideas, economic power, power of social status, brain power, executive power military power and the like. The common thread in different forms and types is that the word 'power' implies in all of them 'ability' or 'capacity' of concerned individuals and groups.

The term 'power' becomes interchangeable with several other related concepts like control, influence, authority,

³Friedriche, C.J. 1937, Constitutional Government and Democracy, New York : Harper, pp. 12-14.

⁴Tawney, R.H. 1931, Equality, New York : Harcourt Brace, p. 230.

force, might, persuasion, coercion, domination etc. irrespective of the fact that it has been used at different places and in different situations in particular peculiar ways with the result that it becomes a highly tedious job to say as to what the word 'power' precisely conveys. Some scholars have, however, warned against the insidious tendency of equating power with other kindred words like influence, force, control and authority in order to have a proper understanding of each of them.

Max Weber explains that power and authority are different phenomena as the latter invariably conveys 'legitimacy' of power, whereas the former communicates a man's ability to exercise control over others. Likewise, force and power are dissimilar as the former necessarily involves some brute manifestation which may or may not form an integral part of the idea of power. Observation of Bert and Russell who argues power as 'the capacity to influence the actions of others'⁵ is close to Weber's understanding of power. Despite keeping definitional hazards and confusions some basic concepts may be defined as follows⁶.

⁵Russell, B. 1937, Power : A New Social Analysis, London: George Allen and Unwin.

⁶Verma, V.P. 1970, Political Philosophy, Agra : Lakshmi Narayan, pp. 410-11.

The Concept of Power and Other Related Concepts

Power :

It is the faculty or capacity of an individual or a group to conquer in a contest. Force is an adjunct, not an essence of power. The potency or capacity to manipulate the will and activities of others to make them conform to the power-seeker's will is the central point in power. Power may also be based on undesirable or not so desirable elements like fraud, ingenuity, or combination and group tactics. It can also be derived from established constitutional and legal procedures.

Force :

It is different from power. It is the most brutal manifestation of power. When we talk of force, the invariable connotation is of use of physical force. Its techniques are restraint, coercion, physical threat, intimidation, blackmail, terrorisation and military domination. Power is latent force and force is manifest power.

Influence :

If force stands on one extreme, influence is on the other as it represents the sublimation of power. It is a category which represents the exercise of power at the intermediate level in between power and force. One may exercise influence due to social prestige, intellectual eminence, capacity for articulation, etc. The most

important features of the distinction between the two is that while influence is persuasive, power is coercive. We submit voluntarily to influence, while power demands submission.⁷

Authority :

Authority carries moral support and sanction. It therefore implies also the legitimization through the provisions of legal enactments. Authority though carries legal support, it is rooted in the traditions, history, and value-constellations of a given community. Legal sanctions, statutes, commands, writs, rules, regulations, bye-laws etc., represent the structure of authority. Authority is essentially the institutional code within which the use of power as a medium is organised and legitimised. It is the aspect of status system, by virtue of which the incumbent of authority/office is put in a position legitimately to make decisions which are binding, not only on himself but also on the collectivity as a whole. Thus by exercise of authority a society legitimises allocation of statuses and roles to its members, statuses and roles allocated as such become basis of identification and obligatory expectations to be performed by the incumbents. Authority may be conceived as the institutional counterpart of power and the main difference between power and authority is that power -

⁷Bierstedt, R., "An Analysis of Social Power" in The American Sociological Review, Vol. XV, No. 6, pp. 738-39.

incumbents are not as stable performers as the incumbents of authority are.⁸

Control :

Control is a more comprehensive category than power. It represents something less concentrated than power. Control can be legislative, executive, judicial, financial, administrative, popular etc. It is more or less equivalent to power except that it is less concentrated in terms of its intensity of manifestation than power.

From what we have mentioned above the following points emerge⁹ :

- 1) Power is a social phenomenon par excellence, and not merely a political or economic phenomenon.
- 2) It is useful to distinguish power from prestige influence, dominance, rights, force, authority, etc.
- 3) Power is a latent force, force is manifest power, and authority is institutionalised power.
- 4) Power which has its incidence only in social opposition of some kind, appears in different ways in formal organisation and in community relations.
- 5) The source and components of power can be located in combinations of numbers (especially majorities), social organisation and command over resources.

⁸Parsons, T. 1969, "On he Concept of Political Power" in Koderick Bell, D.V. Edwards and R.H. Wagner (eds.), Political Power, New York : Free Press, pp. 263-64.

⁹Bierstedt, R., op.cit.

Power as an Encompassing Phenomenon

A very comprehensive definition of power is given by Bertrand Russell in the book, "Power : A New Social Analysis" in which he defines power as "a capacity to produce results". Power in most general sense can also be referred to any kind of influence exercised by objects, individuals or groups upon each other.

R. Dahl defines power as "subsets of relations among social units such that the behaviour of one or more units depend in some circumstances on the behaviour of other units".¹⁰

The definition given by Max Weber is more convincing. Weber says: "Power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carryout his own will despite resistance regardless of the basis on which this probability rests".¹¹ He defines 'domination' in the similar manner as he considers it as a command obeyed by a given group of people. Weberian view is as follows :

- 1) Power is exercised by individuals and therefore involves choice, agency and intention.
- 2) It is exercised over other individuals and may involve

¹⁰Dahl, R. 1968, 'Power', International Encyclopedia of the Social Science, New York : Collier-Macmillan, Vol. 12, p. 407.

¹¹Weber, M. 1947, The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation (trans.) by A.H. Henderson and T. Parsons., New York : The Free Press Clencol, p. 152.

resistance and conflict.

- 3) Power involves the notion of agency, that is an individual achieving or bringing about goals which are desirable.
- 4) It implies that there are differences regarding interests of the powerful and the powerless. However, there is no absolute power and powerlessness. Power is a relative phenomenon, it is not a zero-sum entity.
- 5) Power is negative in nature involving restrictions and deprivations for those subjected to domination.

Weber argues that when the exercise of power is regarded by people as legitimate, it becomes 'authority'. There is one important criticism of Weberian approach by its emphasis on agency and decision-making, it fails to recognize that non-decision making may also be an exercise of power. For example, failure or refusal to act may be evidence of inequalities of power. Power-holders may also shape the wants or interests of subordinates. For example, advertising campaigns may involve an exercise of power through the artificial creation of needs.

According to Weber, power finds its ultimate expression in domination, and all political domination cannot be a fundamental relationship of command and obedience. Since Weberian concept of a power is that of 'Constant Sum', which implies that the amount of power to be constant is held by an individual or group to the extent

that it is not held by others.

Power as a Relational Concept

Power, is essentially a relational concept. It refers to the ability of an individual or a social group to pursue a course of action, if necessary, against the interest and even against the opposition of other individuals and groups.¹² This statement is not intended as a sufficient definition of the concept of power, but it implies a preliminary outline of a field of inquiry. There are diverse conceptualizations of power, which have their place within particular theories of politics. In addition to the central notion of power, other concepts like authority, influence and force or violence need to be examined.

Power is certainly an element of social relationship in the family, community, religious organisation, universities, trade unions and so on. But almost all scholars agree that the manifestation of power presupposes the existence of an objective social situation. A social situation involves not only those who exercise power, but also those on whom power is exercised. Both are parts of the social situation.¹³

Thus, study of power is often concerned with the

¹²Bottomore, T.B. 1979, Political Sociology, London : Hutchinson, p.7.

¹³Singh, R. 1988, Land, Power and People, New Delhi : Sage Publication, p.14.

identification of elite and leadership, the discovery of the ways in which power is allocated to different strata, relations among leaders and between leaders and non-leaders, and so forth. Though some scholars treat power as a 'property' or a 'potential' residing within an individual or group of individuals. This 'property' cannot be made empirically visible unless it reveals itself in the form of rule-domination, influence, control or in its more ugly and naked forms such brute force and coercion. Power generally conceals open violence within itself. Weber is closer to the sense in which we have tried to construct the concept of power. He defines power as 'the possibility of imposing one's will upon the behaviour of another' or as 'the chance of a man or number of men to realise their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of those who are participating in that action.'¹⁴

For Parsons power "is a generalized facility or resource of the society". In particular, it is the capacity to mobilise the resources of the society for the attainment of goals for which a general public commitment has been made. Since goals are shared by all members of society, power will generally be used in the furtherance of collective goals.

From a Marxian perspective the source of power in society lies in the economic infrastructure. In all

¹⁴Ibid.

stratified societies the forces of production are owned and controlled by a minority, the ruling class. The control of the means of production becomes the basis of domination of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. It therefore follows that the only way to grant power to the people involves communal ownership of the means of production. If everyone shares the same relationship to the means of production, power is shared equally by all the members of a society.

Whereas, Marxian theory argues that relationship to the means of production divides society into the dominant and the subordinate groups, the elite theory claims that the personal qualities of the individuals separate the rulers from the ruled. The latter is rooted into attributed criteria such as lineage.

Power Elite

Pareto developed a version of this theory in which the rule of elites was represented as universal, unvarying and unalterable fact of social life, the existence of which depended upon psychological differences between individuals. But Mosca qualified his initial conception by recognizing that historical changes in the composition of the elite and in the relation between the rulers and the ruled, could occur under the influence of various 'social forces' which represented numerous interests in society.¹⁵

¹⁵Bottomore, T.B., 1979, op. cit.

C. Wright Mills explains elite rule in institutional rather than psychological terms. He argues that the structure of institutions is such that those at the top of the institutional hierarchy largely monopolize power.

So far the concept of power has been deliberated through Weberian Parsonian, Marxian and from Pareto's perspectives. Attempts to define and locate power in social contexts highlight the problems involved in the definition of power. Consequently, we find divergent, often conflicting, notions of power.

Approaches to the Study of Political Power

1) Functional Approach

Weberian concept of power is that of 'constant sum' which implies that the amount of power to be constant, is the power held by an individual or group to the extent that it is not held by others. Weber's definition also implies that the power-holders tend to use power to further their own interests. Individual is the focal unit in Weber's analysis of power. However, to what extent his ambition to seek power is commensurate with Societal concerning is not quite clear in Weber's treatment of power. Hence, Weberian framework cannot strictly be, labelled as functional approach.

Arguing from a functionalist perspective, Talcott Parsons rejects the notion of constant 'variable sum' as he regards power as something possessed by society as a whole.

Power as such is a generalised facility or resource in the society. In particular it is the capacity to mobilize the resources of the society for the attainment of goals for which a general public commitment has been made. In this sense the amount of power in society is measured by the degree to which collective goals are realized. Thus the greater the efficiency of a social system for achieving the goals defined by its members, more power exists in society. Thus, Parsons considers power mainly as a societal phenomenon and observes that despite the widespread use, the Weberian definition and its derivatives suffer from a number of weaknesses in including the operational difficulties. "Parsons has argued that the assumption of conflict and antagonism is built into the definition in the sense that if 'A' overcomes the resistance of 'B' implies that the interests of 'B' are being sacrificed to the interests of 'A'".¹⁶

Parsons argues, that a person possesses power only in so far as his ability to influence others to achieve or secure possessions is not institutionally sanctioned. Persons who have power in this sense, however, often do secure a certain kind of direct recognition in practice without having institutional legitimacy. But for Parsons power is a means to acquire legitimized status and symbol

¹⁶Parsons., T. 1967, "On the Concept of Political Power" in Parsons, T. (ed.), Sociological Theory and Modern Society, New York : The Free Press.

of recognition.¹⁷ Hence it is social and institutional phenomenon rather than an individualistic whim or desire to control others.

Authority is an institutionally recognized right to influence the actions of others, regardless of their immediate personal attitudes to the superior authority directing their behaviour. It is exercised by the incumbent of an office or other socially defined status. To put it differently, authority is essentially is institutional code within which the use of power as medium, is organized and legitimized.

Parsons writes : "Authority is the aspect of a status in a system of social organization by virtue of which the incumbent is put in a position. Legitimately to make decisions which are binding not only on him but on the collectivity as a whole and hence its other member-units, in the sense that so far as their implications impinge upon their respective roles and statuses, they are bound to act in accordance with these implications".¹⁸

Thus, authority is a right, within certain limits of discretion, to exercise power for exerting influence. Parsons maintains that "influence should be capable of

¹⁷Parsons, T. 1975 (Revised Edition), Essays in Sociological Theory, New Delhi : Light and Life Publishers.

¹⁸Parsons, T. 1974, "On the concept of Political Power" in Lipset and Bendix (eds.), Class, Status and Power, London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, p. 249.

altering the priority system within the collectivity. He thus regards influence in policy-decisions as a category of the use of power, as a medium for, the process of altering priorities in such a way that the new pattern comes to be binding on the collectivity.¹⁹

Adult franchise is an institutional mechanism of constructional of authority the use of which is confined to the function of selection for leadership responsibility. In the governmental case, this implies inclusion in a common collectivity system of both the operative agencies of government and the 'constituency' on which the leadership is dependent. Such a process of selection power to leaders, but also bestows status of authority for holding office.²⁰

Thus, Parsons regards power as a facility for operating a political system. This means that unless some men have power to take certain kinds of decisions to initiate actions for certain things, there would not be ordering of social relationships as per societal goals. It also means that unless men are rewarded by power, they will not be attracted to perform certain tasks. The implication of this is that the existence of a structure of power in any society can be explained in terms of functions which it performs for the social system. This is perhaps another way

¹⁹Ibid., p. 25.

²⁰Ibid. p. 249.

of saying that power is not a bad thing in itself, for without it certain generally desired things would never get done.

The theory opposite to it states that power exists because certain social positions afford some men the opportunities to coerce or induce others to accept their domination and to comply with their demands. It also asserts that the institution of political representation is closely interlocked with other features of social structure, such as the distribution of resources and granting of patronage. These become instruments of perpetuation of power with certain social classes. The implication of this perspective is that power serves those who have it and it is passed on to others of their liking. A further implication is that the decision-makers become responsible to their supporters, vote banks. They would not have power over those from their desire their strength, nor would the exercise of power necessary for administrative decisions would reflect the demands of those on whose behalf they are taking decisions.

Parson's view regarding power is developed from his general theory of the nature of society. He believes that order, stability and cooperation in society are based on value consensus. Power necessarily contributes to this societal goal of consensus and cohesion.

Criticising Parsons, Anthony Giddens forcefully points out that Parsonian analysis is one-sided as it ignores subjective aspect in acquisition of power and authority. To quote A. Giddens, "what slips away out of sight almost completely in the Parsonian analysis is the very fact that power is always exercised over someone. By treating power as necessarily (by definition) legitimate and thus starting from the assumption of consensus of some kind between power-holders and those subordinate to them, Parsons virtually ignores, quite consciously and deliberately, the necessary hierarchical character of power and the divisions of interest which are frequently consequent upon it".²¹ They, besides being a relational and societal phenomenon, power bears a hierarchical gradation of man and resources. Individual and hierarchy are essential components of power.

2) Marxian Analysis of Power

Marxian theory of power is basically different from all other approaches. Marx treats power as an instrument that connects economics with politics. In the Marxian sense, politics highlights a sphere of social activity in which two contending classes engage in a struggle for the control of the state which Marx considers as the organised force of the society. It is the means of production whose ownership involves control over the labour power of those

²¹Giddens, A. 1968, "Power in the Recent Writings of Talcott Parsons", Sociology, Vol. II, p. 264.

who own little or no means of production and it is this fact that determines the distribution of political power, or what marx says, the relations of production. In this sense property ownership involves control over production as well as political control. Hence, 'political power, property so called, is merely the organized power of one class oppressing another'.²²

The Marxian analysis of power thus provides a radical alternative to Parsons' functionalist approach. It rejects the view that power is a societal resource held in trust and directed by those in authority for the benefit of all.

According to Marx, Political power derives from economic power. The power of ruling class stems from its ownership and control of the forces of production. Hence, the superstructure of society, namely, the major institutions, values and belief systems is to be seen largely as a bye-product of the economic infrastructure. "Law and government, art and literature, science and philosophy, all serve more or less directly the interest of the ruling class."²³ It follows that those who are economically powerful also enjoy an entrenched position in government and politics. According to Marxian thesis laws are nothing but instruments of oppression used by the

²²Marx, K. and Engels, F. 1877, Manifesto of the Communist Party, Moscow : Progress Publishers.

²³Bendix, R. and Lipset, S.M. 1969, "Karl Marx's Theory of Social Classes", in Bendix and Lipset, op. cit, p.6.

ruling class to exploit the masses.

C. Wright Mills, also adheres to the Marxian perspective considerably. He writes : "power is not a facility for the performance of function in and on behalf of the society as a system, but is interpreted exclusively as a facility for getting what one group, the holders of power, wants by preventing another group, and 'outs' from getting what it wants".²⁴

Marx believes that such inequality in power structure will be eliminated when the economic inequalities are removed and there will be no class in the last stage of communism in which the state shall wither away. Mosca holds that human societies can never function without power and political organisation necessarily involves inequalities in power.²⁵

Given these postulates Mosca concludes that there will always be two classes of people "a class that rules and a class that is ruled". Furthermore, since most men are self-seeking, the ruling class will always be a privileged class economically.

All the time economy alone is not a decisive factor. Rather non-economic factors such as forces of culture, tradition and values also provide substantive bases for

²⁴Quoted by Lenski, G.E., 1966, Power and Privilege, New York : McGraw Hill, p. 17.

²⁵Ibid., p. 13.

political power.

Marx expected the polarization of the two principal classes, namely, bourgeoisie and proletariat would accompany the development of capitalism. But it has not happened in the advanced capitalist societies. Different spheres of power appear to have become more distinct and the sources of power numerous and varied.

Political rule has become altogether more mild and less repressive and the state has become a welfare state. One important element in this development is the introduction of universal adult suffrage which brings out in principle a separation between economic and political power. Marx himself considered that "the attainment of universal adult suffrage would be 'revolutionary step' and that it would transfer political power to the working class".²⁶

In some of the most interesting and insightful parts of Mosca's work the Marxian theory is criticised as hopelessly Utopian and Unrealistic in its vision of classless society. Mosco predicted that if the communist ever came to power and if they destroyed the private ownership of means of production, their communist or collectivist societies would still require officials and

²⁶Marx, K. 1978, "The Chartists", New York Daily Tribune, 25 August 1852, quoted in Elite and Society, Bottomore, T.B., London : Penguin, p. 3.

these would come to form a new ruling class.²⁷ After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and East European Socialist Countries in the post cold war situation the emergence of a new class replacing the communist leadership largely substantiates Mosca's prophecy.

Weber rejects the Marxian view that political power necessarily derives from economic power. He argues that class forms only one possible basis for power and that the distribution of power in society is not necessarily linked to the class inequalities. While class forms one possible basis for group formations, collective action and acquisition of political power, Weber argues that there are other bases too for these activities. Such as style of life, honour, cultural heritage, religious faith etc.

3) Power and Elite Theory

Elite theory developed in part as a reaction to the Marxian theory of power. It rejected the idea of a communist Utopia arguing that an egalitarian society was an illusion. It saw Marxism as an ideology rather than an objective analysis of society. A clear contradiction of the Marxian theory of power can be seen in the elite theory which insists that power flows not from the ownership of property but from political and bureaucratic organisations. It argues that politics cannot be properly studied without identifying the ruling class, or the governing and non-

²⁷Lenski, G.E., op. cit., p. 14.

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governing elites and measuring of their respective roles. The central point of the elite theory of power lies in the affirmation that power configuration "is basically the configuration of competing and struggling interests organised into groups".²⁸

Pareto divides the entire population of a society into two strata : (1) a lower stratum, the non-elite or the masses, and (2) a higher stratum, - the elite which is subdivided into two (a) a governing elite, and (b) a non-governing elite.²⁹ Pareto emphasises on the inequality of individual in terms of residues which are the psychological elements (sentiments). The most important classes of residues are those of the persistence of aggregates and the residues of combinations. He is of the opinion that the changes in the distribution of these residues in the population of a society leads to a change in the social equilibrium. Pareto intends to explain the circulation of elites mainly by the changes in the psychological characteristics of members of the elite on the one side, and of the lower strata on the other.

Aristocracies, he says, do not decline only in numbers; they also decay in quality in the sense that they

²⁸Macridis, R.C. and Brown, B.E. 1975, Comparative Politics : Notes and Readings, Illinois : The Dorsey Press, p. 139.

²⁹Pareto, V. 1959, The Mind and Society, Vol. III, London, pp. 1422-1424.

lose their vigour, that there is a decline in the proportion of the residues which enabled them to win their power and hold it. The governing class is restored by families rising from the lower classes.³⁰

In discussing the circulation of the whole groups, Pareto suggests that revolution comes about through accumulation of decadent elements in the higher strata of society and the increase of the elements of superior quality in the lower strata. He writes : "A slowing down of this circulation (e.g. individuals) may result in a considerable increase of the degenerate element in the classes which still hold power, and on the other hand in an increase of elements of superior quality in the subject classes. In such a case, the social equilibrium becomes unstable and the slightest shock will destroy it. A conquest or revolution produces an upheaval, bring a new elite to power, and establish a new equilibrium."³¹

Thus it seems from the above analysis that there is 'circulation' which takes place between different categories of the governing elite itself. Secondly, there is the circulation between the elite and the rest of the population which may take either of the two forms :

(i) Individuals from the lower strata may succeed in entering the existing elite, or (ii) individuals in the

³⁰Ibid., p. 1430.

³¹Ibid.

lower strata may form new elite groups which then engage in a struggle for power with the existing elite. Pareto also emphasizes the role of force and fraud in the circulation of elites. Thus Pareto explains the circulation of elites in mainly psychological terms.

G. Mosca explains the rule of the minority over the majority by the fact that the former is organized and the minority is always composed of superior individuals. Mosca explains that the circulation of elites sociologically as well as psychologically accounts for the rise of new elites (or for the new elements in the elite) in part by the emergence of social forces which represent new interests (e.g. technological or economic interests) in the society".³² Mosca also argued that "The elite does not simply rule by force and fraud, but represent in some sense, the interests and purposes of important and influential groups in the society."³³

Democracy, which becomes the rule of an organised minority which in spite of appearances to the contrary and for all the legal principles on which government rests, still retains actual and effective control of the state.³⁴

C. Wright Mills argues that elite is the product of

³²Bottomore, T.B. 1978, Elites and Society, London : Penguin, p. 13.

³³Bottomore, T.B., op.cit., p.12.

³⁴Mosca, G. 1939, The Ruling Class, New York : Mc Graw Hill, p. 50.

the institutional landscape of society. Power in modern society is institutionalised with the result that certain institutions and the upper-most ranks of the hierarchy in these institutions constitute the 'strategic command posts of the social structure.'³⁵ Power is then not the attribute of classes or persons but of institutions. The power elite consist of those who are in position to make decisions having major consequences, and they are in command of the major hierarchies and organisations of modern society.³⁶

Pareto does not resolve the question of how the two types of elites the ascent and the descent of individuals and the rise and fall of social groups are connected with each other. He suggests that if the position of the governing elite is relatively open to superior individuals from the lower strata, it has a better chance for enduring, and conversely, the replacement of one elite by another may result from a failure in the circulation of individuals. But the second aspect, namely, the replacement of one elite by another has been invalidated in the Indian context extremely rigid nature of social stratification and relatively slow movement of individuals from the lower strata of the society to the upper strata. However, Indian society has experienced few revolutionary movements too

³⁵Mills, C. Wright 1959, The Power Elites, London : Oxford University Press, p.4.

³⁶Ibid.

leading to the replacement of one elite by another.

Both Mosca and Pareto were concerned with the elites in the sense of the groups of people who either exercised directly power or were in position to influence very strongly the exercise of political power. The essence of the elite theory lies in the of the key factors in the area of power. There can be no organisation without power, and power always resides in the hands of a very small section of the 'chosen few'. The struggle for power virtually takes place between contending elites with the result that the roles of men in authority change from time to time. It may also be described as the conflict between the governing and the counter-elites. Irrespective of the fact whether the society is capitalist or socialist power always resides in a select field who are governing elite and if they are ousted, they fall in the category of non governing elite.

Though the elite theory focuses on the study of power, however, it ignores the fact that power is located in a very small section of the people. This select group known as elite emerges out a keen competition or struggle for power. It is a rhetoric that power resides in the people. Certainly elite competition/conflict is carried out in the name of masses.

4) Pluralist Approach

Whereas elite theory and Marxism argue that power is concentrated in the hands of dominant minority, the

pluralist perspective maintains that power is dispersed among different groups in society. Pluralism begins from the observation that society is increasingly differentiated into a variety of social groups and sectional interests. Diversity of occupational groups steadily grows. Organisations representing sectional interests of particular occupational groups are known as interest groups such as trade unions, professional associations, political parties, pressure groups, etc. Leaders of these interest groups are known as elites. In such situations politics involves competition between a variety of interest groups through the process of bargaining and compromise. And power is seen to be dispersed amongst a plurality of elites who are actively involved in the process of bargaining and compromise. Thus, there is only competition, not conflict and power is dispersed, not concentrated.

R. Dahl, in his study of local politics in New Haven, found no evidence of a ruling elite. He argues that "power is dispersed among various interest groups and that this plurality of elites does not form a unified group with common interest"³⁷

Dahl argues that the local politics is a business of bargaining and compromise with no one group dominating decision-making. He rejects the view that economic

³⁷Dahl, R.A. 1961, Who Governs ?, New Haven : Yale University Press.

interests dominate decision making.

Arnold M. Rose rejects the view that society is ruled by a unified power elite. He argues for a 'multi-influence hypothesis'. His approach conceives of society as consisting of many elites, each relatively small numerically, and operating in different spheres of life. Among the elites are several people who have their power through economic controls, several others who have power through political controls and there are still others having power through military, associational, religious and other controls. This multiplicity of relatively independent elites is the key to the pluralist theory.³⁸

Thus set in the pluralist framework power is defined as a capacity of the interest groups to bargaining and compromise in order to further ones own interests. A significant implication of this approach is that power is not merely associated with 'authority', but also with a variety of 'interest groups' in the society.

The pluralist largely ignore 'non-decision making', that is the possibility that some have the power to prevent certain issues from reaching the point of decision. Secondly, pluralist concentrate on the process of decision-making rather than the results and consequences of those decisions.

³⁸Rose, A.M. 1967, The Power Structure : Political Process in American Society, New York : Oxford University Press.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be stated that power is a complex phenomenon as it has multiple dimensions relating to individuals, groups, and their relationships. Power is essentially an asymmetrical and hierarchical phenomenon, both in reality and practice. However, it is not monolithic or absolute in nature, keeping this in view the concept of power, its allied concepts and approaches to the study of power have briefly been discussed in this chapter. The main related concepts to power are the concepts of force, influence, authority, control, etc. It comes out clearly from the analysis that power is an overriding phenomenon interfering with social relations in all walks of life. It does not mean that power is necessarily a negative concept. The functionalists, emphasise that power is a generalized aspect of society and therefore, it ensures orderliness, consensus and cohesion, but for the Marxists, power is a super-structural reality. The basis of which lies in the class structure in human society. It is also found that power is a multi-dimensional concept. In fact power is a plural phenomenon which brings together different approaches and viewpoints.

Power is seen as highly diversified and multi-layered reality. Power is dispersed among individuals, groups and organisations in several different ways.

CHAPTER II

POWER AND SOCIETY IN INDIA

The leadership structure in traditional India was based on the principle of hierarchy, holism, transcendence and continuity ... the cardinal values of the Hindu Tradition,¹ The roles of the leaders were largely defined by the Caste system which offered a cultural and moral frame of reference of the leadership. It was the duty of the king to be an effective military leader, to protect the Caste order by enforcing its obligations on the people, to strictly adhere to caste-norms, to protect the priestly class and offer it congenial environment for meditation and performance of religious duties. The offices of the King and the priest were complimentary. The priest was the source of moral authority (dharma) which the King was obliged to enforce, the same with power and authority at his command.

Power and Society in Ancient Period

Theoretically, therefore, the office of the priest was superior to that of the King. In practice, however, conformity to this ideal was never fully achieved but its ruthless violation was also rare. King always respected the

¹Singh, Y. 1973, Modernisation of Indian Tradition, Faridabad : Thompson Press, p.131.

moral and religious prerogatives of the priest. The principle of hierarchy was evident in the traditional structure of the leadership, since the priestly role was legitimately assigned only to the Brahmins and the Kingly role only to the Kshatriyas, both comprising the upper two segments of the varna dharma. However, this was not always the case. Some non-kshatriyas held the Kingly offices. In practice the aphorism 'whoever bears the rule is Kshatriya' was applied.²

Rigveda mentions about a village as an aggregate of several families, headed by the village chief. The Smritis record that the headman of the village had to report serious disputes and cases to the 'ten village Unit', and to even 'larger Units'. In the great epic Mahabharata, a village is mentioned as a fundamental unit of administration under its head who had to protect the village and its lands. References to the inter-village organisation of hundred, and finally of a thousand villages are also made.³

We also find that for a long time the leadership structure of Indian society remained authoritarian, monarchical and feudal. In the ancient period a quasi-feudal system existed. Kings and emperors had a number of lower

²Basham, A.L. 1971, The Wonder that was India, Delhi : Rupa & Co., Ch. II, p.91.

³Dube, S.C. 1955, Indian Village, London : Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., p.247.

chiefs or vassals under their jurisdiction. The emperor had his own centrally administered territory surrounded by vassal kingdoms subordinate to him in varying degrees, "Vassals themselves had vassals of their own in petty local chieftains calling themselves rajas".⁴

The relationship of the king with his vassals was governed by power and conquest. Priests and councillors as supplementary leaders were associated with each level of the monarchical feudal structure.

Power and Society in Medieval Period

Muslim rule further strengthened and established feudalism. Many Muslim warriors established themselves as rulers and vassals of the Muslim Kings who acquired power by conquest. The Turk and the Afghan sultans had a number of countries, 'Khans', 'Maliks' and 'Amirs'. A more compact feudalistic structure of leadership emerged with the establishment and consolidation of the Mughal empire. Mughal emperors introduced the systems of 'Jagiradari' and 'Mansabdari' which involved land-grants to the vassals on a contractual basis with a view to receive a predetermined number of troops and personal military services whenever required. The leaders were partly patrimonial and partly feudal.⁵ The recruitment of administrative officials was

⁴Basham, A.L., op. cit, p. 94.

⁵Majumdar, R.C. et. al. 1956, An Advanced History of India, London : Macmillan, p. 557.

not based on rational criteria, its system of 'imperative co-ordination' as Weber would call it, was governed by tradition and more than that by chief's own free will.⁶

The character of leaders, whether political or intellectual was predominantly feudal. Both priest and King derived their authority from birth ascription. The status of leaders was rooted in the caste system which itself was based on ascription.⁷ The Muslim rule only the changed leaders and offices involved rather than the system as such. It was succession of one class of leaders by another in the same system. Change in the structure of leadership, was however, not such that it could effect the feudal, patrimonial or traditional society.

Power and Society in British Period

The downfall of the Mughal empire coincided with the decline of the traditional leaders. The entrenchment of the British power accelerated this process and created a material basis for the emergence of a new structure of leadership. The monarchical feudal leaders were replaced by the national liberal leadership. The British colonial rule in India brought about a process of change in many ways. It neutralized the military potential of the feudal chiefs, it established rule of law in the country, it introduced a

⁶Weber, M. 1964, The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation, New York : The Free Press, p. 341.

⁷Ibid., p. 372.

new system of education, centralised administration, modern army, communication network and technological and scientific know-how. True, many of these things the British did in their self-interest, but its latent function was the emergence of a pan Indian structure of leadership in India.⁸

Manifestly the British continued to patronise the traditional feudal lords. The British even created (by permanent settlement) a new class of big landlords in Bihar and Bengal. The alien rulers had a vested interest in keeping the traditional leaders, landowners and the princes in positions of power because their motto was to create a Counterpoise of natives against natives'.⁹ This created a historical schism between the traditional feudal sections and the emergent nationalist leaders in India.

The rise of political leaders coincided in India with the growth of a westernized middle class. It emerged as a result of the expansion of higher education among the upper castes. The upper castes which cornered the power positions were mainly the Brahmins (Nagar and Anavil Brahmins in Gujarat, Bengali Brahmins in eastern India, Kashmiri Brahmins in the north and various sub-castes of Brahmins in South India). Kayasthas, Parsis, Baniyas and other Muslim

⁸Chandra, Bipan et. al. 1980, Freedom Struggle, New Delhi : Penguin, pp. 3-21.

⁹Nehru, J. L. 1977, The Discovery of India, Bombay : Oxford Press, p. 291.

upper castes.¹⁰

In the early twentieth century Indian leaders constituted a composite group. But for the bureaucratic and the technical professional a leaders other levels of leaders were not fully differentiated. The levels of the intellectual and political leaders were merged into one sub-structure. Most of the top political leaders had attained high intellectual standards. The Growth of this type of leaders was a structural break form the feudal monarchial character of the traditional leaders. The new leaders emerged on the basis of their professional achievements and modern education.

Important changes regarding leadership which have appeared during the post Independence period are; (i) increase in the influence of rural-based political leaders and slight decrease in the influence of the leaders drawn from various professions; (ii) greater differentiation in the leadership structure with a significant increase in the number of persons belonging to the middle classes; (iii) greater articulation of regional and interest group-oriented goals in political and cultural ideologies; (iv) slight breakdown in the exclusiveness of the upper castes regarding leadership position and consequent democratisation and decentralisation of power.

¹⁰Karve, D.G. 1963, The New Brahmins : Five Maharastrian Families, Berkeley : University of California, pp. 1-5.

Active participation of people in the national democratic process can be seen through mobilization of political structures or political parties which have emerged as a new form of macro-structural socio-political change in India. Their significance lies primarily in the legitimate access to the sources of power. The framework of change in leadership is essentially rooted into the changing sources of legitimation of authority and the process of its diffusion.

If we evaluate the democratic processes in Indian Society from this frame of reference, we observe two phenomena which to some extent are mutually contradictory. The first is the increased mass participation in the political process and articulation of group interest through preexisting institutional media like caste associations, tribal groups, linguistic and ethnic communities, etc. The second is the continued elitist character of most of the political innovations. In fact the choice of democratic framework of a particular kind in itself is the result of elitist choice rather than people's will. Had the Indian leaders substituted some other model of democracy in India for the present one it would have as well been in operation. This shows that although the choice of democratic polity is a singularly modernizing feature in India, its ethos reflects the traditional principles of hierarchy and elitism. This sets reflected in change in

India which in large measure proceeds through innovations in functioning of the traditional institutions.

On the political sense, however, the second phase of political innovation is largely a matter of the past. Most of the contemporary processes of political change focus on political mobilization through reconciliation with the traditional institutions. It is at this level one may ask some questions. How will political macro-structure survive the contradictions of regional interest groups? How the development at one level of micro-structure and its functioning would affect the other level. How far the traditional institutions like caste, tribe, ethnic groups, will be able to adopt the functional requirements of a modern democratic political structure?

Structural Changes and Emergence of New Power

Structure in Colonial India

The organizing principle of the power matrix emerges from the interaction between the ruler's imperatives and ideology and the social division of labour, occupational structure and the institutional forms of the socio-historical inequalities in society. However, these variables are not static or given, nor the principles remain so over a period of time.

It is essential to understand the colonial ruler's orientation towards India in approaching the principles of power during the colonial phase. The illusion of British

permanence was a significant component in the consciousness of the British nation and for the Englishmen in India it was everything. Rationalizations and theories might have emanated from England, but it was in India that they took on a vivial reality, as formal structures introduced by the raj commensurated with the most intense aspirations and fears of individuals. This illusion of permanence and the form it assumed at the beginning of the twentieth century, had evolved into a full blown theory encompassing every aspect of England's relationship with Indian Society, justifying and confirming England's role in India with a confidence which would have amazed earlier generations of reformers and conservatives alike. And yet, this imperial confidence owed much to those earlier generations, for it represented a synthesis of reformist and conservative attitudes which had emerged during the course of the century.¹¹

What was the nature of the occupational structure in British India in the early Twentieth Century? According to the census of India of 1911, the total population of British India was 252 million; 89.7 per cent of the population was rural and 10.3 per cent was Urban. There were 852 district boards and 750 municipalities in the country. Age-wise, 60.2 per cent of the total population

¹¹Hutchins, F. 1967, The Illusion of Permeance, Princeton : Princeton Press, pp. 106-122.

was in the age-group of 15-59 years, one per cent less than 15 years of age. The sex-ratio was found to be 954 per thousand. The people of India with these demographic characteristics were engaged mostly in agriculture (75 per cent). Secondary occupations, like mining, industry and construction were taken up by 10.7 per cent workers. 14.3 per cent of the workers were in tertiary occupations.¹²

Agriculture, trade and commerce, industries, army and administration were the basic zones of economic opportunity and social mobility during the British rule. British rule introduced two major land revenue and tenurial systems the zamindari and the Roytwari. Later on a modified version of the zamindari system could be seen in terms of private landlords possessing some but not all of the rights of private property in land. They become sole masters of village community. However, the peasant cultivators were transformed into tenants-at-will. Under the Roytwari system the government collected the revenue directly from the individual cultivators, who were recognized in law as the owners of land they cultivated. But their right of ownership was limited by land settlement was not made permanent. According to Vera Anstey, the outstanding results of these prevailing types of land tenure system can

¹²Anesty, V. 1952, The Economic Development of India, London : Longman, Green and Co., p. 61.

be seen in the division of land in India into two main classes. The one consisted of those who "owned" the land, whether they were zamindars, members of Joint village committees or ryots; they had interest in the land but did not cultivate themselves. These owners were responsible for the payment of land revenue to the government. Since they did not cultivate land themselves, rented their land to the actual cultivators, from whom they received rent in money or kind, in return for which they performed some agricultural functions. These rent-receives were parasites to a great extent, and they fattened on the products of cultivators. The other class consisted of the actual cultivators, who either paid rent for use of the land, or in Roytwari districts they paid land revenue directly to the government. The new tenurial systems integrated considerably the Hindu and Muslims norms of inheritance, but created a lack of occupational opportunities in the industrial sector. It also resulted into the fragmentation of land over a few generations. But the land was used to support an increasingly large number of people despite fragmentation.

The colonial norms of landownership led to the evolution of a new pattern of power relations. New classes appeared at the top as well as at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Landlords, intermediaries and moneylenders emerged at the top, and tenants-at-will, share-croppers,

and agricultural labourers surfaced at the bottom. The new pattern was neither capitalistic nor feudalistic nor was it a continuation of Mughal arrangement. It was evolved by the colonial state under imperialist imperatives. In this system of power and property, there were triple burdens upon the cultivators; namely, (1) revenue and tax paid to government, (2) rent remitted to the landlord in zamindari areas and to the landlords in Ryotwari tracts, and (3) interest on loans to moneylenders.

The British Raj accelerated the Commercialization of agriculture. But, as a rule, the peasant had no direct connection with the market. The peasant sold his agricultural produce to middlemen, money-lenders and the landlords; part produce was completed to the same people to repay his debts. An increasing number of peasants lost their lands, yet because of very slow industrial development, they had to depend on land as labourers. On the other hand, an increasing number of merchants and moneylenders were becoming landlords due to the increasing indebtedness of peasants under the raj. Most of the landlords leased their lands to tenants. The big tenants in turn leased it to smaller tenants. The "long, step ladder structure" remained intact even after moderation of land tax burden after 1901.

The moneylenders and intermediaries had legal and financial support, through with qualifications from the

colonial regime and the British monopolies. The British monopolies, controlling the system of finance and credit in India, used the local trading and loan capital as their agency. The British Bank financed the moneylenders who in turn loaned money to the peasants, and paid the banks a considerable part of the interest they received from the peasant. This explains the close economic connection between the British monopolies and the landlords and moneylenders.

The army and bureaucracy provided economic opportunities and social mobility to a very limited section of the Indian population during the colonial phase; the new system also caused decline in the status of certain sections of Indian people. In any case, ethnic discrimination and lack of mutual trust were the most outstanding features of the Indo-British interaction in the spheres of power and social mobility.

It is argued here that the raj created new educational opportunities, hence English education played a critical role in creating jobs and social mobility. The raj created a new middle class which was westernized comprising of mainly upper English Educated caste Hindus, and mostly engaged in non-traditional occupations. The growth of nationalism, anti-imperialist movements and organizations and modern values and ideas are attributed to the new middle class.

In fact, the colonial power system did not create a new middle class as such, but it contributed to the expansion and circulation of the pre-colonial elite, who belonged to the upper castes. These groups joined bureaucracy under the hegemony of the colonial capitalist state. The State introduced a new basis of power and status exercising discriminatory policy of 'divide and rule'. In colonial period, the professional field was the only substantial outlet for the Indian middle class because industry was largely monopolised by the alien rulers. Knowledge of English language and western legal system was critical in getting access to the professional field. These two replaced Persian language and the Mughal legal system. The peculiar geopolitics of the British conquest also contributed to the regional composition of the colonial middle-class. The development of the colonial regime from 1857 onwards benefitted the areas and regions situated near the ports and harbours and contributed to the decline of the significance of the pre-colonial political and commercial centres.

Prior to the raj the landed aristocracy and Brahmans were not central to the power arrangements. It was a time of "change and circulation" in the Indian power matrix with a wide range of situations. The basic political, social and economic unit of the Eighteenth century was the little Kingdom, the territory controlled by a lineage a.

patrimonial domain. The members of the dominant lineage developed a distinctive life-style patterned after the modes of the Persianized Mughal Courts. They were the rural elites. Another type of rural elite were local chiefs who in their person and family were the controllers of the domain and not members of lineage. Finally there were prebendal domains originating from grants to the officials who drew from the agricultural producer on two counts - (1) on behalf of the state, and (2) for their salaries. There were regional elites of urban-royal origins, who grew up around the courts of the nawabs and rajas in Bengal, Oudh, Maharashtra, Mysore, Baroda, Hyderabad, etc. Linked to this Urban-royal elite group, but not necessarily central to it, were commercial elites. IN many Urban centres the commercial groups shared political control of the towns with government officials.

During the British rule, ranking seems to have become more rigid. Greater emphasis was apparently given to the ritual criteria for social ranking and greater power apparently accrued to jatis whose men were already dominant and highly placed. These were not really systematic changes. The major social units remained the same; the assumptions about high and low statuses were unchanged; relations among jatis were carried on in the same way; and mobility campaigns continued, though with some shift in

mobility tactics.¹³

As a consequence of the colonial rule in India society could also be characterised by a number of associations and para-communities organized to protect and promote collective interests by various groups. The leading and most pervasive associations centred around caste and political and economic transformation. Caste became a means to substantiate inequalities by weakening its moral basis. In doing so, however, caste helped peasants by way of associating them to ideas, processes, and the institutions relating to modern democracy.¹⁴

On the other hand, a new combination of forces was rising in India in this period. The educated and the professional groups emerged as powerful segments. The industrialists, landlords, moneylenders, and business class joined them in their own interest. They were anxious to replace the British monopolists and the imperial exploiters who manipulated the policies regarding external trade and internal market conditions. They were attached by the swadeshi and boycott foreign goods. The traditional cultural groups such as the pandits and the Ulama began to take interest in the independence movement since it aimed at fostering Indian culture through national education and

¹³Mandelbaum, David G. 1972, Society in India, Vol. II, Berkeley : University of California Press, p. 633.

¹⁴Rudolph and Rodolph 1967, The Modernity of Tradition, Chicago : University of Chicago Press, p. 19.

at overthrowing of the domination of foreigners over Indian life and society. Lastly, the working class people, peasants and artisans began to be drawn gradually into the movement, because it promised to end the economic exploitation perpetrated by the colonial rulers.¹⁵

Power and Society in the Post-Independent India

Caste dominance

M.N. Srinivas has coined the term 'dominant caste' to explain the power structure in rural India. According to Srinivas, caste dominance has the elements of numerical strength, economic and political power, high ritual status, western education and modern occupation and networks outside the village. He writes : "for a caste to be dominant, it should own a suitable amount of land locally available, have strength of numbers and occupy a high place in the local hierarchy. When a caste has all the attributes of dominance, it may be said to enjoy decisive dominance".¹⁶ Occasionally, there may be more than one dominant caste in village and over a long period of time one dominant caste may give way to another. No longer dominance is a purely local phenomenon in India. A caste which has only a family or two in a particular village, but

¹⁵Tarachand 1972, The History of Freedom Movement in India, Vol. 4, New Delhi : Publications Division, p. 431.

¹⁶ Srinivas, M.N. 1977, Social Change in Modern India, Berkeley : University of California Press, pp. 10-11.

if that case enjoys decisive dominance in the wider region it will still count locally because of the network of ties binding it to its dominant relatives."

According to Srinivas, landownership is a crucial factor in establishing dominance. Generally, the pattern of landownership in rural India is such that the bulk of the arable land is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of big owners. They wield a considerable amount of power over the rest of the village population. He further observes that landownership ensures not only power but also prestige. The individuals who have made good in any walk of life can invest in land. If landownership is not always an dispensable passport to high rank, it certainly facilitates upward mobility.¹⁷

Srinivas maintains that new factors affecting dominance included Western education, job in the administration, urban background and urban sources of income as they all significantly contribute to the prestige and power of particular caste groups in the village. The introduction of adult franchise and Panchayati Raj has resulted in providing a new sense of self-respect and power to lower castes, particularly SCs, who enjoy reservation of seats in all elected bodies from village to union parliament. The long-term implications of these changes are probably even more important, especially in the villages

¹⁷Ibid., p.11.

where there are SCs, to sway the local balance of power one way or the other.

He further notes that in the traditional system, it was possible for a small number of people belonging to a higher caste to wield authority over the entire village if they owned a large quantity of arable land and had a high ritual status. But power passed into the hands of numerically large, landowning peasant castes particularly from mid-sixties. It is likely to remain there for some more time, except in villages where SCs are numerically strong and are also taking advantage of the new educational and other opportunities available to them. Endemic factionalism in the dominant caste is also a threat to its power.¹⁸

S.C. Dube has examined the elements of the caste dominance in a study of four villages in Madhya Pradesh. He observed that a caste is dominant when power is diffused in the group and is exercised in the interest of the whole group or at least a sizeable part of it. Pronounced inequalities of wealth, prestige and power are found among the members of a so-called dominant caste. The dominant individual members of their own castes as well as members of non-dominant castes constitute the power structure of a

¹⁸Ibid., p. 11.

community.¹⁹

Thus, Dube views caste-dominance as unreal proposition in terms of its group character and distribution of power and dominance. According to Dube, it is the individuals (families) who are dominant and not the casts. It is true that a family or group of families is dominant and exploit the non-dominant members of the own castes as well as members of non-dominant castes. But such a formulation is singularistic in its nature and hence incomplete. K.L. Sharma writes, "There are certain areas and aspects of social life in which a group asserts its power. There are other areas in which only families and individuals matter and in still another domains near-monopoly of power or dispersion is found. Both castes and individuals (families) are found dominant but the areas and aspect of dominance of the two differs to a large extent."²⁰

Another question that arises is that if a family or group of families dominate, as to why all the members of a particular caste fight against the members of another caste to carve out a sphere of influence for itself at the micro and macro levels ? Is it not their consciousness of kind that binds them together to swim and sink together ?

¹⁹Dube, S.C. 1968, "Caste Dominance and Factionalism", Contribution to Indian Sociology, (New Series), No. 2, p. 58.

²⁰Sharma, K.L. 1980, Essay on Social Stratification, Jaipur : Rawat Publication, pp. 138-39.

Oommen has raised some questions about the validity of the concept of dominant caste. According to Oommen, alternative situations of dominance have not been visualized by Srinivas such as a numerically weak caste owning most of the land and wealth in a village, or a numerically strong caste which is economically deprived and ritually depressed; or a ritually superior caste which is numerically weak, and so on.... It seems fairly obvious that in such situations a number of castes will share the community power.²¹

Oommen thus refers to two other points, (1) the context of dominance, and (2) the aspects of power, namely, the resources available to individuals and groups for exercise of power and the act of power-exercising. According to Oommen, there is a 'multiple power structure' in a multi-caste village or region having different layers and levels of leadership. He writes : "there are dominant individuals and not dominant castes or castes in the village community. Multiple power-structure exists in a multiple caste village or region and there is "power pool" and "power-dispersion" in village communities."²²

Oommen argues that there are two ways to get in position of power and authority in the village community.

²¹Oommen, T.K. 1970, "Rural Community Power Structure in India", Social Forces, Vol. 49, No. 2, p. 75.

²²Oommen, T.K., *Ibid.*, p. 74.

One is through one's quality and manipulative tactics and other is through ascription of landlording, property, high caste position, lineage etc. Second, the power-elites may not be found in formal positions of power, still they influence the process of decision-making. They do not exercise the power themselves but they control others who exercise power.²³

Oommen has used the concepts of "power-reservoirs" and "power-exercisers". The power-reservoirs are more powerful than the power exercisers. More often than not, the power reservoirs control resources of community, accumulate money and wealth and by obliging their friends, relatives and kinsmen build a strong power structure in the village community. The power exercisers are generally constrained to oblige people by offering loans, benefits and resources to ensure their continuity and hold in the offices. In case the formal power-elites and the real power-wielders have an understanding regarding ruling community, factional cleavages do not become visible and overt.²⁴

The phenomenon of dominance of power of one caste over another is a key factor in the maintenance of the social structure of caste. In the concept dominant caste the

²³Oommen, T.K., "Political Leadership in Rural India : Image and Reality", Asian Survey, Vol. IX, No. 7, pp. 515-21.

²⁴Oommen, T.K. 1970, "The Concept of Dominant Caste : Some Queries", Contribution to Indian Sociology, New Series, No. 4, pp. 220-39.

elements of economic and political dominance also coincide with the ritual dominance. But it may be added that this correspondence between the two types of dominance results into stability, and such a situation is not without tensions which keep the balance of power among castes at a precarious level. Thus, the dominance of one caste over the other has never been absolute. When modern legal and constitutional rights were not available to all the castes, victims of dominant caste could always take shelter behind other dominant caste families inimical to those exercising such dominance. Occasionally, however, even open revolts against the dominant castes took place which sometimes altered the mode of inter-caste relations.

Instances of revolts by lower castes against the upper dominant castes during the pre-independence days are many. B.S. Cohn reports a case of challenge by chamars to the authority of Thakurs (Rajputs) in Madhopur village in Uttar Pradesh.

Many similar instances could be produced from the studies conducted in the realm of inter caste relations. These studies substantiate the view that phenomenon of dominance was never absolute and on utilitarian grounds or in the context of changing configuration of power, between the dominant castes and their subject castes adaptive changes were always possible and actually did occur. Their frequency and magnitude were, of course, limited since the

system as such was relatively closed.

Rural Power Structure

In all regions of India, village economic institutions, power-structure and inter-caste relation are changing fast. The causative factors from which such changes spring up are known. The democratization and politicization in rural and urban areas have weak end the rigidities of the social structure at large. Land reforms and developmental measures in particular in the villages have opened up channels for social mobility. The introduction of democratic decentralization the formal configuration of caste is also changing.

An important consequence of the introduction of such factors can be seen in the realm of rural power structure. The abolition of privileges of the intermediaries like the zamindars and jagirdars has though not succeeded in introducing an egalitarian class structure in the villages, yet it has made a great socio-psychological impact on the ex-tenants groups and has motivated them for access to positions of power and authority. This process coinciding with the introduction of panchayat raj has transformed the socio-political situation in rural India.

Evelyn Wood writes : "Village leadership has now increasingly become more conciliatory and pragmatic in orientation. With the traditional bases of power for the older village elite having been removed, the leadership now

emerging has to reconcile with factions and opposite interest groups to stay in power. In order to be effective, leaders now have to be pragmatic; exercise control through informal relations and integrate bureaucratic innovations to their roles within the framework of informal leadership."²⁵

Henry Orenstein observes that informal leaders are more effective in the village. He has studied more informal than formal leaders. Alan Beals has found that the village leadership in Namhali (Mysore) is faction-ridden and villagers prove to rely on leader who has the capacity of successful action.²⁶

The emphasis on pragmatism in Leadership choice is once again in evidence. Factional basis in the structure of leadership also seems to be the case in the village of Morsalli in Bangalore district studied by William MC Cormarck. "In this village, growth of factions is related with introduction of government sponsored reforms and with interference in village affairs by the government, new factional leaders have gained additional economic autonomy by moving away from subsistence farming to cash-crop farming which releases them from dependence. These

²⁵Wood, E. 1960, "Patterns of Influence within Rural India", in Park, R.L. and Tinker, I. (eds.), Leadership and Political Institution in India, New Jersey : Princeton, p. 390.

²⁶Beals, A. 1960, "Leadership in Mysore Village", in Park and Tinker (eds.), op. cit., pp. 451-452.

processes have given the factional leader an edge over the traditional leaders".²⁷

Thus changes in the economic and administrative structures have introduced a new dynamic element in the leadership of Morsalli village. In the Andhra village, Padu, studied by R. Bacheinheimer, "Leadership is in the hands of economically dominant families with each caste and wealth plus high caste status determine leadership".²⁸

According to Bachinheimer, the families which are more forward-looking and are rich, hold leadership. However, continuity of traditional form of leadership is also observed by Oscar Lewis in a north Indian village. Traditionally dominant Jats hold leadership in Rampur village studied by Lewis in 1950s. Oscar Lewis observes four characteristics regarding jat leadership in Rampur village. These are : (1) the tendency to minimize the status difference between the leader and the led within the caste; (2) resistance to delegate authority to leaders permanently without consultation with appropriate faction; (3) complete absence of youth leadership; and (4) lack of

²⁷McCormack, W. 1960, "Factionalism in a Mysore village", in Park, T.L. and Tinker, I. (eds)., op. cit., p. 444.

²⁸Bacheinheimer, R. 1960, "Elements of Leadership in an Andhra Village", in Park, K.L. and Tinker, I. (eds.), op. cit, pp. 452-457.

direct role of women in leadership.²⁹

F. G. Bailey, however argues that "there is a possibility for lower castes to move upward economically as in the case of Bodal and Ganjam distillers in Bisipara village, the economic change becomes a fore-runner of changes in the balance of power. These two untouchable castes by trade in liquor could earn enough money to purchase land in the village which was the sole monopoly of the warrior caste, the dominant group in the Bisipara, are now having their strong dominance in the villages".³⁰

In Sripuram village, in Tanjore district, studied by Andre Beteille, there has been a change in the power structure of village without the traditional landowning groups having lost their land to any substantial extent. He observes : "Although relations between classes have been undergoing change, this change has not kept pace with changes in the distribution of power. Ownership of land has shifted only in a small way from the old rentier class to the emerging class of farmers and cultivators. Power, on the other hand, has shifted much more decisively from the traditional elite of the village into the hands of the new popular leaders. Today, political power, whether in the village or outside it is not as closely tied to ownership

²⁹Lewis, O. 1958, Village Life in Northern India, Illinois : University of Illinois, p. 150.

³⁰Bailey, F.G. 1957, Caste and Economic Frontier, Manchester, p. 257.

of land as it was in the past. New bases of power have emerged which are to some extent, independent of both caste and class. Perhaps most important among these is the strength of numerical support.³¹

Ranganath has also supported the numerical base of the power structure in the village. He is of the view that "the numerical preponderance of caste is assuming increased importance, particularly at the village level, in this age of adult franchise. This means that today an effective village leader has by necessity to belong to the cast that has the largest share in the village population. To be a member of high caste is no more an unaccountable privilege in this respect, unless of course the high caste in question is numerically the most powerful group. Economic power, an important determinant of status in the past, has ceased to be effective in direct elections at the village level, though it is still important at the block and district levels of rural leadership."³²

He also emphasises that the new leader has to be better educated, he has to be strategist and manipulator. The new leader has to become a rallying point for a particular caste to serve as an interest group. At the

³¹Beteille, A. 1971, Caste, Class and Power, Berkeley : University of California Press, p. 155.

³²Ranganath, 1967, "Rural Leadership : Old and New", in Vidyarathi, L.P. (ed.), Rural Leadership in India, New Delhi : Asia Publishing House, pp. 270-71.

village level, the tensions generated by the struggle for power are sharp and overt, but at the block and zila levels, there exists caste lobbies.

Macro-Structural Factors and Rural Power Structure

The legal and democratic rights introduced after Independence bestow a new form of political power upon the groups or collectivities which have numerical strength provided that strength could be politically mobilized, which is possible if the existential situation of the group is homogenous and uniform.

K.L. Sharma observes that the modern rural elites are a product of post-independence developments such as adult franchise, Panchayati Raj, the abolition of Zamindari and Jagirdari systems, education and means of transport and communication. According to Sharma the numerical preponderance of some caste groups in some villages inspite of their depressed economic position and lower caste ranks has disturbed the hegemony of the upper castes and classes. However, in most cases, these groups could not become politically effective as they lacked other resources such as networks and linkages with outside leaders and money to spend on elections. To quote him, "Some of the recent changes have resulted into the decline of power of both individual families and particular groups. It is a very complicated phenomenon. If some families have been adversely affected by recent changes, it does not mean that

the power position of the group to which these families belong would also dwindle necessarily. Similarly, if there is a general decline in the power of a group, some families or individuals still would be able to retain power and continue to dominate in the community.³³

B.S. Cohn finds a closeness of fit between land ownership and degree of dominance of groups while evaluating the bases of power structure in twelve villages drawn from different regions. He writes, "In six villages, land control also compensates for lack of numerical dominance."³⁴

Thus it appears that leadership is a manifestation of the system of social stratification. The traditional structure itself has not changed. The new democratic rights and legal safeguards have provided motivation to the less powerful classes and aspired them for power though their economic handicaps thwart their desires. The emergent tensions to achieve power ultimately end up in reconciliation by which the traditionally dominant castes and classes remain in power by arrived at several accommodations and manipulations.

D.P. Mukherji focuses on the emergence of new class

³³Sharma, K.L, op. cit., p. 144.

³⁴Cohn, B.S. 1965, "Anthropological Notes on Disputes and Law in India", American Anthropologists, Vol. 67, No. 6, p. 87.

structure especially that of the middle class under the impact of the British colonial rule. The structural forces behind the new middle class led to the growth of the rational awakening in India. Mukherji analysis the role of the Indian tradition in absorbing new institutions and processes. Tradition in India offers understanding and analysis of the resilient yet adaptive social and cultural forces of social change. Change in economic forces and institutions can be analysed in terms of the adaptive capacity of Indian tradition. He write : "Adjustment is the end-product of the dialectical connection meanwhile is tension. And tension is not merely interesting as a subject of research. If it leads upto a higher stage, it is desirable. That higher stage is where personality is integrated through a planned and socially directed. Collective endeavour for historically understood, which means as the author understands it a socialist order".³⁵ However, A.R. Desai analyses the process of change in India in the context of the history of nationalism. This according to Desai emerged due to the special historical conditions created in India.³⁶

Nationalism did not exist in pre-British India. The British rule led to India's economic breakdown and

³⁵Mukherji, D.P. 1958, Diversities, Delhi : Peoples Publishing House, p. 76.

³⁶Desai, A.R., 1981, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Bombay : Popular Prakashan, pp. 2-3.

simultaneously it also gave rise to the nationalistic consciousness. The urge for political freedom grew as the urge for economic freedom became acute. This urge among the Indian business classes is manifested by their demand for protection of native industries. The educated classes wanted Indianisation of other services and the agriculturists demanded reduction in land taxes. Thus the catalytic factors in the entire process of nationalistic movement were the new economic interests and their institutionalisation through various class interests.

Mukherji refutes the popular view that the British rule was beneficial for the Indian Society rather than the colonial regime. He undertakes a thorough examination of the material forces which led to the emergence of the British merchant bourgeoisie. Their expansion in India underwent a process of internal class disintegration, and subsequently it resulted into the fall of the East India company due to the rise of the new class of exploiters in Britain, namely, the industrial bourgeoisie. "The emergence of the latter class was conditioned by the industrial revolution and the material forces that it had released in the Indian society, ultimately these forces also rendered the merchant bourgeoisie obsolete as a class".³⁷

³⁷Mukherjee, R. 1958, The Rise and Fall of the East India Company, Berlin : Berlin Press, p.48.

Resilience thesis is further substantiated by Yogendra Singh writes : "The process of change in the leadership structure reveals that there is a tendency toward 're-definition' and re-adaptation of roles among the traditionally powerful groups in order to maintain their position in the power-structure. Traditionally influential groups still continue to wield influence and power. Caste privileges still continue to coincide with privileged class status. Despite these attributes, change is taking place. Upper castes now hold on to power not by the traditional legitimation of their authority, but through degrees of consensus, which though manipulated, is essentially democratic in ethos. Power is held by traditional privileged class, but is no longer institutionalized by tradition.³⁸

The reservation policy has not helped the elevation of lower castes, the tribes and the minorities to the extent it was expected. It has created cleavages between the upper middle and the lower caste groups within the reserved categories. Available evidence suggests that a few castes from amongst the reserved castes have disproportionately monopolised the opportunities.

Reservation of jobs for the Scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and the backward classes have not yielded

³⁸Singh, Y. 1973, Modernisation of India Tradition, op. cit., p. 197.

desirable results primarily due to lack of education.

The leadership in the green revolution areas in most parts of the country has come from peasants whose traditional occupation was agriculture. Green revolution in several parts of the country created sharp social cleavages and led to new class formations. An important result was the rise of the 'middle caste/class' peasantry to positions of power often supplementing the traditional upper-caste-class landlords, and not to the rise of the twice-born castes such as the Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumihars and others. The middle caste peasantry comprising of jats, yadavas, kurmis, Keoris etc. have come to centre-stage of power-politics in north India. Junbis, Patels and Marathas in the west, Kammas, Reddis and Okaligas in the South have been dominant the areas benefitted by green revolution. The middle caste-class peasantry has shown upward social mobility and greater political influence due to betterment in their economic status. The position of the upper caste-class landlords present an uneven picture of social change. This group is going through both upward and downward social mobility. They have suffered a significant degree of proletarianization, especially in the northern states, such as Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar.

Green revolution signifies not only a growth in agricultural production but also the use of new technology and emergence of changed social relationships among

agrarian classes. A new pattern of interaction between technology, social fronts and culture is now taking place in the rural society. This has resulted into the emergence of a new power structure. Green revolution has resulted into the emergence of the middle peasantry as a dominant class.

Y. Singh has argued that reservation of jobs for the socially and economically deprived sections of our society has been a right policy intended to repair the balance of forces that handicapped them since centuries. But it has now been or is now most likely to be converted into a hereditary privilege. In the rural areas, the planned effort for development contributed to green revolution. It was led by traditional peasant castes throughout the country who rose to power. In comparison to the upper castes who used to be their landlords before independence they still feel culturally and educationally deprived. Hence, the movement for reservation for the socially and educationally backward classes. They already enjoy reservation in government jobs and educational institutions in the states of India. The Mandal commission has recommended reservation of jobs to the tune of 27 per cent for the backward classes which constitute 52 per cent of the population of India. It has been already implemented in central services besides other sectors in the states.

With the rise of middle (caste) peasantry to power in

villages, conflict between them and the dalits on the one hand and between the dalits and the upper caste-class groups on the other has intensified, generally in the states such as Bihar, U.P. and parts of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh etc.

The process of wielding influence and power by the dominant groups in rural India is not smooth and free from a state of serious tension. At the village level the dominant castes have to face new challenges from their former subject castes. On account of the changes in their power due to land reforms and the impact of educational spread, the need to woo the numerically large subject castes to gain excess to power in the village panchayats has become considerably intense. In the situations where the lower castes are successful in exploiting their numerical power, they have attacked the traditional configuration of power. Land reforms green revolution, reservation policy, educational spread, elections, adult franchise and decentralisation of power through panchayati raj have produced noticeable changes in the structure of dominance and power.

Conclusion

Issues relating to the relationship between power and society in India have been taken up in the present chapter. While giving a brief account of the relationship between the two in the ancient and the medieval period, a detailed

analysis of the colonial period and of the situation in post-independent India is presented in this chapter. In the ancient period the main question was regarding the relationship between the priest and the King whom Louis Dumont defines as the *prescriber* and the *prescribed*. Though the priest did not rule directly, but he had power to decide the rules for the ruler. Since the ruler was the de facto ruler, he could overrule the prescribed rule. Hence, there was tension between the two. The situation in the medieval period was, however, quite different. New land tenure systems, the system of land-grants and feudalism were the main features of this period. More basic changes followed in the British period which had enduring fact impact the Indian Society which persisted even after Independence.

The British created entirely new administrative and military structures and a system of education. The changes introduced by the British brought about social and structural transformation of Indian society. Several new contradictions were created as a result of the changes implemented by the raj. Some of the traditional institutions weakened in certain respect, and at the same time some institutions were strengthened. The institution of caste is the most glaring example of such a contradiction. Contradiction between the traditional and the modern power structure was an off-shoot of the British

rule. Some of these points have been analysed in this chapter.

Power and society in the post-independence India are not free from the colonial hangover due to continuity of the British institutions in the free India. However, significant changes have been taking place particularly in the domain of rural power structure. Caste has been a pivotal institution and mechanism of power and dominance. What makes a caste dominant ? Are there other social entities of dominance such as family and individual? What are the criteria of dominance? Is dominance a monolith? All these and some other questions have been analysed in the present chapter. The concept of dominant caste as proposed by M.N. Srinivas is not found acceptable and useful by many other scholars. Family and individual are equally important units of dominance and power. Rural power structure cannot be seen simply in terms of the 'caste model' of Indian society. A series of macro-structural changes have influenced the rural power structure including land reforms, adult franchise, country-town nexus, education, economic changes, migration etc. Caste has become today a most adaptive and resilient institution. It is used today as the main source and agency of political mobilisation. Hence, caste is no more caste in terms of its traditional meaning. Caste is to be seen in relation to both micro and macro structural and cultural factors and forces of social change.

CHAPTER III

POWER AND SOCIETY IN RURAL BIHAR

Bihar was created formally in 1936 when Orissa and Bihar, which were separated in 1912, from the Bengal Presidency were further divided into two separate provinces, namely, Bihar and Orissa. Since then Bihar has remained an independent state like any other states in the Union of India¹

Area and Caste Composition of Bihar

The state of Bihar covering an area of 173,876 km lies between the latitude 21°58' and 27°31' N and longitude 83°32' and 88°20' E. It is bound in the East by West Bengal and on the west by Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. To the south lies Orissa and to the North the Kingdom of Nepal. The state consists of two distinct physical units having roughly equal areas, the Gangetic Plains divided into two rather unequal divisions, one north and the other south of the Ganges. But topographically, the state can be divided into three parts, (1) North Bihar Plains, (2) South Bihar Plains, and (3) Chhotanagpur Plateau. In terms of population, Bihar ranks second among the States of the Union of India. The population of Bihar is overwhelming rural. The north Bihar is the most heavily populated region

¹Menon, V.P. 1969, The Story of Integration of Indian States, Bombay : Orient Longman, p. 173.

Table - 1

Total Population, SCs and STs Population by Rural, Urban and Sex
- 1971, 1981, 1991 of Bihar
(In Million)

Year	Stratum	Total Literate			Scheduled Castes Literate			Scheduled Tribes Literate		
		Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
1971	Total	56.35	28.84	27.51	7.95	4.01	3.94	4.93	2.46	2.47
	Rural	50.71	25.72	24.99	7.43	3.73	3.70	4.72	2.35	2.37
	Urban	5.63	3.12	2.52	0.51	0.27	0.24	0.21	0.11	0.09
1981	Total	69.91	35.93	33.98	10.14	5.16	4.98	5.81	2.91	2.89
	Rural	61.19	31.17	30.02	9.28	4.69	4.58	5.45	2.72	2.72
	Urban	8.72	4.76	3.96	0.86	0.46	0.40	0.36	0.19	0.17
1991	Total	86.37	N.A.	N.A.	12.57	6.57	6.00	6.61	3.36	3.26
	Rural	75.02	N.A.	N.A.	11.44	5.96	5.48	6.15	3.11	3.04
	Urban	11.35	N.A.	N.A.	1.13	0.61	0.52	0.46	0.24	0.22

Source : Union Primary Census Abstract, Census of India, 1971, Series-4, Part-II-A, General Population Table.
: District Primary Census Abstract, General Population, Census of India 1981, Series - 4, Bihar Part-II-B.
: Census of India, 1991, Series-I, India, Paper-I of 1993, Union Primary Census Abstract for Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Table - 4.
: Census of India, 1991, Series-I, Paper-2 of 1992, Final Population.
: Brief Analysis of Primary Census Abstract. Table - 2.

with the density of 1058 persons per square mile followed by the South Bihar and the Chhotanagpur Plateau.

Bihar is one of those states where the upper castes although not numerically large, have traditionally enjoyed ritual superiority and social prestige.

The upper castes constitute 13.22%, the backward castes 52.16%, Scheduled Castes 14.07%, Schedule Tribes 9.05%, and Muslims 11.50% of the total population of Bihar. Thus, the upper castes form only 13.22 percent of the population of Bihar, but their dominance in Bihar is much greater than their number would suggest.

Ramashray Roy observes that, "The numerical weakness of the upper castes is more than compensated by their ritual status, social prestige and economic power. In ritual matters the Brahmins enjoy the first position followed by the Bhumihaar Brahmins and the Rajputs."²

²Roy, R. 1970, "Caste and Political Recruitment in Bihar", in Caste in Indian Politics, Delhi : Orient Longman, p. 229.

Table - 2

Major Caste Groups of Bihar

Category	Caste	Percentage of Population
Forwards, or twice-born	Brahmin	4.7
	Bhumihar	2.9
	Rajputs	4.2
	Kayasthas	1.2
	(Total Forward)	13.0
Upper Backwards	Bania	0.6
	Yadav	11.0
	Kurmi	3.6
	Koiri	4.1
	(Total Upper Backwards)	19.3
Lower Backwards	Barhi	1.0
	Dhanuk	1.8
	Hajjam	1.4
	Kahar	1.7
	Kandu	1.6
	Kumhar	1.3
	Lohar	1.3
	Malah	1.5
	Tatwa	1.6
	Teli	2.8
	Other Shudras	16.0
	(Total Lower Backwards)	32.0
Total Backwards	51.3	
Muslims	12.5	
Schedule Castes	14.4	
Schedule Tribes	9.1	
Grand Total	100.0	

(Source : Harry W. Blair, 'Rising Kulaks and Backward Classes in Bihar', 1980, p. 65)

Economy

Bihar is rich in minerals, producing 46 per cent of the country's coal, 45 per cent of bauxite, 82 per cent of copper and 88 per cent of pyanite."³

³Shah, G. 1977, "Revolution - reforms of protest", Economic and Political Weekly, 9 April, p. 606.

Table - 3

Contribution to National Income from Mining Sector 1988-89

State	[In Billion of Rupees (At current prices)]
Bihar	100.628
Madhya Pradesh	62.800
Gujarat	44.640
Assam	44.228
Andhra Pradesh	27.775
Orissa	23.907
West Bengal	21.378
Maharastra	20.511
Rajasthan	17.481
Uttar Pradesh	16.471
Karnataka	10.753
Tamil Nadu	8.937
Haryana	2.198
Kerala	0.876
Punjab	0.242

Source : Das, Arvind N. 1992, Republic of Bihar,
New Delhi : Penguin.

There are vast deposits of minerals in Bihar. Many big industries, viz. iron and steel, heavy engineering, fertilizer plants, Oil refineries etc. are located in Bihar. Yet per capita income is lowest among all the states.

Table - 4

**Per Capital Net State Domestic Product of Major States
(At Current Prices)**

State	1990-91	1991-92 (Provisional)
Punjab	8373	9769
Maharashtra	7316	7997
Haryana	7502	8722
Gujarat	5687	6306
West Bengal	4753	5284
Karnataka	4696	5898
Kerala	4207	4607
Andhra Pradesh	4728	5529
Tamil Nadu	5047	5817
Assam	4014	4594
Rajasthan	4113	4402
Orissa	3077	3816
Madhya Pradesh	4149	4383
Uttar Pradesh	2516	4001
Bihar	2655	2886

Source : Economic Survey 1994-95, Government of India Publications, Page S-12.

Bihar is predominantly an agricultural state. Just as the Brahmins, the Bhumihars and the Rajputs constitute the higher rung in terms of ritual status, likewise, they own a major part of land and here their dominance in the economic field too.

There are historical reasons for this B.B. Misra observes that, "Before the coming of the British, the

influence which dominated village community was that of a particular kind, especially of Brahmins and Rajputs, who owned most villages either as village zamindars in the upper provinces and parts of Bihar or as Taluqdars in Bengal, as mirasdars in the South or inamdaras in the west. The other occupational groups worked in subservience to the dominant landed interest of a village"⁴

It is reported⁵ that 78.16 per cent of landowners are concentrated in two upper castes. The lower castes depend more for their living on farm labour. Only one upper caste, the Rajputs constitute 0.95 per cent of the total agricultural labour forces, as compared to backward classes (44.99 per cent) and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (51.71 per cent). In other words, the economic standing of a particular caste is highly correlated with its ritual status in the caste hierarchy. Moreover, the backward classes and the scheduled castes do not own land to any significant extent. Such a situation increases their dependence for means of livelihood on the landowning Brahmins, Bhumihars and Rajputs. Thus the agricultural labourers are at lower rung of the social hierarchy. In this way caste and class co-exist in Bihar.

⁴Mishra, B.B. 1961, The Indian Middle Class their Growth in Modern Times, London : Oxford University Press, p. 55.

⁵All India Agricultural Labour Enquiry, Rural Manpower and Occupational Structure, 1961.

Like the system of bonded labour "Saunkiya" system exists in South Bihar. It is system of exploitation of the poor from among the lower castes. In the Saunkiya system, if one takes loan of any amount, he will have to work for the moneylender as and when required till the loan is paid back. He gets a morning breakfast, a mid-day meal and two 'Kachhi Seers' of paddy, maize or dal, and with this he feeds his family and people, if they absent themselves from work for any reason, be it sickness, marriage or visiting a relative, they incur a debt of Rs. 2 per day for being absent. The only respite they might get is when there is no work on contract labour, and even then, very often a portion of their hard earned wages is taken from them to pay back an ever-increasing loan over which they have no check.⁶

The approach to developmental planning in the post-independence area has led to the formulation of laws regarding land reforms, such as the abolition of zamindari system, implementation of ceiling Acts, consolidation of fragmented small holdings, and public investment in infrastructure for agricultural development. The government of Bihar has adopted two important land reform measures after independence, but unfortunately due to structural constraints inherent in the system itself, these measures

⁶See 'JP's Real Mission, Economic and Political Weekly, 22 March 1975.

could not produce desired results. In 1950 the Bihar Land Reforms Act abolishing the Zamindari system, and in 1961 the Bihar Land Reforms (Ceiling) Act, put a ceiling on landholdings. But the working groups on Land Reforms of the National Commission on Agriculture after a visit of Madhubani and Muzaffarpur districts concluded in 1973 that land reforms in the state were 'sour joke'. In case of Bihar the approach is fugitive, the methods for implementation are clandestine. The landowners do not care for the administration. Their approach is different from their 'modus operandi'⁷

Table - 5

**Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Percentage
below the Poverty line in Rural Area : 1983-84**

State	Schedule Castes	Scheduled Tribes
All India	53	58
Bihar	71	65
Tamil Nadu	59	51
Madhya Pradesh	59	67
Uttar Pradesh	57	46
Maharashtra	56	59
Orissa	55	69
Karnataka	54	60
West Bengal	52	59
Andhra Pradesh	51	48
Rajasthan	45	64
Kerala	44	36
Gujarat	40	52
Haryana	28	-
Assam	22	26
Punjab	22	15

Source : Das, Arvind N. 1992, Republic of Bihar,
New Delhi : Penguin.

⁷Ram, Mohan 1975, "The Sarvodaya Farce", Economic and Political Weekly, May.

Though the bonded labour has been abolished legally, it is existing in some form or other in Bihar. Exploitation is the common feature in agriculture in the state. To quote Pradhan H. Prasad, "The landlords, the cultivators and the big peasants did not allow the system of informal bondage to disintegrate. With the help of this practice and the newly acquired surplus, they also became politically very powerful. They claimed the bulk of the benefits that began to flow in the area either in the name of developmental activities or the rural power. For all practical purposes, they became the law in their areas".⁸ He further writes : "The rural rich have thus developed a vested interest in the continuation of mass poverty. The gains arising out of this backward 'semi-feudal' agrarian structure have made the rural rich not enthusiastic about rapid development which, if allowed, is likely to improve the economic condition of the poor peasants who can thereby free themselves from the informal bondage. Therefore, the dominant classes, the rural rich, have not been enthusiastic about dynamising agriculture by taking advantage of the new technology. That is why the bulk of the resources for development activities are either wasted away or are used on conspicuous consumption".⁹ On the basis

⁸Prasad, H. Prasad 1979, "Caste and Class in Bihar", Economic and Political Weekly, Annual Number, p. 483.

⁹Prasad, H Pradhan 1979, op. cit., p. 483.

of such exploitation and poor state of agriculture production, one can characterise Bihar's agrarian structure as semi-feudal in character. Radhakant Barik also subscribes to this view.

In rural areas, concentration of land and thereby of economic power in certain hands has given rise to rural elites. Sachchidananda's description provides some common features of rural elite, in Bihar. He writes : "people of the higher castes or with higher socio-economic status or larger landholdings have made the maximum use of improved practices. Caste norms have remained intact and the people of lower caste are discriminated"¹⁰

Education and Society in Bihar

The economic inequality reflected in land-ownership has its repercussions in other domains as well. When new opportunities in various walks of life were created as a result of contact with the outside world, it was normally the upper castes who took advantages of these opportunities, hence the cumulative inequalities. Take, for example, the utilisation of newly-created opportunities by different castes. The 1931 census out of Bihar and Orissa reveals that for the four upper castes, the Kayasthas have been the most literate caste (372 literates per 1,000),

¹⁰Sachchidananda, 1977, "Social Dimensions of Agricultural Development", quoted by Radhakant Barik, Politics of J.P. Movement, Delhi : Radiant Publishers, pp. 20-21.

Table - 6

Literacy for Total Population, SCs and STs Population by Rural, Urban and Sex
1971, 1981, 1991 of Bihar
(In Million)

Year	Stratum	Total Literate			Scheduled Castes Literate			Scheduled Tribes Literate		
		Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
1971	Total	11.23	8.84	2.40	0.52	0.48	0.04	0.57	0.45	0.12
	Rural	8.71	8.71	1.59	0.43	0.41	0.02	0.51	0.41	0.10
	Urban	2.53	2.53	0.80	0.08	0.07	0.01	0.07	0.05	0.02
1981	Total	18.32	13.69	4.63	1.05	0.93	0.12	0.99	0.76	0.23
	Rural	13.77	10.72	3.05	0.84	0.76	0.08	0.85	0.67	0.18
	Urban	4.55	2.97	1.58	0.21	0.17	0.04	0.14	0.09	0.05
1991	Total	33.24	17.45	15.79	1.90	1.57	0.33	1.41	1.03	0.38
	Rural	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	1.54	1.31	0.23	1.22	0.91	0.31
	Urban	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	0.35	0.26	0.09	0.20	0.13	0.07

Source : Union Primary Census Abstract, Census of India, 1971, Series-4, Part-II-A, General Population Table.
: Table SC III A&B and ST A&B, Education in Rural and Urban among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Census of India, 1971, Bihar Series - 4, V-A.
: District Primary Census Abstract, General Population, Census of India, 1981, Series - 4, Bihar Part-II-B.
: Census of India, 1991, Series-I, India, Paper-I of 1993, Union Primary Census Abstract for Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

followed by the Brahmins 195, the Bhumidars 136, and the Rajputs 120 literates per 1,000. Among the lower castes the Kurmis and Goalas there were only 40 to 50 literates persons per thousand and the Telis had only 52.¹¹

The gap between the upper and the lower castes again is very wide. In the case of higher education, this imbalance is even more noticeable. Modern education forms the gateway to a vast area of new opportunities for status mobility. Recruitment to the arenas of politics, public services, business and professions is, dependent on access to and achievement of higher education. Imbalance in this respect reinforces the relative capacity of various social sectors to take advantage of the available opportunities. Particularly having access to higher education based on inherited resources one can conveniently invest in highly costly education.

But in recent years there is a slow but steady rise in the number of non-dwij coming from the other castes. Roy writes : "This gradual rise in the number of students from the 'dispossessed' sections of Bihar society reflects a change taking place in the stratification system, and presumably points to the growing appreciation among underprivileged groups of education as an instrument of status aspirations. Upper castes still dominate the field of education however, and to this extent maintain the

¹¹Roy, Ramashray 1970, op. cit., p. 232.

process of cumulative inequality."¹²

Thus, changes have been possible through the implementation of the policy of protective discrimination, viz., the reservation of seats in the educational institutions, awarding scholarships to the students and the remission of tuition fees, etc. But those from among the underprivileged who have received and have been receiving higher education are those who are at the upper rung from among them and are having economically viable conditions. Those who are at the lower rung among them, their children do not go to school and even if they go, they have maximum number of drop-outs, because they serve as the earning member of their family. The children of the neo-rich intermediate castes are flooding the educational institutions. And they are forming a kind of 'elite' with their ranks.

By and large people coming from the upper rung of society have taken advantage of higher education. Ghanshyam Shah observes that "most of them are sons and daughters of businessmen, white collar employees and small and big landholders".¹³ Thus, state Politics and Politics in university campus represent certain features, e.g. role of caste in admission as well as election, large scale use of money, and show of muscle power in Student's Union

¹²Ibid., p. 234.

¹³Shah, G. 1977, Protest Movements in Two Indian States, New Delhi, p. 74.

Elections, etc.

Polity, Upper Castes and Power Structure

Though the upper castes in Bihar are numerically weak, this weakness is compensated to a large extent by their higher ritual status, economic power and mastery over modern skills. In Bihar, the ownership of land is, to a very great extent, concentrated in the hands of upper castes. Since Bihar is predominantly an agricultural and rural society, land is the most important source of economic power. Resultantly, in the past landed high castes used to dominate the state polity. As Walter Hauser aptly observes that Bhumihars, Rajputs and Brahmins had successive opportunities for entering into politics as landholders of moderate means. These groups were financially capable of providing education to their offsprings and to support family members for choosing political career.¹⁴

In Bihar the upper caste do not form a single cohesive and coherent group. On the contrary, the upper caste members are serious contenders for political power. In other words, the political rivalry among the upper castes is the main driving force in Bihar politics. Such a political rivalry among the upper castes has, however, a significant impact on the way different social groups have been allowed entry into political system. The fact that the

¹⁴Roy, R. 1970, op. cit., pp. 239-40.

upper castes contend among themselves for political power requires that each contending caste group goes beyond its own caste and seeks support from other caste groups. Those who were previously on the periphery of political field were initially satisfied for a time with the role provided to them by the upper castes. But slowly they have emerged as leaders in their own right and now assertely their independence from the upper caste leaders. Ramashray Roy observes that a slow process of transformation of caste groups has been in operation in Bihar. This process has, however, led to the emergence of the underprivileged caste groups as crucial political forces to be reckoned with in any political calculation.¹⁵

It is not only rivalry among the upper castes for seizure of political power that inducted the underprivileged sections of society, but a valley of factors has also accelerated this process. The most important among these factors is the 'subjective realization' of the 'objective condition' that their numerical preponderance will serve as a powerful weapon to blunt edge of the politics played by the upper castes.

Thus, numerical strength becomes a crucial factor in the context of new political superstructure borrowed from the advanced capitalist countries. Pradhan H. Prasad writes : "In order to win over the downtrodden to the side

¹⁵Ibid., p. 245.

of the ruling faction, concession in terms of seats in educational institutions and jobs in government sectors were offered to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and middle castes under their patronage in the bid to win over these castes to their side. This undoubtedly defused the class contradiction between the rural rich and the middle and the poor middle peasants for the time being. But it also raised the hopes and aspirations of the scheduled castes and the middle castes."¹⁶

The Emergence of Middle Caste and Power Structure

The zamindari abolition has gone a long way in elevating quite a significant number of them to the position of tenants from that of sub-tenants. Though the land reform measures taken up by the government remained mostly on paper, the economic condition of the landlords, big peasantry and ryots worsened so much that they sold their surplus land, not to their own class members, but mainly to the middle peasants - the upcoming agricultural class - because of their better paying capacity. Thus, this process was, of course slow, but in course of time control over ten per cent of land passed into the hands of the middle peasantry.

In the way, the middle and the lower middle peasantry emerged as a most important class in the context of agricultural development in semi-feudal Bihar. Pradhan H.

¹⁶Ibid.

Prasad admits that "with their newly acquired economic power, they made a successful bid for the capture of political power. The demon of casteism which was created by the elites of semi-feudal setup (the upper caste Hindu) to keep themselves in political power has now turned against their creators"¹⁷

Pradhan H. Prasad, further writes : "The recent reservations in appointments and promotions in government in favour of the middle castes in the teeth of stiff opposition from upper caste Hindus is proof of the political supremacy of the middle castes. No doubt, this has led to the unprecedented violence on caste lines, but it is not going to reverse the process. The violence will last for sometime and then it will find the middle castes in the control of the political power in the state. Of course, there will be some attempts on the part of the groups dominated by upper caste Hindus to capture power."¹⁸

But the analysis provided by Pradhan H. Prasad regarding fight for political supremacy does not provide a comprehensive picture of the political intricacies. The nature of rivalry is not bipartite, that is, between the upper caste Hindus and the up-start middle castes. It has a triangular character. The middle caste fight against the upper castes to capture political power on the one hand and

¹⁷Prasad, H. Prasad 1979, op. cit., p. 483.

¹⁸Ibid.

they perpetrate inhuman and heinous atrocities on the scheduled castes to prevent them from rising to the position equal to them. The gory incident of caste atrocities on Harijans in Belchi and Bishrampur are but a few instances in this regard. Such incidents occur simply not because of the fact of the economic exploitation but also because of the lack of recognition of the socially deprived sections by society to the rising the middle castes.

It appears that the unequal access to resources benefitted the upper castes favourably in the initial stage after independence to the virtual exclusion of the non-privileged caste groups. But later on the impact of democratic politics was felt and then political power began to widen the circle of political participation and politically weak caste groups began to be inducted into the political process. Shashishekhar Jha observes that after the 1967 Assembly elections when the non-congress parties came to power more than three-fourth of the total number of MLAs belonged to the landed class.¹⁹ Such elitist composition of the state polity adopts a host of delaying mechanisms in the implementation of any ordinance that are vote-catching but against their class interest. Daniel Thorner also notes that eight years after the Bihar legislature voted its acceptance of the principle of

¹⁹Jha, S. 1972, Political Elites in Bihar, Bombay : Vohra & Comp., p. 55.

zamindari abolition, the majority of the zamindars of Bihar (having political power) were in legal possession of their lands.²⁰

Tribes and Power Structure

The state of Bihar with 49.33 lakh STs stands third in the country with regard to tribal population of India. Leadership in tribal areas has been studied by scholars including L.P. Vidyarthi, Sachchindanada and some others. Before the industrialization of Chhotanagpur, tribal villages had their traditional leaders. The villages have now come under the influence of towns and cities. However, a large number of villages still remain isolated and traditional with continuance of traditional leadership.

According to Vidyarthi, in each village there were three types of leaders : Pahan, Mahto and Mundu. The Pahan was mainly concerned with the religious and ritualistic activities, and he used to make sacrifices and offer worships on behalf of the villagers. Mahto and the Munda were secular heads of the village and decided disputes and collected land revenue for zamindars. The three functionaries are still found, they still enjoy some prestige and honour.

Vidyarthi writes : "only one village, viz., Hindpiri where the Muslims have settled down in large numbers ... the three functionaries are completely non-existent. Out of

²⁰Quoted at length by Radhakant Barik, op. cit., p. 28.

the nine surviving traditional villages eight original tribal villages have traditional village leaders within the municipal boundaries. But change is taking place. Though the non-converted tribals in their respective villages have been able to maintain the village leadership especially in the field of religion, they have lost their position in terms of providing political leadership at the local and regional levels. The educated tribals, who are in service and who have contacts with officials etc., are becoming more prominent in the field of secular leadership"²¹

Vidyarthi observes that continuity in the patterns of leadership and the induction of the traditionally entrenched characterise the leadership today in tribal Bihar. To quote him, "Moreover, the sons and daughters of these traditional leaders have especially taken advantage of the opportunities that urbanisation have provided them. Many of these traditional leaders are educated and have entered into services in local courts etc., the less educated have become agents for land transactions in addition to their traditional jobs as agriculturists"²²

He further notes that leadership in tribal movements was provided by the traditional leaders who were rural bred, charismatic and religious in their approach. They

²¹Vidyarthi, L.P. (ed.) 1967, "Aspects of Tribal Leadership in India", in Leadership in India, Delhi : Asia Publishing House, p. 635.

²²Ibid, p. 136.

were not educated but were supposed to have received divine guidance through dreams or otherwise to lead the masses. Such perceptions were about the Birsa movement, Tana Bhagat movement, etc. But the rural bred, charismatic and tradition - oriented leadership, which worked for revitalizing the tribals has been disturbed owing to the missionary activities as new leadership has emanated as a result of conversion to christianity. Education and modern jobs in particular has created a new middle class among the convert tribals though its size quite small it is considerably effective socially and politically. present Jharkhand movement is led by those who are educated, pragmatic and urban bred.²³ But now Jharkhand has is no more exclusively in the hands of the tribals converted to Christianity.

A new leadership pattern is emerging under the impact of urbanization and growing industrialization. This leadership symbolizes the aspirations and needs of the local and regional people. With the increase in communication, contact and education, adventurous personalities of different castes and tribes of religious and ethnic affiliations are joining hands together and are trying to present somewhat secularised leadership before the masses of Chhottanagpur.²⁴

²³Ibid., pp. 136-137.

²⁴Ibid., p. 139.

Sachchidanand in his study of Kullu tribe observes that "Today in Kullu individuals who provided leadership are more broadly recruited than was true under the traditional system. Leaders are not derived solely from the upper strata of the social structure as was formerly true. The present system allows access to position of respect and power to more categories of individuals than earlier. The basic change is from a closed system in which leadership positions were by and large traditional to a relatively competitive one in which leadership position may also be achieved by enterprising individuals. Power is widely distributed and its existence is diffused with the advent of new leadership roles. The old criteria for elevated social status will operate, but new criteria have come into being. Performance based on special skills and recognized competence enable individuals from any strata of society to achieve leadership status"²⁵

Leadership was different in the past from the leadership in the present situation. Gradually, we see the replacement of hereditary leaders by elected leaders. N.K. Bose writes : "Leadership in the political affairs of the entire community is gradually becoming concentrated in the hands of either the middle class or the upper class minority. More often it is the administration oriented

²⁵Sachindananada, 1967, "Leadership and Cultural Change in Kullu", in Vidyarthi, L.P. (ed.) Leadership in India, op.cit., p. 147.

middle class, rather than the upper class belonging to the landed aristocracy who have gravitated into positions of social authority"²⁶

The Weaker Section and Political Power

The situation has changed to a considerable extent especially after the 1967 national elections in India when the backward castes emerged as a dominant force in politics in Bihar and some other states. Accordingly their share in ministerial posts has also increased considerably. After 27 per cent reservation in government jobs for them, the situation has further improved in their favour. Thus, the 'cumulative inequality' that persisted earlier received the first setback in the 1967 and later on the formation of the Janta Party in the last 1970s. The recent implementation of the recommendation of the Mandal Commission for 27% reservation of jobs for the OBCs is another attack on the hegemony of the upper castes. The weakening of the Congress Party has also given a boost to the OBCs and particularly to the Janta Dal in the state of Bihar and Karnataka. And finally the emergence of Laloo Prasad Yadav as Chief Minister of Bihar indicates the rise of the backwards in politics. However, earlier the late Kapoori Thakur, Chief Minister of Bihar also symbolised the emergence of the OBCs as a political force to reckon with.

²⁶Bose, N.K. 1967, "Changing Character of Leadership", In Vidayarthi, L.P. (ed.), op. cit., p. 93.

It is important to note that among the Backward Castes, Yadavas, Kurmis, Koiris and Baniyas constitute a distinct segment and may be termed as 'advanced' castes as they are often addressed as 'upper backward castes'. Indeed, members of these four castes are better off both economically and politically than some of the upper castes in Bihar. For instance, the Brahmins in Madhubani district are very poor, while the upper OBCs own most of the land in the district. Similarly Yadavas and the Koiris enjoy the status of dominant castes in some parts of the state. These four castes constituted the vanguard of the agitation for reservation of job as they organised rallies for implementation of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission and also helped Laloo Prasad Yadav to emerge as their leader and become Chief Minister.

The Scheduled Castes constitute 14.1 per cent of the total population of Bihar. Despite having two SCs chief ministers and a substantial numerical strength, the SCs have not yet been a political force to reckon with. They are still being oppressed not only by the upper castes but also by the neo-rich advanced OBCs. The scheduled castes have also come up. They have their middle class and elite who are comparable with the elites from the STs, OBCs and other groups.

The Scheduled Tribes, constitute 9.1 per cent of the total population, and they continue to suffer on account of their economic and educational backwardness. They are still

exploited by the 'dikkus' (outsiders who have settled in Chhotanagpur region). The tribals were exploited before India's independence by the colonial rulers, moneylenders and zamindars. After independence their main operations are people from North Bihar and Marwari and Punjabi traders and merchants. The educated tribal youth remain deprived of jobs as most of the white collar jobs are cornered by the north Biharis. Jharkhand movement at the formation of a separate state to emancipate the tribals from the domination of the outsiders. The tribal leadership is, however, divided on the basis of ethnicity, religion and some other factors.

The Backward Castes Versus the Scheduled Castes

While the backwards caste's struggles against the upper castes were mostly confined to the electoral arena, legislative assembly, etc., for the enforcement of certain policies beneficial to the OBCs, at the village level a more violent repression was perpetrated by them to suppress the discontentments and grievances of agricultural labourers of nearly half of whom belong to the Scheduled Castes.

The backward castes in the recent past have burnt the Harijans alive, murdered their vocal leaders, killed their sympathisers and razed their dwellings to tighten their own hold on the castes which are below them to get absolute control over their labour power. Table-7 'Caste Violence in Bihar' shows that in most of the cases violence that

occured in the seventies and eighties in Bihar was mostly engineered by the Yadavas and Kurmis against the SCs. In Bishrampur where several landless agricultural labourers were burnt alive in 1978, the offence was committed by the rich peasant Kurmis. Some of the Kurmi landlords have more than 100 bighas of land. They own tractors huge impressive houses and other valuable assets.

Sachchidanand observes that "The overall socio-economic position of the Kurmis can be compared to that of the upper castes such as the Rajputs and Brahmins in the neighbouring villages. The only distinction between the upper castes and the Kurmi landlords is that the latter have not yet given up the manual work in the field. However, this has led to a harsher attitude towards the Harijans particularly when they work with them during the agricultural operations. It is one of the reasons why the SCs do not like to work with the intermediate caste households."²⁷

Arun Sinha comments on Bihar situation that it is 'class war' against SCs, and not atrocities. In 1977, Bihar among all states, accounted for the largest number of cases of atrocities against SCs. The outrages occurred in Kargdhar, Belchi, Pathadda, Chhaundano, Gopalpur and Dharampur. People were killed or persecuted not because

²⁷Bose, P.K. 1985, "Mobility and Conflicts : Social Roots of Caste Violence in Bihar" in Caste, Caste-Conflict and Reservation, Centre for Social Studies Surat, Delhi : Ajanta Publication, p. 195.

they were SCs, but also because they were agricultural labourers and sharecroppers working with the rich and dominant landlords. Hence cruelties against them were of the nature of a class war as the interest of the two did not coincide and class contradictions had become more than manifest. The issues behind these happenings were struggle for minimum wages, occupancy rights for the sharecroppers and a challenge to the absolute feudal power of the landlords. Therefore, such atrocities (class war) could be against the non-SCs proletariat, the backward castes and even against the poor intermediate and upper castes proletariat.²⁸

²⁸Sinha, A. 1977, "Bihar : Violence Against the Poor", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XII, No. 15, April 8, pp. 2037-40.

Table - 7

Caste Violence in Bihar

Place	Aggressor		Victim		Issues
	Caste	Economic Status	Caste	Economic Status	
1. Bajitpur	Bhumihar	Landlord	Harijans	Agriculture labourers and sharecroppers	Wage, sharecroppers right over land.
2. Belchi	Kurmi	Landlord	All caste	Poor peasants, Agricultural labourers and sharecroppers	Social Oppression
3. Beniapatti	Kurmi	Landlord	Harijans	Agricultural Labourers	Wage
4. Bishrampur	Kurmi	Landlord	Harijans	Agricultural Sharecroppers	Wage, Sharecroppers right
5. Chandadano	Kurmi	Landlord	Harijans	Agricultural Labourers	Wage
6. Dharampuri	Brahmin	Landlord	Harijans	Agricultural Labourers and Share croppers	Wage and Sharecroppers right
7. Dohija	Yadav	All class	Bhumihar	Poor peasant and one big landlord	Retaliation
8. Gopalpur	Kurmi	Landlord	Harijans	Agricultural labourers	Wage
9. Jarpa	Bhumihar	Landlord	Yadav	Poor peasants and Sharecroppers	Land dispute
10. Kalia	Kurmi	Landlord	Harijans	Agricultural labourer	Wage
11. Khijuria	Brahmin	Landlord	Harijans	Sharecroppers	Sharecroppers right
12. Parasbigha	Brahmin	Landlord	Yadav	Sharecroppers	Sharecroppers right
13. Pathada	Yadav	Landlord	Harijans	Agricultural labourers	Wage
14. Pipra	Kurmi	Landlord	Harijans	Agricultural labourers	Wage
15. Pupri	Kurmi	Landlord	Harijans	Agricultural labourers	Wage of possession over land

Source : Dhar, Hiranmay, "Bihar : Caste and Class Tangle", Frontier, Vol. 12, No. 38, May 17, 1980

Recent Tiskhora massacre near Patna during Laloo Yadav's first term in which goons hired by Yadav landlords killed 11 SCs²⁹. It shows that SCs are more exploited by Yadav, Kurmi backwards than upper castes.

Patterns of Social Mobility

The schedule castes suffer today not only because of the imposed social and cultural disabilities but perhaps much more because of the imbalances created by the emergence of structural differentiation within them due to the policies and plans undertaken ostensibly for their uplift and welfare. The differential benefits received by the schedule castes is a major reason for these continuing inequalities.³⁰ I.P. Desai observes that "The system of reservations, even though introduced the state, has now become a weapon in the hands of the various deprived groups in their struggle against socially entrenched upper castes and upper class interests".³¹ The upper castes and classes want to maintain social and economic *status quo* under the cover of seemingly progressive ideology and demand that 'merit' and not 'caste' should be the determining factor in higher education, jobs promotions, etc.

²⁹India Today, April 30, 1995, pp. 54-55.

³⁰Sharma, K.L. 1994, Social Stratification and Mobility, Jaipur and Delhi : Rawat Publications, p. 243.

³¹Quoted in Sharma, K.L., 1994, Social Stratification and Mobility, op. cit., p. 249.

K. Mukherji while analysing the peasant revolt in Bhojpur district of Bihar observes that *izzat* (dignity) and *Uncheneeche Jaat Kat Sanghrush* (upper-lower caste conflict) are the two main causes of bitterness between the upper and lower castes and class people. Mukherji enumerates below main reasons of the Bhojpur situation. (1) Dehumanization of the lower castes; (2) Rampant sexual tyranny perpetuated by the upper castes on lower caste women; (3) The pride of Bhumihars; (4) Challenge to the privileges enjoyed by the Bhumihars. Some of the previledges included not to allow the untouchables to sit in their presence and to pertrate sexual tyranny on the lower caste woman.³² Movement for creation of Jharkhand State for the adivasis and slogans like "*Harijanistan lar ke leinge*" (we will fight for a state for Harijans) are expressions of the oppression and sufferings of the SCs and advasis at the hands of dominant castes/classes in Bihar.³³

Caste Background of Major Cabinet Ministries Since Independence

After independence, the Congress party appeared to behave like a 'monolith' over the opposition. Its rivals on the left were weakened by splits in their ranks. During the elections of 1952, 1957 and 1962, the Congress won large

³²Mukherji, K., 1979, "Peasant revolt in Bhojpur", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XIII, No. 34, August 26, pp. 1536-1539.

³³Sharma, K.L., 1994, op. cit., p. 252.

numbers of seats with 41 to 45 per cent of the popular vote. Opposition was weak as it had a legacy of freedom struggle and nationalist leadership. The opposition is highly fragmented. Sri Krishna Sinha, who first served as Chief Minister between 1937 and 1939, was Chief Minister after independence from the foundation of the first Congress Ministry in 1946 until his death in 1961.³⁴

The party organisation was infested by factional conflicts due to caste-based alliances dominated by the Bhumihars under the leadership of Sri Krishna Sinha on the one side and Anugarh Narain Sinha led another block as a Rajput leader. Sinha was an associate of Gandhiji, conflict between this two major factions was intense. And when the conflict went out of control, towering national figures like Maulana Azad and Jawahar Lal Nehru intervened as mediators. After the death of Anugarh Narain Sinha in 1957 his son Satyendra Narain Sinha rose as the Rajput leader. The death of Sri Krishna Sinha in 1961 resulted into the emergence of his lieutenant Mahesh Prasad Sinha as his successor as none of the rival contenders for power proved strong enough to sustain a majority coalition across caste and factional lines. "The leadership of the party thus became a function of coalescence brought about in the style of a musical-chair game against the caste-based factions of

³⁴Frankel, Francine R. 1980, "Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar", in Rao, M.S.A. (ed.), Dominance and State Power in Modern India (Decline of Social Order), Vol. I, Bombay : Oxford University Press, p. 82.

the party".³⁵

Nevertheless, the upper castes were still able to close ranks for preventing due to the rise of a low caste Chief Minister. In 1963 when a Brahmin Chief Minister Binodanand Jha was suddenly forced to step down (under the Kamraj Plan), he sponsored as his successor, Bir Chand Patel, a Kurmi, who were then alligned with the Rajput group. Since it deemed almost unpalatable amongst the so-called "prominent castes" to accept a member of a Backward Caste as their leader, the Bhumihars, Rajputs and Kayasthas suddenly combined to support the candidacy of K.B. Sahay, a Kayastha, who formed the government in 1963.³⁶

The Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumihars and Kayasthas were sufficiently powerful in the constituencies to preserve their dominant position in the Congress party at the state level. In 1957, more than 44 per cent of the Congress members in Bihar Legislative Assembly came from these caste groups. In 1962, this proportion, was over 43 per cent, and it hardly changed compared to earlier elections.³⁷

Powerful faction leaders were also reluctant to leave the Congress because of its apparent invincibility at the polls. Apart from their strong base among the upper castes,

³⁵Prasad, R.C. 1976, "Bihar, Social Polarisation and Political Instability", in Iqbal Narain (ed.), State Politics in India, Meerut : Meenakshi Prakashan, p. 53.

³⁶Jha, C. 1967, "Caste in Bihar Politics", in Narain, I. (ed.), State Politics in India, op. cit., pp. 579-580.

³⁷Ibid., p. 583.

congress leaders enjoyed a virtual monopoly over two important 'vote banks', (1) the scheduled castes, and (2) the Muslims. The Ahir/Yadava caste groups derived the greatest benefit from the introduction of universal suffrage. In some constituencies, their numbers accounted for 25 per cent to 35 per cent of the electorate, sufficient to determine the outcome of elections to the Legislative Assembly. This new source of power boosted both their social position and political standing. Although the upper castes never recognised the claims of Yadavas for having Kshatriya ritual status, violent attacks on Ahirs who donned the sacred thread that were common before independence, stopped after independence. Moreover, in 1957 and 1962, the upper Shudras accounted for about 22 per cent of the members of ruling Congress Legislative Party. They were in addition a growing minority of the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee, constituting 20 per cent of the membership in 1955.³⁸

In a speech in 1963, K.B. Sahay marked a new departure in Bihar politics by mentioning that Sushil Kumar Bage, a Schedule Tribe MLA was his 'right hand' and Ram Lakhan Singh Yadava as his 'left hand'. Sahay clearly revealed by the composition of his cabinet, cut in the members of the Forward castes by 10 per cent, and increased the share of upper backwards to 20 per cent, who were less than 10 per

³⁸Roy, R. 1970, op. cit., p. 248.

cent earlier and the forward were 50% of the cabinet.

Mahamaya Prasad Sinha, the Congress defector, convened rebel Congressmen from several states to form the Bhartiya Kranti Dal (BKD) in May 1967, became Chief Minister of Bihar. Karpoori Thakur became Deputy Chief Minister. The overall caste composition of Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (SVD) party was not much different than that of the 1962 Congress Legislature Party. Forward caste MLAs maintained their dominant position by having 47 per cent and the upper backwards modestly improved their strength from 23.9 per cent to 25.9 per cent.³⁹ There was, however, one striking difference. Whereas the Yadava representation had previously trailed behind that of each of the twice-born castes, in 1967, Yadavas emerged as the second largest caste group after the Rajputs.

At the outset, the Yadavas found that caste composition of Mahamaya Prasad Sinha's cabinet was unacceptable to them. M.P. Sinha not only held the backwards at 20 per cent, but he increased the representation of the forward castes to 67%, beyond their proportionate strength.⁴⁰ During 1967-71, Bihar experienced nine coalition ministries and three periods of president's rule obsessed by the political chaos caused by defections

³⁹Blair, Harry W. 1980, "Rising Kulaks and Backward Classes in Bihar", Economic and Political Weekly, January 12, p. 68.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 69

and counter-defections, numbering in hundreds, the new bargaining power of the upper backwards in getting a larger share of ministerial posts suddenly went up.⁴¹

On February 1, 1968, B.P. Mandal became Chief Minister and his ministry lasted just for 47 days, but it represented more than a symbolic breakthrough for the backward classes. The Congress decision to support Mandal's Shoshit Dal alienated influential Congressmen and consequently that sixteen dissidents left the party and formed the Loktantrik Congress Dal. This defection was crucial in defeating the Shosit Dal - Congress alliance on a no-confidence motion. The SVD government sworn in on 22 March 1968 was not led by Binodanand Jha, the Brahmin ex-chief Minister whose Loktantrik Congress Dal had helped unseat the Mandal government. Jha remained behind the scene and manipulated for his own man, Bhola Paswan Shastri, a Harijan, for the post of Chief Minister. But Shastri submitted his resignation, just after 96 days. But this resulted into a beginning of the Forward-scheduled caste alignment against the Backward Classes.⁴²

Congress once again emerged as the single largest party. Kayastha, Rajput and Bhumihar faction leader overcame their differences for restoring the rule by the forwards. Harihar Singh, a Rajput, who formed another

⁴¹Frankel, Francine R., op. cit., p. 99.

⁴²Ibid.

coalition ministry could not satisfy the backwards as the composition of his cabinet showed the Forwards 42 per cent of the berths for the Forwards much more than their share of 24 per cent of Assembly seats. In less than four months, Harihar Singh Ministry was defeated after 'violent dissensions among the coalition partners and rival factions within the congress occurred over the distribution of ministerial offices and allocation of portfolios. Once again, Bholu Paswan Shastri, held power for eleven days only.⁴³

The split in the National Congress Party, in November 1969 created new opportunities for the backward classes. Mrs. Gandhi's Congress (R) under the leadership of Daroga Prasad Rai Yadava, received the support of Brahmins from among the Forwards and formed the new government. MLAs from the backward classes and the Scheduled Castes became special objects of attention. The aspirations of the Yadavas soared when Daroga Rai appointed Backward Classes Commission to make recommendations for reservations in educational institutions and governmental services for members of other backward classes⁴⁴

Daroga Prasad Rai, reduced sharply representation of the Forwards in his cabinet to 33 per cent, and held the upper backwards at 20 per cent. The Scheduled Castes and

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 100.

Schedule Tribes, who had remained almost unrepresented were raised to 33 percent in 1970.⁴⁵

The Congress leadership, however paid very little attention to continuing disaffection. Once Congress restored majority in the 1972 elections, it restored the control of the government to the upper castes, especially the Brahmins. Kedar Pandey, a Brahmin, who became Chief Minister, accommodated the aggressive backwards, also raised the representation of the Forwards at the same time, Muslims, Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes were also adequately adjusted. In 1973, Abdul Gaffor, a Muslim, succeeded Kedar Pandey as Chief Minister. Both Pandey and Gaffor kept the upper backwards at 23 per cent, while the Forwards secured 38 per cent dominant. Muslims, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, augmented by a few lower backwards, made up the remainder in 1973.⁴⁶

When in 1975, Jagannath Mishra became the Chief Minister, the impression grew stronger that the government of Bihar was managed and controlled by Brahmins. Mishra followed the strategy of his predecessors in strengthening the position of the Forwards in his ministry from 23 to 40 per cent, containing the backwards at 20%, and building up the representation of Muslims, 13 per cent and SCs and STs,

⁴⁵Blair, Harry W. 1980, op. cit., p. 69.

⁴⁶Frankel, Francine R. 1989, op. cit., p. 101.

27 per cent.⁴⁷

In 1977, in the election for Bihar legislature Janta Party secured enjoyed two-third majority. Karpoori Thakur a lower backward caste leader became the Chief Minister of Bihar. Caste feelings were inflamed by the composition of Thakur's ministry. The Forward Castes still accounted for over 29 per cent of MLAs compared to 23.5 per cent for the upper Backwards. Yet Karpoori Thakur Constituted a Cabinet in which the Forwards were reduced to 29 per cent, and for the first time Backwards gained the predominant position at 38 per cent ministries in the cabinet. Although representation of Muslims was held steady at 13 per cent, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were reduced to 17 per cent of Cabinet Posts⁴⁸

On 19 April, 1979, Karpoori Thakur was defeated by 30 votes on a no-confidence motion after SCs MLAs loyal to Jagjivan Ram joined the Forwards of the Jan Sangh to topple the government. The successor Janta Government headed by Ram Sunder Das, a SCs, restored the Forwards to their strong position in State Government as they received 50 per cent of ministerial posts, while the backwards were pushed back to 20 per cent⁴⁹

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 104.

⁴⁸Blair, Harry W. 1980, op. cit., p. 69.

⁴⁹Ibid.

The position after 1980 when the Forwards were restored to Power in the state situation appeared much the same as it was in the mid-1960s. Jagannath Mishra again became the Chief Minister. In this ministry the Forwards received 44 per cent of ministerial posts. While the upper backwards pushed back to 12 per cent and the lower backwards enjoyed 6 percent. Muslims received 19 per cent, highest so far since 1963, and the SCs and the STs got 19 per cent seats. Jagannath Mishra is considered whether inside or outside of office as the most powerful figure in Congress (I). In 1983, he was forced to step down to allow Chandra Sekhar Singh, a Rajput, to become Chief Minister. In his ministry the Forwards maintained their previous strength (44%), the upper backwards enjoyed 18% (6% more than Jagannath Mishra's ministry), the lower backward received 6%, Muslims 19% and SCs and STs 12%.

Jagannath Mishra prevailed upon again after the 1985 elections in having his candidate, Bindeshwari Dube, a Brahmin as Chief Minister of Bihar. The Forwards maintained their position and received 44% of cabinet posts. The Backwards restored their position as they received 31% of seats, Muslim received 6% SCs and STs 19% ministerial posts.

In 1988, Bhagwat Jha Azad became the Chief Minister. In his ministry the Forwards received had 37 percent ministerial posts, Muslims received 9%, SCs and STs received 27%.

Table - 8

Caste Composition of Major Cabinet Minsters, 1962-95
(Cabinet Ministers Only : Figures are in Percentage)

Category	B.N. Jha 1962	K.B. Sahay 1963	M.P. Sinha 1967	D.P. Rai 1970	Kedar Pandey 1972	Abdul Ghafoor 1973	Jagannath Mishra 1975	Karpoori Thakur 1977	Ram Sunder Das 1979	Jagannath Mishra 1980	Chandra Shekhar Singh 1983	Bindeshwari Dube 1985	B. Jha Azad 1988	L.P. Yadav 1990	L.P. Yadav 1995
Forwards	58	40	67	33	38	38	40	29	50	44	44	44	37	32	16
Upper Backwards	8	20	20	20	23	20	20	38	20	12	18	31	27	35	48
Lower Backwards	0	0	7	0	0	5	0	4	0	6	6	0	0	6	8
Muslims and Bengalis	8	20	7	13	15	10	13	13	15	19	19	6	9	12	8
Scheduled Castes and Tribes	25	20	0	33	23	24	27	17	15	19	12	19	27	15	20

In 1990 Laloo Prasad Yadava became the Chief Minister. In his cabinet Forwards received 32% ministerial seats, after Karpoori Thakur, the Backward Castes for first time tasted the fruit of political power, and it made them conscious of their representation in the Council of Ministers as received 35% posts. The Lower backwards received 6%, Muslims 12%, and SCs and STs 15%.

Again when Laloo Prasad Yadava became Chief Minister on April 3, 1995. Janata Dal reassured its hold over power by ensuring supreme power to the Yadavas. Janata Dal won 160 seats out of 324 seats, and of these 64 seats have been won by Yadavas. P.K. Sinha, a senior leader of the Samta Party says : "Under Laloo, Society's polarisation along caste lines is now complete".⁵⁰ In the latest ministry formation the Forwards hence received just 16% ministerial posts, Upper backwards have been given 48%, Lower backward 8%. Muslims received 8 percent and SCs and STs 20%.

These changes have occurred due to the introduction of adult suffrage, land reforms, panchayati raj, green revolution, reservation etc. Now the Backwards have become more conscious about their representation. The impact of land reforms and green revolution have paved a way for the formation of a middle class among the backward castes. Politician has led them to positions of power and authority.

⁵⁰India Today, April 30, 1995.

Middle class is constituted of Yadavas, Kurmis and Koiris. They are the beneficiaries of developmental programmes initiated by government. These groups are now not only economically strong, they are the contenders for positions of power. Upper caste dominance has been challenged by these upper backward castes. As a result political power has considerably shifted from the upper castes to the upper backward castes. The upper backwards in general, and the Yadavas in particular, dominate the power-politics in Bihar. The emergence of Laloo Yadava proves that the backwards are not so backward politically.

The Emergence of Laloo Yadava

In the Assembly elections held in March 1990, the Janata Dal secured a comfortable majority in Bihar. Laloo Prasad Yadav became the Chief Minister. Initially, he formed 11 member Ministry mainly consisting of his trusted lieutenants. But after the defection of the Chandra Shekhar group at the centre from the V.P. Singh's Janta Dal government. Laloo Prasad Yadava expanded his ministry. 11 Member Cabinet was raised to the strength of 65 ministers which was further extended to 76 members accommodating all his loyal followers as well as potential dissidents. However, six ministers did not take the oath for various reasons.⁵¹. So the number of cabinet ministers shoot upto 33 and of ministers of state to 30. Among the expanded

⁵¹Telegraph, Calcutta, 16 December, 1990.

members 17 were Yadavas and 9 were Rajputs. The representation of others castes and communities was : Muslims 7, Brahmin 5, Bhumihars 3, Scheduled Castes and others 9. Thus supremacy of Yadavas was further reinforced.

The advent of Laloo Prasad Yadav brought a different type of power-politics particularly during his first tenure as Chief Minister. His expansion mania earned him a notorious place in the history of ministry-making.

Again, Laloo Prasad Yadav was sworn as Chief Minister on 3 April, 1995. If Bihar is to be seen in the context of the continuing shift of political power to the weaker sections of the people, this process may accelerate in Bihar with the entrenchment of the OBCs into the positions of power⁵².

Laloo Prasad Yadava has demonstrated beyond any doubt that his influence in Bihar has remained as solid as when he assumed office five years ago.⁵³

Laloo Yadav has cultivated a pro-poor image. The Bihar leader has effectively exploited his rusticity and buffoonery to project himself as the people' leader. His style and idiom, condemning the upper castes has through - offended the traditional elite but has endeared him to a vast mass of people who constitute his constituency⁵⁴

⁵²Telegraph, 6th December, 1990.

⁵³Indian Express, New Delhi, 1 April, 1995.

⁵⁴Indian Express, New Delhi, 3 April, 1995.

Janta Dal's victory is "Victory of Social Justice forces". But except for his "Charwaha Vidyalayas", "rain baseras" Laloo has done little for Bihar's downtrodden backwards and Dalits in actual terms. But he has only given a voice to the backwards and Dalits.

The results clearly indicate that the 32% of smaller backwards castes and bulk of the dalits voted for the Janta Dal, rejecting the Samata party alternative simply because Laloo managed to identify himself with them⁵⁵.

The Kurmis and the Koiris who were the mainstay of Samata Party, have not been happy with Laloo because they want a larger share in power in the state. But they do not obviously feel humiliated by him as do the Upper Castes, who are now divested of power. In the backward versus backward scenario, they feel more comfortable with Laloo than with a Nitish Kumar backed by upper castes, who have ruled Bihar for last forty years.

Conclusion

In general, there is a perception about Bihar that in recent years the state has passed through a phase of misrule and the worst form of caste-politics. Bihar is no doubt a constellation of contradictions and confusions. Its contribution to the mineral resources of the country is highest. Industrialisation is quite substantial. But per capita income is lowest in the country. The state of Bihar

⁵⁵Indian Express, New Delhi, 31 March, 1995.

is also behind a large number of other states in most other fields. The main reason attributed to this backwardness is the worst form of power-politics played through the vulgar game of inter-caste divisions, rivalries and feuds. It comes out clearly in the analysis presented in this chapter. Power politics today has the Forwards, the Backwards, Muslims, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes as the main actors. It is also very clear that the Forwards have received a serious setback in the recent past, and the upper backwards have come to the centre-stage. The lower backwards are though numerically quite strong, yet they are much behind in the power game in relation to the upper backwards. The benefits of higher education and reservations in government jobs have mainly gone to the upper backwards. The middle castes have thus become politically strong replacing the upper castes from the positions of power. The Scheduled Castes, as it is evident from many studies and reports, suffer from oppression and atrocities perpetrated by the upper castes and the upper backwards. The Scheduled Tribes remain an exploited lot particularly at the hands of *dikkus*. The Muslims suffer from minority complex and economic and educational backwardness. This is how one can explain and understand the emergence of the rule of the upper backwards, particularly under the leadership of the present Chief Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadava.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Conventionally, Power is considered as one of the many determinants of social status. Max Weber was the first one to define power along with class and social honour as man's ability to control other's actions and behaviour even against their resistant. As such power, as perceived by Max Weber, was an individual phenomenon, and logically speaking, power of a social group would mean an aggregation of power wielded by its members. Such a definition of power may not explain power as a social phenomenon independent of individuals. Talcott Parsons defines power as a generalized aspect of society and he considers it functional to the integration of society. Hence, power is not only a social phenomenon, it is relative in nature. Power is not a zero-sum game or monolithic as C. Wright Mills argues out.

Power is determined by means and relations of production form Marxian point of view. It becomes in this way a super-structural phenomenon like religion, art, culture, science etc. But according to Marx, power is a social phenomenon, a societal bye-product. There is another view according to which power determines other social phenomena, 'namely', relations concerning class and culture.

We have discussed in the first chapter of the

dissertation the concept of power and some allied concepts. We come to the view that power is a relative phenomena, a relational concept in a limited sense, and it is also an encompassing phenomenon. Keeping these definitional points, we have discussed mainly four approaches to the study of power, 'namely', Functional, Marxian, Elite theory, and Pluralist approach. These four approaches seem to be exclusive in nature. They basically explain power as a social phenomenon in terms of social cohesion, control and regulation of society, social diversification and asymmetry of social relations. In fact, power in real life implies practice or exercise of ones strength and ability acquired either individually or socially.

The second chapter of the dissertation aims at the understanding of relationship between power and society in India with specific focus on nature and social background of political leadership. It is evident from historicity of Indian Society that power was never absolute, because the ruler was not the rule-maker. The rule making was clearly distinguished from the ruling. Theoretically speaking, it was devised to check arbitrariness on the part of the ruler, and in principle the rule-maker was superior to the ruler. This clear hierarchical and functional division could be seen in terms of the functions assigned to the Brahmin and the Kshatriya. Dumont refers this arrangement as the '*prescriber*' and the '*perscribed*', and the former

encompasses the latter.

The situation in the medieval period can be characterised by weakening of the Brahminical hegemony and the rule of the Kshatriya. The Muslim warriors became rulers, and the vassals of the Muslim's King became powerful. A new vocabulary signifying elitist status of new categories of people, emerged replacing the traditional power hierarchy. The systems of 'Jagirdari' and 'Mansabdari' created new hierarchies of political and economic power.

The British replaced the Mughal feudalistic power relations by introducing major structural changes like a new system of education, centralised administration, modern army, networks of transport and communication and Science and technology which altered the medieval monarchical feudal system of relationship. The British created 'power brokers' in the form of Zamindars who were intermediaries between the actual tillers of land and the British rulers. Structural changes also created a new class of people who were educated, professionally trained and technologically knowledgeable. Such a process of transformation widened the base of power and administrative elite in India. This also enhanced the participation of people in the new arrangements introduced by the raj.

The net result of the raj in India was the emergence of a new power structure. The raj created no doubt, the new

structures, but it also generated contradictions which were unforeseen earlier. Caste, religion, family, etc. became weak and less effective on the one hand, and they became strong on the other as the raj wanted to keep them intact in its own interests. As a result one finds traditional and modern forms of values, norms and practices side by side. Traditional and modern power elite co-existed and the modern ones at times could work only with the active and willing support of the traditional power elite.

However leaders and power elite in colonial India could be seen more in terms of diversification of their social base. How this base has persisted after independence? What is the link between the pre and post independent power-structure? How the traditional and modern leaders and power elite have reconciled with each other? These questions and some other points have been discussed in the second part of this chapter.

The most complex question today is regarding the role of caste in Indian politics. The state of Bihar is the most appropriate arena for understanding the play of caste politics. Before we analyse the Bihar's situation let us have a glance at the concept of dominant caste. The concept of dominant caste as given by Srinivas as a group phenomenon is contradicted by other scholars as they argue that dominance is a multi-layered and multi-level phenomenon. Dominance resides also very much in family and

individual. There are some who retain power and there are some others who exercise power. Caste dominance has diffused with the weakening of the traditional caste hierarchy. Caste dominance is determined by both interactional and attributional criteria. Intra-caste differentiation has increased. Macro-structural factors such as land reforms adult franchise, industrialisation, migration, etc., have changed the rural power structure. Reservation for jobs has also weakened the dominance of the upper caste. How all these points can explain the understanding of the present day situation in Bihar is a question which we have discussed in the next chapter.

Bihar is perhaps the only state in which caste divisions have been transformed into such social alignments that correspond with power blocs. The upper castes, 'namely' Brahmin, Bhumihar, Rajput and Kaystha who just constitute 13 per cent of the state population are mentioned as the Forwards. The Bania, Yadav, Kurmi and Koieri were little more than 19 per cent and are referred as the *upper backwards*.

There are other castes such as Barhi, Dhanuk, Kahar, Hazam, Kumahar, Lohar, etc. which are considered as lower backwards and constitute 32 per cent of the total population. The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and the Muslims form other three social and political blocs and altogether constitute about 36 per cent of Bihar's

population. These social divisions are in fact interest groups and power division. The division between these categories is not simply taxonomic, it is found practised in everyday life. In this way Bihar becomes a distinct social political formation compared to other states of Indian Union.

Due to historical reasons such as Zamindari system and early impact of the English education, judiciary and administration of the raj, the upper castes occupied strong and higher positions in Bihar. Their superior status remained uninterrupted even after independence as they controlled substantial landholdings and monopolised white collar lucrative jobs. Their representation in political party and State Legislatives and Parliament is much more than their numerical strength than Bihar's populations. The Backward castes could not tolerate such a situation for a long. The first major setback to the hegemony of the upper castes in Bihar could be seen in the defeat of the Congress Party in the elections of 1967. It is well-known that the Congress Party was dominated by the upper castes not only in Bihar, but also in most of other States of the country. The second setback can be seen in the emergence of the late Karpoori Thakur as the Chief Minister of Bihar, who belonged to the category of the lower backwards. In the post-emergency era under the leadership of the late Jayprakash Narayan, young men and women particularly from

the backward sections received a boost and encouragement. Laloo Prasad Yadava has his political origin as a student leader as a follower of J.P.'s ideology and movement during the Janata rule in the late Seventies.

The revival of the demand for reservation of jobs for the Other Backward Castes' (OBCs) and the weakening of the Congress Party after 1984, the year of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination, mark the third phase of the political strengthening of the OBC's. Laloo Prasad Yadav emerges as the leader of the backwards more or less undisputed one. His continuance as the Chief Minister for the second time speaks of his hold on the OBCs as a power bloc. All the OBCs put together a little more than 51 per cent of the total population of Bihar. This provides him a solid social base to become an active and vibrant political actor.

Situation as it exists today in Bihar creates doubts about the effectiveness of the factors such as education and economic standing because narrow caste, subcaste and clan loyalties and networks have marred their impact considerably. Creation of social alignments and the transformation into power blocs alone can explain the present political scenario in Bihar. A more or less similar experiment has been undertaken by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). The main goal of the BSP is to seek empowerment of the lower castes and depressed sections as they are numerically preponderant and form a majority. After

empowerment other developments including education can follow. Empowerment is such an instrument that it can alone facilitate socio-economic development and awakening among the people.

The present situation in Bihar, however, raises several questions. The Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Muslims do not make a unified power bloc. They remain disenchanted. Politically, they remain alienated and socially and economically their backwardness persists. The lower backwards, though form a majority, do not significantly share power with the upper backwards. Similarly some of the upper backwards such as Bania, Kurmi and Koiri, share much less power than the Yadvas. We have discussed these and all other related issues in the third chapter.

Social mobility could be seen in terms of the white collar jobs, now available to the backwards, which were earlier cornered by the upper castes. Social background of legislators and Ministers which is another indicator of social mobility. Today, Legislature and Parliament are dominated by the backwards. The backwards have gained power and now power is not a patronage given to them by the upper caste. Political mobilisation along social alignments is the key to the political power of the backward castes.

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