

**DYNAMICS OF CASTE POLITICS IN U.P.
PANCHAYATS:
A CASE STUDY OF MEERUT DISTRICT. 1992-1997**

**Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru
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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "DYNAMICS OF CASTE POLITICS IN U.P. PANCHAYATS: A CASE STUDY OF MEERUT DISTRICT. 1992-1997", submitted by SUJAY VARDHAN BHAL in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University. This is his own work.

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


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INTRODUCTION

The present study is an attempt to look into the dynamics of democratic development and social change in a district when they are undertaken by the State through the institution of Panchayats. The basic object of this study is to see what are the likely results of State's intervention in the process of democratic development and social change.

The economic development of the country has not been the singular most important goal of the State in India after independence. Rather, the entire process of nation-building has been undertaken by the 'new State'. This has both its positive and negative aspects. If, on the one hand, the State provides the required pull to bring the nation together in a highly plural society, on the other hand, the society starts assuming that the responsibilities of nation-building and nation's development belong solely to the state. This feeling makes the people passive, dependent upon state for every big or small task, and uninvolved with the responsibility of nation-building. Furthermore, and more importantly, when this 'new state' in an old society applies pull to bring the nation together, the society or parts thereof react in many ways. In a society like India usually no step taken by the state in the direction of social change goes without attracting at least some kind of protest and resistance. This is especially the case when state tries to address the more basic issues like the socio-economic inequalities in the Indian society. Although, inequalities are there in plenty in the Indian society but some of them like the ones based on the caste system are institutionalised inequalities. The caste system is also a product of the relations of production which give it a class character as well.

An attempt to address the socio-economic inequalities of the Indian society has been made by the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992, which has brought about fundamental changes in the character of Panchayati Raj in India by according constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This move is likely to have far reaching implications. On the one hand, it makes Indian federalism more broad-based and on the other hand, entrusts the common masses in the villages of India with the task of undertaking developmental activities with the assistance of state but without losing confidence in their own capabilities. However, like many other policies of the Indian state, the new Panchayati Raj Act also does not limit itself to the task of economic development only. It also intends to address to the twin issues of democratic development and social change. It is with this intention that the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, through its Article 243-D provides for the reservation of seats and offices of chairpersons to the weaker sections of society like the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Women.

Caste being the central point of Indian society's structure no basic social change can take place without touching the institution of caste in one way or the other. The changing equations of castes at the societal level have their essential bearings on the political equations also. The present study proposes to look into these changing political equations of castes in a district (Meerut) of Uttar Pradesh after the implementation of Article 243-D of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992. The basic premise of this study is that the intervention by the State in the process of social change to effect democratic development attracts

reaction from different sections of society. In the case of the entrenched sections of society this reaction is primarily guided by their class interests and status consciousness, whereas in the case of the deprived but mobility aspiring sections of society this reaction is manifested in the rising levels of political consciousness and higher degrees of assertion. Both together influence the dynamics of politics which after the initial friction leads to the realisation of the goal of social change for greater democratisation of attitudes.

The present study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter discusses the evolution of Panchayati Raj in India as well as in the State of Uttar Pradesh. The discussion on the evolution of Panchayati Raj in India focuses upon:

- (i) the continuities and changes in the age old Panchayat system of India and the modern Panchayati Raj as we know it today;
- (ii) the debate between the Anglo-American concept of centralised administration and the Gandhian idea of 'Panchayati Raj becoming the basis of Indian polity and, how the 'former' was preferred over the latter;
- (iii) the shift in the focus from centralisation to decentralisation during 1950s when the policy-makers and administrators realised the need to involve people with the task of nation building; and
- (iv) the process of decentralisation as it has taken place during all these years since mid-1950s culminating into the enactment of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992.

The discussion on the evolution of Panchayati Raj in Uttar Pradesh mainly revolves around the State's experience with Panchayati Raj during the

pre-independence and post-independence India until the passage of U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994.

The second chapter attempts to critically analyse the provisions of the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 especially its Article 243-D. This Act is considered to be a watershed in the evolution of Panchayati Raj in India. This Act accords constitutional status to the PRIs and also devolves more powers to the PRIs to increase their viability. The Article 243-D of this Act, which is also the focus of this study, enhances the importance of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 itself as this Article expands the concerns of the Act to include social change and democratic development along with decentralisation and empowerment.

The third chapter discusses the dynamics of caste politics in the State of Uttar Pradesh after independence. This chapter provides a backdrop to the dynamics of caste politics in the villages of Meerut district that we will discuss in the fourth and final chapter of this study. The third and fourth chapters collectively try to present a closer view of caste politics in U.P. We find that the basic tendencies are more or less same - both in the state politics and in the district - only their manifestations are different. The third chapter is also divided into two parts. The first part discusses caste politics in U.P. roughly between 1960s and late 1980s. This was the period when the nature of U.P. politics underwent marked changes due to the mobilisation of middle peasant castes in the U.P. society as an aftermath of Green Revolution. The second part of this chapter deals with caste politics in U.P. in the decade of 1990s as it has unfolded till 1997. The politics of U.P. has once again changed its complexion

in the decade of 1990s. The magnitude of this change is comparable with the upheavals in the state politics during 1960s. The current phase is broadly attributable to the mobilisation of the lowest strata of caste hierarchy in the state and the realignment of caste equations following this mobilisation. The importance of this mobilisation lies in the fact that it is for the first time in U.P. that landless castes are asserting themselves. In a state like U.P. where the fundamental issues like land-reforms have been neglected, perhaps intentionally due to the dominance of land owning castes in the power structure, this assertion means greater friction in society and increasing competition in the politics.

The fourth and the last chapter of this study deals with the dynamics of caste politics in those villages of Meerut district where the offices of Pradhan have been reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Backward Classes in pursuance of Article 243-D (4) and (6). The basic assumption behind selecting these two sub-clauses, to discuss the nature of caste politics in village Panchayats, is that when the key position of the Pradhan of village Panchayat, which was a privilege of land owning castes till now, is reserved for certain castes, the hitherto entrenched castes are bound to react. This chapter attempts to find out the patterns of this reaction and its consequences.

The fourth chapter is primarily based upon the analysis of secondary data of April 1995 village Panchayat elections in Meerut district. However, to test the actual working of caste equations in the villages with reserved offices of Pradhan for the Scheduled Castes and the Backward Classes, interviews were conducted in eight villages of two Blocks namely Uldepur, Sikhera,

MEERUT-DISTRICT



Datawali and Chilaura of Rajpura Block and Pavli Khas, Sivaya Jamnullapur, Mavimira and Kheri Tappa Lavar of Daurala Block of Meerut district. Out of these villages Datawali, Chilaura, Pavali Khas and Mavimira had a Pradhan belonging to the Backward Classes and the other four villages had a Scheduled Caste Pradhan.

CHAPTER-1

Evolution of Panchayats in India

(A)

Evolution of Panchayats in India

Commenting on Rural-Local-Self-Government (RLSG) in India, Henry Maddick writes 'much is lost in obscurity and what is not obscure has frequently acquired a patina of nostalgic respectability'.¹ A very common understanding of Panchayat system - the traditional form of RLSG in India - has been that it is known to India ever since the dawn of civilisation in the Indo-Gangetic plains; Panchayat means a body of five representing the will of a village society; a Panchayat governed the life of a village and turned the village into a 'happy small republic'; and, impressed by the functioning of Panchayats and their importance in the village life, first the British and then the democracy and development oriented post-colonial state in India revived and revitalised the Panchayat system.

However, now 'it is perhaps a necessity to get rid of this notion that the forms of Western democratic communities, or anything really akin to them, were in operation in the Indian village community.'² It is also needed to be cautious 'against a romantic view of the ancient village system especially in relation with the values of equality and democracy'.³

A very common statement about the panchayat system is 'people's institutions bearing various names existed in villages ever since the vedic

¹ Henry Maddick, *Panchayati Raj: A Study of Rural Local Self-Government in India* London, Longman, 1970, p.14.

² John Mathai, *Village Government in British India* Delhi, Neeraj Publishing House, 1983, (Reprint), p.29.

³ George Mathew, *Status of Panchayati Raj in the States of India-1994*, Delhi, Concept, 1995, p.1.

times'.⁴ Indeed every society, in all the ages, irrespective of its level of advancement has had at least some mechanism to govern its life. But every system of governance cannot be termed as local self-government. Local self-government is a relative term holding good only against the backdrop of a larger system of governance. It is different from both the local government as well as the self-governance. The basic rationale of local-self-government is to recognise the autonomy of people to take care of their day-to-day affairs while the larger state administration concentrates upon the broader issues and policy matters. This system is also viewed as an instrument to strengthen the roots of democracy in a society for this system helps people identify themselves with the democratic functioning. During the Vedic period, for a reasonably long time there existed 'assemblies'⁵ to govern the socio-economic and political life of society. Those assemblies were, of course, chosen by the respective tribes of Vedic people gradually moving towards a sedentary life from a pastoral one, but they were surely not the local-self-government bodies as the concept of a central government was yet to come into being. Thus, it should not be undue to propose that: (i) vedic assemblies were simply the institutions of self-government ; (ii) self-government is not something peculiar to India. Therefore, any mistaken view of self-government and the local-self-government cannot become the basis of tracing the genesis of RLSG in India.

The first indubitable evidence of top down yet local-self-government comes from the inscriptions discovered from South India especially from the

⁴ Surat Singh, "Status of Panchayati Raj in Uttar Pradesh", *Journal of Rural Development*, January 1991, p. 67.

⁵ Sabha and Samiti were the assemblies which governed the lives of vedic people. A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, Delhi, Rupa & Co., 1996, p. 33. Basham accepts Sabha and Samiti only as 'tribal councils'.

Uttarmerur village of Chingleput district of Tamilnadu, which belongs to the dynasty of Cholas (9th-11th century A.D.).⁶ According to the Archaeological Survey of India Report for 1904-05 'the system (Uttarmerur type) must have been in operation in thousands of other villages whose names and exact number await discovery by future researches'.⁷

As the origins of village panchayat system in India and its exact nature are obscure so is the origin of its nomenclature. According to a general perception the ancient village panchayats were a body of five persons in whom was considered to be the abode of God. This reference to five might have been the basis of the nomenclature 'Panchayat'. But there exists no evidence to show that this number was adhered to with any regularity. The term seems to have lost its numerical significance with the passage of time and meant only an association of people performing administrative and judicial functions at the village level.⁸ Quoting from the Punjab Census Report of 1911, John Mathai remarks 'the number five is of frequent occurrence in Indian sacred literature. It seems that the term 'Panchayat' was chosen for its sacred association rather than for any definite numerical indication.'⁹

Another widespread notion about the Panchayat system has been that the Panchayats were of a representative nature. The upholders of this notion tend to see Indian villages as a domain of harmony and a society in total peace. These scholars resist facing the truth that a village also is a collectivity of

⁶ Radhakumud Mukherjee, *Local Government in Ancient India*, London, OUP, 1920, p.306.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ John Mathai, *Op. cit.*, p. 18. In the view of Radhakumud Mukherjee also 'the first characteristic feature of these Indian local bodies is that they are not uniformly composed and constituted'. Radhakumud Mukherjee, *ibid.*, p. 308.

⁹ John Mathai, *ibid.*, p. 18.

human beings no less fallible than those living in the urban centres. Indeed, contrary to their view Indian villages during all the times have had a stricter system of hierarchy logically spelling a deep seated relationship of domination and subordination, greater privileges and harsher disabilities to different societal groups and more of exploitation of man by man. This all has been ensured by a caste based organisation of Indian villages. If a village comprised of more than one caste, which most of the Indian villages generally do, it also meant that there existed more than one Panchayats in the village. These were the panchayats of the 'segmental divisions of society' namely the castes.¹⁰ It was not long back when every caste in the villages of India, functioned as a 'small and complete social world in itself'. The dos and don'ts which govern the interaction between castes also give an internal cohesion to each caste. This internal cohesion was more conducive for separate caste councils called caste panchayats than a regular village panchayat. The writers of the Bombay Census Report (1911) finding numerous traces of caste or professional panchayats but none of the village as a whole, ventured the suggestion that all panchayats have been caste panchayats and the myth of village panchayat has probably arisen out of the idea that a village is generally, if not invariably, formed by several families of a particular caste settling down in one spot.¹¹ These caste panchayats regulated the conduct of the members of respective

¹⁰ G.S. Ghurye, "Features of Caste System" in Dipankar Gupta (ed.), *Social Stratification*, Delhi, OUP, 1987, pp.36-37. According to Ghurye 'The governing body of a caste is called panchayat...in their caste bound society the amount of community feeling must have been restricted and that the citizens owed moral allegiance to their castes first, rather than to the community as a whole'.

¹¹¹ John Mathai, Op. Cit., p.20. However, Sydney Webb believes that in spite of many more evidences of caste panchayats than that of village panchayats the existence of the latter cannot be summarily rejected. Sydney Webb in his preface to John Mathai's book Op. cit.

caste groups. In the event of an inter-caste friction probably the elders of a village community sat together and found out a solution of the given problem. But there are reasons to believe that in all such decisions, the voice of the elders from higher castes weighed heavier than that of the elders from the castes placed lower on the hierarchy scale. Some social groups like untouchables and outcastes, could never think of getting a place, not to say of a place of equality, in such common discussions.

Scholars believing in the existence of something called village panchayat also claim that this body, being reflective of people's will was entitled to govern the day-to-day life of the village. It is for this reason, phrases like 'the supreme authority of the village', 'a highly developed organisation' and 'the absolute proprietor of the village land including the amount of revenue to the government', have been liberally used while describing the village panchayats. However, any form of governance is mainly aimed at (i) co-ordination of different activities in a society; (ii) conflict management; (iii) undertaking the developmental activities. An Indian village has lived through the ages 'without changing its face'. It is a cluster of households belonging to different castes. Most of these households primarily depend upon agriculture and some on the allied activities like artisanship, craftsmanship, small scale trading and the religious services.¹² The agricultural activities include landless field labourers also. Generally, Indian villages needed no police administration as caste hierarchy, religion and for long an insignificant position of private property in land, due to its abundance kept friction at the minimum. Rain-fed

agriculture further strengthened the need of a closer community life - a prominent characteristic of 'typical Asiatic economy'. If at all the security related needs were felt they were dealt with by the village community collectively. Perhaps, judicial administration was the most important task to be undertaken by a panchayat to maintain peace and order in the village. But, this was performed only when the need was felt and no permanent judicial administration at the village level was required for this.

Till the British empire took roots in India, Indian village was not a development-oriented society. Rather, it was an 'idyllic and self-sufficient community'. The socio-economic relations in a village were guided by customs and the need of interdependence, which may be explained by the term 'Jajmani system'. This system demanded no regular administrative body for its running. Only the occasional friction among the 'individual members or groups of this custom bound society called for village people, especially the elders 'getting together, talk and reach a consensus',¹³ to iron out the friction. Hence, it looks quite improbable that Indian villages had any such permanent village body called panchayat at any point of time governing the day-to-day affairs of the village. Panchayats sprang up at once whenever somebody tried to violate the customary law or disturb the tranquility of the village.

Thus, evidentially Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), as we know them today, are a drastically modified version of ancient panchayats, if at all they are their version. The most profound continuity between the two is the similar

¹² Karl Marx calls Indian Village System 'the domestic union of agriculture and manufacturing pursuits'. See Marx's Perception of India, Irfan Habib, *The Marxist*, July-September, 1983, pp.92-143.

nomenclature. Another continuity is village being the focus of both. One more continuity, so to say, may be the all-India nature of both the systems. However, unlike the older panchayats system, the modern PRIs are linked to each other organically in a larger system of RLSG.¹⁴ The modern system of PRIs is strikingly dissimilar to its ancient predecessor in concept, structure, and functioning.¹⁵ First of all, the ancient panchayat system was a community affair whereas, the present one is more related to the state.¹⁶ Second, organisationally the traditional panchayats were informal meetings in which 'ascriptive status' was the token to a prominent position. This status also made an opinion weigh heavier. Unlike these, the modern PRIs are formally organised and well-designed constitutional bodies. The principle of universal adult franchise is the basis of their constitution. The traditional panchayats lacked this representative character which has been acquired by the modern PRIs. Third, in the traditional panchayat system the method of deciding an issue was to meet, talk and take a decision by consensus, whereas the modern system goes by rule-book and any decision is reached upon either by democratic consensus or by division. Fourth, the modern panchayats are in no

¹³ Sir Herbert Risley, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal made a detailed reference to the functions of village panchayats while addressing the Bengal Legislative Council on July 23, 1892. See John Mathai, Op. cit., p.30.

¹⁴ Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress*, Chicago, the University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 162-3.

¹⁵ Many scholars even go to the extent of claiming that 'from the structure and procedure of earlier local-institutions almost nothing has been incorporated into modern local government'. R.C. Khanna, *Panchayati Raj in India*, Ambala, The English Book Depot, 1972, p. 16.

¹⁶ Since its genesis and throughout its evolution the modern panchayat system has been conceived and promoted by the state - earlier by the colonial state interested in reducing the costs of maintaining itself without relaxing the degree of control and then by the post-colonial interventionist state suspended between statism and status quoism. The compulsions of planned development and later on the question of political survival led to the reemphasis upon panchayati raj in independent India.

way caste panchayats.¹⁷ They do not have anything to do with the administration of justice which was the main concern of traditional panchayats. At present this happens to be the domain of Nyaya Panchayats, wherever they exist, or of judiciary. The task of maintaining discipline in the village is also not the responsibility of PRIs and lies with the village society in general. Last, but not the least, the traditional panchayat system was not a development oriented system and at the most it was concerned with managing the village affairs and preserving the social customs, traditions and relations.¹⁸ The modern PRIs are primarily concerned with undertaking developmental activities. Democratic development is also one of the major objectives of modern PRIs.

Historically, local self-government in India, in the sense of an accountable representative institution is the creation of the British.¹⁹ By the middle of the 19th century, the British had started believing in the permanence of their stay in India. Now their only concern was how to maintain and manage the 'jewel in the crown' with least of expenditure but maximum of efficiency. The schooling of Indians in the task of self-governance seemed to them to be a

¹⁷ The caste panchayats are a social phenomenon. They performed administrative functions when the state was neither developmental, nor welfare, nor interventionist. At present, state has assumed these characteristics and as a consequence of it, PRIs have come into existence. But it does not mean the extension of caste panchayats. Many castes still have their respective caste panchayats which influences quite effectively the decisions of the members of that caste. Caste panchayats even influences the political process with consequence. For example, during April 1995 elections, two PRIs in Meerut district, the caste panchayat of Goojars, played a significant role in the success of Goojar (see Chapter 4). Thus, caste panchayats and the modern panchayats can be seen existing side by side and interacting with each other.

¹⁸ According to Henry Maddick the traditional panchayats were not 'concerned with the complexities of national development as we understand it today but with the simplest aspect of living within a small space'. Maddick, *Op. cit.*, p.15.

¹⁹ George Mathew, *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

prudent step to meet both the objective at one stroke.²⁰ It was in 1870 Viceroy Lord Mayo got a resolution passed by his Council which was aimed at decentralisation. This resolution, considered to be the first major landmark in the evolution of local self-government in India, proclaimed:

“Local interest, supervision and care are necessary for success in the management of funds devoted to education, sanitation, medical relief and local public works. The operation of this resolution in its full meaning and integrity will afford opportunities for the development of self-government”.²¹

The impact of Mayo Resolution was not unimpressive in the urban areas, however, the rural areas were still lying out of focus. After Mayo, the next historic step towards decentralisation is attributed to Lord Ripon who on May 18, 1882 passed his famous resolution on decentralisation. A notable feature of Ripon Resolution was it inaugurated RLSG in India ‘six years before there were any rural councils in England’.²² In this resolution, emphasis was laid on the fact that local self-government was ‘chiefly desirable as an instrument of political and popular education’.²³ The Taxation Enquiry Commission 1954-55 also observed ‘it was Lord Ripon’s Resolution of 1882

²⁰ The present day historians of the Raj are sceptical about the ‘lofty ideology of gradual training of Indians in the acts of self-government and local self-government and prefer to call it ‘an exercise in controlled co-optation of loyal collaborators’. See Sumit Sarkar *Modern India*, Madras, Macmillan, 1983, p.19 and Anil Seal, *Locality, Province and Nation*, London, CUP, 1973, p.10.

²¹ In the view of P.C. Mathur, Mayo Resolution hardly looks like an ‘exercise in empty political rhetoric’. P.C. Mathur, “Rural Local Self-Government in India : Ideological Nuances from Ripon to Jayaprakash Narayan, 1882-1964, *Journal of Rural Development*, September, 1991. But Samuel Laing, the member (finance) of Viceroy Mayo’s Council had mentioned clearly that the Revolt of 1857 had put imperial finances under considerable strain and it was found necessary to finance local services out of local taxation. (Samuel Laing as quoted by George Mathew, Op. Cit., p.2); Sumit Sarkar (1983) also sees the Mayo Resolution as motivated by the need for tackling growing British financial difficulties.

²² Hugh Tinker, *Foundations of Local Self-Government in India, Pakistan and Burma*, Lalvani Publications, Bombay, 1967, p.19.

that paved the way for the development of local self-government especially in rural areas, with the accent on self-government'.²⁴ Ripon Resolution was very similar in tenor to the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee Report formulated exactly 75 years later.²⁵ However, Anil Seal (1973) and Sumit Sarkar (1983), two famous historians on 'the Raj' seem to be less enthusiastic about the content and impact of this resolution.²⁶ Analysing the issue from a different vantage point, Hume Tinker points out that "Any attempt to revive the traditional institutions of village government was anyhow too late by the 1880s. The village folk had become powerless under the grip of local bosses and bullies; the agent of the landlord, the local 'daroga' and the 'Bania' were the real power in the village".²⁷

Viscount Morley, the Secretary of State for India was the person who acknowledged the institutional deficiencies of the local self-government structure established in 1882 and appointed a Royal Commission on Decentralisation under the chairmanship of Charles Hobhouse.²⁸ Advocating strongly for the development of village panchayats, the Hobhouse Commission tried to show sensitivity towards the problems of rural India. Perhaps, it was

²³ R.V. Jathar, *Evolution of Panchayati Raj in India*, J.S.S. Institute of Economic Research, Dharwar, 1964, p.14.

²⁴ Report of Taxation Enquiry Committee, 1954-55, vol. III, Government of India, , p.334.

²⁵ P.C. Mathur, "Sociological Dimensions of Panchayati Raj", *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, January-March, 1964, p.72.

²⁶ According to Seal, 'it was an exercise in bringing down administrative grid more heavily for 'more intervention of the Raj in the local matters'. See, Anil Seal, *Op. cit.*

²⁷ Hugh Tinker, *Op. Cit.*, p.55. Besides, the Ripon Resolution, 1882 was never implemented with the same sincerity that had been shown during its passage. See P.C. Mathur (1991) *Op. Cit.*, pp.473-474.

²⁸ 'strange it may sound, the first ever public reference in a document of constitutional significance, to village panchayats as LSGIs was made in the Report of this Commission'. P.C. Mathur (1991), *Op. Cit.*, pp.473-474.

only in 1909 the importance of Indian village panchayats was duly recognised.²⁹

It is generally believed that Indian National Congress (INC) was always concerned about the revitalisation of RLSG in India. But fact of the matter is INC leadership was almost completely dominated for long by the western educated urban Indians concerned primarily with drawing concessions from the British government and acquiring petty government jobs. For them political activity was merely a tool to draw the attention of the British government. The welfare of common masses was yet to figure on the INC agenda. No wonder 'village panchayats featured for the first time in the annals of the INC in 1909', following the recommendations of Hobhouse Commission.³⁰ In its twenty-eighth session in Karachi in December 1913, INC once again adopted a resolution on local bodies. But as the British government was very lukewarm about the idea of decentralisation, reference to RLSG institutions slowly disappeared from the INC agenda except for some passing comments. In fact, neither the INC as a body nor the bulk of its members in their individual capacity made any systematic efforts to further the cause of India's constitutional development at the local levels. M.K. Gandhi was the only INC leader during the first World War years who advocated for the village panchayats but was seldom heard by the INC leadership.

With the enactment of Government of India Act, 1919, local self-government became a transferred subject to the provinces under the system of 'Dyarchy'. But this development failed to attract the attention of the INC as it

²⁹ R.V. Jathar, Op. Cit., p.22, n. 9

was preoccupied with supposed to be the larger issues. Furthermore, the decision of INC to non-co-operate with the system of Dyarchy also adversely affected the cause of local self-government in India.³¹ The Gandhian political strategy of all India mass movements brought the goal of national self-government to the centre-stage but also relegated the issue of RLSG to the back stage. Again the boycott of local self-government bodies, as they were still under a great deal of official control and, therefore, seen as official bodies, badly hit the growth of RLSG institutions. There were instances when the daring participants in the activities of these bodies were ostracised or intimidated. This was particularly a case with Bombay Rural Boards.³²

The Government of India Act, 1935 was a major step in the direction of constitutional development in India. However, the mistake this Act committed was that it left the issue of structural and functional reforms, with regard to RLSG institutions, to the discretion of provinces. And provincial level political leadership could “hardly be expected to get busy in designing new devices of decentralisation and devolution of their own authority upon local level self-governing institutions while they were bitterly complaining about the limited autonomy devolved upon themselves under the Government of India Act, 1935.”³³

³⁰ H.D. Malviya, *Village Panchayats in India*, New Delhi, All India Congress Committee, 1956.

³¹ In the view of P.C. Mathur (1991), ‘had INC done its best to sincerely co-operate with ‘Dyarchy’ the RLSG institutions in India would certainly have fared much better because even within all its constraints the ‘Dyarchy’ regime did result in the passage of several new enactments for the establishment of village panchayats in the major provinces of British India’.

³² *ibid*, p.482.

³³ Hugh Tinker, *Op. Cit.*, p.65.

The hopes of the advocates of panchayat system as the basis of independent India's polity received a severe jolt when the Draft Constitution came out without a single reference to panchayats.³⁴ This triggered off protest against the neglect of panchayats by the Constituent Assembly. The final outcome of this tug of war between the pro-panchayat and anti-panchayat lobbies in and out of the Constituent Assembly was that through an amendment proposed by K. Santhanam, panchayats could secure a small cubicle in the Directive Principles of State Policy under Article 31-A that later on became Article 40 of Indian Constitution.³⁵ This concession was hardly sufficient to meet the expectations; yet for the time being it succeeded in pacifying the protest.

The rejection of panchayats as the basis of Indian polity was neither an outcome of some inexplicable neglect by the Constituent Assembly nor of a revulsion for panchayats on the part of 'oligarchy'. It was rather a logical result of a clash between the differing world views; one that of Gandhi - the ascetic who was aiming at minimising the gap between ideals and practice in all the spheres of life for all the members of society - and the other that of the members of the so called 'Austinian oligarchy' especially Nehru. Besides, the vision of 'oligarchy' was also getting affected by the practical realities of the day. Gandhi had seen state as an evil and wanted it to fold back its tentacles sooner than later while the oligarchy along with other like minded, was pinning

³⁴ The neglect of panchayats by the Constituent Assembly was monumental none from the 'Austinian Oligarchy' (Nehru, Patel, Prasad and Azad) uttered a single word on village panchayats in the Constituent Assembly. See G. Austin, *Indian Constitution : Cornerstone of a Nation*, Bombay, OUP, 1972.

³⁵ Article 40 reads: 'The State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function

all the hopes on a strong statist state. This ideological war had not erupted all of a sudden but was continuing for a long time and just picked up momentum on the eve of independence.³⁶ Finally, this ideological war ended with a victory of the 'Euro-American' notion of polity over the village based indigenous system of panchayats.

Analysing the issue, Austin views, "The ideal of a revived village life with benevolent panchayats and decentralised government bringing democracy to the grassroots level appealed to Assembly members. Yet when considering the political tradition to embody in the Constitution they had to ask themselves several questions concerning the Gandhian alternative: (a) Was the nature of man different in rural and in urban society? Would man become a moral being in one and not in the other? (b) Was it possible in 1947 to change India back to primarily agricultural village nation? (c) Did the state bear the responsibility for the welfare of its citizens; if it did, could it fulfil the responsibility under a decentralised Constitution? (d) Did the villages have - as they must have with a decentralised Constitution and indirect government - the initiative to remake their way of life?"³⁷ Besides 'considering the unusually lengthy and relatively successful experience India had had with representative government it is not surprising that Indians would have favoured a parliamentary constitution'.³⁸ The intellectual commitment of many Western educated Indians was also to the 'Euro-American' tradition of representative government. During the post-

as units of self-government'. D.D. Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, New Delhi, Prentice Hall, 1993, p.453.

³⁶ This becomes amply clear from the correspondence between Gandhi and Nehru during early 1940s. See G. Austin, Op. cit., pp.39-43.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 31.

Second World War years as a consequence of the victory of 'Allies' the liberal Euro-American thought had become the predominant thought in the world which created 'a favourable impression of representative government among many other Indians. The belief of the Constituent Assembly in Parliamentary government was also strengthened in large measure by the ideological commitment of many members to socialism. Besides, these ideological considerations there were 'impelling immediate reasons' as well;³⁹ namely, the near famine conditions in parts of Madras, the rise in food prices all over the country, communal upheavals throughout North India, the influx of refugees, threats posed to India's internal security by the princely states and the Telengana rebellion of 1948 and finally India's external security concerns brought to the centre-stage at that time by Pakistan-inspired invasion of Kashmir. These happenings made it very clear that 'local even provincial government could be frail reeds in the time of great distress; (therefore), the centre must have the power to preserve order and the process of government.'⁴⁰

The question of country's economic regeneration also demanded a strong centre. The contemporary leadership believed that only with the presence of centralised authority, centralised planning and by the development of modern infrastructure, agriculture and industry, economic regeneration of the country was possible. The incapacity of private sector to invest huge capital in the basic infrastructure and industry on the eve of independence also

³⁸ Austin emphasises that the belief in Parliamentary government seemed to be nearly universal. The draft Constitutions published by the groups of the left, centre and right were also all for parliamentary, centralised constitutions. *ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁹ In one of his letters to Gandhi, dated 9 October 1945, Nehru had talked about the need to keep in view the reality of the day while considering the questions like a panchayat based polity versus a strong centre. *ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.44.

necessitated the role of a strong centre. This naturally went against the arguments put up in favour of panchayat system as the basis of post-independence Indian polity.

Finally, the question of political legitimacy was also there to guide the adoption of a parliamentary form of government against a panchayat based decentralised polity. Since the 19th century, the Congress had demanded adult suffrage for the people of India. It had also become sine qua non of independence. The system of direct election was also seen as a pillar of social revolution, for only an Assembly directly elected by the whole of people could speak for the people as a whole and address the socio-economic problems of national magnitude. This was not possible for an indirectly elected Assembly, in which 'the creation of national consciousness was virtually impossible as a representative dealing with national problems would have been several steps removed from the general electorate'.⁴¹

These were the main factors guiding the adoption of a 'Euro-American' model of parliamentary democracy, rejecting the panchayats as the basis of Indian polity. However, according to Austin "their (the panchayat based polity supporters) demand was not political but administrative and administratively but not politically their demand could be met. Seen on two levels, the problem of panchayats, of village development and renaissance could be solved by providing for a degree of administrative decentralisation below the level of the provincial governments, while politically Indian co-operative federalism operated from the provincial governments upwards. India in this way could

⁴¹ J.L. Nehru, *Unity of India, Collected Writings, 1937-1940*, London, Lindsay Drummond, 1948, p.23.

have both panchayats and a direct parliamentary constitution in which the villager was connected by the electoral process to the provincial and national governments".⁴²

In the Republic of India panchayats were unprecedently neglected. Constitution of India made them a state subject. And states were understandably least enthusiastic about the real empowerment of panchayats. The central government was so indifferent about the whole issue that ailing panchayats were left unattended to in a ward of Health Ministry to get relieved only in 1958 when they came under the Ministry of Community Development.⁴³

It was with the publication of Balwant Rai Mehta Study Team Report (1957) that panchayat's issue came back to the centre stage once again. Mehta Committee recommended a new universal three-tier system of panchayats. Block or the Middle tier was to be the most important of these three. The co-ordinating role in the system had been assigned to the block. The other two tiers were to be the village panchayat and the Zila parishad. The most relevant recommendations of the Mehta Committee were approved by the NDC and on October 2, 1959, Prime Minister Nehru inaugurated the new 'Panchayati Raj'⁴⁴ in the Nagaur district of Rajasthan.

On surface, the Constitution of the B.R. Mehta Committee appeared to be a sudden move by the Government of India. But in actuality there existed very many reasons behind this move. The necessity felt by the policy makers and the administrators to bring about an attitudinal change in the '80 million

⁴² G. Austin, *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁴³ Henry Maddick, *Op. cit.*, p.30.

cultivators and 220 million people in the rural areas'⁴⁵ was perhaps the primary reason behind the rethinking about rehabilitating the Father of the Nation's this beloved but now forlorn child named 'panchayat'. The sub-continental proportions of the country and a rise in the aspirations of masses with the inception of 'new state' had added to the already complex administrative problems which could not be solved without people's co-operation. Further, any aspect of planning required an adaptation according to the local conditions before it was implemented.⁴⁶ The Community Development Programme formulated with the help of USA and launched in 1952 had failed in 'enlivening the countryside'. Lastly, after the experiences of the implementation of First Five Year Plan the need for people's participation was being felt more deeply.

Following the enthusiasm generated by the Mehta Committee Report, panchayats rapidly spread all over the country. During the period between 1959-64, which the Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) later on termed as 'the phase of ascendancy', more than 217,300 village panchayats covering over 96% of the 'total 579,000 inhabited villages and 92% of the rural population had been established'.⁴⁷

However, the new panchayati raj was born under inauspicious stars. The personal interest taken by Nehru in panchayati raj was a shot in the arm of this project. But even before the idea of 'Panchayati Raj' could properly take roots, the trial years for the independent India, which Morris-Jones calls 'the

⁴⁴ Panchayati Raj as a term was popularised by Nehru who frequently used it in his speeches, etc.

⁴⁵ It was the estimated population of Rural India according to the Census of India, 1951.

⁴⁶ Henry Maddick, *Op. cit.*, pp.35-37.

⁴⁷ George Mathew, *Op. cit.*, p.5.

period of challenge',⁴⁸ set in. The first in this chain of unfortunate events was the eruption of Sino-Indian border dispute into a full scale war. With the final departure of Nehru - a broken man now - from the scene the prospects of Panchayati Raj taking roots in the Indian political system became further bleak.⁴⁹ The successor to Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri found himself placed in the middle of surmounting difficulties - 'a time of flux and uncertainty'. War efforts had diverted considerable part of already scarce resources toward defence needs. The situation was aggravated by the failure of successive monsoons resulting in 'poor harvests, food shortages, famine in certain areas and steep price rises throughout the system'⁵⁰ and 'it was an inauspicious setting for the new regime despite the skillful and tranquil succession to Nehru'.⁵¹ Situation further worsened due to the eruption of a full scale war in 1965. Under these circumstances it was not unnatural that the decentralisation ideals were overtaken by a polity favouring a strong centre. However, this process was not consciously designed but was just a logical outcome. Perhaps at this time the situation was in many respects like the one that had prevailed during the framing of Indian Constitution between 1947-50.

Panchayati Raj in India presents a good example of how the personalities influence the body and the soul of programmes and policies. What was the impact of Nehru's presence on Panchayati Raj in the post-

⁴⁸ W.H. Morris Jones, *Government and Politics of India*, London, Hutchinson, 1971, pp.114-115.

⁴⁹ Of late, S.K. Dey, the philosopher of CD system in India opined that 'the Sino-Indian conflict in October 1962 and the decline in Nehru's health and authority led to declining interest in states in grass-roots democracy and to a fast growing lack of will to part with power by State Ministers and Members of Parliament and State Assemblies. With Nehru's death, on May 27, 1964, the forces opposed to the spread of grass-roots democracy gathered support'. "Panchayati Raj: Call of Grass-Roots Democracy", *The Statesman*, New Delhi, September 8, 1978.

⁵⁰ W.H. Morris Jones, *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

independence India needs no repetition. What is important to know is the nature of impact his successors left on Panchayati Raj. Lal Bahadur Shastri, as he himself made no secret of it, that he 'did not share Nehru's faith in the capacity of people to rule themselves'.⁵² Consequently, bureaucrats had a field day during Shastri in Office.⁵³ A Prime Minister with this attitude automatically sent signals to the state level leadership also to neglect the Panchayats. Indira Gandhi, the successor to Shastri, had a very distinct mind-set and style of functioning. The strains which Indian political economy underwent during her regime, e.g., the intra-party challenges and the opposition from other political opponents, strengthened her personal notions regarding ideas and institutions. This clearly reflected during her eleven years long stay in power with suspension of democracy in the country for close to two years as the culmination point. There are reasons to believe that Indira Gandhi having no special preference for democracy, had more confidence in bureaucrats than faith in people's elected representatives.⁵⁴ The result was 'all Panchayati Raj institutions were put to beauty sleep during the time...Mrs. Gandhi was at the zenith of her power'.⁵⁵

The different political culture of the constituents of the Janata Party from that of the Congress was a major reason behind the efforts made to revive

⁵¹ Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, London, OUP, p. 143.

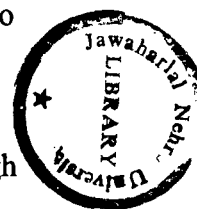
⁵² S.K. Dey, 'Panchayati Raj: Call of Grass Roots Democracy', *The Statesman* (New Delhi), 8 September 1978. Also Michael Brecher, (*ibid.*, p.92) also expresses similar views regarding Shastri's distinct style of functioning.

⁵³ It was during the Shastri regime the PMO came into existence which over the years grew in influence so much that even the Cabinet Secretariat was eclipsed. Madhu Limey, *Cabinet Government in India*, New Delhi, Radiant, 1989, p.103.

⁵⁴ According to Weiner, 'no group in India was as supportive of the Prime Minister (Mrs. Gandhi) and of the emergency as the country's bureaucrats'. Myron Weiner, *The Indian Paradox: Essays in Indian Politics*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1989, p. 287.

Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) during the Janata Party regime. Political expediency also demanded that through Panchayats villages would be penetrated by the party. The Janata Party Working Committee was the first to raise the demand to resuscitate Panchayats.⁵⁶ This was followed by the circulation of a 'consensus statement' titled 'Towards Roots of Democracy'. This was prepared by S.K. Dey and L.M. Singhvi and endorsed by twenty-one eminent politicians, lawyers and other intellectuals. Along with this statement a draft Amendment Bill prepared by RCS Sarkar and L.M. Singhvi was also presented.

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The Morarji Desai Government appointed in December 1977 a high power committee to look into the working of Panchayati Raj institutions. This thirteen member committee was to be chaired by Ashok Mehta. The critical theme around which the Ashok Mehta Committee rounded its recommendations was 'linking institutions of democracy the decentralisation with socially motivated economic development'. Ashok Mehta Committee saw Panchayati Raj both as 'an end and a means'. As an end it was an 'inevitable extension of democracy' and as a means 'responsible for discharging obligations entrusted to it by the national and state governments in spheres not yet transferred to its exclusive jurisdiction.'⁵⁷ The Ashok Mehta Committee recommended a two-tier system of Panchayats modifying the system that was continuing since the implementation of the B.R. Mehta Committee Report. These two tiers were to be Zila Parishad and Mandal

⁵⁵ "Awake Sleeping Beauties", (Editorial), *Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad, 16 November 1977.

⁵⁶ "More for Stronger Panchayats", *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 1 December 1977.

⁵⁷ Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions, (Chairman Ashok Mehta), Department of Rural Development, New Delhi, 1978.



Panchayats. Mandal Panchayats were to be formed by grouping together a few villages.⁵⁸

The purpose of creating Mandal Panchayats was explained as making the projects 'economically viable' and 'enable people's representatives to exercise democratic supervision over the large number of micro-projects' which would be needed to be implemented at the village level. This scheme proposed a village level committee to function as an assisting body to the Mandal Panchayat. The body was to involve people at the village level in the activities of the Mandal Panchayat and also to look after the municipal functions and welfare activities at the village level. Another significant recommendation of the Ashok Mehta Committee favoured the entry of political parties in the Panchayat elections and activities.⁵⁹

Despite presenting a convincingly sound package the Ashok Mehta Committee Report failed to win all the hearts. Soon after its publication many of its vital recommendations were questioned. The two main recommendations which attracted greatest amount of criticism were (i) two-tier system, (ii) entry of political parties in Panchayats. Many believe these recommendations were questioned not because of their impracticality⁶⁰ but because of the entrenched

⁵⁸ The Ashok Mehta Committee had picked up the idea of Mandal Panchayats from Karnataka's successful experiment with them.

⁵⁹ With many of its recommendations like the holding of elections to the PRIs under the supervision of Chief Election Officer of the state in consultation with the Chief Election Commissioner of India; strict rules regarding the periodic holding of elections to the PRIs and their supersession by the state government; constitutional status to PRIs, etc., the Mehta Committee Report proved itself to be a pre-runner of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992.

⁶⁰ Mandal Panchayats in Karnataka had already demonstrated their success in Karnataka and the entry of political parties was in no way against the logic of a polity based on competitive multi-party system. Rather, a section of intellectuals and politicians strongly believes that the entry of political parties is a must for the success of Panchayati Raj in terms of demolishing the hold of entrenched sections from the PRIs

politicians of the day who, especially at the state level, had perceived a threat to their positions from any genuine sharing of power with the sub-state stratum.⁶¹ These fears had prevailed across the party lines. This fact of the real politik may also explain why not only in the Congress ruled states but also in many non-Congress states Panchayati Raj received a step motherly treatment. Finally, on 19 May 1979 in a Chief Ministers' Conference in Delhi a majority of Chief Ministers openly aired their strong reservations regarding the Ashok Mehta Committee Report. Following this reaction the Committee Report was paid a quiet burial.⁶²

When the Janata Party failed to adopt their own child it was rather unlikely that Indira Gandhi, who formed the government after the failure of 'Janata experiment', would have undertaken the task. During the days of Rajiv Gandhi government, a renewed enthusiasm for Panchayati Raj was witnessed. The Constitution of G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985), L.M. Singhvi Committee (1986) and the introduction of 64th Amendment Bill, 1991 in the Parliament were the significant outcomes of this new wave of enthusiasm. However, it is widely believed that if during the just half of Rajiv Gandhi regime this enthusiasm reflected the wish of a young leader to accomplish something dazzling during the second half it demonstrated only the survival instincts of a maturing politician.

as well as the village society in general and providing the deprived sections of village society with equal opportunities.

⁶¹ L.C. Jain was told by Rajiv Gandhi in a personal conversation that Chief Ministers were resisting by all means the idea of empowering panchayats. L.C. Jain, *Report of a Panel Discussion on 72nd Amendment Bill, 1991*, 25 September 1991, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, p.25.

⁶² *The Statesman* (New Delhi), 20 May 1979.

(B)

Evolution of Panchayati Raj in Uttar Pradesh

The Royal Commission on Decentralisation (1909) had emphasised the need for the 'formation of village panchayats so that local government might be built up from the bottom'. But unmoved by these recommendations the government in U.P., known as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh at that time, took no steps in this direction.⁶³ In 1905, the Government of Uttar Pradesh had passed an Act to constitute statutory local government institutions at the district level. A similar Act was passed again in 1915. But these Acts armed the District Boards which had been constituted under these Acts, only with superficial powers.⁶⁴

The local self-government was made a transferred subject by the Government of India Act, 1919. This led the United Provinces to pass its Panchayati Raj Act as many other states had done. The objective of the Uttar Pradesh Village Panchayat Act, VI of 1920, as stated in its preamble, was 'to establish in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh Panchayats, to assist in the administration of civil and criminal justice, and also to effect improvements in sanitation and other common concerns of the village'.⁶⁵

The Panchayats under the Act of 1920 looked more like an arrangement for the management of justice in the villages.⁶⁶ The concept of Panchayat as a

⁶³ Ali Ashraf, 'Uttar Pradesh', in G. Mathew (ed.), *Status of Panchayati Raj in the States of India-1994*, New Delhi, Concept, 1995, p. 205.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 206.

⁶⁵ Vijaylaxmi Purwar, *Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh*, Lucknow, Universal Book Depot, 1959, p. 61.

⁶⁶ Interestingly, the Act of 1920 explicitly disqualified women to become a punch. *ibid.*, p.61.

unit of local government was still absent. Even the idea of panchayats as a developmental agency was missing. The Panchayats under the Act of 1920 were the pocket boroughs of the Collector who created and abolished them at will. The Act was not enforced throughout the Province and wherever it was enforced the hopelessly slender resources available to Panchayats rendered them paralysed. More interestingly, among all the major provinces which had passed their respective Acts on decentralisation in the wake of the Government of India Act, 1919 'the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh alone had non-elected Panchayats'.⁶⁷

Ali Ashraf very candidly views that the Panchayat bodies created by the Act of 1920 were 'unreal and a mockery of self-government'.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the introduction of Panchayats in the province helped it make an early start in the independent India vis-à-vis other states. Uttar Pradesh passed its Panchayat Act in 1947 itself, which made Uttar Pradesh the pioneering state empowering its villages. Another important outcome of the introduction of Panchayat system by the Act of 1920 was it attracted the attention of national leadership also. The visit of Simon Commission (1927) to the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh to study the functioning of Panchayats and their positive opinion about the system attracted the attention of the leadership as well as the masses. This ignited the process of opinion-building on the Panchayat system. It was this opinion and counter opinion-building that made the inclusion or non-inclusion of 'Panchayat system as the basis of Indian polity', a hotly debated issue during the Constituent Assembly Debates in the post-independence India.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.
⁶⁸ Ali Ashraf, *Op. cit.*, p.206.

After the formation of a Congress government following the passage of the Government of India Act, 1935, a local self-government committee headed by A.G. Kher was set up in Uttar Pradesh. However, the resignation of the Congress government in 1939, and the political turmoil thereafter blocked the implementation of the recommendations of Kher Committee. Soon after the independence of India the Uttar Pradesh legislature, drawing heavily upon the recommendations made by the Kher Committee passed the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1947. This Act was an attempt to do away with the defects of the earlier legislation. Unlike the Act of 1920, which had a limited jurisdiction, the Act of 1947 was covering the entire Uttar Pradesh. Surat Singh sees this act as 'an attempt to develop the spirit of self-reliance and common endeavour necessary for the prosperity of the masses'.⁶⁹

Under the Act of 1947, a Gaon Panchayat - the executive body of Gaon Sabha - was required to conduct the village administration with Pradhan and members elected on the basis of adult franchise.⁷⁰ There was no separate electorate and seats were reserved for the members of the deprived sections of the society. The Gaon Sabha was required to meet twice a year. The Gaon Sabha could remove the Pradhan and the *Up-Pradhan* by a two-thirds majority. The Panchayat members were elected by the Gaon Sabha for a term of three years.

'By 15 August 1949, about 35,000 Gaon Panchayats and 8,100 Panchayat Adalats had been set up under the Act of 1947. In 1954, the Congress Village Panchayat Committee Report had put the number at 36,139

⁶⁹ Surat Singh, *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁷⁰ *Up-Pradhan* was elected by the 'Panchs' - the members of Gaon Panchayat.

and 8,543 respectively.⁷¹ According to M.P. Sharma, 'the establishment of such a large number of Panchayats covering every village and based on universal suffrage was the boldest and most comprehensive democratic experiment tried anywhere in India.'⁷²

The Act of 1947 was accompanied by the passage of Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1951 which established Gram Samaj⁷³ all over the state. This threw up a new problem of co-ordination between Gram Panchayat and the Land Management Committee. In the meantime Uttar Pradesh High Court also pointed out some legal difficulties as they were in the provisions of the Act of 1947.⁷⁴ Therefore, an ordinance was issued by the state government in 1954. This Ordinance fixed the term of the members of Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Adalats for five years. This Ordinance was replaced by the U.P. Panchayati Raj Amendment Act II, 1955.

The Community Development Programme, that was launched in 1952, marked the beginning of developmental administration in India. 1952 was also the year when 'planning' was initiated in India. In the wake of these developments the U.P. government set up a committee in 1954 which was chaired by the then U.P. Minister for Self-Government Mohan Lal Gautam. The Committee studied the working of the U.P. Panchayat Raj Act 1947 and recommended that the Land Management Committees should function as a sub- committee of Gaon Sabha and not independent of them.

⁷¹ Ali Ashraf, *Op. cit.*, p. 207.

⁷² M.P. Sharma, "Recent Experiments in Local Self-Government in India", *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, April-June, 1957, pp. 104-111.

⁷³ Gram Samaj is the term used for the land and other resources designated as the common property of a village.

⁷⁴ Surat Singh, *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

Uttar Pradesh not only took the lead among the states of independent India in terms of implementing Panchayati Raj but also continually demonstrated an originality of thinking for many years to come. This thinking in no way was a subordinate ally to the thinking about Panchayats at the national level. Consequently, even after the recommendations of the B.R. Mehta Committee, U.P. hesitated endorsing the recommendations uncritically and preferred to adopt them according to the State's needs and situations. U.P. witnessed its reservations regarding the status of Panchayat Samiti - the second tier of B.R. Mehta system. In a meeting of Central Council of Local Self-Government in September 1957, Vichitra Narayan Sharma, the then U.P. Minister for Local Self-Government argued for giving the district level body the pivotal position because U.P. considered 'block' to be a very small unit to entrust with the task of execution and taxation.⁷⁵

To implement the idea of making Zila Parishad a vital link in the process of democratic decentralisation the Uttar Pradesh government issued an ordinance in 1959 in this regard which was enacted in 1961 as Uttar Pradesh Kshettra Samiti and Zila Parishad Adhiniyam, 1961. This Act brought about significant structural changes in the Panchayati Raj system in Uttar Pradesh. In the words of Abida Samiuddin, "the Act of 1947 and the U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1951 had done the spade work in

⁷⁵ Shahida Hatim, *Panchayati Raj in India with Special Reference to Uttar Pradesh*, Aligarh, AMU Press, 1976, p. 27.

In this way U.P. was almost two decades ahead of the thinking at the national level regarding Panchayats. The same reservations regarding the viability of the second tier of the three tier Panchayati Raj system were expressed by the Ashok Mehta Committee in 1978. The Ashok Mehta Committee also recommended giving Zila Parishad a place of prominence.

strengthening the concept. The Act of 1961 finally cemented the concept in the State.”⁷⁶

After the enactment of the Act of 1961, in Uttar Pradesh, the Zila Parishad had the overall supervisory as well as decision making authority in matters of allocation of budget for various schemes and projects to be carried out at the block and the village level. The block, on the other hand, was the pivot of most of the activities and actual disbursements were made at this level.

To bolster the finances of Panchayats, a scheme of Panchayat Udhogs or Panchayat industries was initiated in 1960.⁷⁷ On the recommendations of Santhanam Committee, constituted by the Government of India, the Uttar Pradesh Panchayat Raj Finance and Development Corporation was also established under the Indian Companies Act 1973.⁷⁸ The main aim of the Corporation was to ensure greater efficacy of the Panchayati Raj institutions and provide them with finances for public transport, residential house construction, electrification, water supply and other productive and public assets. The Third Five Year Plan of Uttar Pradesh also gave due attention to the Panchayati Raj in the state. It provided for the infra-structural arrangements in every district for the training of non-officials. During the Third Plan period, twelve training centres were set up for imparting three months’ training to nearly 8,500 Panchayat Secretaries in the State. U.P. Third Plan also made a provision for the grant of loans to the Panchayats to enable them increase their financial resources by building up remunerative assets like community orchards

⁷⁶ Abida Samiuddin, *A Critique of Panchayati Raj with Special Reference to Uttar Pradesh*, Agra, Sahitya Bhawan, 1976, p.46.

⁷⁷ Surat Singh, *Op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.73.

and forests, local markets, minor irrigation works, fisheries, etc. An allocation of 110 lakhs of rupees was made towards this provision.⁷⁹

Uttar Pradesh entered the decade of 1960s with full preparations to march on with Panchayati Raj institutions in a big way. However, the unexpected developments at the national scene during the '60s spelt disaster for Panchayati Raj in the country as well as in U.P. The 'phase of stagnation' had set in. It was during 1960s U.P. lost its independent initiative regarding Panchayati Raj. Now it was difficult to detect a difference between the thinking at the state level and the one at the national level. At both the levels Panchayati Raj was shelved without a whimper. Since 1961 until the first half of 1990s, there was almost complete lull in Uttar Pradesh regarding Panchayati Raj. Intermittently, elections to the PRIs took place in the State but they were nothing but a rote.⁸⁰ These elections were of no good since Panchayat Raj institutions in the State were chronically ill thanks to financial, political and bureaucratic road-blocks. No denying the fact that illiteracy, poverty, backward agriculture, rivalries, factionalism, etc. in rural U.P. contributed significantly to the failure of Panchayati Raj in the State. Nevertheless, the political leadership, which looked upon the grassroots leadership as an upcoming challenge, and the bureaucracy, which treated Panchayats and the people's representatives with indifference and contempt, bear the greatest responsibility for the failure of Panchayati Raj in the State. The autocratic tendencies dominating the larger part of Mrs. Gandhi's regime at the Centre also left Panchayati Raj in Uttar Pradesh crippled like in many other States.

⁷⁹ Third Five Year Plan of Uttar Pradesh, Government of Uttar Pradesh.

However, as a matter of fact the politico-bureaucratic nexus, financial difficulties, poverty, illiteracy, etc. which are cited as factors ailing Panchayati Raj in U.P. are not unique U.P. specific factors. Almost all the states of the Union suffer from one or other or all of them. Yet, the degree of success of Panchayati Raj institutions varies from State to State. The States of Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal have achieved a degree of success in implementing Panchayati Raj which is towards the higher side of the scale. On the other hand not only in U.P. but in all other states of the 'Hindi belt' Panchayati Raj institutions have simply failed to take off. This pattern of PRIs across the country in general and U.P. in particular can be better explained through the State specific conditions of, especially society and political-economy, of the State.

Since 1960s, PRIs in U.P. received nothing but rich lip service from successive governments. The State level leadership never allowed PRIs to grow because they perceived a threat to their own entrenched positions from PRIs' success. The tendency of stalling the progress of PRIs had become so strong among the entrenched leadership that even after the enactment of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 the State level leadership left no stone unturned to escape the mandatory provisions of 73rd Amendment Act. The result of the manoeuvring was that U.P. became the last State of the Union to enact its Panchayati Raj Act according to the provisions of 73rd Amendment Act. Even after the enactment of U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994 the State level politicians continued with their manipulations.

⁸⁰ It took nearly eleven years to the State Government to observe the next round of elections to the village Panchayats after the elections held in 1961. For Zila Parishads

Postponed from October and rescheduled for the end of December 1994, elections to the PRIs under the new Act were announced all of a sudden on 27 November 1994. It was possibly because of the constitutional deadline needing states to hold their Panchayat elections before the end of the year. The State Government was moving in such a great hurry that it even 'forgot to dissolve the existing Panchayats by a State Assembly resolution before announcing elections.' Even the details regarding delimitation and reservation of constituencies were finalised just two days before the announcement of elections.⁸¹

The notification of 27 November 1994, was challenged first by the political groups of Uttarakhand who declared that no Panchayat elections would be allowed to take place in the region before they get a separate State. In other regions of the State also provisions of the new Act were resented. The act of merging of villages with less than 1,000 population was resented by many as illogical, politically motivated and neglecting the concept of village. As per the new delimitation the number of Gram Panchayats has come down from the previous figure of 73,000 approximately to 58,620.

On 2 December 1994, the Allahabad High Court postponed the elections indefinitely, upholding the 147 petitions challenging the validity of the Act itself. It also questioned the definition of Gram Panchayat under the Act and nullified the delimitation of the Panchayats by the government as they had been carved out without consulting the Pradhans. Nor were the electoral rolls or delimitation records available as late as 2 December, even though the

there were no elections between 1973 and 1988.

poll process and nominations were to start on 3 December 1994. The State Government appealed to the Supreme Court and the Court in its judgement on 10 February 1995 bailed out the State Government and ordered it to complete the Panchayat elections by mid-April after inviting objections to specifications of villages and delimitation of Gram Sabha and Panchayat areas of the State.⁸²

The judgement of the apex Court gave a go ahead to the State Government but it did nothing to stop the dominant partner in the ruling Samajwadi Party (SP)-Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) alliance to stop avoid caste based manipulations of the elections.⁸³ The extent of State Government's (SP) manoeuvres was such that even the U.P. Rural Development Minister for State, Dinanath Bhaskar (BSP) had to sit on 'dharna' against the malpractices in the

⁸¹ Susheela Kaushik, *Panchayati Raj in Action: Challenge to Women's Role*, New Delhi, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1995, p. 74-75.

⁸² In the Pradhan Sangh Kshettra Samiti, Jalalpur (Jaunpur) vs. State of U.P., 1994 (Allahabad High Court) the petitioner argued that the "state government is trying to make unwarranted interference in the delimitation of Gram Sabha." The petitioner also argued that the U.P. Panchayat Law (Amendment) Act, 1994 is a "faulty, hurried and shabby legislation brought in by the state government to amend the U.P. Panchayati Raj Act," which is "against a spirit of Constitution and ultra vires." The Allahabad High Court, upholding the petition decided that "a slip shod exercise to go into elections was being forced on the electorate of the villages" by the State Government, and "the contradictions in the U.P. Panchayati Raj Act, 1947, in the face of the provisions, incorporated as Part ix of the Constitution of India, under the chapter 'Panchayats' render the State enactment as repugnant to the Constitution of India. To the extent of the repugnancy, such provisions are held as ultra vires to the Constitution of India". A.I.R. 1995, All, pp. 162-209.

However, the State Government appealed in the Supreme Court and the decision of the Allahabad High Court was quashed by the Bench of Justice P.B. Sawant and Justice S.C. Agrawal stating that "the decision of the High Court suffers from errors and has to be set aside." The Court also declared that "the election process once started could not be set at naught by raising objections on the ground that the delimitation of the Panchayat areas was defective." Thus, the apex Court cleared the tracks for Panchayat elections in U.P. under the State Panchayat Act, 1994 but it also asked the State government "to bear it in mind that if and when the next regrouping of the villages and determination of the panchayats is undertaken, the authorities will have to give sufficient opportunities to the people of that area concerned for raising objections." *Supp (2)*, 1995, pp. 305-355.

⁸³ 'The State Government (was) bent upon twisting the 73rd Amendment to suit its caste and party interests rather than the letter and spirit of local governance'. Susheela Kaushik, *Op. cit.*, p.76.

Panchayat elections.⁸⁴ Even the local press severely criticised the Chief Minister for her partisan role during the Panchayat elections.⁸⁵

However, the first elections to the PRIs under the U.P. Panchayat laws (Amendment) Act, 1994 were held in the plains of U.P. in April 1995 and in the hill districts in October-December 1996. According to the latest figures after reorganisation there are total 58,620 Village Panchayats in the State. The U.P. plains have 52,125 and the hill districts 6,495 Panchayats. A total of 12,458 offices of Village Pradhan have been reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and 15,827 for the Backward Classes of U.P. Total 19,345 offices of Pradhan have been reserved for the women of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and the general category castes.⁸⁶

Panchayati Raj in U.P. has repeatedly faced determined attempts by its detractors to scuttle the growth of PRIs yet in the post-73rd Amendment phase it promises great possibilities. It is also not unlikely that the new grassroots leadership which is bound to emerge through the new PRIs would transform the face of State's society, economy and polity to wipe off the stigma of backwardness from U.P.'s name.

The next chapter deals with the provisions of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment), Act, 1994, especially its Article 243-B, which marks the beginning of a new era in the evolution of Panchayati Raj in India.

⁸⁴ *Amar Ujala (Meerut)*, 17 April 1995.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 27 April 1995.

⁸⁶ *Panchayati Raj ke karya-kalap Evam Uplabdhayan* (Hindi), Lucknow, U.P. Directorate of Panchayati Raj, 1996-97.

CHAPTER-2

The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992

With Special Reference to Article 243-D

(A)

The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992

The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 is considered to be one of the major landmarks of the process of democratic decentralisation in the country. The new Act has put fresh responsibilities on the Centre, States and the common man in rural India.

Since the recommendations of Ashok Mehta Committee regarding constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), it was only during the Rajiv Gandhi regime that concrete steps in the direction of according constitutional status to PRIs were taken. During the first half of Rajiv Gandhi regime, G.V.K. Rao Committee on Panchayati Raj (1985)¹ and the L.M. Singhvi Committee (1987) had strongly recommended the necessity of according constitutional status to PRIs. Their recommendations had created a favourable environment for PRIs status elevation. But what appears to have convinced the young leader more about the necessity to empower PRIs was the swinging electoral fortunes of Congress(I) in Karnataka in mid-1980s. The Congress after having faced a near rout in the Karnataka Assembly elections fared unexpectedly well in the elections to the PRIs held there soon after. Encouraged by the results of Karnataka, the young leader suggested in a hurriedly convened conference of Congress Chief Ministers that PRIs should be strengthened in other states also to repeat Karnataka success there. Some of the Congress Chief Ministers were sceptical about the scheme for they feared its implementation would help opposition parties more than the Congress in

¹ Appointed by the Planning Commission of India.

their states. But their reservations had little effect on the determination of their leader who had already made up his mind on this issue.²

More than all other factors like these, what is believed to be the real reason d'être of Rajiv Gandhi's new Panchayati Raj initiative was the unprecedented political storm gathering about him and his party.³ It was the demand of the situation that some new and more populist moves be made which would bail out the Congress and would help it regain the lost ground in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.⁴ The master stroke of all such moves, thus made, was the hurriedly drafted Constitution (Sixty-Fourth Amendment) Bill, 1989 which was presented by Rajiv Gandhi in Lok Sabha, on 15 May 1989.

This step was expected to help the leader and his Party in many ways: (i) it was aimed at 300 million voters in rural India, (ii) in his attempt to win the goodwill of both the Hindus and the Muslims, Rajiv Gandhi had lost the confidence of both, first in the Shahbano case and then due to the Ayodhya issue. Now Panchayati Raj Bill was expected to rectify the blunder as a mass appeal cutting across the religious lines, (iii) it promised to give Rajiv Gandhi a much needed chance to shed some of his pro-rich, pro-urban image, (iv) Congress not having two-thirds majority in the Rajya Sabha at that time, needed to get a constitutional amendment bill passed, was uncertain about the

² L.C. Jain, *Report of the Panel Discussion on 72nd Amendment Bill, 1991*, 25 September 1991, New Delhi, ISS, p.25.

³ Rajiv Gandhi's inexperience in politics, mismanagement of political and governmental affairs, corruption charges against him and his advisors and ministers and the general unrest with the Party were rapidly cutting at his ground. See, Atul Kohli, "India's Democracy Under Rajiv Gandhi", in Atul Kohli, *India's Democracy*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1991, pp. 319-333.

⁴ Christopher Thomas, "Gandhi to woo rural voters with key political reforms", *Times* (London), 7 August 1997.

passage of the bill on the Panchayati Raj. But Congress still thought itself to be in an all win situation in the game. The passage of the Bill was to be electorally advantageous to the Party while the defeat was seen as damaging the Opposition parties politically painting them as anti-people and anti-poor.

Of course, initially the introduction of the Bill put the Opposition parties in a quandary, yet a major opposition to the Bill could not be held back. The Bill was criticised basically on two counts: (i) the Bill overlooked the States and was seen as an instrument of the Centre to deal directly with the Panchayats; and (ii) it imposed a uniform pattern of Panchayats throughout the country. Moreover, the Bill was attacked for its political overtone also. As a part of protest, the combined opposition under the National Front (NF) formed a committee headed by S.R. Bommai which prepared an alternate legislation. The findings of the Bommai Committee proved to have a great influence on the subsequent bills on Panchayati Raj.

Taking advantage of its position in Rajya Sabha, the combined Opposition defeated the Bill in the Rajya Sabha. However, as the move to accord constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions had gained wide popular support, the NF Government, soon after assuming office, introduced the Constitution (Seventy-Fourth Amendment) Bill on 7 September 1990. But during the short tenure of NF Government the Bill could never be taken up for discussion. It appears that the successor Narasimha Rao government was obliged to legislate on Panchayati Raj for more than one reason: (i) the issue had received popular and across the party line support; (ii) after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, this was being viewed within Congress Party as the unfulfilled dream of late Rajiv Gandhi. Its passage now was likely to earn

Rao some extra political support within the Party, which he was in an urgent need of; and, (iii) a legislation granting something to Indian villages was also to project Rao and his party as the 'Messiah' of the poor. Naturally, the Rao government was not to let go the golden opportunity encashed.⁵

In September 1991, the Rao government introduced Constitution (Seventy-Second Amendment) Bill in the Parliament which having passed through a Joint Select Committee, Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and the State assemblies for ratification, finally received the assent of the President of India on 20 April 1993. It was brought into force by a Government notification on 24 April 1993 as the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992. This amendment added a new part, namely, Part IX to the Indian Constitution under Article 243 and under the head 'The Panchayats'. The same amendment has also transferred 'Panchayats' from the State List to the Concurrent List.

The enactment of Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 has been widely hailed. Many scholars have called this step founding the "third tier of governance" in the country.⁶ The main provisions of Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 are of two types: (i) mandatory provisions which restrict the freedom of states in their dealings with PRIs; (ii) the non-obligatory provisions which allow the states more space in certain areas, for instance, regarding Gram Sabha it leaves to the state legislatures to define the powers and functions of Gram Sabha (243A). This structure of

⁵ "The first and primary purpose of the amendment is to take credit for taking power to the people", Rajeev Dhavan, "Many Implications", in P. Satyanarayana, *Towards New Panchayati Raj*, New Delhi, Uppal Publishing House, pp. 10-11.

⁶ Nirmal Mukherjee calls it "third tier of governance", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1 May 1993), but according to Prem Shankar Jha it is not the third but the fourth tier of governance as the third tier of governance is the Autonomous Development

Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 attempts to strike a balance between the central authority and states' autonomy. Past experiences with the functioning of PRIs all over the country had made it clear that without some kind of constitutional obligation, states would not allow the smooth functioning of PRIs. However, it is also understood that in a federal structure of polity, centre cannot go on pushing the states beyond a certain limit. This becomes yet more important in view of the already strained centre-state relations. Therefore, Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 comes before us in its present form.

The mandatory provisions of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 say:

- (i) There shall be constituted in every state,⁷ panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels (243-B[1]);
- (ii) All the seats in a panchayat shall be filled by direct election from territorial constituencies in the panchayat area (243-C[2]). However, the chairperson of a panchayat at the intermediate level or district level shall be elected indirectly (243-C5[b]);
- (iii) In all the panchayats, seats shall be reserved for SCs and STs in proportion to their population. Offices of the chairpersons of the panchayats at all levels shall be reserved in favour of SCs and STs in proportion to their population in the state. The number of offices reserves so shall be allotted by rotation to different panchayats at each level (243-D[1][4]);

Councils, within a State, Prem Shankar Jha, "India's Political Miracle", *The Hindu*, 9 February 1997.

(iv) One-third of the total number of seats shall be reserved for women.

One-third of the seats reserved for SCs and STs shall also be reserved for women. One-third offices of chairpersons of panchayats at all levels shall also be reserved for women (243-D[2][3][4]);

(v) Every panchayat shall have a uniform five-year term and elections to constitute new bodies shall be completed before the expiry of the term. In the event of dissolution, elections will be compulsorily held within six months. The reconstituted panchayats will serve for the remaining period of the five-year term (243-E[1][3][4]);⁸

(vi) A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of a panchayat - (a) if he is so disqualified by or under any law for the time being in force for the purpose of elections to the legislature of the state concerned;⁹ (b) if he is so disqualified by or under any law made by the legislature of the state (243-F[1]).

(vii) The Governor of a state shall within one year from the commencement of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year, constitute a Finance Commission to review the financial position of the panchayats and to make recommendations to the Governor. The

⁷ Some exceptions under Article 243-B(2) are there. For details, see non-obligatory provisions of the Act in this Chapter.

⁸ According to the Article 243E(2) of the Act, no amendment of any law for the time being in force shall have the effect of causing dissolution of a panchayat at any level which is functioning immediately before such amendment, till the expiry of its term specified in clause(1) of article 243E. However, Orissa dissolved its PRIs paying no regard to this provision.

⁹ Provided that no person shall be disqualified on the ground that he is less than twenty-five years of age, if he has attained the age of twenty-one years.

Governor shall cause every recommendation made by the Commission together with an explanatory memorandum as to the action taken thereon to be laid before the legislature of the state (243-I[1][4]).¹⁰

(viii) The overall authority of conducting all elections to panchayats shall be vested in a State Election Commission consisting of a State Election Commissioner to be appointed by the Governor (243-K[1]; and

(ix) The provisions of Part IX shall apply to the Union Territories.¹¹

Some of the prominent non-obligatory provisions of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 are as follows:

- (i) Notwithstanding, anything in Clause 243-B[1], panchayats at the intermediate level may not be constituted in a state having a population not exceeding twenty lakhs (243-B[2]);
- (ii) Subject to the provisions of Part IX, the legislature may, by law, make provisions with respect to the composition of panchayats, provided the ratio between the population of the territorial area of a panchayat at any level and the number of seats in such panchayat to be filled by election shall be the same throughout the state (243-C[1]);

¹⁰ Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 also amends Act 280 of the Constitution by inserting a new Clause (280 [bb]) which says that it shall be the duty of the Finance Commission (of India) to make recommendations to the President of India as to “the measures needed to augment the consolidated fund of a state to supplement the resources of the panchayats in the state on the basis of the report of Finance Commission of the state”.

¹¹ By a public notification issued by the President of India to this effect.

- (iii) The legislature of a state may, by law, provide for the representation of (a) chairpersons of the village panchayats and intermediate level panchayats in the higher level of panchayat as the case may be; (b) the members of Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly representing constituencies which comprise wholly or partly a panchayat area at a level other than the village level, in such panchayat (243-C[3c]; and (c) the members of Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Council where they are registered as electors (243-C[3d];
- (iv) The chairperson of a panchayat at the village level shall be elected in such a manner as the legislature of a state may, by law, provide (243-C[5a];
- (v) The legislature of a state is free to make any provisions for the reservation of seats as well as of offices of chairpersons in panchayats at any level in favour of backward class of citizens (243-D[6]);
- (vi) The question of the disqualification of a member of a panchayat shall be referred for the decision of such authority and in such a manner as the legislature of a state may, by law, provide (243-F[2]);
- (vii) Subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the legislature of a state may, by law, endow the panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government (243-G);
- (viii) The state legislature may authorise the panchayats to levy, collect and appropriate suitable taxes, assign to the panchayats such taxes collected by the state government and provide for making grants-in-aid to the panchayats from the consolidated fund of the concerned state (243-H[a][b]&[c]);

- (ix) The legislature of a state may, by law, make provisions with respect to the maintenance of accounts by the panchayats and the auditing of such accounts (243-J); and
- (x) Subject to the provisions of Constitution, the legislature of a state may, by law, make provision with respect to all matters relating to or in connection with elections to the panchayats (243-K[4]).

The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 recognising the special nature of parts of North-Eastern India, Hill Council in West Bengal, District Councils in the Hills of Manipur and the Scheduled & Tribal Areas, has exempted these areas from any mandatory acceptance of this Amendment Act (243-M). The rights to extend the provisions of Part IX to the Scheduled & Tribal Areas referred to in clause (1) & (2) of Article 244 of Indian Constitution are reserved with the Parliament of India (243-M[b]).¹² The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 has added Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution of India under Article 243-G that lists matters (Twenty-Nine) on which the legislature of a state may, by law, endow the panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to implement the schemes for economic development and social justice.

The enactment of Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 has been widely hailed for its promising to transform representative democracy into a participatory one. As a matter of fact, the post-independence India has witnessed the spread of an attitude of passive observance and total dependence on the government. This attitude appears to be more pervasive in the

¹² Of late, Dilip Singh Bhuria Committee recommended the extension of the provisions of this Act to the Scheduled & Tribal Areas with some adaptations.

countryside where people's potential remains underestimated and unharnessed. The new Act is hoped to correct this by paving the way for the empowerment of powerless in the villages of India. Provisions like regular elections and reservations of different kinds to the weaker sections of the society will definitely broaden the foundations of Indian democracy. The emergence of new leadership from the grassroots in the coming years will not only make people at the village level more self-assured but will also have far reaching impact on the Indian party system as such, which at present badly suffers from the lack of mass leaders. A polity with leaders without followers naturally brings into picture the role of money and mafia as the means of garnering support. The new grass-roots leadership may significantly reduce the role of these two.

However, the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 does not clarify the objective of new panchayati raj that whether it aims at transforming panchayats into the institutions of self-governance or intends to leave undisturbed the conventional idea of viewing them as developmental agencies of a higher level of governance, especially the state government (243-G[a][b]). The basic objective of panchayati raj bodies has to be involving people in their own governance and cultivate initiative and self-reliance in them. The new Act is not very clear about this objective. After analysing the provisions of eleven of the state Panchayati Raj Acts enacted in consonance with Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992, the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation Task Force on Panchayati Raj noted with grave concern that "barring Bihar and Punjab, all other states have carefully avoided any reference to panchayats as institutions of self-government. In Bihar and Punjab also,

nothing else has been done except calling panchayats “the institutions of self-governance”.¹³

According to the critics, a major lacunae of Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 is that it recommends a uniform three-tier system below the state level in the same way as the Constitution (Sixty-fourth Amendment) Bill, 1989 had proposed.¹⁴ This pronounces disruption of old but successfully functioning local self-government structures in some of the states like Kerala and Karnataka.¹⁵

Scholars are critical of the Article 243-C(3c,d) also which provides for the representation of MPs, MLAs and MLCs in the intermediate and district level panchayats. This arrangement is believed to be a potential threat to the autonomy of PRIs as the involvement of these representatives would unnecessarily influence the local leadership. This will help building parties at the local level but not the people’s initiative. This will naturally increase the conflict and reduce the co-operation in the functioning of PRIs. Furthermore, there is every likelihood that the presence of MPs, MLAs and MLCs would lead to an ego clash with the local leadership. Indeed, this was one of the major reasons for the failure of old panchayat system also. The MPs Local

¹³ Report of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation Task Force on Panchayati Raj, 1995.

¹⁴ Pointing out this flaw of 64th Amendment Bill, 1989, EMS Namboodiripad tells how in Kerala after protracted discussions for nearly two decades, two-tier system of local self-government was unanimously found better suited for the conditions in the state. According to him, the proposed three-tier system would jeopardise Kerala’s efforts. EMS Namboodiripad, “Partisan Interest” in P. Satyanarayana, *Op. Cit.*, p.23.

¹⁵ If the two-tier model was adopted, or the states which had found this model more suitable had it been left to themselves, it would have been akin to the Socialist-Janata concept of four pillar state-village, district, state and centre- perhaps that was too much for the Congress(I) to concede. George Mathew “From Legislation to a Movement”, *The Hindu*, 9 January, 1993.

Area Development Scheme¹⁶ is also feared to steal the focus from Panchayati Raj. Many of these threats posed by the presence of legislators were well perceived and expressed by EMS Namboodiripad when he declared (in the capacity of a member of Ashok Mehta Committee) that he was 'for purely elected bodies at all the levels of Panchayati Raj. Having coopted members...is a hang over of the idea that the Panchayati Raj institutions are concerned with development alone and (are) not the elected organs of administration at the appropriate level'.¹⁷

A very pernicious provision of this Act is one which provides for the dissolution of a Panchayat even before the expiry of its term (243-F[1]). This leaves Panchayats completely at the mercy of a state government. What is still dangerous about Article 243-E[1] is that it does not stipulate any conditions which might lead to the dissolution of a Panchayat. Nor does it mention the authority capable of rendering a Panchayat (or all the Panchayats in one go!) dissolved. Against this backdrop the position of both the opposition parties dominated as well as assertive Panchayats becomes very precarious.¹⁸

Some of the highly valued clauses of Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1993 which are expected to make a great impact at the grass-roots level are related with the elections to the PRIs (243-E) and the

¹⁶ This scheme was introduced during Narasimha Rao regime. It puts a large sum of one crore rupees at the disposal of local M.P. which he/she can spend on the developmental works in the constituency.

¹⁷ *Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions*, Chairman: Ashok Mehta, New Delhi, Department of Rural Development, 1978.

¹⁸ Taking advantage of this ambiguity in the 73rd Amendment, U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994 has gone to the extent of making a provision for an administrative committee and even an administrator (undefined), who would function in the place of an elected Panchayat. See Section 11-B ([2][3][4] and [5]), U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994. Section 11-B(5) reads, 'The Administrative Committee or the Administrator shall be deemed to be duly constituted Gram Panchayat for the purposes of this Act'.

demarcation of the authority responsible for conducting elections to PRIs in a state.¹⁹ Independent India's experiment with democracy during the last five decades teaches that periodical, even if not a fully free and fair, electoral exercise itself is a matchless educating and democratising practice. The bargaining, negotiations and compromises which take place during electioneering greatly enhance the levels of consciousness in the society. It is owing to the periodical electoral exercises in the past that in spite of the class character of Indian democracy the socio-economically deprived sections of Indian society are increasingly becoming aware of their power. This experience is bound to be repeated still more effectively in the Panchayat elections as the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 has streamlined the hitherto discredited election process.²⁰ It is believed that the elections to PRIs will also compel a state government to keep its record clean and impressive for these elections are surely to be viewed as a referendum on the performance of a state government.

Among the most severe constraints on the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions before the enactment of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 was the financial crunch faced by the PRIs. Article 243-I of the new Act, which provides for the constitution of State Finance Commission in every state to review the financial situation of PRIs in the state,

¹⁹ According to Nirmal Mukherjee, the Act does not define the 'Chief Electoral Officer' of the State. It leaves to the states to define the 'Chief Electoral Officer'. This is a loop-hole that gives space for the manipulation of elections by the state governments. Occasional Papers, New Delhi, Institute of Social Sciences, 1991, p. 8).

²⁰ According to Rajeev Dhavan, periodical elections may have played wonders to Indian polity but in the case of elections to PRIs people may demonstrate their political consciousness on the eve of the elections and thereafter nothing else. See P. Satyanarayana, *Op. cit.*, p.10.

is viewed as a step in the right direction.²¹ As a back up measure to this step a SFC cell has been set up in the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) at the initiative of Union Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment to develop guidelines in respect of the tasks entrusted to the SFCs and to respond to them on various issues related with their functioning including the undertaking of specific studies on various aspects of Panchayat finances.²²

Like the mandatory provisions of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 its non-obligatory provisions have also attracted sharp criticism. The very first non-obligatory provision Article 243-A of the new Act, for example, is also the first to be targetted by the critics for having left the general body of village Panchayats i.e., Gram Sabha without any clear cut powers. The objective of the new Act is believed to be taking Indian democracy to the level of participatory democracy. However, the sustained participation of the poor, ignorant and the deprived to ensure the destruction of the 'culture of fear and silence' is not possible without a major focus on the role of Gram Sabha. The active role of Gram Sabha is the only guarantee that the ideal of 'power to the people' does not degenerate into 'power to the powerful'. By neglecting the Gram Sabha the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 completely misses the point. Reports reveal that almost in all the states Gram Sabhas are defunct as the post-73rd Amendment State legislations on Panchayati Raj have largely ignored the role of Gram Sabha.²³

²¹ Critics doubt the prospects of financial viability of PRIs even under the new Act. For them the Act unduly leaves the discretion to authorise PRIs to levy, receive or share taxes or receive from the Consolidated Fund of the State to the State Legislature. See Rajeev Dhavan, *ibid.*, p. 7.

²² Sushma Singh, "Initiative for Strengthening Panchayati Raj", *Kurukshetra*, April 1995, pp. 80-84.

²³ *Kurukshetra* (Editorial), April 1995, p.2.

The discretionary provisions related to the conferring of powers and functions on Panchayats by the State government are some other grey patches on the spread of Seventy-Third Amendment Act. These provisions ask the Panchayats to prepare the plans for economic and social development but don't empower the Panchayats to implement the plans which they prepare.²⁴ It is wrongly believed by many that the twenty-nine functions (in the case of U.P. thirty) in the Eleventh Schedule have been conferred on the Panchayats by the Constitution Amendment. Rather these articles relating to powers and functions of Panchayats appear to treat the Panchayats as agents of the State government for the implementation of schemes forced upon the PRIs. In the absence of a clear functional jurisdiction of Panchayats, State Finance Commission also can take cognisance of those functions only which the State legislature in their discretion may confer on Panchayats. Under these circumstances one can only speak of the moral responsibility, political obligation and good sense of a state government making it conscious about the devolution of powers and functions to panchayats.²⁵

Another controversial area where Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 leaves it to the discretion of State legislatures is the accounts and audit of Panchayats. A major criticism that Constitution (Sixty-

²⁴ According to S.P. Ranga Rao, 'the omission appears to be deliberate...only schemes related to the items of the Eleventh Schedule are to be implemented by the Panchayats and such schemes need not be necessarily those prepared by the Panchayats'. S.P. Ranga Rao, "The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act: What next?", *Kurukshetra*, April 1995, p. 11.

²⁵ It is also pointed out that 'with no guarantee of any enforcement Panchayats will either flounder helplessly or be manipulated or ignored by other more powerful agencies that will also operate in their geographic area...Disputes will arise and matters head for the higher judiciary as court litigation. The Amendment does not provide for any method of resolving disputes. Centre-State disputes go straight to the Supreme Court, Panchayat disputes will surface with ease and be resolved with difficulty. Rajeev Dhavan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

Fourth Amendment) Bill, 1989 attracted was against entrusting the function of audit and accounts of Panchayats to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India by this Bill. This was highlighted as a clear example of blatant centralisation. However, N. Mukherjee correctly calls this objection as wholly misconceived.²⁶ The CAG is a constitutional authority, not to be equated with the central government. In the words of N. Mukherjee 'constitutional authorities should be strengthened, not weakened by taking away functions from them which is their right and duty to perform....The form in which accounts are kept is a totally non-controversial point on which there should be no two opinions. There should, in fact, be a single form of accounts throughout the country so that there is then a single method of audit.'²⁷ Paradoxically, Constitution (Seventy-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1992 dealing with urban local self-government bodies places both accounts and audit separately in the hands of CAG.²⁸ Therefore, the rationale behind leaving the accounts and audit of PRIs to the discretion of the state government is rather incomprehensible. The critics have questioned not only the undercurrent of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 but also the very idea of constitutional amendment on Panchayats. As a matter of fact the idea of constitutional amendment on Panchayats cannot be seen in isolation from the vital question of political will to empower people. Without having any constitutional provision compelling them the states of West Bengal, Karnataka and Kerala have progressed reasonably well in the direction of strengthening PRIs. Whereas, there are states like U.P. and Bihar, where in view of a political culture of

²⁶ Nirmal Mukherjee, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

²⁷ *ibid.*

institutionalised inequality emanating from the semi-feudal agrarian relations and caste system, causing all pervading backwardness, it seems rather unlikely that Panchayati Raj in many of these states would get any better treatment than what it has received till date. For instance, government of Bihar has not yet conducted elections to the PRIs (till mid-1997), which it was obliged to have conducted within one year of the passage of State Panchayati Raj Act. And all the so called political compulsions, governmental (central) pressures and judicial directives have proved futile before the manoeuvres of Bihar government.²⁹ It appears that the passing of a Constitution Amendment Act might be a necessary condition but surely not a sufficient condition for the success of panchayats as the bodies of local self-government. What is more important is that the state level leadership and bureaucracy concede to the need of their attitudinal transformation sooner than later. If the state level politicians continue to view the new grass-roots leadership as their up-coming competitors and the bureaucracy sees in them a threat to their hitherto unchallenged position, the desired success of PRIs will take a longer route to reach home. Unfortunately, the ambiguity and undefined spaces in many of the provisions of Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 have put the bureaucracy in a commanding position by default. This is clearly evident from the

²⁸ Constitution (Seventy-fourth) Amendment Act, 1992, Government of India.

²⁹ It is ridiculous that the Bihar State Election Commission had to approach the Patna High Court for protection against contempt of court proceedings since it was not in a position to conduct elections to the PRIs, in spite of court directives, due to the non-co-operation of the State government. In another instance, the Union Rural Development Ministry had to stall the release of funds to eight states (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Rajasthan, Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Manipur) for not conducting elections to PRIs. Prabhat Datta, 'Browning the Green Revolution in Politics', *Telegraph* (Calcutta), 20 May 1996.

provisions of state legislations passed under the mandatory provisions of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992.

(B)

Article 243-D

Article 243-D of Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 by its likely implications becomes one of the most important articles of this Act.³⁰ This article reserves seats (also offices) for SCs/STs (also OBCs) in the PRIs on the pattern of a similar reservation for these sections (SCs and STs) of Indian society given by the Constitution of India in the legislative bodies at both the levels of Indian federalism. Article 243-D also provides for the reservation of seats/offices in the PRIs for women. This kind of reservation happens to be the first ever under the Indian Constitution.

In modern India the policy of preferential treatment to some of the sections of society was initiated by the British in pursuance of their primary objective of divide and rule. But in the hands of Indians, fighting for the independence of their country and later on building a nation after attaining its independence, like many other things the policy of preferential treatment or protective discrimination or reservations went through a transformation of its context and purport. Indeed, against the Ramsay MacDonald Award of 1932 Gandhi-Ambedkar Pact (Poona Pact) 1932 was quite a different thing.

³⁰ The reservation for women in PRIs given under this article has already started showing its impact along with the similar provisions of Seventy-fourth Amendment Act, 1992. The current demand for the reservation for women in legislative bodies is essentially inspired by the similar provisions of 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts.

Reservation of seats in the legislative bodies for SCs and STs is a well accepted policy now. The extent to which this policy has served its purpose can be debated upon; but this seems to be beyond any doubts that the extension of this policy to the villages of India in the form of reservation of seats/offices for the marginalised sections of Indian village society in the Panchayati Raj Institutions through the Article 243-D of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992, will have a tremendous effect upon the society of village India. According to the Clause (1) of Article 243-D:

‘Seats shall be reserved for (a) the Scheduled Castes;³¹ and (b) the Scheduled Tribes, in every Panchayat and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Panchayat area or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.’

Even in the fifth decade of India’s independence majority of the Scheduled Caste population throughout the country and especially in U.P. continues to be the field labourers and other menial workers suffering from acute economic deprivation and social handicaps. Because of their extremely weak position vis-à-vis the land owning peasant castes, the Scheduled Castes dare not stand up and assert themselves in front of their employers-cum-oppressors. The scanty representation that Scheduled Castes got occasionally in the intermittently elected Panchayati Raj Institutions over the years has done

³¹ This section proposes to focus mainly on the Scheduled Castes because in U.P. these are Scheduled Castes rather than the Scheduled Tribes which are more prominently engaged in the socio-economic and political relationships with other castes, especially with the land owning ones, throughout the state.

little to improve their condition. Writing on U.P., Ali Ashraf remarks 'there was a time not long ago when there was a high degree of co-relationship between the upper castes, landlords and control over the Panchayat Institutions'.³² Such a situation is nothing but a reflection of Indian society's socio-economic inequalities through its political institutions - apparently an clear example of the base and superstructure relationship. In order to break this nexus, Indian state was obliged to exercise its relative autonomy which it did by enacting the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992. It is hoped, and perhaps not unduly, that the provisions for the reservation of seats for the marginalised castes will prove to be quite an asset in changing the spectrum of Indian villages. No doubt the process of transformation will not be easy, especially during the initial phases due to the factors like the unavailability of assertive leadership among the marginalised sections of the society at present, and the unwillingness of the entrenched castes to part with their conservative and exploitative ways. Yet, such steps cannot be held back for long, waiting for a more favourable climate. Rather, these steps are to be seen as instruments to create an environment conducive enough for the initiation of far more radical steps. It is hoped that when the deprived sections of the rural Indian society are exposed to the new possibilities of changing their conditions by the provisions of Article 243-D not only a new generation of more assertive leadership will emerge from these sections but gradually the entrenched castes will also concede to the new change. Once the new system gets the required momentum, hurdles will vanish.

³² Ali Ashraf, Uttar Pradesh, in George Mathew (ed.), *Status of Panchayati Raj in the States of India: 1994*, Delhi, Concept, 1995, p. 211.

Clause (4) of Article 243-D further extends the reservation for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the office of chairperson at all the three levels of the new Panchayat system. In any system, chairperson is the supreme authority as well as the representative of the system. This position in a political system has its psychological, if not essentially material, ramifications for all those who can identify themselves with the person holding this key position. This has a more powerful impact on the psychology and the morale of a people when the unit is as small as a Panchayat and the chairperson is one of those who have traditionally been on the receiving end of social interaction. In fact, this not only means an impact on something as intangible as psychology and morale but also on the actual material conditions of a people. To illustrate the point in the villages of India dominant peasant castes not only enjoy a greater degree of confidence vis-à-vis other castes in the village but their living quarters are also more developed compared to the hamlets of the lower castes since the village Pradhan who acts as the conduit of resources from the government belongs to one or the other dominant peasant caste in most of the castes. Furthermore, the cases of atrocities upon the weaker sections generally go unreported and their protests unheard as the version of village Pradhan weighs more than the voices of socially and economically deprived sections of the society. The rationale behind extending the reservation in the office of chairperson is that all these unhealthy trends should take a new turn once a person belonging to the deprived sections of society emerges as the de jure leader of the village. This may help increase the self-esteem of the people belonging to the deprived sections of the society. With the passage of time this

may also help in bringing about an attitudinal change among the entrenched castes.

However, despite the benefits of extending reservation on the basis of caste to the office of chairperson, this turns out to be a case of unwarranted over enthusiasm and constitutional excess. It is to be kept in mind that chairperson is an executive head. At no other level of Indian federal structure the seat of executive head is reserved on the basis of some kind of preferential treatment or protective discrimination. This is to say that the Prime Minister of India or any of the Chief Ministers do not get their position as a result of some kind of social justice exercise. If Panchayat system is seen as the 'third stratum' of Indian federalism there is no need for a step like the one under discussion. Any such move jeopardises the legitimacy of an executive head making him or her the representative of only a part and not of the entire electorate. It is not unlikely that an executive head chosen so would fail to free himself/herself from some kind of biases. Besides, there are chances of this move further aggravating caste tensions which are already tearing asunder the society and polity of some of the states like U.P. and Bihar. Nurturing upon the relations of domination and subordination since time immemorial Indian villages have not yet absorbed fully the principles of equality and liberty. In the absence of really effective land reforms, the dominant castes still enjoy a far superior social, economic and political position. If their position is rudely challenged, as has been done by the Article 243-D(4) it should not be

surprising that the dominant castes resist, and react sharply.³³ The manifestation of this sharp reaction may be anything from passivity about PRIs to non-co-operation with the new office holders of power within them and from harassment of deprived castes to open violence unleashed against them. If any of these apprehensions come true the growth and the impact of PRIs will be adversely affected. Surely, the Indian state cannot monitor the happenings in all the five lakh odd villages of the country, all the time. Besides the entrenched castes are better equipped to manipulate the Indian state itself in their interest.

It can be argued therefore that by leaving the office of chairperson in PRIs to the logic of electoral process the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 could avoid the chances of unnecessary friction in the villages as well as in the PRIs. This might have delayed the realisation of desired social change but it could be recompensated by emphasising more vigorously on land reforms and on the social indicators of development like education, child welfare and the upliftment of women. This would have diverted some of the pressure from the political route to social change to the socio-economic route to social change. In the states of Kerala and West Bengal this experiment has been undertaken quite successfully. Giving an account of this experiment in West Bengal, Basudeb Acharya, a Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) told the House during the debate on Sixty-fourth Amendment Bill,

³³ 'Evidently, the post of a Pradhan is a key-post...the upper castes do all that is possible to win the Pradhanship and the general consensus in villages is not very much in favour of accepting a lower caste man as Pradhan unless the conflict and cleavage has become sharp, beyond the limit of reconciliation between the upper and lower castes.' Rangnath, *The Changing Pattern of Rural Leadership in Uttar Pradesh*, New Delhi, Sindhu Publishing Ltd., 1974, p. 29.

1989 that “in West Bengal thirty per cent of the members of the Gram Panchayat belong to scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes even without this reservation. An agricultural labourer can contest with a landlord and he can win.”³⁴ Thus any delinking of the question of reservation to SCs and STs in the office of chairpersons of PRIs from the question of political will tends to obfuscate a holistic view of the problem.

Another very significant aspect of Article 243-D is the provision for 33% reservation for women in the posts of members as well as in the office of chairpersons at all the three levels of Panchayati Raj Institutions.³⁵ This reservation includes 33% reservation for women from SCs and STs from the quota of reservation to these sections in a Panchayat area. This reservation also provides for an internal rotation within a Panchayat by which such reserved seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

This has been increasingly realised by the policy makers in recent years that for any meaningful social change and rural development, women are to be made the hub of the process of social change. In real terms women contribute to the rural economy more than their men-folk and their share in the household activities is disproportionately more than the men. Nevertheless, women remain to be living on the periphery of social existence. Women’s share in the governance of community life is far from adequate even though they constitute half of the community. Fact of the matter is if the women remain insulated from the process of change, positively no change can be brought about. It is with this understanding the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act,

³⁴ Parliamentary Debates, Lok Sabha, 15 May 1989, New Delhi, Lok Sabha Secretariat, p.62.

1992 provides for 33% reservation of seats/office for women in PRIs at all the three levels. So far the participation of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions has been almost marginal. According to the figures of 1982, out of 2,12,248 Gram Panchayats only in 506 (0.23%) women were elected. The percentage of elected women members was just 29.10% as compared to that of coopted members (70-90%) in both Gram Panchayats as well as Panchayat Samitis. Regarding the elected women members of Gram Panchayat to total number of Panchayats it was only about one-fifth (19.41%). In Panchayat Samitis a little more than one-fourth (25.35%) women members were coopted and only 13.27% were elected.³⁶

The provisions of Article 243-D(2) 8(4) propose to change the situation in a big way. The reports trickling in about the implementation of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 say that women are not understanding the significance of the new change and are acting as puppets in the hands of their men-folk. Indeed, there is considerable degree of truth in these reports, yet there are reasons to believe that this situation cannot sustain for long. The women are bound to become aware of their situation as well as of their rights by the exposure to new system and this will make them more independent, competitive and assertive.

According to a view the reservation for women in the post of chairperson may be questioned on the same grounds on which the reservation for SCs and STs is put in the spot. Of course, technically both are reservations in the office of chairperson. However, there lies a major difference between

³⁵ Article 243-D (2) 8(4).

the two varieties of reservation. Contrary to SCs or STs, women exclusively constitute no caste, no class and no community. They are rather an inseparable part of each of these categories. Therefore, their interests do not clash antagonistically with any other social group. Besides, in absolute numbers they nearly equalise with men. These factors fundamentally change the nature of the reservation for women. The reservation for women may lead to some kind of an ego clash with the men-folk in a village or in a PRI. But reaction to it should not be as sharp as it may in the case of reservation for SCs or STs in the office of chairperson presenting a real or a perceived threat to the caste/class interests of the hitherto hegemonic social groups.

Article 243-D(4) also makes it clear that 'the number of offices reserved under this clause shall be allotted by rotation to different Panchayats at each level'. This provision makes a very important aspect of the reservation policy as envisaged for the PRIs. Reservation to the weaker sections of society has been provided for to expedite the process of attitudinal change that is inseparably wedded to the goal of social change. Rotation of reserved offices proposes that in every PRI this process is to be undertaken. However, there are chances of this provision being misused if it is not followed in letter and spirit. It is possible that the initially reserved PRIs as well as the PRIs, which escaped the reservation net during the first round, find the interests of their respective leadership converging at the time during the next round of elections. The new political elite thrown up by the provision of reservation in the office of

³⁶ Rural Development Statistics, Hyderabad. National Institute of Rural Development, 1982.

chairperson may not like their constituencies being denied the facility of reservation this time forcing them to face a tougher contest in an open fray. Similarly, the leadership of unreserved constituencies would not welcome the casting of the net of reservation upon their constituencies thereby endangering their hitherto secure position. In such a situation vested interests may try to exercise some kind of pressures on the official machinery to slow it down on the execution of rotation provision. A state government may also choose to manipulate rotation provision to serve its own vested interests like the building up its party at the grass roots level. If, under any such circumstances, PRIs go to elections without adequately following the rotation of reserved offices the very purpose of reservation to the weaker sections shall be defeated. This will restrict the efforts to bring about attitudinal change in the society to a very limited number of PRIs initially demarcated as reserved. Even in such PRIs, the democratic right of electorate to elect a person of their choice will be unduly denied for a prolonged period of time. Understandably, any experiment in the direction of social change cannot be undertaken at the expense of the democratic rights of one group of people for ever. If done so this will generate more of animosity among the groups than the accomplishment of attitudinal change. Therefore, it is very important that the principle of rotation of the reserved offices is followed in letter and spirit.

Clause (5) of Article 243-D recognises the temporary nature of all kinds of reservations based on caste provided for under the Article 243-D of Seventy-Third Amendment Act. It stipulates that 'the reservation of seats under Clause (1) 8(2) and the reservation of offices of chairpersons (other than the

reservation for women under clause (4) shall cease to have effect on the expiration of the period specified in Article 334.³⁷

This provision clearly indicates that basically the idea of reservation has an instrumental value. This is to be used to improve the condition of the most marginalised sections of Indian society thereby moulding the Indian society according to the ideals expressed in the preamble of the Constitution of India. This clause excludes the reservation for women from its purview as the Article 334 of Indian Constitution does not deal with the reservation for women which came into existence long after the enactment of Article 334. When it is felt that this objective has been met the reservations given under Article 243-D shall cease to have effect. Thus, Clause (5) of Article 243-D recognises the caste based reservations only as a temporary measure.

The Article 243-D leaves it to the discretion of respective state governments whether to provide for a separate reservation for the 'backward classes of citizens'. Clause (6) of the Article 243-D reads "Nothing in this Part shall prevent the legislature of a state from making any provision for reservation of seats in any panchayat or offices of chairpersons in the panchayats at any level in favour of backward classes of citizens."³⁸

³⁷ The period of ten years prescribed in the original Constitution was extended to twenty years by the Constitution (8th Amendment) Act 1959, and then to thirty years by Constitution (23rd Amendment) Act, 1969, on the ground that the object of the safeguard had not yet been fulfilled. This has been further extended to forty years by the Constitution (45th Amendment) Act, 1980 and to fifty years by the Constitution (62nd Amendment) Act 1989. D.D. Basu, Introduction to the Constitution of India, New Delhi, Prentice Hall, 1993, p. 364.

³⁸ Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 including its Article 243-D does not define the term 'backward class' as mentioned in the clause (6) of the Article 243-D. Therefore, it may be assumed that the term as used there stands for the castes listed as Other Backward Castes (OBC) in a state.

Ideally speaking, this provision intends to make Panchayats more democratic and broad based by inducting as many sections of Indian society into the organisation and functioning of PRIs, as possible. This can also be viewed as an attempt to free the PRIs from the clutches of hitherto entrenched castes. It is quite possible that in many of the states this provision would have a desired effect. But in some other states like U.P. and Bihar, where the interests of OBCs are not so much in conflict with the upper castes as they are with those of SCs, the situation is to be seen under a different light. In these states relationship between SCs and a sizeable section of OBCs is determined by their class situation. Many of the OBCs are strong land owning peasant castes (ECCs).³⁹ Their interests naturally clash with the interests of SCs who in majority of the cases are landless field labourers. As a matter of fact, the cases of atrocities upon SCs by the OBCs is not something very new to some of the states including U.P. The land owning OBCs have frequently indulged in caste/class violence against the lower castes to maintain their upper hand. In such a situation a provision like reservation of seats/office in PRIs for the OBCs raises many apprehensions. This ironically would offer preferential treatment to the oppressor against the oppressed and in the hands of some unscrupulous demagogues, fuelling caste sentiments, this may inflict much more harm to the interests of the most marginalised sections than they have experienced till date. Thus, by its implications the Clause (6) of Article 243-D may pose a real threat to the objectives of Clauses (1), (2) and (4) of the same

³⁹ 'The highly politicised groups of Jats and Yadavas, when forced by a challenge from lower classes, particularly lower caste agricultural labourers, often adopted an extremely aggressive posture towards the low castes.' Zoya Hasan, "Class and Caste: The Dynamics of Political Change in Uttar Pradesh", in Hasan, Jha and Khan (eds.), *The State, Political Process and Identity*, New Delhi, Sage, 1989, p. 265.

Article. This also exposes the contradiction within the provisions of an Article of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992.

However, the provisions of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 especially its Article 243-D (4) and (6) are bound to change the dynamics of caste politics in the states of India. The following chapter, which discusses caste politics in Uttar Pradesh since independence, gives us an idea of what have been the relationships among different castes in Uttar Pradesh and how the provisions of new legislation may alter them.

CHAPTER-3

Caste Politics in Uttar Pradesh

(A)

A Historical Survey

Uttar Pradesh is the fourth largest state of India area-wise and the first population-wise.¹ Both geographically and historically it occupies a central place in the vast north Indian plains. Perhaps, Uttar Pradesh presents no less diversities than the rest of the country put together.² On none of the parameters of statehood U.P. presents a natural unity. Yet, UP has been a politico administrative unit for more than a century. Its democratic experience before and after independence has been as one entity. Such causes of friction like the virulent anti-Brahminism of South India and the Kamma-Reddi friction of Andhra Pradesh are almost negligible in U.P. The language and boundary issues are also virtually absent in U.P. This presents a situation in U.P., which is markedly different from most other states in India. But this also presents the problem of identifying the issues fundamental to the politics of U.P.³

Caste and religion have been two major determinants of politics in Uttar Pradesh. Here caste and politics have been closely interacting since the earliest days of state's experience with democracy. Regarding the interaction between caste and politics, Uttar Pradesh perfectly follows the dictum of Rajni Kothari that until the institutional changes introduced in a particular society become

¹ According to the Census of India, 1991, U.P. continues to be the largest populated state with 16.44% (13,91,12,287) people of the country living there. Census of India, Series 1: Provisional Population Totals, New Delhi, Registrar-General and Census Commissioner, 1991.

² These diversities of U.P. present 'The greatest difficulties for generalisation'. Atul Kohli, *The State and Poverty in India: The Politics of Reform*, New Delhi, CUP, 1987, p. 190.

part of the working relationships of that society, they cannot hope to gain stability and legitimacy....(Therefore) The important thing is organisation and articulation of support through the organisations in which masses are to be found'.⁴

Besides being a social category which provides raw material to politics caste also has an economic dimension. In U.P. (especially in Meerut) as a principle those castes which enjoy higher ritual status in the hierarchical system are also the major land holding castes whereas, the land-less labourers almost always belong to the lower castes.⁵ The control or the lack of control over the means of production-in this case land-fulfills one of the main conditions of treating caste as class. But another major condition, i.e. class consciousness is largely found to be missing.⁶ In the place of class consciousness we come across another type of group identity namely caste consciousness. This may be called an imperfectness in the caste and class identities. The roots of this consciousness lie deep in the religio-cultural tradition of the country which mystifies the understanding of the causes and consequences of class situation of different caste groups. In a number of instances, the relations of production unambiguously reveal a class relationship existing between the two groups of persons engaged in the process of production. But these groups especially the

³ Angela S. Burger, *Opposition in a Dominant Party System*, Bombay, OUP, 1969, p.21.

⁴ Rajni Kothari, *Caste in Indian Politics*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, pp. 3-4.

⁵ A rare instance of class consciousness comes before us in the form of Northern Agriculturist Party formed in early 1930s by the Zamindars of U.P. They formed NAP to protect their class interests and Zamindars from different upper castes joined it. N.C. Saxena, *Mainstream*, 15 June 1985., pp.15.-19.

⁶ 'It is unusual to find in the Indian social hierarchy very low social status and very high control of land going together'. R.K. Hebsur, "Congress and Dominant Castes", in Joshi and Hebsur (ed.), *Congress in Indian Politics: A Centenary Perspective*, Bombay, Popular, 1987, p. 74.

actual producers thoroughly lack the understanding of this relationship. Those who control land - the primary means of production - may be having some idea of their common interests but they too don't have a deeper sense of class groupings.⁷ This caste consciousness usually overtakes the class consciousness but at times class interests appear to be dictating the terms. This manifests best in the voting pattern of different caste groups. In the words of Paul Brass, "The difficulties of disentangling ethnic or caste from class factors in voting is largely attributable to the fact that the *correspondence between caste and economic class is imperfect in U.P...the imperfectness of correspondence means that the potential for appeals (based on economic-cum-caste inequalities) is limited...*(the) middle size and small holding 'Brahmin kisans' are probably no more likely to vote for the party of Charan Singh (known to be upholding the interests of backward castes) than the richer Brahmin landlords; similarly rich and middle Yadav peasants are more or less equally unlikely to vote for the Congress (known to be an upper caste hegemony supporter)...full articulation in class terms is prevented by the persistent hold of caste sentiments and antagonisms."⁸

This already complex scenario becomes further complicated when we confront a political mobilisation strategy of joining the two extreme ends of the socio-economic hierarchy namely the elite castes like Brahmins and the lowest castes like Harijans, jumping over the middle peasant castes, as carried out very successfully by the Congress for decades. The success of this strategy once

⁷ In classical Marxist terminology this situation remains as one of class-in-itself. At least, at present this situation does not betray any possibility of changing into 'class-for-itself' in the foreseeable future.

⁸ Paul R. Brass, *Caste, Faction and Party in Indian Politics*, Vol. II, New Delhi, Chanakya, 1984, p. 9.

again defies the attempts to read caste as class with reference to North Indian plains especially with reference to U.P.

Nevertheless, the pattern of political mobilisation by different parties in successive elections shows that the economic interests of caste groups definitely influence the voting behaviour as well as the formation of informal/formal political coalitions between different castes. In a multi-caste society the support of any single caste group cannot suffice to win an election. The logic of competitive electoral politics compels caste-groups to forge inter-caste alliances to gain control over resources through political power. In a situation like this, some common factor has to thread through the different components of any such alliance. In a highly hierarchical system, like caste, not the ritual status but more tangible material interests only can become the basis of a political alliance.⁹ It is at this point caste has to come to terms with class interests.¹⁰

All the castes in UP can be broadly divided into four groups. The castes having lowest ritual status on the hierarchy scale castes are officially termed as scheduled castes. These are the traditionally deprived castes which are now receiving constitutional protection. The *Chamars* or *Jatavas* form the numerically largest and spatially most widespread scheduled caste group in UP. The concentration of *Jatavas* decreases from west to east in the State. The maximum concentration of *Jatavas* is in the districts of Agra, Aligarh, Bijnor,

⁹ Sometimes the logic of electoral politics enjoys a relative autonomy from all factors except the political compulsions. The alliance of BJP-BSP in UP is a clear example of it. BSP chief Kanshi Ram himself accepted it (during the post-1996 Assembly elections period) in a meeting of party workers on 26 September 1997. *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 27 September 1997.

Bulandshahar, Gaziabad Haridwar, Meerut, Moradabad, Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur. Traditional Awadh region, except for Fatehpur and Kanpur, has a very small of *Jatav* population. Again, in the hills of UP their numbers are strikingly low.¹¹ The *Jatavas* are traditional employees, wage labourers and tenants. They are rarely proprietary cultivators. In UP those areas see the maximum concentration of *Jatavas* where till recently the feudal system of economy had necessitated employment of a large number of agricultural labourers.¹² In different regions of UP, the *Jatavas* have acquired socio-economic attributes according to the nature of the social relations of production in operation in that particular region. Hence Jatav population in the Zamindari area of Awadh, Rajput area of Bundelkhand, Rajput-Brahmin region of UP hills and Jat region of western plains shows striking differences.¹³

“The Pasis, another scheduled caste group of significance in the state, are concentrated in the central and east-central districts, where their numbers put them among the largest castes. Since late 1930s this caste has tried to raise its status through the process of ‘Sanskritisation’...Unsuccessful efforts by the State Pasi Mahasabha and some of its district units in the early 1950s included appeals to the courts. More recently this group has turned to electoral politics, possibly as an alternative method of raising its status”.¹⁴

¹⁰ ‘It is evident from...(the) voting behaviour in UP over the past twenty years that it is often difficult to disentangle the separate effects of ethnic and class identities in voting’. Paul R. Brass, *Op. cit.*, p.9.

¹¹ A.B. Mukherjee, *The Chamars of Uttar Pradesh: A Study in Social Geography*, New Delhi, Inter India Publications, 1980, pp. 19-32. Jatav or Chamar terms are used to denote the same caste group. (See A.B. Mukherjee). This study proposes to use the term Jatav for denoting the task group hereafter.

¹² *ibid.*, p.44.

¹³ *ibid.*, p.106.

¹⁴ Angela Burger, *Op. cit.*, p.25.

Besides *Jatavas* and *Pasis* there are many other scheduled castes like Baheliya, Balmiki, Bhuiyar, Khatik, Sansi, etc. which are scattered throughout the state. An important aspect of scheduled castes in UP is that their percentage in the total population is 21%, which is higher than their all-India percentage or percentage in the population of any other state of the Union.¹⁵

The second group of castes in the state is that of backward castes or the Intermediate Cultivating Castes (ICC). These castes are placed immediately above the Scheduled Castes on the hierarchy scale and are primarily middle peasant castes. These castes also receive some protective cover from the state but its scope is not as wide as the one that covers the Scheduled Castes. The most important among the Backward Castes are the *Kurmis*, *Lodhs* and *Yadavs*. The *Yadavs*, who are also known as *Ahirs* or *Ahars*, are a large and rather evenly distributed caste with good strength in almost all the districts except those of the Western U.P. and the North-Western hills. The District Gazetteers do not refer to *Yadavs* in quite as glowing terms as they do to *Kurmis*. The *Kurmis* have their main concentration in the Eastern and North-Central districts. They are relatively better off than other middle or low castes. They also claim to be in the higher Kshatriya or warrior caste category. The third important Backward Caste in the state prefers to call itself *Lodh-Rajputs*. This caste also has upward aspirations. The economic and social status of this caste varies considerably within UP. Other backward castes, less prominent but of some importance in state politics, include the *Goojars*, *Gadariyas*, *Kachhis*, *Koeris*, *Muraos*, *Sainthwars* and *Sainis*. Most of these aspire for higher social

¹⁵ Atul Kohli, *Op. cit.*, p.205.

status.¹⁶ Besides them, there are a large number of other backward castes with varying ritual status and occupational activities like artisanship and craftsmanship. These may be called lower backward castes.

Jats and *Tyagis/Bhumihars* are two peasant/cultivating castes which have not been listed either as backward or as elite upper castes.¹⁷ They together constitute the third group of castes according to the present categorisation. These castes are also termed as Elite Cultivating Class (ECC). Among them *Tyagis* are upper castes and the *Jats* are de facto high caste. Some ethnographies of yore have given *Jats* a status midway between the *Rajputs* and *Ahirs*. *Jats* are concentrated in the Western districts and control vast agricultural tracts. Many *Jats*, for example Chaudhary Charan Singh himself, consider themselves to be the leaders of backward classes. Like *Jats*, *Tyagis/Bhumihars* also control vast agricultural tracts. Their concentration is mainly in a few districts of Western UP and North-Eastern districts. In social status *Tyagis/Bhumihars* are somewhere between Brahmins and *Rajputs*.¹⁸ A typical characteristic of *Tyagis/Bhumihars* is their aversion to manual labour despite holding vast land tracts. This feature is shared by *Jats* also to some extent. This habit leads them to employ the lower caste as cheap labour in their fields. This becomes an important factor in the social relationship of production with all its naturally following consequences making these two

¹⁶ Angela S. Burger, *Op. cit.*, p.27.

¹⁷ The difference between the elite cultivating castes and the intermediate cultivating castes is that ECCs never suffered from caste afflictions as many of the ICCs have and still do. Unlike ICCs the ECCs are far lesser in numerical strength than the ICCs (2.1% against 41.9%). Third, the ECCs are concentrated in a few areas of the state whereas the distribution of the ICCs is spatially uniform. Lastly, the ECCs in spite of their small numbers control larger land tracts per capita than the ICCs.

¹⁸ Angela S. Burger, *Op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

castes (along with other upper castes) capitalist farmers (especially after the Green revolution) and the lower castes wage earners.

The fourth and final grouping comprises of the elite castes, commonly known as upper castes. These castes (except Khatri and Kayasthas who are predominantly urban) are prominent in rural as well as urban areas of the state. The *Brahmins, Rajputs/Thakurs, Banias, Khatri*s and *Kayasthas* are the most important of these castes. Some of these castes (like *Rajputs*) are also traceable among the Muslim community of the state. However, in such cases the religious consciousness is generally found to be overtaking the caste identity. The

upper/elite castes are distributed throughout the state and constitute almost 20.0% of the state's population. After independence these castes for long remained unchallenged in their domination of the economic and the political scene of UP.

TABLE 3.0: CASTE PROFILE OF UTTAR PRADESH

Caste Category	Name of the Caste/Castes	Percentage in Total Population
Elite Castes	Brahmins, Thakurs, Banias, Khatri, Kayasthas	20.0
Elite Cultivating Castes	Jats, Bhumihars/Tyagis	2.1
Intermediate Cultivating Castes	Yadavs, Kurmis, Koiris, etc.	41.9
Scheduled Castes	Chamars, Pasis and others	21.0

Source: Atul Kohli, *The State and Poverty in India: The Politics of Reform*, New Delhi, CUP, 1987, p.205; and N.C. Saxena, "Caste and Zamindari Abolition in U.P.", *Mainstream*, 15 June 1985, pp. 15-19.

Caste is a highly important social aspect of U.P. society which perhaps influences the state politics more than any other factor. But, in U.P., till 1990s conflict on caste lines was never more severe than the conflict on the religious lines. It was during 1990s that the face of U.P. politics markedly changed as caste conflict started pushing the conflict on religious lines into the background. The recent tendencies emerging in U.P. politics appear to be very akin to those which have been dominating the politics of some other states like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra for quite some time now. The current round of caste based political mobilisation has significantly changed the idiom of U.P. politics. For example, this has compelled all the political parties in the state to give a prominent position to the articulation of the interests of the Scheduled Castes on their agenda. This trend seems to be the outcome of an aggressive mobilisation of numerically strong but socially weak Scheduled Castes and lower backward castes in U.P.

The mobilisation of Scheduled Castes and lower OBCs in U.P. during 1990s is the logical corollary of the process which started in the State during 1960s in the wake of Green Revolution in the form of ECCs' and to some extent ICCs' mobilisation. During the 1960s round of mobilisation the newly prospering ECCs and ICCs were simultaneously becoming politically ambitious also. The factor that was inspiring them to control political power, was the need felt to strengthen and further their newly acquired economic gains. Besides, they were also in no mood to let their gains to seep down to the social strata placed below them. Contrary to this the 1990s' round of political mobilisation of castes has assumed a very different character and is addressing

very different issues. The caste mobilisation of 1990s is not focused at preserving and furthering some newly gained prosperity, rather it pronounces a fundamental protest of the deprived sections of the U.P. society against the politico-economic injustice and social disabilities inflicted upon them by the caste system.¹⁹ This is for the first time that the lowest stratum of caste hierarchy is not willing to accept a subordinate political position and has been trying to throw-up its own political elite to bargain with other caste groups on its own terms. Another aspect of this mobilisation of the lowest stratum is that the castes placed higher than this stratum, particularly the land-owning castes are adopting a reactionary stance against this mobilisation. The net result of this interaction is that at present caste is on the centre-stage of U.P. politics as a factor that was never ever so important in the U.P. politics. Sometimes, it appears to have pushed even the communal question to the background.²⁰ At the societal level this interaction has made the existing caste equations between the land-owning and the landless agricultural labourer castes highly frictional and at the political level this has made the politics highly competitive.

The main character of U.P. society is that it is a multi-caste society. Naturally, the dynamics of multi-caste equations become a highly important factor of State politics as well. The politics of U.P. during the post-

¹⁹ '...the current disturbances reflect the increasing resolve on the part of Dalits not to tolerate any longer the lowly social position which has been assigned to them in the caste fragmented Hindu order'. "Caste Adrift in U.P.", *The Times of India*, 10 February 1994.

²⁰ Caste politics seems to have its advantages also. The relegation of the communal question to the background appears to be one of them. With the emergence of highly frictional U.P. caste politics various caste groups are viewing each other as enemies. Therefore, for the time being minorities have been spared from being identified as enemy or at least the main enemies the decreasing of communal riots in U.P. in 1960s seems to be one of the indicators of this. The failure of 'Ram Mandir' issue of BJP and allies in binding the Hindus together overcoming caste divisions may be another indicator of this.

independence period can be termed as the history of successive political mobilisations of different caste groups striving to capture political power to improve their social and economic conditions. This process has also been directly linked to the emergence and growth of opposition parties in the State.

Political parties as such are a relatively new invention. A political party is formed generally to air the interests and grievances of one or more social groups and to fight for that purpose. Ideally, after coming to power (sometimes even to come to power) a political party has to keep in view the interests of other sections of the society as well. But this ideal is not served always in its true sense. In a competitive political system political power being the decisive factor in the sharing of limited resources and opportunities available to a society also becomes the focus of struggle between different groups in a society. After attaining political power the social groups forming the support base of a party instinctively endeavour to prevent other social groups, especially those resting below, from making attempts to divest these entrenched social groups of their newly acquired political power. This denial of access to political power by the entrenched social groups generates a sense of deprivation among other social groups at an early stage of competitive politics. This sense of deprivation among the discontented social groups is initially expressed by their attempts to make the ruling groups aware of their dissatisfaction with their share in resources and opportunities. The leaders of these groups, who are coopted by the ruling groups to acquire a wider support and legitimacy, become instrumental in the initial expression of this dissatisfaction. But since the resources and opportunities are either limited or the greed and fears of the ruling groups make them unavailable to others, the coopted leaders later get

disillusioned. They also see their positions facing the danger of permanent subordination. This becomes the departure point of oppositional and competitive politics²¹ in a political system. Emergence of new political parties is the clearest sign of the changing nature of a political system and fermentation in a composite society. The newly coming up political parties are often more radical than the already existing party(ies). Often the newly formed parties represent the interests of more than one social group which commonly share the sense of deprivation during a particular time-span. Many times they, rather than making individual attempts to capture political power, try to form a coalition of social groups to divest the already ruling social groups of their political power.

In U.P., as in many other states of post-independence India, the new social groups have been generally politically mobilised by the opposition parties and not by the party in power, namely the Congress. The Congress, as the oldest and the dominant party in India naturally drew its leadership and members from the groups that had mobilised before or by the time India attained independence. In most of the cases these groups were the elite (upper) castes and the educated middle classes, which again belonged exclusively or predominantly to the elite castes. Amongst the elite castes also Brahmins of every hue were the main group in and behind the Congress. They were followed by the *Kayasthas*, *Banias*, *Khattris* and *Thakurs*. Muslims and Harijans were two other groups which contributed in a big way to the

²¹ Angela S. Burger, *Op. cit.*, p.10. 'Recently mobilised groups may discover that an established party has been pre-empted by social rivals who were mobilised earlier. Those in control of the party are likely to be reluctant to relinquish their position and may attempt to limit admittance of their rivals to leadership ranks'.

Congress's support base without claiming any significant leadership positions. There was a classical case of "vertical mobilisation"²² as undertaken by the Congress. Congress remained a predominant party till the late sixties facing no serious challenge from the Opposition, thanks to the solid support extended by the Brahmins, Muslims and the Harijans. Indeed, not only these caste/religious group but most of the other caste groups also voted for the Congress - the predominant party - in large numbers during this period. However, the opposition parties during this period were also trying to develop the matching skills to play the caste card. They adopted a two-pronged strategy, which aimed at:

- (i) breaching the Congress fort;
- (ii) mobilising those castes which had been neglected by the Congress, despite their numerical strength..

Thus, the opposition parties of the day were willy-nilly forced to emulate the Congress ways in their pursuit of fighting the Congress. Consequently, the opposition parties, especially the Lohia Socialists, also tried to forged multi-caste alliances to ensure electoral success against the Congress.²³

²² "The relationship that caste bears to politics can best be understood in terms of three types of political mobilisation, each suggestive of different phases of political development: vertical, horizontal and differential. Vertical mobilisation is the marshalling of political support by traditional notables in local societies that are organised and integrated by rank, mutual dependence, and the legitimacy of traditional authority". Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoebel Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1969, p. 24.

²³ R.K. Hebsur, "Congress and Dominant Castes", in Ram Joshi and R.K. Hebsur, *Op. cit.*

Nevertheless, the credit for inventing the device called inter-caste alliance goes to the Congress which perhaps by chance²⁴ got hold of this technique. During the freedom struggle the cosmopolitan leadership of the Congress saw that the religion and caste related issues as either irrelevant or insignificant. To some, such issues were inconvenient also because of their conflictual nature. Precisely the Gandhian strategy was also to hold all the major social (and economic) contradictions in check so that the cause of freedom struggle would not be hampered. But, the Congress could not simply wish away the problems arising out of caste and communal loyalties and mobilisation. Caste soon became a major factor to be reckoned with, and it still remains so. In the opinion of Morris Jones²⁵ its reason was that after independence the Indian society and polity, hitherto kept apart, had to increasingly grapple with each other. Rudolphs, Kothari, Weiner and other scholars have also demonstrated that how the interaction between the primordial divisions of society, viz., caste and modern political processes have largely determined the nature of Indian politics since independence.²⁶

Owing to their socio-economic position, the elite castes in U.P., as in the rest of British India, were the first to throw up an educated middle class. The unfulfillment of their aspirations like getting a government job drove this

²⁴ It seems to be correct to call it 'by chance' because there are reasons to believe that the founding fathers of the Congress did not think in terms of majority or minority. They believed that aims and objectives of the Congress would be in keeping with the interests of the Indian people. Their watch-word was unity. The social groups which became the main support base of the Congress had come to the Congress on their own. It was only much later that realising their electoral value Congress made conscious efforts to keep them with the Party.

²⁵ W.H. Morris-Jones, *Government and Politics of India*, London, Hutchinson, 1971.

²⁶ Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Laxmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987; Rajni Kothari, *Op. cit.*; and Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1967.

class to the path of political agitation and mobilisation. Throughout the struggle for independence and also long afterwards this class remained the backbone of Congress, vastly contributing both to the leadership as well as the ranks. The other components of the Congress alliance were the Harijans and the Muslims. The support extended by the Harijans (in post-independence years SCs) to the Congress was very natural since Gandhi had inspired Congress to take a pro-Harijan upliftment stance. However, what seems to be rather intriguing is why did the Muslims support the Congress in the post-independence India. During the pre-independence days Jinnah and the League had posed a tough challenge before the Congress. In spite of all its efforts, the Congress failed to effectively counter the 'two-nation theory' and to present itself as the sole-spokesman of the entire Indian people. Large sections of Muslims throughout the North India, especially in U.P. and Bihar, supported the cause of the League. But in the post-independence India the Muslims who chose to stay back in India or who remained in India, threw their weight behind the Congress. Moin Shakir tries to give a reasonably convincing answer to this intriguing question. According to him, "Minorities like Muslims...found themselves in an unprecedented situation with the dawn of independence in India....It was a great loser in the arena of politics and economy. Those who chose to remain in India suffered the guilt consciousness of the pre-independence politics. They had no choice except to support the Congress. The Muslim Leaguers of yester-years turned Congressmen overnight. This was perhaps done in order to buy peace and security which Congress alone could guarantee. Secondly, the acute 'minority complex' created a feeling of

helplessness as from almost 25 per cent of the total population, the Muslims were now reduced to 9.91% in 1951.”²⁷

The Congress successfully used the formulae of Brahmin, Harijan plus Muslim for quite long to retain power. This multi inter-caste alliance of the Congress made it the predominant party in U.P also. Undoubtedly, the Congress Party in U.P. built its support by accommodating and aggregating the interests of wide sections of the agrarian and the urban society. But drawn mainly from the rural dominating castes and urban professionals, business interests and middle class, its leadership profile was rather limited. Congress leadership especially the kshatras like C.B. Gupta and Dr. Sampurnananda continued to neglect the interests and sentiments of the backward/intermediate cultivating castes (ICCs) and the upwardly mobile castes like Jats (ECC).²⁸ Facts speak for themselves. The United Provinces’ Provincial autonomous ministry of 1937-39 has been described as an all-Brahmin ministry because all the Hindu ministers were Brahmins.²⁹ In the 1962-67 State Assembly only 6.8% of CLP members belonged to the backward castes whereas 63% were from the elite castes.³⁰

The exclusion of the ICCs and Jats from the leadership positions in the ruling party naturally bred dissatisfaction among these castes who had recently prospered in the wake of Green Revolution. In this dissatisfaction are traceable the signs of ‘non-Congressism’ that was first accentuated by Dr. Ram Manohar

²⁷ Moin Shakir, “Congress and Minorities”, in Ram Joshi and R.K. Hebsur, *Op. cit.*, p.162.

²⁸ Zoya Hasan, “Class and Caste: The Dynamics of Political Change in Uttar Pradesh”, in Zoya Hasan, S.N. Jha and Rasheeduddin Khan (ed.), *The State, Political Process and Identity*, New Delhi, Sage, 1989, p. 257.

²⁹ R.K. Hebsur, in Ram Joshi and R.K. Hebsur, *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

³⁰ Angela S. Burger, *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

Lohia. Later on Chaudhury Charan Singh became the main pillar of anti-Congressism. The common factor between the 'non-Congressism' of Lohiaites and the strategy of Charan Singh was the caste alliances which were attempted to be forged by them. In fact, those who were opposing the Congress in U.P. were taking the help of caste equations much more than what the Congress had resorted to, in their pursuit to diversify the latter of its pre-dominant position.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 clearly indicate that all the important political parties participating in the 1962 elections gave extra importance to the elite (upper) castes. However, the impact of respective party ideology also cannot be outrightly denied on the choice of candidates. Jan Sangh, PSP and Socialists all elected far higher numbers of MLAs of elite castes than that of lower castes. The over-representation of Brahmins and Rajputs also appears to be the acknowledgement of their capacity of executing 'vertical mobilisation'. PSP elected a good number of Backward Castes and only a few of Scheduled Castes whereas in the Jan Sangh there was a near balance between the two groups. The Socialist Party whose MLAs were equally divided between Elite and Non-Elite, had more BC than SC MLAs. In 1962 Congress MLAs belonging to backward castes comprised only 6.8 per cent of the total number of Party MLAs, which was a far lower proportion than that of the Jan Sangh, PSP or Socialists. This neglect of the BCs by the Congress soon resulted into the mobilisation of BC by the Opposition parties like the Socialists, Bhartiya Kranti Dal (BKD) and the subsequent versions of BKD.

In contrast to the Congress, three opposition parties maintained balance between Brahmins and Thakurs. In the first general elections, Brahmins comprised 28 per cent and Thakurs 13 per cent of the Congress MLAs. In

1962, the Brahmins still had the largest caste representation with 30 per cent to the Thakurs' 19 per cent. According to a view it reflects the Brahmins vs. Thakurs rivalry in U.P. politics.³¹ Against the backdrop of this rivalry hypothesis the proportion of MLAs from these two castes in the opposition parties (Thakurs getting more than the Brahmins) seems to be an effort to rope in those castes which were less well represented in the Congress.

However, that besides the caste calculations and bare electoral considerations party ideology also played an important role is reflected from the representation given to the Banias - the principal trading community of North India - by the rightist Jan Sangh. Of the three opposition parties Jan Sangh was the only party in 1962 offering more than minimal representation to the Banias that exceeded even the representation given to them by the Congress. Jan Sangh a pro-Hindu party also did not give ticket to a single Muslim in 1962. Perhaps it was again the result of ideological factors that Socialists (PSP and SP) offered a far less number of tickets to the Banias as compared to the Congress and the Jan Sangh (see Table 3.1).

All the three opposition parties and the Congress also had a small number of Kayasthas among their MLAs and among the candidates. There were no Jat MLAs in the Jan Sangh, PSP or SP though there were a few in the Congress. This neglect of the Jats was a main factor behind the emergence of

³¹ Tracing the genesis of the rivalry N.C. Saxena writes 'Rajputs and urban castes like Banias, Kayasthas and Muslims owned more land than they farmed directly. On the contrary the share of Brahmins was higher in many districts in the cultivated land as compared to their share in ownership. This was more true of the districts in Awadh and Eastern U.P. where generally the Thakurs were the landlord and the Brahmins were occupancy tenant. From these districts a number of Brahmin Congressmen agitated in favour of tenurial reforms in the 1920s and 1930s and much of the rivalry between Thakurs and Brahmins in the post-independence politics of these districts has its historical origin in the tenurial structural of the immediate past.' N.C. Saxena, *Op. cit.*,

**TABLE 3.1 GENERAL SEAT CANDIDATES OF THE CONGRESS,
JAN SANGH, PRAJA SOCIALIST AND SOCIALIST PARTY IN 1962**
(% and no. of seats offered by the Parties to different Caste groups)

Caste	Congress		Jan Sangh		Praja Socialist Party		Lohia Socialists	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Brahmin	31.5	107	27.3	82	18.4	43	17.1	37
Thakur	21.2	72	26.3	79	23.6	55	17.6	38
Bania	12.9	44	13.0	39	5.6	13	7.4	16
Kayastha	5.9	20	6.7	20	6.4	15	3.2	7
ECC	6.5	22	5.0	15	7.3	17	2.8	6
Total	78.0	265	78.3	235	61.3	143	48.1	104
Kurmi	2.1	7	2.3	7	5.2	12	8.8	19
Yadav	3.5	12	6.3	19	12.5	29	13.9	30
Lodh	0.9	3	3.3	10	2.6	6	1.4	3
Others	1.5	5	3.0	9	2.6	6	6.9	15
Total	8.0	27	14.9	45	22.9	53	31.0	67
Muslims	13.1	45	-	-	9.4	22	9.7	21
SCs in Gen. Seats	0.3	1	2.7	8	3.4	8	7.9	17
Not ascertained	0.6	2	4.1	12	3.0	7	3.3	7
Total	14.0	48	6.8	20	16.3	37	20.9	45
Grand Total	100.0	340	100.0	300	100.0	233	100.0	216

Source: Angela S. Burger, *Opposition in a Dominant Party System*, Bombay, OUP, 1969, p. 55.

BKD under the leadership of Charan Singh. Congress gave far more representation to Muslims - the third constituent of its alliance - than any other political party in the State (Table 3.1).

Brahmins were the largest single caste among the Congress MLAs, whereas among the Praja Socialist MLAs the Yadavs - a backward caste - were predominant. A feature distinguishing the three opposition parties was the predominance of Yadav MLAs in the PSP, the near balance between Kurmis and Yadavs in the SP and the nearly equal proportions of several backward castes in the Jan Sangh. The most striking difference, however, is the small proportion of backward caste candidates and MLAs in the Congress compared to three opposition parties.

The *Chamars* or *Jatavs* appear to have benefitted more than any other Scheduled Caste from legislative reforms. Perhaps, being the largest Scheduled Caste group in the State, they have attracted much more attention of all the electoral success conscious political parties vis-a-vis any other Scheduled Caste group. In 1962, all of the PSP Scheduled Caste MLAs and almost three-fourths of those in the Congress were Jatavs. The *Pasis*, who are the largest Scheduled Caste group of Eastern U.P., predominated the list of Socialist Party's MLAs for the simple reason that this Party had higher political/electoral stakes in the East than in any other part of the State.³² The Jats and the ICCs were naturally and visibly dissatisfied with what Congress had offered to them over the years. Ram Manohar Lohia had correctly perceived the political potential of this dissatisfaction among the ICCs. But the

³² This analysis is mainly based upon the findings of Angela S. Burger, *Op. cit.*, pp.31-65.

systematic mobilisation of ECC and the ICC was for the first time undertaken by Charan Singh, who was among the firsts to calculate the hidden possibilities in the mobilisation of numerically sizeable, economically powerful but socially and politically deprived and dissatisfied non-Elite, other peasant castes in U.P.³³

Charan Singh presented the interests of ECC (mainly of Jats) and also of ICC in the garb of rural vs. urban or agriculture vs. industry issue. This benefitted these castes in two ways:

- (i) The appeal in the name of the rights of rural people could be extended to all the people with rural affiliations without raking up the inherent internal conflicts since the common enemy was identified as the urban people.
- (ii) The interests of the land owning ECCs and ICCs could be very shrewdly guarded without either receiving the label of 'casteist' or letting the material benefits of this new awakening seep down to the lower castes in the multi-caste villages of U.P.

Charan Singh initiated his attempts to mobilise the Jats and other castes with similar socio-economic situations after G.B. Pant was promoted up to the Centre in 1954. Charan Singh's efforts were resented by the upper caste leadership of the Congress which dominated the Party at that time. In 1956 Charan Singh presided over a Backward Castes Conference despite a whip issued by the Congress to its members forbidding their attendance of the Conference. Charan Singh defied this whip along with some other BC leaders.

³³ Charan Singh had aired the demand for 60% reservation to the sons of cultivators in the Government jobs as early as 1947. Zoya Hasan, *Op. cit.*, p. 258.

Such situations kept recurring in the future also. The then Congress leadership failed to accommodate the demands of newly assertive social groups. Finally, Charan Singh resigned from the Congress and formed his Bhartiya Kranti Dal (BKD). This was the first clear pronouncement of the changed idiom of U.P. politics. This 'questioned the traditional upper caste domination represented by the Congress'.³⁴ No denying that it was Charan Singh who unleashed the new forces in the politics of U.P. by giving a forum to the pent-up dissatisfaction of the ECC and the ICC. However, it would be inaccurate to infer that in the absence of Charan Singh this dissatisfaction would have guttered out. Leadership has its own place in the course of history but it has to be essentially a product of the socio-economic conditions of the day. Leadership definitely influences the course of history but not beyond a point. Charan Singh or no Charan Singh the ECC and the ICC in U.P. were bound to assert themselves in the State politics sooner than later.³⁵ In fact, the opposition to the Congress's inter-caste coalition had begun even before Charan Singh donned the mantle of the 'sole spokesman'. The discontent of the cultivating castes 'was expressed in voting for independent candidates in Western U.P., for socialist candidates in Eastern U.P. and for the Jan Sangh in Awadh in 1950s and 1960s'.³⁶ The BKD tried to trap this unrest in the Western parts of U.P. whereas the SSP did

³⁴ Z. Hasan, *Op. cit.*, p. 256.

³⁵ Paul R. Brass, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

³⁶ The issue of indispensability of a leader in a movement or at an historic turn of history is not new. It has been widely discussed by the thinkers, philosophers and scholars all over the world. A great thinker like G. Plekhanov answers to this in these words: '...the leader is merely the organ of an historic need or necessity, and that necessity creates its organ when it needs it. No great man is therefore irreplaceable'. G. Plekhanov, *Role of Individual in History*, London, 1940. Furthering Plekhanov's idea, Isaac Deutscher writes: 'The illusion (of indispensability) consists in the fact that a leader appears irreplaceable because, having assumed his place, he prevents others assuming it'. *The Prophet Outcaste: Trotsky 1929-1940*, Oxford, OUP, 1963, p. 244.

so in the East. BKD also replaced Jan Sangh as the principal opposition party to the Congress right in its first electoral contest.

The political articulation by the cultivating castes was a newly surfaced phenomenon in the U.P. politics in 1960s. It posed an unprecedented challenge to the Congress hegemony. But in terms of actual gains this accentuation could at the most unite these castes especially the Jats of Western U.P. as a powerful pressure group, and nothing more beyond that could be achieved. 'The dominance of upper castes remained unchanged'.³⁷ The cultivating castes could never capture the political power in U.P. barring a couple of interludes. In fact, these interludes were also the results of either some post-electoral manoeuvres as in the case of Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (SVD) government led by Charan Singh (1967) and or of the reaction against Emergency which brought the R.N. Yadav (1977) and Banarsi Das Gupta (1979) governments into the saddle.

The return of Harijans and Muslims, who constituted the basic vote bank of the Congress, to the Party in the post-Janata days³⁸ and the Congress victories in subsequent elections clearly indicated that Congress's inter-caste alliance was still in tact and effective. During 1980s Congress further strengthened its inter-caste alliance by inducting Rajputs/Thakurs into its fold in a big way by placing them on important leadership positions in the Party as well as in the government.

³⁷ In all the ministries formed after emergency and also after the post-Janata days Brahmins and Thakurs continued to get more representation both in the Legislative Assembly membership as well as in the government than their proportion in State's population. Pradeep K. Srivastava, *State Government and Politics in India*, New Delhi, Mittal Publishing House, 1991, pp. 48-50.

³⁸ Paul R. Brass, *Op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

Nevertheless the political mobilisation of cultivating castes left its indelible mark on the politics of the State. The first major impact of this was the unprecedented growth of political consciousness reached by the cultivating castes in the state. It was the outcome of this political consciousness that in the 1980 elections, after the disintegration of Janata coalition, the Lok Dal emerged as the strongest opposition party securing 29% of the total votes. In the 1984 parliamentary elections also despite securing only three parliamentary seats the Dalit, Mazdoor, Kisan Party (DMKP) obtained 22% of the popular vote which marks the unflinching support of the land owning castes to the party of Charan Singh.³⁹ Another impact of this spread of political consciousness among the middle castes was that Congress was forced to change its strategy. The new strategy adopted by the Congress was a multi-pronged one. Firstly, the Congress tried to woo cultivating castes by increasing their share in the party and the governmental posts.⁴⁰ However, the Congress could never completely get rid of its upper caste bias and the traditional alliance of castes. This prevented the Congress from taking a clear stand on the induction of cultivating castes into its fold. The Congress remained suspended between the felt need of getting cultivating castes' support and the desire to maintain the Brahmin hegemony. Therefore, in spite of its best efforts Congress failed to rope in the backward castes. The second prong of the strategy of Congress was the consolidation of its Harijan vote bank by portraying Lok Dal, as a party of Jats and other cultivating castes. In U.P.'s agrarian relations of production landed peasant castes and the wage earning Harijans stand in a conflictual relationship

³⁹ ibid.,
⁴⁰ Zoya Hasan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 263-64..

in which 'behind the facade of caste conflict lay the basic issues of minimum wages and land'.⁴¹ In this conflict Harijans have always been losers and have suffered all kinds of oppressions and brutalities. Congress cleverly tried to harness the fears of Harijans as a means of counter-strategy against the newly assertive cultivating castes.⁴² The third prong of this strategy of the Congress was its efforts to consolidate the upper caste votes. Henceforth, the Congress started serious efforts to rope in Rajputs/Thakurs by increasing their share in the Party and in the government.⁴³

The trend towards upper castes consolidation continued in the 1984 parliamentary elections in which the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Janata Party support base shifted to the Congress. Significantly, it is believed that in the 1984 parliamentary elections many Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) cadres voted for the Congress discontinuing their support to the BJP - the reincarnation of the Jan Sangh. The factors which might have inspired the RSS cadres in this direction could be many. Indira Gandhi had adopted a tough stance against the Punjab extremists which was hailed by the RSS. The political insignificance of the BJP vis-a-vis the Congress was another factor that believably inspired the RSS cadres to vote for the Congress in those crucial elections which were taking place in the post-Indira Gandhi assassination phase. Besides, during the campaign the refusal of Rajiv Gandhi to make RSS an issue was again a welcome step from the RSS point of view. For these reasons primarily, many believe that in the landslide victory of the Congress in

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.266.

⁴² *National Herald*, a newspaper known as 'pro-Congress' wrote on 13 October 1984, 'Basically a casteist, Mr. Charan Singh cannot see beyond Western U.P. What happened at Bagpat (Charan Singh's constituency) in the previous elections is a positive proof of his callous disregard for the weaker sections of society'.

1984 elections, which left BJP only with two parliamentary seats, RSS cadres had an important role to play.⁴⁴ An important result out of these elections was that the Congress realised the potential of upper caste Hindu votes. This sent the Party leadership thinking in the direction of consolidating Hindu vote bank in favour of the Congress. The policies adopted by the Congress in the following years were a clear indicator of this change.

As a matter of fact, upper caste Hindus all over the country, and especially in the typical 'Sanskritic' state of U.P. see themselves as the guardians of Hinduism. Hindu religion and caste system are so closely intertwined that for appealing the upper castes enblock at least some use of religion is a must. Therefore, in order to woo the upper castes the Congress started with hesitant and erratic moves to project itself as a 'Party of Hindus' also'.⁴⁵ The culmination of this new strategy was the Congress undertaking 'Shilanyas' of the controversial 'Ram Mandir' at the site of Babari Mosque at Ayodhya in U.P. However, this misadventure cost the Congress rather dearly. On the one hand it deprived the Congress of its image as a secular, broad-based party, resulting in the loss of faith of Muslims and Harijans in the Congress; and on the other hand it evoked only a lukewarm response from the upper caste Hindus who had chosen to fall to a more aggressive and unequivocal propaganda of the BJP and its allies.⁴⁶ The net result of the Congress' fizzled

⁴³ Pradeep K. Srivastava, *Op. cit.*, p.189.

⁴⁴ Walter K. Anderson and Shridhar D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swaymsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, New Delhi, Vistaar Publications, 1987, p. 234.

⁴⁵ Indira Gandhi herself had started using the religious card to combat her political opponents. Punjab since 1980s was the bloodiest victim of this. Dipankar Gupta, 'The communalising of Punjab 1980-85', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 13 July 1985.

⁴⁶ Believeably, behind the passage of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992., the failure of Congress's this strategy had a hand. (see Chapter-1).

out plan was that the Party faced a complete rout in the state of U.P. in 1990s leaving no hopes for redemption in the foreseeable future.

(B)

Caste Politics in Uttar Pradesh during the 1990s.

The decade of 1990s has opened with a new idiom of politics in the State of U.P. This new idiom is 'caste consciousness' which has been fast replacing the earlier notion of caste-based mobilisation.⁴⁷ The difference between the two is that in the case of the former various caste groups in the society become overtly conscious about their ritual status on the hierarchy scale, about their conflictual relationship with other caste groups placed above or below than on the same scale and about the handicaps or benefits, as the case may be, attached to their position in a political system based upon universal adult franchise; whereas in the case of latter the political parties alone are aware of the political importance of caste based groupings in the society. The political parties try to mobilise these groups enblock by gradually politically socialising them and aggregating and articulating their interests, without pitching them against each other. In the case of caste based political mobilisation the caste groups cannot hold the political parties for ransom as they can do in the event of growing caste consciousness. In other words, this signifies a shift from the earlier idea of "politicisation of caste" - a healthy trend towards the democratisation of a society - to the practice of 'casteism in

⁴⁷ C.P. Bhambhri, 'The Cacophony of Reservation Politics: From Modernity to Mandal', *Hindustan Times (Delhi)*, 12 January 1994.

politics ' a negative tendency which is capable of entangling the society in a greater friction.⁴⁸ What is more dangerous about this development is that whatever bleak chances of a class consciousness were discernible hitherto might also fade away under the influence of caste consciousness.

However, caste consciousness is a logical outcome of the inherent contradictions of caste based political mobilisation. When caste based political mobilisation plunges into caste consciousness is difficult to determine. As a matter of fact, the relatively early mobilised castes not only capture the larger share of the resources but also try to stall the attempts of other castes to mobilise and claim a share in the resources. This results either into the domination of some caste groups and a subsidiary or subordinate position of other caste groups or an aggressive mobilisation of other caste groups which often use unorthodox measures to mobilise themselves against the dominant castes. The latter situation is termed as casteism by the observers sharing the interests based or learnt caste consciousness of the early mobilised castes.⁴⁹

It was during the 1990s U.P. politics increasingly became state specific absorbing lesser than ever influence of the issues of national magnitude.

⁴⁸ On the night of ½ October 1994, U.P. Police and Provincial Armed Constabulary forcibly stopped the Uttarakhand rallyists, going to Delhi for a rally, in Muzzaffarnagar district of U.P. and unleashed an unprovoked violence. Many rallyists were killed in the Orgy of violence. Many of women rallyists were molested and raped by the 'protectors of law'. The State government headed by Mulayam Singh Yadav was of the opinion that the 'Uttarakhand movement' is a movement of upper castes (Thakurs and Brahmins are the predominant castes in U.P. Hills), therefore, it should be dealt with a heavy hand. The incident and the subsequent attitude of the State government left nobody in doubt that the Mulayam Singh government was not the government of all the sections of U.P. society but only of those few castes which had voted for the party of Mulayam Singh. This seems to be a clear example of casteism in politics. Kanchan Gupta, "Time to Say No to Mulayam's Destructive Politics", *The Pioneer*, 6 October 1994.

⁴⁹ Even the media persons majority of whom are from the upper castes and have had their intellectual training in the established idiom of knowledge, nurse a bias against the parties like the BSP which champion the cause of deprived castes. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 May 1996.

During the 1989 elections the entire country was heatedly discussing the issues like Bofors and U.P. also was equally charged up on these issues. The only additional issue that was attracting the attention of the U.P. electorate was the Ayodhya issue. In 1989, BJP was perhaps the third position holder after the Congress in the first place and the forces, which later on became Janata Dal (JD) occupying the second position. All that time caste was an important aspect of the electoral calculations of all the political parties but it was not the paramount issue. Political parties used caste formations as their vote banks but they were neither appealing to the caste sentiments on a regular basis nor their tone was revengeful. BJP made smart gains in the 1989 elections for the Lok Sabha and for the State Assembly. Probably, the Ayodhya issue had a role to play in these gains of BJP but the larger part of these gains was a result of an electoral understanding among the non-Congress opposition parties. This co-operation among the political parties at the threshold of 1990s was destined to change the very ethos of Indian politics in general and the U.P. politics in particular.

Although, the 1990s have witnessed U.P. politics becoming more and more state specific, yet the process was actually ignited by an issue of national importance. It was the decision of the implementation of Mandal Commission Report in August 1991 that became instrumental in bringing to the fore contradictions in the society of U.P. The Mandal issue unleashed all those forces in U.P. society, which had been rather dormant till that time and whose simultaneous assertion was beyond the capacity of U.P.'s existing political structure to contain. In the decision of V.P. Singh government to implement the Mandal Commission Report, the BJP smacked of a conspiracy to divide the

Hindu society which a Hindutva Party like the BJP could only ill-afford. As an answer to Mandal Commission issue - presumably the V.P. Singh's stick to beat Devi Lal - BJP resorted to fanning up the religious sentiments of Hindus by raking up the Ayodhya issue more aggressively than ever. It finally culminated in the pulling down of the disputed structure in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992 - the black Sunday in the history of a nation that had chosen to divide its territory in 1947 but had not compromised on ideological constructs like 'the two nation theory'.

The politics of U.P. in 1990s has been overtly influenced by the caste factor which in many cases has overtaken even the factor of religion. However, it will be inaccurate to say that religion has ceased to play a significant role in U.P. politics. U.P. has experienced successive waves of caste and communal mobilisation which have significantly altered the existing political equations by mobilising new social groups. This has also created a high degree of confrontation and conflict in the society and politics of the state. As a result, the U.P. politics has undergone a fundamental transformation. Following the assertion of new social forces in the U.P. politics the political equations and party system in the state is undergoing a constant process of alignments and realignments and . This can best be termed as 'politics in flux' so far as U.P. is concerned. In past seven years, i.e., from 1989-90 to 1997 U.P. has seen as many as six governments of three major parties in the State.⁵⁰ In this process of alignments and realignments the major players have also tested numerous

⁵⁰ U.P. has had three rounds of assembly elections (1991, 1993 and 1996) in a span of six years. The three major players which determine the trends in U.P. politics in 1990s are BJP, SP and the BSP. The Congress has been relegated to a fourth position which it shares with the JD and others.

inter-party combinations/electoral governmental alliances which range from an electoral understanding between the JD and the BJP during the 1989 elections to the alliances between Samajwadi Party (SP)-Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), BSP-Congress, SP, Congress, etc., to written understanding between BJP-BSP to form government by turn.

The characteristic or the political behaviour that primarily determines this politics in flux in U.P. is that in different rounds of elections in U.P. different sections of the society have rapidly changed their loyalties.⁵¹ The main fall out, which to a great extent is also a cause of the process of fluid politics in the state is the emergence of the new social forces, namely the lower backward castes and the Dalits, mainly under the leadership of the BSP. In the beginning these new social forces included the middle backward castes like the Yadavs and the Kurmis also which were increasingly asserting themselves against the domination of upper castes and were the main supporters of the Samajwadi Party of Mulayam Singh Yadav. In their attempt to dislodge the elite cultivating castes and the upper castes from their entrenched position these middle backward castes had also co-operated with the lower backward castes and the Dalits which, with the support of Muslims, had emerged as an alliance between SP-BSP against the Hindu, Elite castes - ECCs' support to the BJP. However, due to the inherent contradictions, which have to be there in any such alliance at the societal level among the middle backward (peasant) castes and the scheduled castes (landless), the alliance between the SP-BJP fell through,

⁵¹ Ameresh Mishra, "Politics in Flux", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1 June 1996. 'It is becoming more and more difficult to pinpoint the actual winner of the elections - it seems that every party has lost somewhere while gaining at other places'.

consequently leaving BJP as the major beneficiary.⁵² Although, the moves for co-operation between the SP and the BSP rested on shaky foundations yet it cannot be denied that as a result of such moves the lower most strata of U.P. society have unprecedentedly started asserting themselves which has 'upset and moved beyond the political discursive confines of the contemporary India'.⁵³ Another important signal which the emergence of new social forces in U.P. sent has been that, if united, these forces can successfully answer the divisive politics that has been the main agenda of some of the political outfits. The results of 1993 U.P. Assembly elections clearly demonstrate it.⁵⁴ In fact, the impact of the rise of these new social forces in U.P. is so thorough that even when they fall apart due to inherent societal contradictions or due to 'personality clash of top leaders'⁵⁵ the Bhartiya Janata Party failed to get the advantage of the division in the opposition votes in the Assembly polls. In the 1996 U.P. Assembly elections BJP, of course, emerged as the single largest party with SP as the runners up and the BSP-Congress combine securing the third position but it could not take the advantage of the situation. The extent of political rivalry in the contemporary U.P. politics is such that even after general elections state could not have a government and in an unprecedented situation the State had to undergo long spell of President's rule that could end only after a written agreement between the BSP and the BJP regarding the formation of

⁵² Bhimasen Hantal, *Op. cit.*; also Kripa Shankar, "SP-BSP Division Comes to BJP Aid", *Mainstream*, 15 June 1996.

⁵³ K. Srinivasulu, "Centrality of Caste: Understanding U.P. Elections", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 January 1994.

⁵⁴ Yogendra Yadav, "Political Change in North India: Interpreting Assembly Elections Results", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 18 December 1993.

⁵⁵ Asgar Ali Engineer, "How Muslims Voted", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 May 1996.

government in the State (which also fell through in September 1997). The political rivalries as they exist among the major players in U.P. today are not autonomous of their social base. If BJP - basically an upper caste and Elite cultivating caste's party - is despised by the SP - a party of middle backward castes like the Yadavs and the Muslims and by the BSP - a Party of the Scheduled Castes, the SP and BSP have no less hatred for each other also which is more a manifestation of the dichotomy between the middle backward castes and the Scheduled Castes at the societal level. This is one of the major reasons which has made the U.P. politics during 1990s extremely unstable.

The next important result of the new idiom of politics in U.P. during 1990s is the total route of the centrist politics in the State. The parties like the Congress and the Janata Dal have been the worst sufferers of this process. These parties miserably failed to keep their traditional voters' support in tact also to mobilise new groups in an era of the politics of extremes. The trend of Congress's disintegration had begun in 1989 itself. But at that time it could not be teed as the crisis of centrist politics since Congress was displaced by another centrist party the Janata Dal. But the situation has changed markedly in the decade of 1990s. Now the entire space vacated by the Congress has been filled by either of the parties of extremes - the BJP, SP and BSP. If BJP capably showed its skills in spewing out communal slogans SP and BSP competed in the politics of caste sentiments. The centrist parties especially the Congress of course made hesitant attempts to try hand in both of these fields but miserably failed in the competition with the original votaries of these tactics. 'The Lok Sabha elections of 1996 have put the final seal on the demise of the Congress as far as U.P. is concerned as it won here only five seats and

polled a mere eight per cent of the votes as compared to 18 per cent in the last Lok Sabha polls in 1991'.⁵⁶

There is no doubt that caste has been at the centre of U.P. politics in 1990s but without taking a note of the voting pattern of the Muslims - the most important minority community of the State, which is in commanding position in at least 170 constituencies (Assembly) in the State⁵⁷ - no conclusion would be correctly founded. In fact, during 1990s, the voting pattern of Muslims has significantly aided the mobilisation of new caste groups in the State. To begin with, the Muslim voting pattern clearly shows that the Muslims throughout India have voted tactically to defeat BJP wherever possible and U.P. has been no exception to this rule.⁵⁸ Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party was, indeed, the first choice of Muslims, wherever it was in a position to defeat the BJP, but if not SP but BSP or even JD in some isolated castes, was in a position to stall the BJP juggernaut, Muslims did not hesitate in voting enmasse for that alternative. But how far this strategy has helped the Muslim community in its purpose in real terms is debatable. The statistics of 1993 Assembly election in U.P. show that in the 170 odd Muslim dominated constituencies containing twenty per cent or more Muslim voters, the BJP scored major victories and won nearly eighty per cent of the seats because of the communal polarisation. The Janata Dal and the Samajwadi Janata Party (later on Samajwadi Party or

⁵⁶ Out of the 85 seats, the Congress contested it could save its deposit in only four seats excluding the five seats that it won. It was in the second place in just two constituencies and in third place in another six constituencies. In 54 constituencies it was in the fourth place and in another twelve constituencies it was in the fifth place. Its position was even lower in other constituencies. Kirpa Shankar, "SP-BSP Division comes to BJP's Aid", *mainstream*, 15 June 1996.

⁵⁷ "State Polls: Scramble for Survival", *India Today*, 15 October 1993, p. 48.

⁵⁸ *The Indian Express*, 20 May 1996. Also, Asgar Ali Engineer, *Op. cit.*.

SP) made a better showing in constituencies which had a balanced mix of castes and especially where Muslims were less than fifteen per cent.⁵⁹

Another trend, that was peculiar to the U.P. politics during 1990s, has been the economic and political interests of various castes including the Dalits and the middle backward castes driving them away from the parties for whom they have generally voted throughout the 1990s. This, again has been a result of the class based antagonistic relationship between the middle peasant caste and the landless agricultural labourer castes. For example, in the 1996 Lok Sabha elections in Gazipur (eastern U.P.) Yadav were seen voting for the BJP and not for the SP-JD-CPI joint candidate who had held that seat in last many elections. It was found that the Yadavs - usually taken for Mulayam Singh Yadav's safe bets - voted for BJP to ward off the threat from BSP and its Dalit constituency. In some other constituencies Dalits have voted for the BJP to defeat the SP - 'the party of Yadavs'.⁶⁰ These are the situations when class interest appears to be overtaking all other considerations including caste. Perhaps, it is due to such equations that in U.P. 'during the 1996 Lok Sabha polls BJP wrested 13 out of 18 reserved seats while the BSP bagged three and SP just two',⁶¹ since the middle peasant castes and the landless agricultural labourer costs both felt more immediate threat from each other than the 'communal BJP'.

The next chapter discusses caste politics in Meerut Panchayat. The caste politics in Meerut Panchayat shows that the fundamental tendencies in the State level political equations among castes are not much different from those

⁵⁹ *India Today, Op. cit.*

⁶⁰ *Ameresh Mishra, Op. cit.*

which exist in individual districts of the states, and only their manifestations are different.

⁶¹ Asgar Ali Engineer, *Op. cit.*

CHAPTER-4

Caste Politics in Meerut Panchayat

HISTORICAL SURVEY

The early history of Meerut as an administrative unit is largely obscure. Very little is known about Meerut before the coming of the Muslim rulers. During the reign of Akbar the 'Mahals' of Jalalabad, Barnawa, Hapur, Sarawa, Garhmukteshwar, Meerut and Hastinapur, comprising the Meerut 'Dastur' fell within the limits of the 'Sirkar' of Delhi. During the last phase of Mughal empire Meerut came under the occupation of Marathas. In 1803, Sindhias ceded the whole of the region between the Ganga and the Yamuna to the British, which included the areas of Meerut too. The district of Meerut came into being in 1818 and included the southern division of the Saharanpur district and some of the 'parganas' of Aligarh. Till India's freedom from the British rule, Meerut changed its borders several times. In the post-independence India, Meerut was one of the largest districts of Western Uttar Pradesh with an area of 6,501 sq.km. Yamuna separated it from Delhi and Haryana (Punjab) in the west and Ganges formed its eastern border with Bijnor and Moradabad. The districts of Muzaffarnagar and Bulandshahr flanked it from North and South respectively.¹ In 1970s the district of Ghaziabad was carved out of Meerut. In 1997 Meerut was once again bifurcated into the districts of Meerut and Bagpat – the homeground of the legendary Jat leader Chaudhary Charan Singh.

At present Meerut district comprises of the headquarter city of Meerut and three revenue sub-divisions or 'Tehsils' - namely Meerut, Mawana and Sardhana. Meerut district has twelve Community Development Blocks and

**TABLE 4.0: CASTE PROFILE OF VILLAGES IN MEERUT DISTRICT
(AS IN 1995)**

Block	Average Population and Percentage									Population			
	SC in SCR	SC in BCR	SC in Gen	BC in BCR	BC in SCR	BC in Gen	Gen in Gen	Gen in SCR	Gen in BCR	SC	BC	Gen	Total Pop.
Daurala	16338 (40.58)	6761 (19.95)	9524 (22.86)	19097 (56.36)	12043 (29.91)	11521 (27.65)	20614 (49.48)	11872 (29.49)	8025 (23.68)	32623	42661	40511	115795
Hastina-pur	12067 (41.57)	4422 (16.94)	7416 (19.60)	17511 (67.10)	8894 (30.64)	9514 (25.14)	20905 (55.25)	8061 (27.77)	4126 (15.81)	23905	35919	33092	92916
Jani Khurd	12577 (33.87)	4434 (15.86)	11390 (20.15)	15704 (56.18)	10472 (28.20)	9910 (17.53)	35200 (62.30)	14080 (37.92)	7812 (27.94)	28401	36086	57092	121579
Khar-khauda	9732 (30.28)	4448 (16.86)	7624 (13.43)	13930 (52.81)	8466 (26.34)	10272 (18.10)	38838 (68.45)	13938 (43.37)	7998 (30.32)	21804	32668	60774	115246
Machhra	8440 (34.24)	4613 (17.34)	9554 (13.46)	15418 (57.97)	7332 (29.74)	13106 (21.03)	48284 (68.05)	8877 (36.01)	6563 (24.67)	22607	35856	63724	122187
Mawana	11685 (38.77)	5722 (16.54)	10431 (21.22)	23651 (68.38)	10182 (33.79)	10334 (21.03)	28371 (57.73)	8265 (27.42)	5210 (15.06)	27838	44167	41846	113851
Meerut	3209 (36.76)	3827 (18.48)	4432 (20.28)	13987 (67.57)	2422 (27.74)	6902 (31.58)	10515 (48.12)	3039 (34.81)	2885 (13.93)	11468	23311	16439	51218
Parikshit garh*	-	-	10533 (14.72)	-	-	15941 (22.28)	45039 (62.96)	-	-	10533*	15941*	45039*	71513
Rajpura	17348 (40.52)	5374 (16.24)	11213 (18.11)	14334 (43.34)	11324 (26.44)	10995 (17.75)	39702 (64.12)	14141 (30.02)	13364 (40.40)	33935	36653	67207	137795
Rohta	8818 (35.25)	5276 (19.16)	10126 (21.19)	11410 (41.44)	5449 (21.78)	9702 (20.30)	27944 (58.49)	10743 (42.95)	10846 (39.39)	24220	26561	49533	100314
Sardhana	6354 (36.36)	2145 (11.53)	10958 (14.59)	13164 (70.78)	2484 (14.29)	14433 (19.22)	49695 (66.17)	8540 (49.14)	3287 (17.67)	19457	30081	61522	111060
Sarurpur Khurd	5960 (23.84)	4082 (14.83)	4932 (07.34)	9714 (35.30)	6411 (25.65)	8153 (12.14)	54035 (80.15)	12619 (50.49)	13717 (49.85)	14974	24278	80371	119623
District Total	112528	51104	108133	167920	85479	130783	419142	114175	83833	271765	384182	617150	1273097

Source: Data of the Elections of Village Panchayat Pradhans in Meerut district, 1995 elections (Unpublished).

* Complete figures not available.

1. SCR and BCR stand for the villages with the offices of Pradhans reserved for Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes respectively.
2. Gen. Stands for the general category castes.

TABLE 4.1: OFFICES OF PRADHANS RESERVED FOR THE SCHEDULED CASTES, BACKWARD CLASSES AND GENERAL CATEGORY AND THE OFFICES OF PRADHANS OCCUPIED BY THE SCHEDULED CASTE, BACKWARD CLASSES AND GENERAL CATEGORY PERSONS
(April 1995 Elections)

Block	No. of offices in the Block	No. of reserved offices in the Block	No. of offices reserved for Scheduled Castes			No. of offices reserved for Backward Classes			No. of offices of Pradhans for Gen. Category Castes			No. of Scheduled Caste Pradhans			No. of Backward Class Pradhans			No. of General Category Pradhans		
			M	W	Total	M	W	Total	M	W	Total	M	W	Total	M	W	Total	M	W	Total
Daurala	43	30	10	6	16	8	5	13	9	5	14	10	6	16	9	5	14	8	5	13
Hastinapur	42	23	8	4	12	7	4	11	11	8	19	9	5	14	7	5	12	10	6	16
Jani Khurd	42	25	8	5	13	8	4	12	11	6	17	8	5	13	8	4	12	11	6	17
Kharkhauda	34	21	6	4	10	6	4	10	9	5	14	6	4	10	6	4	10	9	5	14
Machhra	42	21	6	4	10	7	4	11	14	7	21	6	4	10	7	4	11	14	7	21
Mawana	45	29	9	5	14	10	5	15	10	6	16	9	5	14	10	5	15	10	6	16
Meerut	19	11	3	2	5	4	3	7	4	3	7	3	2	5	4	3	7	4	3	7
Parikshitgarh	49	29	8	5	13	10	6	16	13	7	20	8	5	13	11	6	17	12	7	19
Rajpura	45	28	10	6	16	8	4	12	11	6	17	10	6	16	8	6	14	11	4	15
Rohta	37	21	8	4	12	6	3	9	9	7	16	8	4	12	6	3	9	9	7	16
Sardhana	38	18	6	3	9	6	3	9	13	7	20	6	3	9	6	3	9	12	8	20
Sarurpur Khurd	29	15	4	3	7	5	3	8	9	5	14	4	3	7	5	3	8	9	5	14
Total	465	271	86	51	137	85	48	133	123	72	195	87	52	139	87	51	138	119	69	188

Source: Data of the election of Village Panchayat Pradhans in Meerut District, 1995 Elections (Unpublished).

500 odd villages. In pursuance of U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994, a total of 465 Gram Panchayats or village panchayats have been constituted in these villages (Table 4.1). The U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994, has stipulated a minimum population of 1000 for the constitution of a village panchayat.² Therefore, the villages with a population less than 1000 have been attached to some other village or villages to constitute a common village panchayat. For that reason, the number of village panchayats is less than the number of villages in the district. The total population of these villages is 1273097 out of which 271765 belong to Scheduled Castes, 384182 to Backward Classes and 617150 to the castes termed as General Category Castes (Table 4.0).³ There are no Scheduled Tribes in Meerut district.

Meerut forms an important part of the land stretch called the Indo-Gangetic plains. Here, agriculture and its allied activities is the main occupation which makes land - the primary means of production - the centre of relations of production. Therefore, the social set up and the political economy of the area are governed by the relations of production based upon land. Caste

¹ Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers, Meerut, Department of District Gazetteers, Lucknow, 1965.

² Section II-F(1) of U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994 reads 'The State Government may, by notification, declare any area comprising a village or group of villages, having, so far as practicable, a population of one thousand, to be a panchayat area for the purpose of this Act by such name as may be specified; provided that for the purposes of declaration of a panchayat area no revenue village or any hamlet thereof shall be divided'. This provision is only for the districts of Plains. For the hill districts of U.P. besides the criterion of a population of 1000, there is a provision that all the villages falling within the radius of five kms. may be clubbed together as a village panchayat if the population criterion is not duly met in this sparsely populated region.

³ The figures are according to the unpublished data of April, 1995 Panchayat elections in Meerut and do not show the population of some parts of Parikshitgarh block of Meerut district. The population of backward classes in the district was ascertained by the district administration through a 'Rapid Survey' conducted just before the panchayat elections, 1995, as the census data does not indicate caste-wise population except that of the SCs.

system - the unique institutionalisation of actually class based relationships of domination and subordination in Indian society - is the basic building block of the society of Meerut district also. In Indian context, especially in North India, caste and class identities broadly co-terminate.⁴ Thus, in Meerut also, principal land owning castes are also the castes which enjoy upper, high or slightly lower than high ritual status on the social hierarchy scale named caste system.⁵ The traditional landless agricultural labourers in the district belong to the castes placed quite low on this hierarchy scale based on ritual status. In the past, these castes were no better than the bonded labourers in the fields of land owning castes. At present, they are the landless agricultural wage earning castes which also do share-cropping and of late have started offering their labour on wages in the urban areas of the district. The numerical strength of traditional landless agricultural wage earning castes is greater than any other single caste in the district. However, they lose their numerical edge over other castes if, for example, land owning castes are put together as a class or as an interest group.

Besides the land owning castes and the landless agricultural wage earning castes, there are many other castes which have varying ritual statuses and who engage in numerous ancillary occupational activities in the society. Indian Constitution recognises that besides the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes there may be other castes also which are 'backward (although the Indian Constitution does not define the term 'backward') classes of

⁴ R.K. Hebsur "Congress and the Dominant Castes" in Ram Joshi and R.K. Hebsur (ed.) "Congress in Indian politics: A centenary perspective popular", Bombay, 1987, p.74. Also E.M.S. Namboodari pad, "Caste Conflict Vs. Growing Unity of Popular Democratic Forces", Economic and Political Weekly, Annual Number, Feb., 1979, p.329.

citizens'. The B.P. Mandal Commission which submitted its report in 1980, has prepared a list of castes on the basis of their social and educational backwardness, and these castes have been termed as Other Backward Classes (OBC). In U.P., fifty-five of these castes are found in varying degrees of concentration.⁶ In Meerut district about twenty-five of these castes are found. In the caste hierarchy, these castes are placed between the higher castes and the Scheduled Castes or between the 'Dvijas' and the 'Shudras'.⁷ So far as the occupational activities of these castes are concerned, they vary from agriculture to artisanship to services. The castes which have higher ritual status among these castes are also typically land owning middle peasant castes or Intermediate Cultivating Castes (ICCs). The lower strata of these castes are either marginal peasants or landless castes. They are mainly artisans, craftsmen, small scale traders in specialised commodities e.g. Teli or just provide services to other castes e.g., Nai or barber and Dhivar or water carrier. Although, the landless among these castes are not traditional agricultural labourers but some of them do supplement their primary occupation with occasional agricultural wage earning. However, such practice does not engage them in a conflictual relationship with the land owning upper (Elite), higher (ECC) and middle castes (ICC) which exists between the upper, higher land

⁵ The castes which are major land owning castes in Meerut but have slightly lower ritual status than the higher castes are commonly known as middle peasant castes or Intermediate Cultivating Castes (ICC).

⁶ For the U.P. list of Other Backward Classes, see Appendix I.

⁷ The Terms 'Dvija' and 'Shudra' are specific to Hindu society.

owning castes and the middle peasant castes on the one hand and the landless agricultural wage earning castes on the other hand.⁸

There is another group of castes thinly present in the villages of Meerut comprises those castes which have a lower ritual status than the agricultural wage earning castes. These castes are not traditionally agricultural wage earning castes and earn their livelihood through means considered to be rather unclean in an excessively purity-pollution conscious Hindu society. The relationship of these castes with the land owning castes is not determined by the factors of agricultural labour and wage earning. These castes continue to survive on the periphery of the rural economic structure, without intervening into it at a regular basis.

Jat, Tyagi, Rajput and *Goojar* are the principal land owning castes of Meerut. Among these Tyagi and Rajput are upper castes and Goojar is a middle peasant caste. The Jats have a rather ambivalent position in the caste system. Their ritual status draws them closer to other middle peasant castes while their economic development and predominance takes them nearer to the upper castes. Indeed, at present Jat is a de facto higher caste in Meerut district.

Numerically, Jat is the strongest group in Meerut among the trio of Jat, Tyagi and Rajput. Jats also occupy largest land tracts in the district. They are spread in good strength throughout the twelve blocks of Meerut district and

⁸ Since the Green Revolution, the relationship between the middle peasant caste, which emerged as powerful capitalist farmers in the post-Green Revolution phase, and the landless agricultural wage earning castes has become even more conflictual than the one which traditionally existed between the higher land owning castes and the castes of agricultural wage earning labourers. See Zoya Hasan, *Class and Caste: The Dynamics of Political Change in Uttar Pradesh* in Hasan, Khan & Jha "The State, Political Process and Identity", Sage, New Delhi, 1989. Also R.K. Hazari, "National Unity: Some Socio-Economic Aspects", *Economic Times* (Bombay), 2 January, 1986.

decisively influence the political equations in many of these blocks. Rajputs are also spread throughout the district and held sizeable amount of land tracts. But they do not enjoy decisive numerical strength except in the Sardhana block. The Tyagi community, which is equivalent to the Bhumihars of Eastern U.P. and Bihar, is also spread throughout the district and controls large land tracts, but its main concentration is in the North-Western parts of Meerut like Sardhana and Sarurpur Khurd.

Goojar is the most important middle peasant caste of the district. Goojars are traditionally milch animal rearers but they also own good amount of agricultural lands, which makes them an agricultural community also. An important aspect of Goojar as a community is their concentrated habitation which makes them politically unchallengeable in certain areas like the Kharkhanda block of Meerut. In a large number of villages in the district, Goojars enjoy the status of dominant caste. On the ritual hierarchy scale Goojars are placed immediately below the Jats and above the Ahirs.

Besides Goojars, a host of other backward castes are found in varying numerical strengths throughout the district.⁹ *Saini, Aheer, Dhivar, Gosai* and *Gadariya* are important Hindu backward castes and *Bunkar (Ansar), Fakir, Barai, Kassab*, etc. are important Muslim backward castes of the district. *Barai, Lukhar, Nai*, etc, are some of the castes which are found among both the Hindus and the Muslims in the district. These castes influence the political equations in the district only to a limited extent.

⁹ As caste system has percolated into non-Hindus also through the religious conversions in Meerut, many of the backward castes are both Hindu and Muslim or even exclusively Muslims. See the U.P. list of Backward Classes, Appendix I.

Jatav also known as *Chamars* and *Harijans*¹⁰ is the most important caste of that group of castes which are termed as the Scheduled Castes by the Constitution of India and as *Dalits* by the present day social scientists. Jatavs have their perceptible presence in almost every village of the district. In a good number of cases, Jatavs are the single largest caste in a village but in the absence of ownership of land, they have to engage themselves in wage earning, primarily in the agricultural sector, and share-cropping. The low ritual status of Chamars renders them further vulnerable.¹¹ This socio-economic position of Jatavs exposes them to all kinds of exploitations and atrocities. Although, the intervention by the Indian state through protective discrimination and other means and the general economic development of the region in the post-Green revolution phase has succeeded in Meerut district, as in other parts of western Uttar Pradesh, in reducing the incidence of physical violence against the jatavs by the dominant castes though none of these two factors have helped much in improving their material conditions of existence. Contrary to it, the studies conducted in the region demonstrate a rise in disparities and worsening of the conditions of landless agricultural wage earning labourers and all others except the capitalist farmers in the post-Green Revolution phase.¹² Despite suffering from all kinds of weaknesses, the numerical strength of Jatavs in Meerut is one such factor which provides them with an enhanced political bargaining power

¹⁰ These terms are frequently used to denote the same caste group. See A.B. Mukherjee, *The Chamars of Uttar Pradesh; A study in Social Geography*, Inter India Publications, New Delhi, 1980. The present work proposes to use the term 'Jatav' for this caste group.

¹¹ ... 'considering them low on the basis of their (Jatavs) traditional occupation and ritual purity pollution principle must be flowing from the sinister objective of the higher castes of preserving their domain of the almost exclusive ownership of land, the principal means of production'. A.B. Mukherjee, *Ibid*, p.18.

¹² Francene R. Frankel, *India's Green Revolution : Economic Gains and Political Costs*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971.

in the universal adult franchise system. It is this factor which has been enabling them for quite some time to influence the electoral politics of the district with consequence.

After India's independence, Jatavs in Meerut district, as in other parts of the state, formed a major component of the classical political alliance of the Congress, along with Brahmins and Muslims. But during the 1990s with the erosion of Congress's support base in the region, Jatavs have been successfully mobilised by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). It was discovered during the interviews conducted in eight villages of Meerut district in pursuance of this study that the Jatavs are die-hard supporters of the BSP. Out of Jatav respondents cent percent of them showed their unequivocal allegiance to the BSP which, as they claim, will remain unaltered irrespective of BSP's poll prospects.¹³ This political mobilisation of Jatavs has had two fall outs. On the one hand, it has led to an unprecedented rise in the levels of political consciousness and political organisation among Jatavs; on the other hand, it has alarmed the dominant castes in the district and inspires them to join hands against the Jatavs, especially during the elections for the PRIs, etc. - the new symbols of power in the rural areas. This is also evident from the emergence of newly found ties of economic interdependence among different land owning castes and also among the members of a land owning caste, who have started helping each other with agricultural operations to (i) reduce their dependence upon traditional agricultural labourers, like Jatavs, and (ii) teach Jatavs a lesson by squeezing their major source of livelihood - the agricultural wage earning.

¹³ 'The Dalits look upon the BSP as a party which is particularly yours...' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 12 February, 1994.

This in a way resembles some kind of class polarisation where those who control the means of production and those who sell their labour become conscious about their respective class situations and stand in an antagonistic relationship against each other.

Besides Jatavs, other Scheduled Castes of Meerut district are Baheliya, Balmiki, Bhuiyar, Dhanuk, Khatik, Nat and Sansi. These castes are scattered throughout the district and a few households of one or more of them are found in nearly every village of the district. None of these castes is in a position to influence the political equations in the district simply on the basis of their own numerical strength. Although, during the April 1995 Panchayat elections they left their mark on the scene through certain electoral strategies employed by the high land owning castes and the middle peasant castes in collusion with some of these Scheduled Castes. These Scheduled Castes are not traditionally engaged in actual productive activities and merely render services to the dominants of the society or earn livelihood through some other means falling out of the definition of social production and the purview of the relations of production in the village. For example, Balmiki is the next important Scheduled Caste of the district after Jatavs. Traditionally their main occupation¹⁴ is rendering sanitation services to the village especially the dominant castes' living areas. In lieu of their services, Balmikis do not receive regular wages but just some foodstuff, clothes and occasional 'Bakhshish' from them. In such a relationship there is no room for conflict between the land owning castes and the Balmikis. Rather, there exists a strong patron-client

relationship between them and the land owning castes consider the Balmiki as a very loyal caste.¹⁵ The statistics of 1995 village Panchayat elections in Meerut district reveals a close co-operation between the non-Jatav Scheduled Castes and the higher land owning castes and the middle peasant castes which actually influenced the election results to a great disadvantage of Jatavs in many villages of Meerut (Table 4.3).

Caste system is no more an exclusive feature of Hindu society. Through conversions it has percolated into other non-Hindu communities like Muslims, Sikhs and Christians.¹⁶ In Meerut district also caste system has infected other non-Hindu communities. For example, among the Muslims in the district there are traceable groups like Pathans and Saiyyads who claim to be the descendants of original Muslim migrant groups that had come to India during medieval period from Afghanistan, Turkey and other West Asian countries. These Muslims enjoy the highest social status in the Muslim community. Next come the Muslims who claim to be the converts from higher Hindu castes like Tyagi and Rajput. They still prefer to call themselves Tyagi Muslims and Rajput Muslims and try to observe caste principles like maintaining a distance with the lower caste converts to Islam in their social interactions and practising endogamy. These two sections of Muslims are also land owning groups in Meerut district and enjoy the status of 'dominant caste'

¹⁴ With the expansion of sanitation related requirements in the urban areas Balmikis in increasing numbers get employment out of the village. Sporadically, they also offer their services as general labourers and agricultural labourers.

¹⁵ Not only the castes like Balmiki but also many lower backward castes like the Nai and Kahar find it difficult to go against the dominant castes because of their 'traditional association with personal service in feudal order. See Ameresh Mishra, "Dalit Assertion: Possibilities and Limits", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 11 December 1993.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

in many villages of the district. Among the lowest strata of Muslim society there come those Muslim groups which got converted to Islam from lower artisan castes of Hindus like Barai, Luhar, Dhuniya, Teli, etc., or who have adopted such other professions after their conversion to Islam from Hindu lower castes. Typically, the Muslim lower social status groups are also landless groups in the same way as the Hindu lower backward castes or Scheduled Castes are. Although, the impact of principles like Muslim brotherhood have mellowed the rigidities of caste system among the Muslims but this system has definitely influenced the social status consciousness among the Muslims and has constructed a kind of hierarchical structure in the Muslim community also. This idea of hierarchy also affects their political behaviour in a considerable manner, especially when no outside enemy, e.g. communal polarisation of electorate is there, to draw them closer on the basis of common religious identity. The higher social status Muslim groups assume themselves to be the leaders of entire Muslim community. They also, like the Hindu high land owning and middle peasant castes, detest the idea of a lower caste person (e.g. a backward Muslim becoming 'Pradhan' of their village).¹⁷

'As politics does not function in a vacuum but is rooted in the society',¹⁸ it is but natural there would be a two way interaction between the social set up and the institutional arrangement of polity. Caste is an important

¹⁷ During the sample survey in the Pavli Khas Village of Daurala block of Meerut district it was found that the Pathans, who had controlled the post of Pradhan before 1995, were vehemently against the reservation policy. They discouraged and ridiculed the Fakir candidate in the 1995 Panchayat elections in the beginning. When the situation appeared to be impossible to them they boycotted the election. After the election they again did not co-operate with the newly elected Fakir Pradhan and finally got him removed through a non-confidence motion. The dethroned Pradhan as well as the Pathans confessed that they (Pathans) have not yet reconciled to the fact that even a backward caste Muslim can become Pradhan of their village.

¹⁸ Rajni Kothari, *Caste in Indian Politics*, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1970.

building block of Indian society and thus is a very important variable of political dynamics also. Since the origin of caste lies in the division of labour or specialisation of various functions in society, a corresponding correlation of different castes with their respective classes can be seen.¹⁹ The conflict between castes does not stem from the fact that they are castes. The people belonging to different castes come in conflict with one another for such reasons as control over economic resources, social dominance, self-assertion or desire for autonomy.²⁰ This conflict assumes the character of a struggle for power which is further accentuated by the democratisation of the Panchayats and other legal measures designed to create an equitable social order.²¹

The introduction of new Panchayati Raj in the wake of Constitution (Seventy-third amendment) Act, 1992 and the U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994 poses a new challenge to the society of U.P. countryside by initiating the formation of new power structures through the revamped PRIs in which dominant castes or the land owning castes are not necessary as important as in the past. These legislative measures have violently shaken the very foundation of the traditional patterns of social interaction and political participation. The Article 243-D of the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 which provides for the reservation of the offices of Pradhan (the head of village Panchayat) for different weaker sections of the rural society like the Scheduled Castes, the Backward Classes/Castes and the

¹⁹ Sudhir Hindwan, *Op. cit.*

²⁰ K.K. Singh identifies five major sources of inter-caste tension. These are: (i) tension emanating from land conflicts, (ii) fear of lower caste domination, (iii) challenge to upper caste ascendancy by the low castes, (iv) damage to and destruction of property, and (v) actual and threatened refusal by the low castes to work for the higher /dominant castes and to render traditional services. K.K. Singh, *Patterns of Caste Tension*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1967, p. 40.

women is the nucleus of this challenge. Many previous studies have established this fact that the key post in the village Panchayat is that of 'Pradhan' and the dominant castes do everything that is possible to capture the office of Pradhan.²²

(B)

Post-73rd Amendment Act, 1972 Phase

When a powerful interventionist state negotiates with the social processes in order to steer social change according to the democratic ideals, what it has attempted to do through the Article 243OD of 73rd Amendment Act, the reaction from the society may be expected at two levels:

- (i) the entrenched sections of society like the dominant castes reacting either violently or attempting to manipulate the new situation to preserve their positions;
- (ii) the hitherto unassertive sections of society discovering a new idiom of assertion to claim their due in the given socio-economic set up.

In Meerut district, it appears that both of these processes have been continuing by and large simultaneously since the first general elections for the Village Panchayats under the new Acts which took place in April 1995. During these elections, caste politics manifested itself in more than one way. Some of the manifestations of caste politics were traditional, natural and common to all the castes whereas some other facets of it were very unique and ingenious both in their conception and impact and were specific to particular

²¹ *ibid.*, p.1.

castes as their target. Further, the caste politics, as it was witnessed during the April 1995 elections, had both the intra-caste and inter-caste dynamics. The most important aspect of intra-caste politics was factionalism. Whether it was a land owning caste or a caste of landless agricultural labourers none of them was free from factionalism. However, we find that the nature of factionalism is not alike in all the castes. In some of the castes like the higher land owning castes factionalism is totally a result of intra-caste dynamics. Whereas in the case of some other castes like the Jatavs, besides the intra-caste factors, the dynamics of inter-caste politics has also added to factionalism. Again, among certain castes like the Goojars the role of traditional authority, like the caste panchayat, has reduced the incidence of factionalism. On the other hand there are Balmikis among whom the rate of factionalism has markedly come down due to the role of inter-caste politics.

So far as the patterns of caste politics in the pre-1995 days are concerned Village Panchayats in Meerut, like Panchayats in any other part of U.P. plains were under the complete control of higher land owning castes and the middle peasant castes. In the villages where any of the land owning castes like the Tyagi, Rajput, Jat and Goojar had a good numerical presence, even if it was not a majority, they invariably pocketed the post of Village Pradhan. Generally, this was facilitated by the formation of an informal alliance of the higher and middle peasant castes with other lower backward and Scheduled Castes in the village. Elections in the villages were often a contest between

²²

Rangnath, *Changing Patterns of Rural Leadership in Uttar Pradesh*, New Delhi, Sindhu Pub., 1974, p. 29; also Masaaki Fukunaga, *Society, Caste and Factional Politics: Conflict and Continuity in Rural India*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1993, p. 129.

different factions of a higher or middle peasant caste or between more than one land owning castes in the village. Other castes usually participated in the elections only as subordinate allies of different factions of a land owning caste or of different land owning castes, as the case may be. Generally, the candidates from Scheduled Castes and lower backward castes were made to contest the elections by one or the other main rivals in the fray, belonging to some land owning caste(s), with the purpose of splitting rival votes. Only in rare cases candidate(s) from some lower caste independently ventured into the fray. This used to be a case when the village had a rather polarised population composition. If a Scheduled Caste or a some other lower backward caste candidate dared to contest against the candidate(s) of the land owning caste(s) in a multi-caste village, the factor of caste hierarchy, that determines the relative position of every caste vis-à-vis other castes, put the land owning caste(s)' candidate(s) automatically in an advantageous position. It happened so because neither the castes placed above the caste of a particular lower caste candidate nor those below his/her caste were/are psychologically prepared to accept a lower caste person as Village Pradhan.²³ Consequently, the Scheduled Castes and lower backward castes had a very insignificant number of Pradhans belonging to them.²⁴ What must have been the scene of Panchayats before the implementation of new Panchayati Raj in 1995 is discernible from the available statistics of 1995 Panchayat elections in the villages where the office of Pradhan was either unreserved or was reserved for the women from general

²³ *ibid.*, p.29.

²⁴ This was a case not only in Meerut but in other parts of the country also. Indeed, this was the reason that the Parliament of India had to incorporate a provision like Article 243-D into the 73rd Amendment Act.

TABLE 4.2: SCHEDULED CASTES, BACKWARD CLASSES AND GENERAL CATEGORY NOMINATIONS AND CANDIDATES FOR THE OFFICE OF PRADHANS
(April 1995 Elections)

Block	Total		Scheduled Castes*												Other Backward Classes*								General*					
	Nom. Can.		Nom. Can.		Nom. Can.		Nom. Can.		Nom. Can.		Nom. Can.		Nom. Can.		Nom. Can.		Nom. Can.		Nom. Can.		Nom. Can.							
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W				
Daurala	219	109	165	79	90	40	72	34	5	-	5	-	7	8	6	6	59	32	35	19	11	-	10	-	47	29	37	20
	(328)		(244)		(130)		(106)		(5)		(5)		(15)		(12)		(91)		(54)		(11)		(10)		(76)		(57)	
Hastina- pur	169	95	114	70	44	29	34	25	-	-	-	-	9	4	6	4	43	26	26	15	10	3	5	3	63	33	43	23
	(264)		(184)		(73)		(59)		(-)		(-)		(13)		(10)		(69)		(41)		(13)		(8)		(96)		(66)	
Jani Khurd	164	92	134	73	42	28	40	21	-	-	-	-	4	5	4	5	45	25	38	19	2	2	1	2	71	32	51	26
	(256)		(207)		(70)		(61)		(-)		(-)		(9)		(9)		(70)		(57)		(4)		(3)		(103)		(77)	
Khar- khauda	129	73	111	63	39	22	36	22	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	28	24	23	20	5	-	4	-	55	27	46	21
	(202)		(174)		(61)		(58)		(-)		(-)		(2)		(2)		(52)		(43)		(5)		(4)		(82)		(67)	
Machhra	151	85	122	63	38	28	29	23	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	1	33	17	26	9	4	-	4	-	74	39	61	30
	(236)		(185)		(66)		(52)		(-)		(-)		(3)		(3)		(50)		(35)		(4)		(4)		(113)		(91)	
Mawana	233	118	175	97	66	31	54	27	-	-	-	-	6	6	6	3	82	27	55	22	7	2	7	2	72	52	53	43
	(351)		(272)		(97)		(81)		(-)		(-)		(12)		(9)		(109)		(77)		(9)		(9)		(124)		(96)	
Meerut	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parikshit-187 garh	120	124	87	48	32	37	25	2	-	2	-	2	6	8	3	7	64	31	41	25	12	2	7	1	55	47	34	29
	(307)		(211)		(80)		(62)		(2)		(2)		(14)		(10)		(95)		(66)		(14)		(8)		(102)		(63)	
Rajpura	217	101	183	86	82	32	72	25	4	1	-	-	8	6	8	6	50	29	42	24	4	2	4	2	69	31	57	29
	(318)		(269)		(114)		(97)		(5)		(-)		(14)		(14)		(79)		(66)		(6)		(6)		(100)		(86)	
Rohta	118	75	105	59	44	19	43	18	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	34	15	32	8	-	-	-	-	40	39	30	32
	(193)		(164)		(63)		(61)		(-)		(-)		(2)		(1)		(49)		(40)		(-)		(-)		(79)		(62)	
Sardana	165	83	118	62	36	19	32	13	-	-	-	-	6	1	6	1	37	16	18	9	2	1	1	1	84	46	61	38
	(248)		(180)		(55)		(45)		(-)		(-)		(7)		(7)		(53)		(27)		(3)		(2)		(130)		(99)	
Sarurpur Khurd	115	102	94	88	32	18	27	17	-	-	-	-	4	2	2	2	29	18	22	12	1	-	1	-	49	64	42	57
	(217)		(182)		(50)		(44)		(-)		(-)		(6)		(4)		(47)		(34)		(1)		(1)		(113)		(99)	
Total	1867	1053	1445	827	561	298	476	250	11	1	7	-	54	43	45	36	504	260	358	182	58	12	44	11	679	439	515	348
	(2920)		(2272)		(859)		(726)		(12)		(7)		(97)		(81)		(764)		(540)		(70)		(55)		(1118)		(863)	

Source: Data of the Elections of Village Panchayat Pradhans in Meerut District, 1995 Elections (Unpublished)

* SCR and BCR stand for the villages with the offices of Pradhans reserved for the SCs and BCs respectively. Gen. stands for General Category Castes.

category castes.²⁵ There were total 195 offices of Pradhans falling in these two categories (Table 4.1). For these offices a total of 97 Scheduled Caste candidates filed their nominations and 81 of them actually contested the election (Table 4.2). However, only two of them (two Jatavs, one man and another woman from Hastinapur) could make it to the Office (Table 4.1). This is a success rate of just 1.02% whereas the percentage of Scheduled Castes in Meerut is about 22%.

However, after the implementation of new Panchayati Raj in 1995 the scenario has radically changed in Meerut district. In this first round of Panchayat elections under the U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994, as many as 2920 persons both men and women filed their nominations and 2272 of them actually contested the election (Table 4.1) for a total of 465 offices (Table 4.1). The number of offices reserved for the Scheduled Caste in the district was 137 (86 for SC Men and 51 for SC Women). The number of Scheduled Caste persons contesting for these offices was 7% out of which 476 were SC men and 250 were SC women (Table 4.2). In these elections, Scheduled Caste candidates divided total 139 (137 + 2) offices of Pradhan among themselves out of 465 offices of Pradhan in the district (Table 4.1). In all probability this was the highest ever rate of Scheduled Castes' participation and success (29.89%) in the election to the key position of Village Panchayat Pradhan in the Meerut district.

Among the Scheduled Castes also, Jatavs - the traditional landless agricultural wage earners - were the maximum beneficiaries. Out of 139

²⁵ Higher land owning castes like Tyagi, Rajput and others and the de facto high land owning caste like Jat.

**TABLE 4.4: OFFICES OF PRADHANS SECURED BY THE
JATAV CANDIDATES IN MEERUT VILLAGE
PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS, 1995.**

Block	No. of Reserved Offices of Pradhan	No. of Offices Secured by Jatav Candidates		Total No. of Offices secured by Jatav candidates
		Men	Women	
Daurala	16	9	4	13
Hastinapur*	12	7+1	4 + 1	13
Jani Khurd	13	6	5	11
Kharkhauda	10	4	1	5
Mawana	14	7	4	11
Machhra	10	5	2	7
Meerut	5	-	-	-
Parikshitgarh	13	7	5	12
Rajpura	16	9	4	13
Rohta	12	5	4	9
Sardhana	9	2	1	3
Sarurpur Khurd	7	4	3	7
Total	137	66	38	104#

Source: Date of the Election of Village Panchayat Pradhans in Meerut District, 1995
Elections (Unpublished)

* Jatavs wrested two extra offices from the General Category castes.

This total does not include the number of offices secured by Jatavs in Meerut
Block.

offices of Pradhan secured by Scheduled Caste candidates, Jatavs pocketed about 104 offices* (Table 4.4). this means that in the 1995 elections Jatav Pradhan constituted about 22.36%* of the total number of Pradhans and 74.82%* of the total number of Scheduled Caste Pradhans in Meerut district. In some of the Blocks of the district like Sarurpur Khurd Jatavs wrested all the offices reserved for the Scheduled Castes. In at least five Blocks, their success rate is above eighty per cent. Only in the Sardhana Block they succeeded only in 33.33% case and in Kharkhauda in fifty per cent cases. In Hastinapur, Jatavs secured two extra seats even from the quota of higher land owning castes.(table 4.4).

Although, the performance of the Jatavs was outstanding among all the Scheduled Castes in the 1995 panchayat elections in Meerut, yet it happens to be only one side of the picture. The other half, which is also more important from the point of view of this study, is how the other castes especially the land owning castes of Tyagi, Rajput, Jat and Goojar have reacted to the participation and success of Jatavs - their principal agricultural labourers - in the election to the prestigious office of Pradhan.

Before the adoption of the policy of reserving offices of Pradhan for the weaker sections of society, the office of Pradhan in majority of the cases was a privilege of either of the land owning castes. With the implementation of this policy of reservation it was but natural that the land owning castes found their hitherto entrenched positions to be under threat. This was to affect them in more than one way. First of all, among all the Scheduled Castes maximum danger was perceived from the Jatavs. Jatavs being more numerous than any other Scheduled Caste had better chances of success in the panchayat elections.

Their growing political consciousness and organisation were also making the Jatavs more assertive. The holding of Pradhan's office by a Jatav meant the surfacing of a general unwillingness of the Jatav community in the village to submit to the dictates of land owning castes. This was to bring to the fore the perennial question of minimum wages that are seldom paid to the agricultural labourers by the land owning castes.²⁶ This situation could put the land owning castes, especially the higher ritual castes among them, into great difficulty as:

- (i) they hold large land tracts not manageable with the labour of family members solely, making the engagement of traditional agricultural labour necessary;
- (ii) the higher ritual status land owning castes like the Tyagis and Rajputs are traditionally known for their abhorrence for manual work.²⁷ They usually do not allow their womenfolk particularly to work in fields. This increases their dependence for agricultural operations on the Jatavs;
- (iii) the investment of agricultural surplus by the land owning castes in the education of their children (male child especially) has resulted into the emergence of an educated section of youth. This youth is unwilling to seek occupation in agriculture and attempts to get a white collar job outside the village.

Further, with the industrial development in the region the notions of power and social prestige also have undergone a great change. This has led to the fall in the erstwhile social position of capitalist farmers. Therefore, in a

²⁶ Sudhir Hindwan, *Op. Cit.*

²⁷ A.B. Mukherjee, *Op. Cit.*, p.106.

way, the migration of land owning castes' educated youth to the urban areas in search of white-collar jobs is also a conscious effort by these castes to adapt themselves to the new idioms of power and prestige. In the absence of sufficient degree of mechanisation of agriculture, this process, however, has not resulted into the lowering of the dependence of land owning castes upon castes like Jatavs; rather it has multiplied the degree of dependence.

Secondly, the office of Pradhan is no more an ornamental one making just an addition to the social prestige of its holder. Now it means a control over the government funds earmarked for the village and the money collected through taxes levied by the Panchayat. Naturally, the caste, whose representative holds this key office, will be most benefitted by these funds. Further, when a Jatav is a Pradhan the government policies like the 'Indira Awas Yojna', which particularly target the Scheduled Castes in the villages, would be actually implemented in the quarters of Jatavs in the village and the money earmarked for the purpose would not lapse due to non-utilisation by the Panchayat as it used to happen in the past, due to the conscious efforts of higher castes and middle peasant castes through their Pradhan, to keep the Scheduled Castes in the village materially underdeveloped and thus dependent upon agricultural wage earning. This matter of the nature of the utilisation of official funds in the village has important ramifications on the patterns of interaction between the land owning and the agricultural wage earning castes, once the office of Pradhan moves to the latter.

Thirdly, the feudal mind-set of social status conscious land owning castes does not allow them to accept a lower caste person as Pradhan especially as a de facto Pradhan.

Finally, although this reservation of the office of Pradhan is rotational and would cover a village only for five years at a time yet it harbours the danger of making the agricultural wage earning castes in the villages conscious of their position and potential. This is most likely to set them more restive and more vocal forever. The material gains made by the individual members belonging to such caste(s) or by them collectively would also turn them more ambitious. Definitely, this means no happy situation for the land owning castes.

Led by these considerations primarily, the land owning caste in the villages of Meerut having the office of Pradhan reserved for the Scheduled Castes reacted, as they were bound to, against the new provisions. However, the way they adopted to react was quite unorthodox, calculative and ingenious. Since the power of Indian state with its policy of protective discrimination in favour of the weaker sections of society stands behind the new provisions the options like physical violence or a formal protest automatically became unviable. Therefore, the new situation demanded invention of new mechanisms by the land owning castes to maintain their domination in the rural power structure. The reservation of a certain percentage of the offices of Pradhans from the total number of offices of Pradhans in a district²⁸ for the Scheduled Castes debar the non-Scheduled Castes from entering the fray for these offices. But, there is no way to prevent the non-Scheduled Castes, especially the land owning castes, from enjoying a back-seat driving.

²⁸ According to the percentage of the population of Scheduled Castes in the total population of the State. In Meerut 137 out of 465 offices, i.e. 29.46% offices were reserved for the Scheduled Castes (Table 4.1).

In Meerut villages, which had reserved offices of Pradhan for the Scheduled Castes during the 1995 elections, the land owning castes adopted a two-pronged strategy to facilitate back-seat driving by them. The first prong of this strategy was that wherever possible only a non-Jatav Scheduled Caste would be allowed to secure the post of Pradhan. The second prong of the strategy was that in case a non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidate is not available to contest the election, efforts would be made to see that land owning castes' own Jatav candidate won the election. In pursuance of the first part of their strategy the land owning castes adopted a simple but effective *modus operandi* of (I) fielding a minimum possible, preferably a single, non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidate and throw behind him/her the weight of land owning castes headed multi-caste alliance comprising land owning castes, non-Jatav Scheduled Castes and the lower backward cases; (ii) dividing the Jatav votes by fuelling factionalism among the Jatavs and fielding as many puppet candidates as possible, which are surely not difficult to find out in a poor and dependent community like the Jatavs.

Among the non-Jatav Scheduled Castes it was the Balmiki community which became the main supplier of non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates to the land owning castes. Neither by their number nor by their occupation the Balmiki community poses a threat to the land owning castes in the villages of Meerut. Contrary to it, they are considered to be a very loyal community by the land owning castes because of their acquiescence to land owning castes' domination. Thus, out of 132 offices of Pradhan reserved for the Scheduled Castes in eleven blocks of Meerut district (data of Meerut block not available) at least for 76 offices contest took place between Jatav and the non-Jatav

**TABLE 4.3 JATAV V. NON JATAV SCHEDULED CASTES CONTEST FOR THE OFFICES OF PRADHANS
RESERVED FOR SCHEDULED CASTES
(April 1995 Elections)**

Block and No. of reserved offices	Sl. No.	Village	No. of Jatav candidates	No. & Castewise break up of non-Jatav candidates	No. of Jatav Nominations Withdrawal	No. of Non-Jatav Nominations Withdrawal	Winner	Runners-up
	1	Batjevra	2	N-1	1	-	J	J
	2	Chindauri	5	B-1	-	-	B	J
	3	Kheri Tappa Lavar	4	B-1	2	-	J	B
Daurala (16)	4	Maithna Indra Singh	7	B-1	-	-	B	J
	5	Pohli	7	B-2	2	-	J	B
	6	Dhanju	6	B-3	3	-	B	J
	7	Bahralla	4	B-1	5	-	J	J
	8	Jevri	8	B-1	1	-	J	J
	9	Rasoolpur Murad-nagar	9	B-1	1	-	J	J
	10	Sivaya Jamnullapur	1	B-2	9	-	J	B
		Total	53	14/N-1, B-13	24	-	J-7, B-3	J-7, B-3
Hastinapur (12)	1	Kishorpur	6	B-1	-	-	J	J
	2	Shahpur	8	B-1	1	-	J	J
	3	Meeva	5	B-1	-	-	B	J
	4	Sadarapur	3	Bh-1	3	-	J	J
		Total	22	4/B-3, Bh-1	4	-	J-3, B-1	J-4

Source : Data of the Election of Village Panchayat Pradhans in Meerut District, 1995 Elections (Unpublished)

Cont...

Jani Khurd	1	Sisaula Khurd	5	B-1	1	-	J	J
(13)	2	Ghat	8	B-1	-	-	J	J
	3	Gejha	4	B-1	-	-	B	J
	4	Kithauli	2	B-1	-	-	J	B
	5	Jani Khurd	4	B-1, K-3	2	-	K	K
		Total	23	8/B-5, K-3	3	-	J-3, B-1, K-1	J-3, B-1, K-1
Kharkhauda	1	Setkuan	3	B-1	-	-	B	J
(10)	2	Dheerkhera	5	B-1	-	-	B	J
	3	Sarava Mirzapur	5	B-1	-	-	J	B
	4	Panchi	5	B-1	-	-	B	J
	5	Bijauli	7	B-1	-	-	J	B
	6	Chhatari	2	B-1	-	-	B	J
	7	Kaili Paidapur	3	B-1	-	-	J	B
	8	Rajpura	4	B-1	-	-	J	B
	9	Ulghan Shikarpur	7	B-1	-	-	J	B
	10	Dadri Jagipura	7	B-1	1	-	B	J
		Total	48	10/B-10	2	-	J-5, B-5	J-6, B-4
Machra	1	Muradpur Shaulda	7	B-1	2	-	B	J
(10)	2	Meghrajpur	6	B-1	-	-	J	J
	3	Bhagwanpur Bangar	2	B-2	-	-	J	J
	4	Battipura	2	B-1, N-1	2	3	N	J
	5	Bahloipur	5	B-1	-	-	J	B
	6	Dabathla	5	B-1	-	-	B	J
	7	Amarpur	5	B-1, Bh-1	-	-	J	J
	8	Fatehpur Narain	1	Bh-1	6	-	J	Bh
		Total	33	11/B-9, Bh-2, N-1	10	3	J-5, B-2, N-1	J-6, B-1, Bh-1
Mawana	1	Rafan	1	B-1	-	-	J	B
(14)	2	Nagli Isha	8	B-1	-	-	B	B

	3	Kishanpur Birana	4	B-1	1	-	J	J
	4	Nagla Hareru	5	Bh-1	2	-	J	J
	5	Bhagwanpur	4	B-1	-	-	J	J
	6	Gadina	11	B-1	-	-	B	J
	7	Fitkri	5	B-2	4	-	J	J
	8	Zinjharpur	1	B-1	-	1	J	B
	9	Kohla	6	B-1	-	-	J	J
	10	Rahavati	3	B-1	2	-	B	J
		Total	48	11/B-10, Bh-1	9	1	J-7, B-3	J-7, B-3
Meerut	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(-)								
Parikshitgarh	1	Durveshpur	3	Bh-1	-	-	J	Bh
	2	Sona	2	B-1	-	-	J	B
(13)	3	Neemka	3	B-1	1	-	B	J
	4	Chitwansherpur	5	B-2, N-1	2	-	J	B
		Total	13	6/B-5, N-1	3	-	J-3, B-1	J-1, B-2, Bh-1
Rajpura	1	Amheda Adipur	3	B-1, K-1	-	-	J	J
(16)	2	Rajpura	4	K-3	1	1	K	J
	3	Rali Chauhan	2	B-2	2	-	B	J
	4	Lalsana	1	B-1	-	-	J	J
	5	Uldepur	4	B-1	1	-	J	B
	6	Pabla	9	B-1	-	-	J	J
	7	Hasanpur Kadeem	7	Ba-1	-	-	J	J
	8	Murlipur	4	B-2	1	-	J	J
	9	Kamalpur	8	B-1	1	-	J	J
	10	Sikhera	6	B-1, K-3	-	1	B	J
		Total	48	18/B-10, K-7, Ba-1	6	2	J-7, K-1, B-2	J-9, B-1
Rohta	1	Jangethi	9	B-1	1	-	B	J
(12)	2	Rampur Moti	2	D-2	-	-	D	J
	3	Kaleena	4	B-2	-	-	B	B
		Total	15	5/B-3, D-2	1	-	B-2, D-1	J-2, B-1

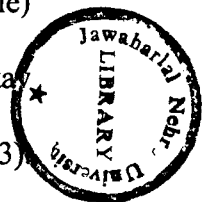
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Sardana	1	Tehrki	4	N-1	1	-	N	J
(9)	2	Jasrathpur	2	B-1	1	-	B	J
	3	Chhabaria	4	B-1, D-1	-	-	D	J
	4	Juletha	3	B-1	-	-	B	J
	5	Jafarnagar Begamabad	2	K-4	1	-	J	K
		Total	15	9/N-1, B-3, K-4, D-1	3	-	J-1, N-1, B-2, D-1	J-4, K-1
Sarurpur Khurd	1	Bhooni	5	D-2	1	-	J	D
(7)	2	Kakkepur	5	B-1	-	-	J	B
	3	Ekdi	3	B-1, K-1	1	-	J	K
	4	Bahadarpur	3	B-1	-	-	J	B
	5	Dahar	7	B-3	1	-	J	J
	6	Badaruddin Nagar	4	B-2	1	-	J	J
	7	Pathauli	6	B-1	3	-	J	B
		Total	33	12/B-9, D-2, K-1	7	-	J-7	D-1, B-3, J-2, K-1
132	76	Grand Total	351	108, B-80, B-1, Bh-5, D-5, K-14, N-13	72	6	J-48, B-22, K-2, D-2, N-2	J-51, B-19, K-3, Bh-2, D-1

Scheduled Caste candidates. A total of 108 non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates contested for these 76 offices. Out of them eighty were Balmikis, contesting in sixty-five villages. Balmikis were followed by Khatiks (15), Dhanuk, Nat and Bhuiyar (four each) and Baheliya (one) (Table 4.3).

What makes us believe that the candidature of a large number of non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates was sponsored one, is the pattern of non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates' participation in the April 1995 election. First of all, if a caste fields its candidate(s) in an election it is expected to have at least some meaningful numerical presence in the constituency to enable its candidate(s) secure a respectable score. But, this is not the case with the non-Jatav Scheduled Caste in the villages of Meerut. The nature of their occupations does not allow their concentration in one village. In general these castes have only a few households in a village. Normally their thin presence in rural Meerut should have discouraged the non-Jatav Scheduled Caste to field their candidates for the office of Pradhan. But what actually happened was just the reverse of it during the 1995 Panchayat elections. In 76 out of total 132 villages, in eleven blocks of Meerut (data of Meerut block not available) having the reserved office of Pradhan for the Scheduled Castes non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates contested against the Jatav candidates (Table 4.3)

There is strong possibility that these candidates had a guaranteed support base which, in all probability, was lying out of their own caste. As one cannot expect Jatavs enmasse supporting the candidature of some other Scheduled Caste candidate dumping their own caste candidates, the non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates could not receive support from elsewhere but the land owning castes in the village whose vested interest in preventing a Jatav from becoming



Village Pradhan is already clear to us. Thus, it would not be undue to conclude that a good number of non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates ran for the office of Village Pradhan because the land owning castes in the village wished so.

Secondly, these 76 villages have a markedly different pattern of non-Jatav Scheduled Caste persons' nominations, withdrawal of nominations and candidature. Generally, in village politics because of factionalism the number of nominations for a key office like Pradhans is very high among all the major castes. But again due to the role of caste council, political bargaining and inter-caste politics the rate of withdrawal of nominations is also reasonably high. For example, in the case of general category nomination the number of nominations per office is 5.73. In the case of Scheduled Castes this figure per SC reserved office is 6.27, in the case of backward castes figure per BC reserved office is 5.74 and in the case of overall nominations per office the figure is 5.27 (Table 4.2). However, in the case of non-Jatav Scheduled Castes the rate of nominations per SC reserved office is just 0.83 and their rate of nominations per office they contested for (76) is 1.5 (Table 4.3). In contrast to them the rate of nominations per SC reserved office among the Jatavs is 5.43 (Table 4.2) and per reserved office of Pradhan for which non-Jatav Scheduled Castes contested against them the rate of Jatav nomination is 5.56 (Table 4.3). So far as the Balmiki nominations are concerned their rate per reserved office is still lower than the non-Jatav Scheduled Castes in general (Table 4.3). Similarly, the rate of withdrawal of nominations among the general category candidates is 22.80%, among the BCs for BC reserved offices is 29.31%, among the SC, for the SC reserved offices is 15.48% and overall this figure is 22.19% (Table 4.2). However, among the non-Jatav Scheduled Caste

candidates this percentage is a bare minimum of 5.26% (Table 4.3). Further, in 47 out of these 76 villages a single Balmiki candidate was in the fray against an average 5.08 Jatav candidates. In 54 out of these 76 cases a single non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidate was contesting against an average 4.88 Jatav candidates (Table 4.2). This pattern of nominations, withdrawals and candidature exudes a high probability of a pre-planned strategy by certain vested interests that negated the normal principle of political bargaining during the electoral process and overruled the discretion of the candidate or his caste group.

Of course, there are some exceptions to this pattern of non-Jatav Scheduled Castes' participation in the elections. Khatik and Dhanuk, two non-Jatav Scheduled Castes in the district in four and two cases respectively had more than one candidate from their community for the same office. IN eleven cases more than one Balmiki candidates are found contesting for one office. In eight cases more than one non-Jatav Scheduled Caste's candidates are found contesting for the same post (Table 4.2). There may be various reasons behind such aberrations and they may differ from case to case. It may be a result of severe factional politics within the ranks of land owning castes leading different factions to field their own non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates. It may be a result of factional politics within a non-Jatav Scheduled Caste in a particular village. It may also be an outcome of inter-caste politics among non-Jatav Scheduled Castes in villages where they are present in more than average numerical strength. Even a technical reason like failure in withdrawing one's nomination form may cause such an aberration. Unfortunately, any secondary data is insufficient to ascertain that which one of these factors actually caused a

particular case of this nature. Only the primary data collected about each one of these deviations can ascertain this actual factor as it was established by the sample survey in Sivaya Jamnullapur village of Daurala Block of Meerut district. In this multi-caste village Jat and Jatav are two most numerous castes. Two Jat factions in the village fielded two Balmiki as their respective candidates (see Table 4.3). But when after a Jatav caste Panchayat, nine out of ten jatav persons withdrew their nominations both the Jat factions got alarmed and decided to field a common Balmiki candidate burying their mutual differences in the face of a common challenge. However, the Balmiki nominee, who had been asked by the Jats to withdraw his nomination papers, failed to beat the deadline of the withdrawal of nomination forms. Consequently, both the Balmikis were officially candidates in the fray which makes our Table 4.3 show that in Sivaya Jamnullapur two Balmiki candidates contested election against one Jatav candidate. This is incidentally the only case among the cases of Jatav vs. non-Jatav Scheduled Caste contests in the district during the 1995 Panchayat elections when the number of Jatav candidates (1) was less than the number of non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates (2) (Table 4.3).

Fielding and supporting a non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidate was an important aspect of land owning castes' defence mechanism against the reservation of the office of Pradhan. But this strategy in itself was incomplete and insufficient to return their candidates. A necessary condition for the success of their candidates was that not only their votes would go to a single candidate - here a non-Jatav Scheduled Caste person - but also the Jatav votes be fractured among many candidates. Thus, the second part of land owning

castes' strategy was to deftly encourage factionalism among the Jatavs in the village and to ensure that many Jatav candidates contested against each other thereby eating into the support base of each other. It was expected if the land owning castes managed to retain this factionalism among Jatavs till polling, the chances of the success of a non-Jatav candidate would fairly increase.

The *modus operandi* to incite factionalism among Jatavs was a mixture of the use of resources, pressure tactics and false promises of support to the candidature of many Jatav community members simultaneously. As a result, we find 423 Jatavs filing nominations for 76 offices against just 114 non-Jatav Scheduled Caste nominees. Out of them 351 Jatavs were actually in the fray. Thus, in these 76 cases, for per office of Pradhan 4.61 Jatav candidates were there against just 1.42 non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates per office (Table 4.3).

The land owning castes in Meerut district were able to find out non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates only in seventy-six out of 132 villages,²⁹ having the office of Pradhan reserved for the Scheduled Castes. In the remaining fifty-six villages, contest took place exclusively among the Jatav candidates. The second prong of land owning castes' two-pronged strategy was meant for these villages. In these villages the difficulty of land owning castes had increased many fold since in a contest exclusively among Jatavs only a Jatav could be elected for the office of Pradhan. The safest way in the given situation was that rather than a real representative of the Jatavs, a Jatav most favourable to the land owning castes would become village Pradhan. A Jatav candidate elected with the support of land owning castes would be naturally

obliged to keep the land owning castes in good humour. The option left with the land owning castes in this situation was to adopt the technique of fuelling factionalism among the Jatavs and plant a couple of their own Jatav candidates into this crowd of candidates. Factionalism was expected to make the contest multi-cornered reducing the chances of Jatav votes deciding the result. The advantage of the situation had gone to the land owning castes and other castes in the village whose votes would have decided the result in such a situation. Although, it is not easy to determine the exact degree of land owning castes' role in inciting factionalism in these village, yet it is not impossible to discern the trend with the help of available facts and figures. In these fifty-six villages total 267 Jatav candidates were in the fray.³⁰ Thus, in these villages there were 4.76 Jatav candidates in the fray for every office of Pradhan. This ratio is even higher than the ratio of Jatav candidates per office in other 76 villages. Not to deny this higher rate of contestants may be because of the absence of an outer enemy i.e. a candidate from some other Scheduled Caste, as this outer enemy often becomes a factionalism moderating factor in the case of all the castes. But it is also not improbable that this higher rate of contestants was due to the role of land owning castes, who had high stakes involved in those elections. Indeed, it needs no more proof to say that the land owning castes' position in the rural power structure was under greatest threat with the provision of Article 243-D of 73rd Amendment Act. Therefore, even when a non-Jatav Scheduled

²⁹ Excluding Meerut Block where data is not available.

³⁰ For the total number of SC reserved offices of Pradhan (excluding Meerut Block), total 726 candidates contested (Table 4.2). Out of them 351 Jatav and 108 non-Jatav SC candidates (total 459) had contested for the P6 offices where contest was between the Jatav and the non-Jatav SCs. Thus, remaining 267 candidates, who were all Jatavs for the 56 offices for which contest was exclusively among the Jatavs.

Caste candidate was not available to contest the election on the behest of land owning castes, these castes could not afford to watch helplessly the Jatavs exclusively deciding the result of election for the prestigious office of Village Panchayat Pradhan.

Thus, the land owning castes in Meerut tried to employ a defence mechanism to render the provision of reservation of Pradhan's office for the Scheduled Castes ineffective. However, to what extent their reactionary stance served their purpose indeed, needs further discussion.

In the villages where the land owning castes had succeeded in pitching non-Jatav Scheduled Castes against the Jatavs the non-Jatav Scheduled Castes managed to capture 28 (36.48%) out of 76 offices. This was 21.21% of the total number of SC reserved offices in eleven Blocks of the district. They were runners up in 25 other villages. The Balmikis, who had provided the land owning castes with the largest number of non-Scheduled Caste candidates, were the major beneficiaries of results also, among all the non-Jatav Scheduled Castes. They captured twenty-two out of twenty-eight offices bagged by the non-Jatav Scheduled Castes (Table 4.3). This indicates the mechanism of land owning castes in Meerut really worked although the performance remained below expectations. The reasons behind this low performance may be many. The most important of them appears to be the inescapably conspicuous nature of the strategy adopted by the land owning castes. A mechanism like this is bound to reveal its motive and the forces behind it right in the beginning. And there is no way to keep them concealed till the finals.

The relevance of a traditional system like caste in a modern democratic political system can be best tested in situations like this. Here, the debate on

caste system moves out of the domain of traditional dialogue “whether to retain the caste system or destroy it; and ventures into a new territory where the departure point of debate on caste system has to be how a traditional institutional arrangement contributes to the moulding of a modern society.”³¹ Now the debate has to proceed in the direction of viewing caste system as a living and dynamic system, which in the process of two way interaction between society and polity facilitates a transformation of both of them. At the societal level caste system may be an arrangement of privileges to some and disabilities for many. But at the political level in a system of universal adult franchise, caste becomes a synonym of effective political mobilisation based upon common conditions of social existence. The caste identity helps in bringing to the fore the factors of common interests. This exposes the members of a caste group to the appeals of caste brotherhood and to the decisions of caste councils. Consequently, any strategy, like the one adopted by the land owning castes in Meerut, which so apparently aims at dividing a particular caste to sabotage their political interests usually ends up making them more united in the course of an electoral exercise. Thus, in the villages where land owning castes engineered a Jatav vs. non-Jatav Scheduled Caste contest, Jatavs managed to sideline their internal factionalism to a great extent in the course of electioneering, which helped them defeat non-Jatav Scheduled Caste candidates in as many as 48 villages. They were also runners-up in 51 villages (Table 4.3).

The results of the elections for the office of Pradhan reserved for the Scheduled Castes send strong signals about social ferment in Meerut society,

³¹ See Rajni Kothari, *Op. cit.*

which must be a case with other parts of U.P. also because of a similarity in social setting. In Western U.P., it was with the politicisation of Jats and other middle peasant castes under the leadership of Chaudhury Charan Singh in the post-Green Revolution days, the process of percolation of political consciousness in the caste structure began. This process effectively challenged the domination of Brahmin-led political class of the day. This process was witnessed in other parts of U.P. also, for example, in Eastern U.P. mobilisation of middle peasant caste was undertaken by the Socialists. In 1990s political consciousness appears to be further moving down the strata of society, leading to increasing political assertion by the landless Scheduled Castes. This percolation of political consciousness below the peasant castes spells out significant changes in the society and polity of U.P. in the coming years. The prolonged political instability in U.P. during a better part of 1990s is one of the results of this process. Realising the unwillingness of the existing political class in the state to go beyond the preservation of *status quo* and address the real issues like land reforms, the castes of landless agricultural labourers like the Jatavs and other lower castes have been attempting to throw up their own political class. Their this attempt may also be a result of these castes' efforts to work out a political route of social change. The process has tremendously enhanced the bargaining power of these castes which on the one hand has resulted into the meteoric rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 1990s and on the other hand has forced other political parties to include the cause of these castes in their agenda.

Nevertheless, the process of social change is a tortuous one. The entrenched sections of society do not concede defeat so easily. Thus, despite

**TABLE 4.6 NO-CONFIDENCE MOTIONS AGAINST PRADHANS IN
MEERUT DISTRICT**

(Between April 1996 and November 1997)

Sl. No.	Name of the Block	Name of the Village	Category	Caste of the Pradhan defeated by the No-Confidence Motion
1.	Daurala	Chindauri	SC Woman	Balmiki
2.	Daurala	Pavli Khas	BC Man	Fakir (Muslim)
3.	Hastinapur	Maud Khurd	Gen Woman	-
4.	Hastinapur	Saifpur Firozpur	SC Man	Jatav
5.	Jani Khurd	Ghat	SC Man	Jatav
6.	Jani Khurd	Kurali	Gen Woman	-
7.	Jani Khurd	Timkiya	SC Man	Jatav
8.	Kharkhauda	Ajrada	Gen Woman	-
9.	Kharkhauda	Rasoolpur Dhantala	BC Woman	Goojar
10.	Machhra	Govindpur Shakarpur	SC Man	Jatav
11.	Mawana	Bhainsa	Gen Woman	-
12.	Mawana	Sandhan	Gen. Man	-
13.	Parikshitgarh	Mehmoodpur	SC Woman	Jatav
14.	Parikshitgarh	Samaspur	BC Man	Gosai
15.	Rajpura	Lalsana	SC Woman	Jatav
16.	Rohta	Doongar	SC Man	Jatav
17.	Rohta	Kalina	SC Man	Balmiki
18.	Sardhana	Bhamauri	Gen Woman	-
19.	Saurpur Khurd	Ekdi	SC Woman	Jatav

Source: Data of the Election of Village Panchayat Pradhans in Meerut District, 1995 Elections (Unpublished)

the shortfall of the strategy of pitching one Scheduled Caste against another and fuelling factionalism among certain Scheduled Castes, the land owning castes in Meerut did not give up their manoeuvres in the post-election phase and resorted to supplementing techniques to maintain their position. The new Panchayati Raj legislations have the provision of non-confidence motion against an existing Pradhan. If this motion, which can be moved once a year, is passed by the two-thirds majority of total village Panchayat members the Pradhan loses his/her office. The vacancies created by the passage of a no-confidence motion are filled through by-election to be conducted mandatorily within six months of the creation of such vacancy. It seems, in the form of this provision, various caste groups in the district have discovered another instrument of caste politics. As a matter of fact, no-confidence motions are neither moved nor passed on the merit of Pradhan's governance of Panchayat affairs. The inefficiency of, or corruption by, the Pradhan are without fail prime allegations against a Pradhan levelled by the opposition party in the Panchayat/Village. In reality, these are the intra-caste and inter-caste equations which call the shots. In Meerut district, between (April) 1996 and (November) 1997, a total of nineteen no-confidence motions were passed against Pradhans (Table 4.6). Out of them, 52.63% or ten motions were against Pradhans belonging to a Scheduled Caste, 31.57% or six against the Pradhans from general category castes and 15.78% or 3 were against the BC Pradhans. Now, these no-confidence motions may be a result of factional politics or inter-caste politics or both together. The case composition of Panchayat members plays an important role in the event of a non-confidence motion where against the Pradhans belonging to the Scheduled Caste indicates a role of caste politics as

it exists between the land owning castes and the Scheduled Castes in the district. During the elections to PRIs (1995) the land owning castes had attempted to forge an alliance with other backward castes and the non-Jatav Scheduled Castes with a purpose to defeat Jatav candidates, wherever possible. Reacting to it, the Jatavs managed to identify the planted candidates of all hues, and defeated them in majority of the cases. These equations seem to be working in the post-electoral caste politics also. The pattern of no-confidence motions adds to its probability. In eight out of ten cases, motions were passed against a Jatav Pradhan. The remaining two motions were against the Balmiki Pradhans (Table 4.6). Although, the land owning castes understand that even after removing a Jatav Pradhan, through a no-confidence motion, their village will have by-election under the same reservation provisions and in any case a Scheduled Caste person will become Pradhan of their village; yet, what seems to be inspiring the land owning castes to use no-confidence motion's option to remove a Jatav Pradhan is the opportunity they may get during the by-election to push their own candidate through. Besides, the removal of a Pradhan belonging to the landless agricultural labourers, through a no-confidence motion also has a demoralising effect upon the entire community of landless agricultural labourers. In the case of no-confidence motions against the Balmiki Pradhans it might be an attempt to correct the mistakes the Jatavs committed during the general elections.

Lastly, in the case of the Scheduled Caste Pradhans, irrespective of their belonging to the Jatav or a non-Jatav Scheduled Caste, the amount of respect they get from the village community and the co-operation they receive from the Panchayat members, members of Gram Sabha, and even from the Panchayat

officials like the Panchayat Secretary, A.D.O., B.D.O., etc., is very low. During the sample survey it was a common observation made by the respondents that the members of land owning castes never visit the SC Pradhan for any reason. IN case they have some work to be done, they prefer to directly approach the concerned government officials. Sometimes even the Pradhan has to visit the powerful persons in the village (invariably belonging to a land owning caste), if summoned by them (in case a woman (SC) is Pradhan her men folk is summoned). The Scheduled Caste candidates who get elected with the support of the land owning castes are more prone to it.

Article 243-D(6) of Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 also makes a provision for reservation of the offices of Pradhan for the Other Backward Classes of citizens. The castes which are termed as the 'Other Backward Classes of citizens' by the Constitution of India and as the 'middle castes' by the social scientists are those castes which occupy the entire space on the scale of caste hierarchy which lies between the 'Dvijas' and the 'Shudras'.³² These middle order castes are a rather heterogeneous group³³ and have highly differing ritual statuses and occupational identities. The only common thread running through them is that they neither enjoy the ritual status of 'Dvijas' nor suffer from disabilities which haunt the Shudras. As the conditions of socio-economic existence markedly differ within this group of castes, clubbing them together for any purpose appears to be somewhat artificial. Within this group the patterns of different middle castes' control over economic resources and and of their social mobility, political

³² These terms are specific to Hindu caste hierarchy. However, among the non-Hindus also an identical system can be identified.

consciousness, mobilisation and organisation differ so much that any unqualified mechanism of protective discrimination in favour of the middle castes tends to benefit more the already powerful and upwardly mobile middle peasant castes like the Goojars, Aheers, Sainis, etc., than other lower middle castes like the Barai, Luhar, Nai, Kevat, Dhuna, Dhobi, Teli, etc. The difficulties in defining the commonality among the middle castes have resulted in clubbing them together as 'backward classes' and not as 'backward castes'. The accepted criterion³⁴ for their class determination is social and educational backwardness and not the economic status of different castes. The latter was rejected to be the suitable criterion because it would have excluded castes like Goojar, Aheer, Kurmi, Lodh and Saini, who control good amount of land but otherwise they are backward on other indicators of development. Further, these castes have been called 'classes' by this formulae because the term class was found to be broader than 'caste' to accommodate certain non-Hindu communities as well, who share similar levels of social existence with their Hindu counterparts.

Perhaps, on account of these difficulties in neatly defining the status of middle order castes, the Constituent Assembly had desisted from making any mandatory provision of protective discrimination in favour of the middle castes/backward classes of citizens. The Parliament of India also followed the same path while passing the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992 and made only non-obligatory provisions in this regard. Thus, the Article 243-D (6) of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 merely declares that:

³³ K. Srinivasulu, "Centrality of Caste: Understanding U.P. Elections", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 January 1994, p. 159.

“Nothing in this Part (Part IX) shall prevent the legislature of a state from making any provision for reservation of seats in any panchayat or offices of chairpersons in the panchayats at any level in favour of backward class of citizens.”

At the same time when the U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994 had been passed, it was Mulayam Singh Yadav - a powerful backward caste leader, who was the Chief Minister of U.P. Besides it, by 1990s the assertion of middle castes has acquired such proportions that no legislation of this kind could be passed without special provisions in favour of the middle castes. Thus 11-A (2) of the U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994 reads:

“The State Government shall, by order, reserve offices of Pradhans for...the backward classes:

Provided that the number of offices of Pradhans reserved for...the backward classes in the State shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of such offices as the population of...the backward classes in the State bears to the total population of the State;

Provided further that the reservation for the backward classes shall not exceed twenty-seven per cent of the total number of offices of Pradhans.”

Following the provisions of Article 243-D (6) of the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 and Section 11-A (@) of U.P. Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Act, 1994 in Meerut district 133 offices of Pradhans out of total 465 offices were

³⁴ This ~~provision~~ was laid down by the B.P. Mandal Commission.

reserved for the backward classes.³⁵ Out of these 133 offices, 48 were reserved for the BC women. After elections to the village Panchayats in Meerut in April 1995 there were total 138 offices of Pradhans which had been occupied by the persons from the backward classes. The number of BC women who became Pradhan in the district after these elections was 51 while 87 BC men became Pradhan (Table 4.5).

In Meerut district, as in other parts of the State also, the middle order castes or backward classes enjoy a status in the socio-economic structure of the area which is quite different from the status of the Scheduled Castes. As the BCs are a far more heterogeneous group than the Scheduled Castes, within the BCs also the socio-economic status of different BCs differs markedly. Because of these two factors the nature of caste politics in the villages, where the offices of Pradhans have been reserved for the BCs, is perceptible different from the nature of caste politics that we find taking place in the villages with Pradhan's office reserved for the Scheduled Castes. The first major difference between the two emanates from the differing occupational status of the BCs and the SCs. None of BCs is a group of traditional agricultural labourers. Many of them may be landless and some of them may even be occasional agricultural labourers but fundamentally they are peasants, animal rearers, artisans, craftsmen, etc. thus, by the nature of their occupations the BCs do not engage in a conflictual relationship with the land owning castes on the questions of labour, wages and share-cropping. On the contrary, some of the land owning

³⁵ The U.P. Act of 1994 has prescribed a limit of 27% for the reservation for the BCs. But in Meerut actually 28.60% offices had been reserved for the BCs. Thus, at the allotment stage itself the BCs had gained about 7 offices. These seven offices had come from the quota of the General Category castes.

BCs like the Goojar, Aheer and Lodh³⁶ engage in conflictual relationship with the castes of landless agricultural labourers on these questions. Therefore, in the political arena also the land owning higher castes do not perceive that kind of threat from a BC person occupying the prestigious office of Pradhan which they do perceive in the event of a Scheduled Caste person, especially a Jatav incumbent of this office.

Secondly, on the social hierarchy scale also the BCs are above the SCs. Indeed, some of the land owning BCs, like the Goojar, Aheer and Lodh, are just below the higher ritual status land owning castes of Tyagi and Rajput and the de facto higher caste of Jats. Although the orthodox elements among the higher ritual status land owning castes some time may not agree to the elevation of a BC person to the position of Pradhan yet these higher castes in general do not view a BC becoming Pradhan of their village, as their insult. This situation, therefore, does not lead the higher castes to reacting very sharply and inventing mechanisms to prevent a particular group of BCs from occupying the office of Pradhan.

The third important reason for the differing natures of caste politics in the villages with Pradhan's office reserved for the SCs and the villages with Pradhan's office reserved for the BCs is the pattern of BC settlement in Meerut district (Table 4.0). In Meerut, many BCs., especially the land owning among them, are dominant castes in a large number of villages. It is not unusual to find one individual BC forming numerical majority in a village along with holding the maximum of economic resources in the village. Unlike the BCs, the SCs despite forming single largest caste group in the village in many cases,

³⁶ In Eastern U.P., Kurmis, Koeries and Aheers play this role.

do not constitute generally the majority of village's population. Moreover, it is next to impossible to find a Scheduled Caste decisively holding the economic resources in any of the villages of the district. This dominant caste position, which BCs enjoy in a large number of villages of the district, also makes BC(s) politically powerful. Their dominant position as well discourages the entry of outer players in the intra-caste equations of the BCs. The other castes, whether higher or lower, may join the factional politics of a dominant Bc group in a village but they cannot engineer factionalism within a particular BC in all or majority of the villages having Pradhan's office reserved for the BCs.

Lastly, within the BCs there exists no specific inter-caste rivalry. Nor any of the BCs have a kind of relationship with the land owning castes which exists between the land owning castes and particular Scheduled Castes like the Balmikis that they would help the higher land owning castes to manipulate political equations to their own advantage.

Indeed, the nature of caste politics in this group of villages is least predictable and it may be guided by any of the equations of caste politics. In one case, it may become more of class politics than caste politics when the higher land owning castes in the village decide to support the candidature of a land owning BCs candidate against the candidature of a lower BC candidate. In another case, the equations of election may be determined by the rivalry between the land owning higher castes and the land owning BC(s). In such situations the support of a land owning higher caste(s) may go to a candidate from one of the lower BCs. In yet another situation many BCs may be interlocked in a multi-corner contest. In such a situation the scene becomes too hazy to decide about the support pattern. The only thing which can be held

Table 4.5- Offices of Pradhans Reserved for Backward Classes.
(April 1995 Elections)

Block and the no. of BC reserved villages		Goojar				Saini				Aheer				Gadariya			
		Nom.	Can.	Vill. parti.	Posi. won	Nom.	Can.	Vill. parti.	Posi. won	Nom.	Can.	Vill. parti.	Posi. won	Nom.	Can.	Vill. parti.	Posi. won
Daurala	M	13	8	3	2	14	8	5	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	6	4	4	1
	W	19	9	5	5	9	7	4	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8+5=13	T	32	17	8	7	23	15	9	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	6	4	4	1
Hastinapur	M	35	22	7	5	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	6	3	2	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	14	8	3	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	11	6	11	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
7+4=11	T	49	30	10	8	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	17	9	13	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Jani Khurd	M	4	3	1	1	3	2	1	1	16	15	3	3	2	1	1	1
	W	7	4	1	1	5	3	2	Nil	7	6	2	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8+4=12	T	11	7	2	2	8	5	3	1	23	21	5	4	2	1	1	1
Kharkhanda	M	16	11	4	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	5	5	3	2
	W	23	20	4	4	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6+4=10	T	39	31	8	7	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	5	5	3	2
Machhra	M	16	12	4	4	2	2	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	14	7	3	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	1	Nil
7+4=11	T	30	19	7	7	2	2	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	1	Nil
Mawana	M	56	34	9	8	10	7	4	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
	W	27	22	5	5	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
10+5=15	T	83	56	14	13	10	7	4	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
Meerut	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	T	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parikshit- garh	M	41	25	9	7	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	7	2	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	22	17	5	4	2	2	1	Nil	4	3	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
10+6=16	T	63	42	14	11	2	2	1	Nil	11	5	2	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Rajpura	M	10	10	3	2	3	3	2	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	12	7	3	2
	W	22	18	4	4	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8+4=12	T	32	28	7	6	3	3	2	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	12	7	3	2
Rohta	M	3	3	1	Nil	2	2	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	8	5	2	2	2	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	1	Nil
6+3=9	T	11	8	3	2	4	3	2	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	1	Nil
Sardhana	M	26	10	4	4	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	11	5	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6+3=9	T	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	5	4	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Sarurpur	M	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
5+3=8	T	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	4	3	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	3	2	2	Nil
G.Total	M	220	138	45	36	37	26	17	9	29	20	6	Nil 6	27	19	13	6
	W	173	117	35	Nil 34	22	16	9	Nil	24	19	15	4	4	1	3	1
	T	393	255	80	70	59	42	26	9	53	39	21	10	31	20	16	7

Source : Data of the Election of Village Panchayat Pradhans in Meerut District, 1995 Elections (Unpublished)

Table 4.5 - Offices of Pradhans Reserved for Backward Classes.
(April 1995 Elections)

Block and the no. of BC reserved villages		Kumhar				Gosai				Dhivar			
		Nom.	Can.	Vill.	Posi. parti. won	Nom.	Can.	Vill.	Posi. parti. won	Nom.	Can.	Vill.	Posi. parti. won
Daurala	M	4	1	4	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	4	4	3	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8+5=13	T	4	1	4	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	4	4	3	Nil
Hastinapur	M	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
7+4=11	T	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
Jani Khurd	M	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	7	6	3	1
	W	2	2	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8+4=12	T	2	2	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	7	6	3	1
Kharkhanda	M	2	2	2	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6+4=10	T	2	2	2	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Machhra	M	4	4	2	1	4	4	2	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
7+4=11	T	4	4	2	1	4	4	2	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Mawana	M	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
10+5=15	T	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
Meerut	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	T	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parikshit- garh	M	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	10	8	2	2	2	2	2	Nil
	W	1	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
10+6=16	T	1	1	1	Nil	10	8	2	2	2	2	2	Nil
Rajpura	M	5	3	4	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	2	2	2	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2	2	2	Nil
8+4=12	T	5	3	4	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	4	4	4	Nil

BC reserved villages		Nom.	Can.	Vill.	Posi. parti. won	Nom.	Can.	Vill.	Posi. parti. won	Nom.	Can.	Vill.	Posi. parti. won
Rohta	M	9	8	6	4	3	3	2	Nil	2	2	1	Nil
	W	1	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	1
6+3=9	T	10	8	7	4	3	3	2	Nil	3	3	2	1
Sardhana	M	1	1	1	Nil	1	Nil	1	Nil	4	4	2	1
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6+3=9	T	1	1	1	Nil	1	Nil	1	Nil	4	4	2	1
Sarurpur	M	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	Nil	10	6	3	1
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
5+3=8	T	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	Nil	11	7	4	1
G.Total	M	27	20	21	7	20	17	9	3	33	28	18	3
	F	4	3	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	4	4	4	1
	T	31	23	24	7	20	17	9	3	37	32	22	4

Table 4.5 - Offices of Pradhan Reserved for Backward Classes.
(April 1995)

Block and the no. of BC reserved villages		Barai				Fakir				Jogi				Nai			
		Nom.	Can.	Vill.	Posi.	Nom.	Can.	Vill.	Posi.	Nom.	Can.	Vill.	Posi.	Nom.	Can.	Vill.	Posi.
		parti. won				parti. won				parti. won				parti. won			
Daurala	M	8	4	5	Nil	3	1	2	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8+5=13	T	8	4	5	Nil	4	2	3	1	1	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Hastinapur	M	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	1	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
7+4=11	T	1	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Jani Khurd	M	4	2	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	4	4	4	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8+4=12	T	4	2	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	4	4	4	Nil
Kharkhanda	M	2	2	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	3	3	2	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6+4=10	T	2	2	2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	3	3	2	Nil
Machhra	M	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2	2	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
7+4=11	T	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2	2	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Mawana	M	1	1	1	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
10+5=15	T	1	1	1	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Meerut	M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	T	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parikshit- garh	M	1	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2	2	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
10+6=16	T	1	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	Nil
Rajpura	M	6	3	3	1	4	3	2	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
	W	1	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8+4=12	T	7	4	4	1	4	3	2	Nil	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	Nil
Rohta	M	5	3	3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	3	3	3	1
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6+3=9	T	5	3	3	Nil	2	1	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	3	3	3	1
Sardhana	M	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	1	Nil	1	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6+3=9	T	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil	1	Nil	1	Nil
Sarurpur	M	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
5+3=8	T	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1	Nil
G.Total	M	30	19	21	3	10	6	6	1	5	5	5	Nil	14	13	13	1
	F	2	2	2	Nil	5	4	2	1	4	4	3	1	-	-	-	-
	T	32	21	23	3	15	10	8	2	9	9	8	1	14	13	13	1

Table 4.5- Offices of Pradhans Reserved for Backward Classes.
(April 1995 Elections)

Block	Remaining Backward Castes' Participation				
	Nominations	Candidates	Number of Villages participated	Positions won	
Daurala	M	T-1	Nil	1	Nil
		A-4	3	2	1
		D-1	1	1	Nil
	W	Dh-2	Dh-1	1	Nil
Hastinapur	M	DB-1	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Jani Khurd	M	L-4	4	1	1
		T-1	1	1	Nil
		A-3	3	2	2
	W	D-1	1	1	Nil
Kharkhauda	M	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	B-1	Nil	1	Nil
Machhra	M	Gaddi- 1	1	1	Nil
		Unspeci- 5 fied	4	1	1
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Mawana	M	L-3	3	1	Nil
		K-5	4	2	1
		M-1	1	1	Nil
		T-1	1	1	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Meerut	M	Unspecified	Unspecified	Unspecified	4
	W	Unspecified	Unspecified	-	3
Parikshitgarh	M	L-1	1	1	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Rajpura	M	Da-1	1	1	Nil
		Ka-3	3	1	1
		Dh-1	1	1	Nil
		D-2	1	1	Nil
	W	Ka-2	1	1	Nil
Rohta	M	Dh-1	1	1	Nil
		L-2	2	2	Nil
		A-1	1	1	Nil
		T-1	1	1	Nil
		D-1	1	1	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Sardhana	M	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	W	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
	M	DB-1	1	1	Nil
		S-1	1	1	Nil
		Dh-1	1	1	Nil
		Unspeci- -6 fied	5	1	1
	W	K-2	2	1	Nil
	W	L-3	3	1	1
Sarurpur Khurd	M	50	43	27	10
	W	15	12	9	6
Grand Total	T	65	55	36	16

Dhuna - Dh Kassab - K
Teli - T Manihar - M
Ansar - A Bairagi - Ba
Darji - D Dhobi - Dh
Luhar - L Kamboj - Ka
Bharbhujia - B Sunar - S
Gaddi - G
Bhat - Bh

with surety regarding caste politics in the villages, where Pradhan's office has been reserved for the BCs, is that this politics has its own idiom. This idiom of caste politics is very different from the one which accentuates caste politics in the villages with Pradhan's office reserved for the Scheduled Caste.

The results of 1995 Panchayat elections in this group of reserved villages in Meerut clearly demonstrate that most of the benefits have been reaped by the dominant sections of this group. The actually targetted castes have largely failed to get benefitted out of these provisions. The Goojars, who are the most powerful BC of Meerut and who are not unlike the higher land owning castes either in their control over land or in the methods to maintain control over land, emerged as the maximum beneficiaries of this provision of reservation of Pradhan's office for the BCs. The Goojars captured seventy out of 133 offices reserved for the BCs in the district. Out of them thirty six were men and thirty four women (Table 4.5). Thus, in 15% of total Meerut villages Goojars have become Pradhan. They are 52.63% of the total number of BC Pradhans returned from reserved seats. Further, 42.35% of men BC Pradhans and 70.33% of women BC Pradhan belong to the Goojar caste. A more interesting record was set by the Goojar women in these elections by capturing 34 out of 35 seats (97.14%) for which they had contested the elections (table 4.5).

The success of Goojars presents one more aspect of caste politics which is basically intra-caste but which gives cutting edge to a caste group in inter-caste contests. The primary reason behind the success of Goojars in these elections was the internal cohesion of the community. It seems caste Panchayat of Goojars still has an important role to play in the community affairs. Goojars

are politically conscious and organised community. Their voting is usually very systematic and objective. The community decision plays an important role in the participation of its members in electoral exercises is clear from the pattern of Goojars' participation in the 1995, village Panchayat elections. A very distinguishing aspect of Goojars' participation was their rate of withdrawal of nomination forms, which was highest among all the castes. For the offices of Pradhan reserved for BCs total 393 Goojar persons from 80 villages had filed nomination forms. The total number of candidates who contested the elections was just 255. Thus, as many as 35.11% of the nomination forms from this category of villages were withdrawn (Table 4.5). Among the Scheduled Castes this figure is 15.90% and among the general category candidates 22.80%. Among the BCs in general, excluding the Goojars, this figure is 22.90% (Table 4.2). The higher incidence of withdrawal of nominations among the Goojars indicates that internal deliberations within the caste must have taken place to reduce factionalism, thereby increasing the chances of Goojar candidates' success. These deliberations could not take place so effectively in the absence of a formal forum like the caste panchayat. Perhaps, the role of caste panchayat was especially useful when Goojars were engaged in a direct contest with some other BC(s).

Unlike the Goojars and probably few other BCs among the lower BCs in general in the villages with Pradhan's post reserved for the BCs, the election was very competitive. Every BC intended its own candidate to become Pradhan. Therefore, in a good number of villages from this group election was multi-cornered with many BCs fielding their own candidates. This reduced the levels of inter-BC co-operation leading to the decision making power in the

election shifting to the non-BCs in the village. Nevertheless, the provision of reservation of the offices of Pradhans for the BCs has benefitted the lower BCs also though in a limited degree. These castes have also raised their share in the grass roots representative bodies. In the open general elections many of these castes just cannot think of contesting election due to their scattered population. But in these elections they not only contested but also secured a reasonably good number of offices also (Table 4.5). This marks the beginning of 'political socialisation' of many of these castes that have lived on the periphery of electoral politics during all the bygone years.

Summary and Conclusion

The system of 'Panchayats' in India has very deep roots. Many scholars attempt to trace its origins even to the Vedic society. They also believe that the Panchayats were the bodies governing the everyday life of villages all over the country, and therefore, are fit to be called traditional local self-governance institutions of India which have become the basis of modern Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). However, a closer scrutiny of the origins and functions of Panchayats, as they existed in Indian villages through the ages, reveals that the traditional Panchayat system of India was no spectacular and unique system devised by the ancient Indians.

Undoubtedly, there are historical evidences which establish the existence of the system of Panchayats in ancient India. But their nature and functions were very different from what they are generally perceived to have been. The political institutions and the social arrangements of a society are generally the product of the felt needs and organisational structure of that society. Caste system, that seeks its roots in the relations of production is the primary building block of the Indian society. The hierarchical nature of caste makes Indian society, especially the rural society, an organisation of institutionalised inequalities. In this kind of societal organisation no institutional arrangement can remain immune to the relationships of inequalities. Therefore, the traditional Panchayat system also absorbed a deep influence of institutionalised inequalities of Indian society. This was the reason that there existed more caste panchayats than village panchayats as such. Of

course, there were held village Panchayats also as and when the need arose but generally they too were not free from the caste based inequalities. Besides, the traditional Panchayats were not permanent bodies concerned with the developmental activities. They were more of judicial bodies which used to spring up occasionally to deliberate upon and decide a matter.

Caste Panchayats exist even today but now we come across new kind of Panchayats also which are largely different in their origin, structural organisation, functions and objectives from their traditional predecessors. These modern Panchayats are known to us as PRIs. However, in spite of profound differences with the traditional Panchayat system, the PRIs have one thing similar to the traditional Panchayats that they too have to function in a society based upon caste system. The PRIs are not a product of this caste based society; yet castes and PRIs have to interact with each other. In this interaction, both assume different characteristics. On the one hand, the castes try to use PRIs to serve their socio-economic interests by capturing them, on the other hand PRIs aim, especially after the enactment of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992, at bringing the village society into the mainstream of development. Since, in a society with institutionalised inequalities no meaningful development can take place until the members of the society do not start believing in the democratic ideals, the PRIs also aim at effecting democratic development and social change.

It is not unusual to find the entrenched sections of the society resisting the efforts for the realisation of the ideals of democracy which, by their very nature, pose a real danger to the entrenched positions in the society. On the other hand, these ideals inspire the deprived sections of the society to claim

their due in the socio-economic set-up. This process accelerates if the state power backs the efforts for the democratisation of society. The enactment of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 is one such gesture by the Indian state which marks a great leap forward in the direction of democratic development and social change. Especially, through its Article 243-D(4)&(6), this Act promises to give a new turn to the inter-caste relationships which, in all probability, after an initial phase of frictional politics, will make rural India more egalitarian and democratic and politics more competitive and grass-roots based.

However, the PRIs have not reached this stage of development without passing through the thick and thin of times. The enthusiasm, which had generated before the independence of India, about a Panchayats based polity of free India, came down crashing soon after 'We, the people of India' set down to 'adopt, enact and give to ourselves' a Constitution. The Panchayati Raj Institutions could get only a ceremonious place in the Constitution of India and Anglo-American system of centralised government was thought to be the right choice to 'wipe off tears from the last man's eye'. However, within less than a decade after the enactment of the Constitution of India, the policy makers realised the magnitude of the task ahead, and also the impossibility of completing even a fraction of it, if the common man was not involved with the task of nation building. Consequently, PRIs were once again eulogised and declared the centre of country's hopes. However, it was not late when PRIs themselves were found to be crawling. The reason behind this pathetic condition of PRI was that in the place of 'Austinian oligarchy', a new politico-bureaucratic oligarchy had come up by that time. This new oligarchy was least

willing to part with power in favour of the PRIs. To add to the woes of PRIs, at the societal level the dominant sections of the society – the base of politico-administrative oligarchic superstructure – were either wanting to use them to serve their own vested interest or otherwise were not in a mood to let the PRIs take off at all. This situation was more or less present almost in all the states of India but in states like U.P., it assumed somewhat mythical proportions. Ironically in U.P., this happened despite a glorious track record of PRIs since the pre-independence days.

This situation continued for decades together until late 1980s when the convergence of various factors ranging from the political difficulties of the then Prime-Minister to the developmental needs of the country led to the enactment of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 which has accorded a much needed Constitutional status to PRIs. The new Act has made decentralisation an emphatic reality. The most important of the features of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment Act), 1992 are - regularity in the elections to the PRIs under the aegis of State Election Commission; constitution of a Finance commission in every state to take stock of the financial conditions of the PRIs; devolution of power to the PRIs through at least twenty nine heads that have been put under the IX Schedule of the Constitution of India; and the reservation of seats and the offices of chairpersons to the weaker sections of society, namely, SCs, STs, OBCs (non-obligatory) and women. More than any other provision of this Act, it is the provision for the reservation of offices of chairpersons which would have a direct impact on the societal relationships especially the caste based ones.

The emergence of an interventionist welfare state in India after independence has played a very important role in the process of democratic development and social change. Besides, the inherent logic of competitive politics has also added to this process. A clear manifestation of this process was the political mobilisation of various caste groups which challenged the hegemony of upper castes and claimed a place for themselves in the running of the political system. In the state of Uttar Pradesh, this process surfaced in mid-1960s in the wake of Green Revolution when the Elite and Intermediate Cultivating Castes (ECCs & ICCs) mobilised and challenged the domination of the upper castes like the Brahmin and Rajput. The degree of the success of this challenge may be disputed in terms of statistics as even after the mobilisation of these castes, the Brahmins and Rajputs continued to be favourites of all the political parties in the state, but in real terms, the political weight of ECCs and ICCs considerably increased. No political party, hereafter, could afford to ignore the interests of these castes any more. By 1990s, the importance of these castes, especially of the ICC, along with the 'Dalits' has increased so much that the office of U.P. Chief Minister appears to have become out of the reach of an upper caste person in the near future.

The political mobilisation of the Scheduled Castes or 'Dalits' during 1990s can be called the culminating point of the caste based political mobilisation in U.P. It challenges the domination of all the castes above the SCs and makes SCs claim their due in the socio-economic and political structure of the U.P. society. The mobilisation of the Scheduled Castes, especially the castes traditionally providing agricultural labour, has caused a perceptible friction on the caste lines in the U.P. society. This, in a way, has

given class character to the caste relationships in the U.P. society as the land owning castes, whether they are upper castes, ECCs or ICCs, are viewing the mobilisation of the castes of agricultural labourers quite alike and are adopting similar strategies to neutralise the impact of Scheduled Castes' mobilisation.

By reserving the key offices of Village Panchayat Pradhan for the SCs, STs and OBCs through Article 243-D(4)&(6) the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 has boosted the process of the mobilisation and assertion of the ICCs and the Scheduled Castes. This study of Meerut village Panchayats reveals that the provisions of Article 243-D(4)&(6) have had a direct impact on the process of democratic development and social change in the villages of the district.

The first unmistakably visible impact of this step has been that the village Panchayat elections have become more competitive and participatory than ever. A significant aspect of this development is that those marginalised sections of society like the Scheduled Castes have got a chance to participate in the electoral exercises and in the working of the democratic institutions, who in the past were usually denied their democratic rights by the dominant castes in the village. This development naturally means that these sections will also benefit by the fruits, like the enhanced bargaining power and rise in the levels of political consciousness, which the periodical electoral exercises and the working of democratic institutions bear. This will also change the psychological environment in the village, bringing about attitudinal change among both the depressed castes and the dominant castes. Consequently, if the former becomes (as they have already started becoming in the villages of Meerut) more conscious about their rights and their potential to claim their

rights through the use of franchise, the dominant castes will become aware of the changing idiom of their times, which will force them to respect the democratic rights of individuals.

In a way, the attitudinal change has already started taking place among the dominant castes. The second result of the introduction of these provisions is the dominant castes have realised that the Indian state stands by the process of democratic development and social change. Consequently, the dominant castes are getting discouraged to use their traditional method of threat of physical violence or actually resorting to physical violence against the depressed castes to perpetuate their domination in the rural power structure. In the place of physical force, the dominating castes are now manoeuvring within the limits of democratic politics to maintain their hold. However, in this domain, they stand to be losers in the longer run. With the growing political consciousness the numerically strong but traditionally deprived castes will surely become able to answer the manoeuvres of the dominant castes.

Thirdly, the caste politics in the villages of Meerut district is mainly guided by the relations of production. The dominant castes don't feel threatened when a backward caste person becomes village Pradhan. They do not worry even when a Scheduled Caste person becoming village Panchayat Pradhan. Their main cause of concern is a person from the caste of traditional landless agricultural labourers becomes Pradhan. Such an occupant of the key post of Pradhan is viewed as a spark to the consciousness of the landless agricultural labourers in general which in turn would initiate the rearrangement of the existing relations of production, disturb *status quo* in the village and jeopardise the position of the dominant castes in the rural power structure. To

defend themselves against such possibilities the dominant castes try to evolve new defence mechanisms. In Meerut district during the April 1995 elections they tried to field and support the non-agricultural labourer Scheduled Castes against the Jatav - the main Scheduled Caste engaged in agricultural labour. As a supplementary strategy to it the dominant castes also attempted to fuel factionalism among the Jatavs to neutralise their numerical advantage. However, this strategy of the dominant castes did not serve their purpose upto their expectations. Jatavs, who are fast becoming political conscious due to the state-wide changing political atmosphere, in a large number of cases succeeded in defeating the sponsored candidates of the dominant castes. But the dominant castes have not yet conceded defeat. They have resorted to mechanisms like no-confidence motion to continue their battle against social change, in the post-election phase.

Fourth, the impact of the Article 243-D(6) of the Seventy-Third Amendment Act, 1992 is not as significant as that of the Article 243-D(4) in the district. In Meerut, the latter has mainly influenced the inter-caste relationships based upon the relations of production in the villages whereas the former has remained primarily limited to the Backward Classes without making any significant dent in the relations of production. The Article 243-D(6) has definitely increased the proportion of lower backward classes' participation in numerical terms but because of the unqualified nature of this provision, the maximum of its advantages have been cornered by the land owning backward castes like the Goojars and Sainis who in a good number of cases are dominant castes. They have a relationship with the landless agricultural labourers that is not very different from the relationship that traditionally existed between the

higher land owning castes and the castes of landless agricultural labourers. In this way, this provision appears to have benefitted the oppressors more than the oppressed.

Finally, the provisions regarding the reservation of the offices of Pradhan for the Scheduled Casts and the Backward Classes have, for the time being, added to the friction in the village society. Now, the conventional relationships face a tremendous challenge from the competitive democratic politics. Perhaps, caste relationships in the villages were never so tense as they appear to be now. Some critics believe that the creation of this unharmonious situation was largely unwarranted and the targetted objectives could be achieved at far lesser costs through the adoption of socio-economic route to democratic development and social change, in the place of political route. However, these critics seem to be unwilling to take into account the fact that the Indian villages have not been actually that harmonious an entity as they have been painted by the romantics; that, land reforms have been successfully thwarted by the dominant castes in U.P.; and that, questioning the social inequalities, at once bring to the fore the protests against so called state's unnecessary intervention in the religio-cultural rights of the people. Thus, any attempt to directly address the socio-economic inequalities in the society would create much more complex situation than what the political route to democratic development and social change has created by now. The present step is just a reassurance to the traditionally deprived sections of society about the presence of state on their side. This urges them to become conscious and stand up to claim their due in social resources. This step also asks the traditionally dominant sections of the society to respect the principles of co-existence and

democratic rights of individuals. At present, this step might appear to be causing friction among the members of the village community but in the longer run, this is bound to democratise the village society at much lesser costs than any other alternative course might have demanded. Besides, this step also promises to throw up a grassroots leadership which is likely to end the crisis of leadership that Indian polity is facing for quite some time now.

APPENDIX-I

LIST OF BACKWARD CLASSES IN UTTAR PRADESH*

01	AHIR	30	FAKIR
02	ARAKH	31	BANJARA
03	KACHHI	32	BARAI
04	KAHAR	33	BARI
05	KEVAT/MALLAH	34	BAIRAGI
06	KISAN	35	BIND
07	KOIRI	36	BIYAR
08	KUMHAR	37	BHAR
09	KURMI	38	BHURJI/BHARBHOOJA
10	KAMBOJ	39	BHATHIYARA
11	KASGAR	40	MALI, SAINI
12	KUNJRA/RAIN	41	MANIHAR
13	GOSAIN	42	MURAW/MARAI
14	GOOJAR	43	MOMIN (ANSAR)
15	GADARIA	44	MIRASI
16	GADDI	45	MUSLIM KAYAST
17	GIRI	46	NADDAF (DHUNIYA)
18	CHIKWA (KASSAB)		MANSOORI
19	CHHEEPI	47	MARCHHA
20	JOGI	48	RANGREZ
21	JHOJHA	49	LODH, LODHA, LODHI
22	DAPHALI		LOT, LODHI, RAJPOOT
23	TAMOLI	50	LOHAR
24	TELI	51	LONIYA
25	DARJI	52	SONAR
26	DHIVAR	53	SWEEPER (Not in SC List)
27	NAKKAL	54	HALWAI
28	NAT (Not in SC List)	55	HAJJAM (NAI)
29	NAYAK		

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